

JESUS: The Greatest Life of All

STUDY SEVENTEEN

Encountering Jesus along Life's Road

Luke 24:13–35

Sometimes on the road of life, you can almost feel the warmth of Jesus' presence. He helps you. He quiets you. He calms you with the truth.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

JESUS' death had devastated His followers, and it took time for some of them to embrace the reality of His resurrection.

A week earlier, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey, just as the prophet said the messiah would come (*Zechariah 9:9*). Messianic fervor washed across the city as people lined the road, waving palm branches, spreading their cloaks before Him, and shouting, "Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the LORD!" (Luke 19:38). They sang, "Hosanna!" which means, "Save us now!"—which they fully expected Jesus to do (Mark 11:9 NASB).

Now it was Sunday, seven days later. What a difference one week made.

In a cascade of horrors, Jesus had been arrested, tried, convicted, tortured, and crucified. Jesus was dead and buried—and so was his disciples' hope for a free and restored Israel. Adding to the confusion were reports that His body was missing. Some said He was alive . . . but where? *Nothing made sense.*

Trying desperately to sort through the splintered debris of their faith, two of His disciples left for their home in Emmaus. Where else could they go? They had sacrificed everything to follow Jesus. Now what would they do?



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Have you travelled the road of dashed dreams? Feelings of disillusionment and confusion accompanied you then, and perhaps they still do. In prayer, invite the Lord to walk beside you through His Word.

Father, encourage me through this account of two men who encountered Jesus on the road. They had left home to pursue a dream, but their dream shattered. Even so, You had a plan far greater than they imagined. You have a plan for me, too. Help me find Your way for my life. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Let's review the sequence of events from Friday through Sunday. On Friday at 3 p.m., Jesus died, and His body was laid in the tomb just before sunset ([John 19:38–42](#)). The next day, the Sabbath, soldiers sealed the tomb and stood guard ([Matthew 27:62–66](#)).

Early Sunday morning, an earthquake struck, an angel rolled away the stone, and the terrified guard “fell into a dead faint” ([28:2–4](#)). The women arrived to anoint Jesus' body and discovered Jesus missing. Mary Magdalene rushed off to tell Peter and John ([John 20:1–2](#)). Two angels appeared to the remaining women, explaining that Jesus had risen from the dead ([Luke 24:4–8](#)). While the women hurried to tell the disciples, the soldiers left to tell the Jewish authorities, who bribed them to say the body was stolen ([Matthew 28:11–15](#)).

Meanwhile, Mary reached Peter and John, who ran to the tomb, saw it empty, and left ([John 20:3–10](#)). Mary returned alone. She stood weeping at the tomb when Jesus appeared to her ([20:11–18](#)). Jesus also appeared to the other women as they were on the way to tell the angel's message to the disciples—who thought they were crazy ([Matthew 28:8–10](#); [Luke 24:11](#))!¹

All morning, people were in a frenzy—racing to and from the tomb, words spilling out, emotions bouncing wildly between anguish, skepticism, and uncontrollable excitement. It was that afternoon when the two disciples, dizzy from the chaos, packed up and headed for home.



Observation: The Emmaus Road Encounter

In *observation*, try to put yourself in the scene, as if you were a silent companion with the two men walking to Emmaus. Feel the warm sun, hear the men's conversation, and sense the emotion in their tone.



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The Men Walked without Understanding—Luke 24:13–24

As the men treaded the dusty road, they were “talking and discussing” (Luke 24:15 NASB). The Greek word for “discussing” implies an emotional exchange—a heated debate. Suddenly, yet naturally, Jesus stepped into their pain and confusion.

What do you see in Jesus' approach, His manner, and how He entered the conversation in *Luke 24:13–19*? Can you pick up the irony in their response to Jesus?

Why do you think Jesus led them on rather than reveal Himself immediately?

What stands out to you in the men's perspective of the week's events in *24:19–24*?

These men had no knowledge of God's plan in the Scriptures. Their viewpoint was all human. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Jesus Shed Light from the Scriptures—Luke 24:25–27

How did Jesus correct their misunderstanding of God's plan, according to *Luke 24:25–27*?

Christ's mission was to redeem individuals from sin, not to set Israel free. That will come when Jesus returns to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. The men missed God's redemptive purpose, and they missed God's awesome power in raising Jesus.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Men's Eyes Were Opened—Luke 24:28–35

How were the men's eyes opened, according to *Luke 24:28–31*?

What did the men do in their excitement, in *24:32–35*? What did they find out when they returned to the disciples?



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The men said, "It's real! Jesus has risen! It's true! It's true!" These were the same ones who, just hours earlier, were sad on the road to Emmaus, but now their perspective had changed.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: How Disciples Learn and Grow

Luke preserved this eyewitness account as evidence that Jesus really was alive and as an illustration of how disciples learn and grow. Let's take snapshots of these men *before and after* Jesus revealed Himself to them and learn from their faith-development process.

Growing Awareness of God's Sovereign Plan

Before. The two men had a limited perspective. What preoccupied Cleopas and his friend's thoughts, according to their report of recent events in [Luke 24:19–24](#)? Do you find any mention of God?

Like we often do, these disciples viewed life on the horizontal plane—people and events—not the vertical—God's plan. How did Jesus open their awareness of God's sovereign plan in [Luke 24:27](#)?



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After. When Jesus opened their eyes through the Scriptures, the disciples said that their hearts “burned within” them (Luke 24:32). Now, they saw God at work.

What principle can you write to capture the lesson? “When circumstances are confusing and seem out of control, Christ’s followers should”

In life, when things look like they are out of control, God’s predestined plan is running its course. If you doubt that, you’ll be sad and depressed. Remember that, and it will make all the difference in your perspective. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Growing Understanding of God’s Redemptive Purpose

Before. The two men had a political agenda. Their faulty assumptions distorted their view of Jesus. They saw Him as “a prophet who did powerful miracles” and a “mighty teacher,” hoping He was “the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel” (Luke 24:21).

How did Jesus explain God’s redemptive purpose for the messiah, according to [Luke 24:25–26](#)? Surely, Jesus quoted [Isaiah 53](#) for them.



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After. The two disciples saw Jesus clearly when they “recognized him as he was breaking bread” (Luke 24:35)—symbolically giving His body to them. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross suddenly made sense.

Write another principle: “Christ’s followers can adjust their faulty expectations by . . .”

We often come into situations with our own agenda. We have our plans and expectations, and we live our lives disappointed because we didn't get our way. Instead, live for whatever God wants and whatever God plans. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Growing Appreciation of God's Power

Before. The men put limits on God’s power. They heard the women’s story, but they couldn’t believe resurrection was possible. As a result, “sadness [was] written across their faces” (Luke 24:17).

After. But then, “their eyes were opened, and they recognized him” (24:31). They had a new appreciation of God’s power to raise the dead! Now the men couldn’t contain their excitement, so what did they do, according to [Luke 24:33–35](#)?



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Write a final principle: “Believing in the living Jesus emboldens His followers to . . .”

These men spoke of Christ and brought reassurance to their friends. They were now witnesses as a result of what they experienced. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Disciples Transformed

Skeptics who deny Christ's resurrection have a hard time explaining the before-and-after transformation in His followers. On the day Christ died, the disciples were frightened like deer running for their lives. But only a few days later, they were courageous as lions, witnessing and willing to die for their Master.

What recurring themes do you find in the disciples' bold messages? Read [Acts 2:22–24](#); [3:18](#); and [4:27–31](#).

What transformed these men and women? *They saw Jesus.*



Application: Learning from Jesus, Growing in Faith

Have you been stumbling down your road to Emmaus trying to make sense of a recent heartache, groping for answers, not able to see past a disappointed dream? It's a lonely road, but it's one on which Jesus meets us.



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How might Jesus be coming alongside you to help deepen your faith? Is He helping you to grow in your awareness of God's sovereign plan? In your understanding of God's redemptive purpose? In your appreciation of God's power? Look back at the principles you wrote down. Which one do you really need to cling to in your current circumstances?

What's the key to deeper, bolder, more resilient faith? The two disciples' experience on the road illustrate the answer—time with Jesus.

Spending time alone with Jesus opens our eyes and changes our perspectives.

Jesus can meet us on the mountaintop, but usually He meets us on the same old road we've travelled a thousand times, right where we already are. Below, write a reflective prayer in response to your time with Jesus through this study. Express your gratitude. Express what He has taught you. Express your needs and hopes.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father,

ENDNOTE

1. This sequence of events is based on the chart, "Forty Days—From Resurrection to Ascension," by Louis A. Barbieri, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 91).

