



Sorrow Turned to Joy

Desired Outcomes

1. To study the encounter between two disciples and Jesus on the road to Emmaus.
2. To consider how Jesus brings the Word of God alive to us.
3. To seek experiences of growing in our faith through encountering Christ and studying God's Word.

Session Key Verse

"We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."

—Luke 24:21a

Optional Materials

- Flip chart
- Internet access
- Communion supplies, perhaps shared within a meal
- *For free digital resources to enhance this lesson, go to www.warnerpress.org/life-mosaic-resources.*

Sneak Peek

Two disciples encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus, but didn't recognize him. Jesus helped them understand God's plan for the Messiah, revealed himself to them, and then disappeared.



Create a welcoming atmosphere and greet people as they enter the room. If anyone is new to your group, take a few moments to introduce yourselves. If there were prayer requests or other concerns expressed last week, share with the group any changes or updates. Ask for additional prayer concerns and requests, then share in a time of prayer.

What is an example of a story, a book, a television show, or a movie that has a surprise ending? In the final episode of the television show *Newhart*, we find out that Bob Newhart's character was just dreaming everything that had occurred throughout the series. In the movie *The Sixth Sense*, we get all the way to the end before we realize that Bruce Willis's character is actually dead. Share with the group one of your own examples. **How did the expectations of viewers (or readers) play a role in the surprise?**

Today you will see how the expectations of two disciples led to a most unexpected and life-changing surprise.



Read and discuss Luke 24:13–35. The commentary sections can be used to generate dialogue, or for study prior to your meeting.

Luke 24:13–27

Commentary

Who were the “two of them” on the road to Emmaus? There is no clear antecedent to *them*. They were clearly not part of the eleven within the original circle of the Twelve, yet they were part of a “group” of disciples (24:9) to which the women also belonged who had gone to the tomb. In addition to the women, some of this “group” also visited the tomb on Easter morning (24:24). We are given the name of one of the two on the road to Emmaus: Cleopas (v 18), but he shows up nowhere else in the New Testament.

These two persons had no idea who Jesus was when he approached them. He must have had normal human features (not superhuman), and they did not even catch on to his identity when he interpreted “Moses and all the prophets” concerning himself (v 27). They were aware, however, of recent events in Jerusalem. They recited to Jesus a brief summary of his earthly career, his passion, and his death. They also knew the essential Easter story; what is recorded in verses 22–24 is a brief recounting of the Easter narrative in 24:1–12.¹



Questions

- Verse 18 names one of the “two” as Cleopas. There is a “Clopas” mentioned in John 19:25. Tradition says that these were one in the same and that Cleopas was the brother of Joseph (Jesus’ earthly father), which would have made him Jesus’ uncle. Clopas was married to Mary, who was one of the women to discover the empty tomb. Perhaps Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus were not only disciples, but were husband and wife. Verse 17 indicates one emotion they were experiencing. **What was the reason for this emotion?**
- Verse 21 seems to suggest that the hope of these two travelers had vanished. **Why might this have been the case? What is the opposite of hope?**
- Jesus’ shared an emotional response in verse 25. **What emotions did he seem to express? What might have been the reasons for these emotions?**

1. Adapted from “Commentary on Luke 24:13–35,” accessed September 12, 2016, https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=54.

Luke 24:28–35

Commentary

The identity and significance of the stranger finally became known to the travelers on the road. As they were gathered at the table, their guest “took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them” (v 30). The words are



almost identical to those in 22:19 used to describe the Last Supper. Surely the symbolism was intentional. It was at this point that the two disciples understood who the stranger was. They now knew it was Jesus, who vanished from them. Then too they recalled that their hearts burned within them while he had been teaching them concerning the Messiah.

The story ends with the two going to Jerusalem to report what had happened. But before they could do that, they heard the testimony of the eleven who said that Jesus had been raised and had appeared to Simon (Peter).

This story demonstrates that belief in Jesus as risen Lord was not self-evident to his earliest followers, even after his crucifixion and resurrection. The reason people back then came to believe in him was that he appeared to them. In other words, it took divine revelation for them to believe. We cannot believe by our own reason or strength; it is by the Holy Spirit that we come to believe.

Today's story is one of movement; it contains at least nine verbs describing movement. Some of the verbs tell of movements made by Jesus, and others of movements made by “the two.” Either way, both Jesus and his followers were on the move. But it was not movement for its own sake. The moves

being made had a purpose—to tell the story of Jesus, to interpret it, to have fellowship (communion) with Jesus and others, and to share it all with others. That is what it means to be the church.²

Questions

- What “shift of emotions” in the two travelers do you sense in verse 29? What might have been the reason for it?
- What emotions seem to be indicated in verses 32–35?
- How would you describe the overall experience of the two travelers from the beginning of the story to the end?

3 Experience



Option 1

Group members should take turns shouting out a particular life event in a single word or phrase; for example, “Marriage” or “Taking a job.” After an event is named, work together to describe the expectations one might have for that event, then work to describe the reality discovered from the actual event. **How do expectations differ from reality in each case? Why are there discrepancies?** You may wish to use a flip chart to create *EVENT*, *EXPECTATIONS*, and *REALITY* columns for taking notes. This activity could also be done in small groups using paper and pens or pencils.

Option 2

With your group, spend some time online on the Demotivators page of Despair, Inc. (there is a link at www.warnerpress.org/life-mosaic-resources), which offers a satirical, tongue-in-cheek view of reality versus expectations. **Which posters are your favorites and why?** Discuss the differences between expectations and reality in the different situations of life, and the reasons these discrepancies occur.

2. Ibid.

4 Apply



Meditate for a bit on today's passage. Cleopas and his companion knew that Jesus had been crucified and buried. Now, his body was missing. When Jesus asked what they were discussing, they were sad and speechless. Cleopas finally responded. They had hoped Jesus was going to redeem Israel, but it seemed that nothing had changed. What they had believed, hoped, and expected to happen was not coming to reality. But as they continued walking, Jesus reinvigorated their hope. He caused them to think differently about God, about Israel, and about the meaning of the message of the prophets. Therein lies the message of Emmaus.

Sometimes we become overwhelmed by the possibility that our own understanding is flawed. Discouragement and hopelessness set in. We wonder whether things will turn out as we had once hoped. And then the resurrected Christ reveals something new—and our hearts burn within us.

Have you ever had doubts regarding your faith? If so, what were they? How did the Spirit of Christ illumine your understanding and help you to trust? What questions still remain unanswered?

Here is space to record your thoughts:

If you are willing, share a bit with a partner.

5 Conclude



Jesus' presence and work in our lives means change, and sometimes even discomfort. But whatever changes, there is still the comfort and familiarity of his presence in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup. Other things in life may change, but one thing remains constant: the Lord is with us. The journey will look different for different people at different times, but Jesus Christ can bind us together from generation to generation and across differences of gender, race, ethnicity, economic status, or anything else.

If possible, conclude your meeting by sharing together in the Lord's Supper. This could be done in a traditional format, with bread, the fruit of the vine, and the reading of pertinent verses from God's Word. It could also be done as part of an actual meal, perhaps an organized carry-in dinner pre-planned as a part of your meeting. Be sure to include a time of acknowledging the presence of Christ and giving thanks for his work in your hearts.

Close in prayer.



**Daily Bible
Readings**
Week 6

Sunday

Luke 24:13–35
*Sorrow Turned
to Joy*

Monday

Acts 4:1–20
Before the Council

Tuesday

Acts 4:23–31
Believers Pray

Wednesday

Acts 4:32–37
Believers Share

Thursday

Acts 5:1–11
*Ananias and
Sapphira*

Friday

Acts 5:12–16
The Apostles Heal

Saturday

Acts 5:17–26
*The Apostles Are
Persecuted*

Notes
