



07

SESSION SEVEN

The Emmaus Road

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, the risen King Jesus joined two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus. By taking a look at their conversation, we learn that the risen King draws near to His people in times of sorrow and confusion. We also see how all of Scripture is a testimony to Jesus Christ, who reveals Himself to those who trust Him. As witnesses to the risen King, we proclaim the Bible's grand story, which culminates in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:13-35

THE POINT

Jesus is the central focus of Scripture and our worship.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

In J. R. R. Tolkien's story, *The Two Towers*, Sam posed a question to his fellow hobbit, Frodo. Both had encountered wonders. Both had survived danger on their journey. As they traveled the perilous road to Mordor, Sam asked, "I wonder what sort of a tale we've fallen into?"¹

What a profound question! It must be similar to what Jesus' disciples wondered on the third day after His death. They were confused. They thought they were following a victorious king, but Jesus had been crucified as a criminal. Three days later, they heard an astounding report that suggested Jesus was alive. What kind of a tale had they fallen into?

Perhaps you ask a similar question: What kind of story do I belong to as a follower of Jesus Christ? This question haunts us when we face times of sorrow and confusion—especially as people in our community become more hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' death and resurrection stands in line with the great story of God working to redeem and restore His people to life in His presence, where true fullness and joy are found. This is the tale into which we, as followers of Jesus, have fallen!

- **People often think of life in terms of a story—with a beginning, middle, and end goal in mind. How does seeing ourselves within a story help us through times of sorrow and confusion?**

Option 2

We all have expectations. We have expectations concerning our families, our friends, our schools and the work we do there, our sports teams or clubs, our small groups, what we want for Christmas and birthdays, God, and so on. Gather students and ask the following:

- **When have you heard an idea or person described in a way that was completely different from what you found when you encountered that person or idea? Was it better or worse than what you expected?**

We don't quite know what to expect when our expectations meet reality. Sometimes things are worse than we expected, and sometimes they're better. Jesus' followers expected a conquering leader, the Messiah, but Jesus had died. It was the third day after His death, and they were still expecting something. What would they do next? In the midst of their confusion, Jesus met them (literally) on the road to Emmaus. They didn't recognize Him immediately. He didn't come to them as they expected, but He did come. And with Him being raised from death to life came the offer of a new life for all who believe in Him—one far better than anyone could have ever expected.

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

Jesus is the central focus of Scripture and our worship.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesus:** the eternal Son of God; second person of the Trinity
- **Cleopas:** one of the two travelers on the road to Emmaus who was approached by the resurrected Jesus

PLOT

The eyewitnesses to Jesus resurrection' continued to pile on. Jesus first revealed Himself to the women at the tomb. Then, on His way to meet the disciples in Galilee, He found an opportune time to reveal Himself to two more people as they were traveling to the town of Emmaus.

TIMELINE

HEARTS ON FIRE

All Scripture points to Jesus.

JESUS SENDS

The disciples witness the risen Christ and receive the peace He brings.

OVERCOMING DOUBTS

Thomas' doubts are satisfied when he sees and touches the risen Jesus.

JESUS ENCOUNTERED TWO DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

How often has our sorrow and confusion blinded us to the presence of Jesus? That's what happened to two travelers on the day Jesus was raised from the dead.

¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." (Luke 24:13-24)

Luke highlighted two travelers having a heated discussion about the events of the weekend—the arrest, trial, sentencing, and death of Jesus (v. 20). Jesus' crucifixion had shattered their dreams. And then, Jesus appeared.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

Luke gives us “insider information” that the two travelers did not know—that the identity of the man who joined them was Jesus (vv. 15- 16). The passive voice of the verb, “were prevented,” suggests that someone other than the disciples was responsible for their blindness. Presumably, Jesus looked similar after His resurrection as He did before. So, God supernaturally prevented their eyes from recognizing Him. They likely assumed this man was just another worshiper returning home from Jerusalem.

But why prevent them from recognizing Jesus? As New Testament scholar Darrell Bock says, “God still had things to teach them. ... Part of the drama is when and how they will realize who their discussion partner is.”²

JESUS EXPLAINED HOW ALL SCRIPTURE POINTS TO HIM

How did Jesus respond to the disciples as He walked with them to Emmaus? Take a look:

25 And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:25-27)

Jesus expressed disappointment that the two disciples failed to understand what the Scriptures said. The combination of “foolish” and “slow” suggests they were slow to accept by faith what the Scriptures taught about the Messiah.

The reference to Moses and other prophets referred to the Hebrew Bible—what Christians today refer to as the Old Testament. In Jesus’ day, the Old Testament was read as a story in search of a conclusion. The Jewish people in Jesus’ day were waiting for the last chapter in their story to begin. Essentially, Jesus said to Cleopas and the other disciple, “I am the one who brings the story to its completion. I am the focus of all the Scriptures.”

Our challenge, as disciples of Jesus Christ, is to read the Old Testament Scriptures in light of His death and resurrection. We can do this well by asking three questions every time we read a passage from the Old Testament.

First, ask: Does anything in this passage point directly to Jesus? A few places in the Old Testament speak directly about the coming Messiah, such as Genesis 49:10-12, Isaiah 9:6, and Micah 5:2, to name a few. Of course, direct prophecies of Jesus do not occur in every passage, but you will find them throughout the Old Testament.

Second, ask: Does anything in this passage foreshadow or anticipate Jesus? Sometimes the most powerful way to communicate is through subtlety. In addition to direct prophecies, the Old Testament foreshadows Jesus in subtle,

indirect ways. For example, knowing that the Gospel of Matthew begins by identifying Jesus as “the Son of David” and “the Son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1), we can look for ways that events in David and Abraham’s lives anticipate who Jesus is and what Jesus would do. Abraham’s “sacrifice” of Isaac in Genesis 22 foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus’s love for His enemies was indicated by David’s love for Mephibosheth—a potential enemy given that he was descendent of King Saul (2 Sam. 9; Rom. 5:8).

Third, ask: How does the gospel of Jesus shape my understanding of this passage? The Old Testament is full of wise sayings, principles, and commands. The Apostle Paul made it clear that these still have relevance for us as followers of Jesus Christ. However, we can only understand how these wise sayings, principles, and commands apply when we read them through the lens of Jesus’ life and teaching. He came to bring the Old Testament to its complete expression (Matt. 5:17).

JESUS MADE KNOWN HIS IDENTITY

Cleopas and the other disciple still did not know Jesus’ identity as they approached Emmaus. But that was about to change. Luke reported what happened next.

28 So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, 29 but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” 33 And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:28-35)

Imagine the men’s surprise when they discovered that the One whose explanation of Scripture set their hearts ablaze turned out to be their risen King! The text explains that the followers’ eyes were opened, and Jesus’ identity was made known to them. But as suddenly as Jesus’ identity was revealed, He vanished from their sight. Why did Jesus disappear when the two disciples finally recognized Him? It is likely that His disappearance created the opportunity for a meeting with the Eleven and the other disciples (Luke 24:36-49). His disappearance caused the two to return to Jerusalem and report what happened (vv. 33-35), setting the stage for Jesus’ dramatic appearance to them in the next to last scene of Luke’s Gospel.

- **What do you think the men meant when they said that their hearts were burning while they walked with Jesus? (p. 49, PSG)**

TIMELINE

FOLLOW ME

Jesus’ forgiveness and the call of every Christian.

AS YOU GO ...

Fulfilling the Great Commission wherever we are in life.

THE ASCENSION

Jesus promises to send His Spirit.

- **Why do you think Jesus made Himself known to them in this way? How would you respond if you were with these two men?** (p. 49, PSG)

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Illumination of Scripture (p. 50, PSG)

Because of the vast difference between God's wisdom and ours, and because of humanity's sinful state, human beings are incapable, on our own, of fully grasping spiritual truth without being aided by the Holy Spirit through the process of illumination. When it comes to understanding the meaning of God's Word, Christians do not ultimately rely upon human reason in the process of interpretation, and we do not rely solely upon an institution or body of scholars. Instead, a Christian's ultimate reliance is upon the work of the Spirit of God who illuminates the Scriptures in the heart and mind (Matt. 13:13-15; Mark 8:18).

CHRIST CONNECTION

On the road to Emmaus, the risen Jesus explained how the Old Testament Scriptures pointed forward to His suffering and glory. Like the disciples, we read the whole Bible in light of Christ's death and resurrection, focusing our attention on the gospel that lies at the heart of God's written Word to us.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why does God allow us to endure times of sorrow and confusion? How does it affect us to know that He is with us, even if He seems hidden or disguised?** *There's no question that the disciples were extremely upset and sorrowful over the weekend's events. Furthermore, even in knowing their sorrow and confusion, Jesus still decided to prevent them from recognizing Him (at least for a short while) in order for them to learn certain things first. This time of heartache was a teachable moment for them and can be for us as well. Whatever our circumstances, we can be sure of the fact that Jesus will never leave nor abandon us.*
- **How has God used His Word and His people to remind you of Jesus' presence when you have faced distressing situations?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Consider some of the famous stories in the Old Testament. In what ways do they point to Christ? Why is it important to see Bible stories in their relation to Christ?** *Answers will vary.*
- **How does this story highlight the importance of personal devotion time in the Word?** *The disciples commented that their hearts were "burning" as a result of Jesus talking to them about the Scriptures. Being able to connect the dots of Scripture and understand how it all fits together is incredibly rewarding, which is why constantly being in the Word and praying are so important.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

The mission God has given to us is not to present the Bible as a book of virtues or as a moral improvement program. Our mission is to introduce people to the risen King who came to redeem, restore, and reconcile people to God. When Jesus makes Himself known to us, He makes God known to us. As John 1:18 says, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”

- **Why is it important to not primarily see the Bible as a big book of good behaviors we should live by, but instead as God’s story of saving humanity through His Son?** *There are commands and principles we are called to live by in Scripture. However, the call to live a certain way is always a result of first knowing Jesus and being changed by Him.*
- **If Jesus makes God known to us, and if the Bible is the best means to learn about Jesus and His teaching, then what is ultimately at stake if we neglect the Scriptures?** *The obvious conclusion is that we are at risk of not knowing God if we neglect His Word. His Word has been given for our benefit and is the primary means the Holy Spirit uses to reveal Christ.*



HEART

These disciples rightly captured what happens when we correctly understand the Bible when they said, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). For the disciples and countless Christians over the centuries, understanding the Bible and seeing how all of the stories and events point to Jesus sets our hearts on fire, creating a love and passion for the Word and a hunger for more of it.

- **Share about a time when, like the disciples, the Word stirred your heart.** *Answers will vary.*
- **What are some ways you can cultivate a passion and hunger for God’s Word in your own life?** *Having a consistent devotional time in the Word (reading contributes to more reading), listening to good sermons, reading good books about the Bible from credible authors, and so on.*



HANDS

Note how the disciples on the road to Emmaus quickly went to share the good news of Jesus’ resurrection. An encounter with Jesus is not meant to be kept secret. It leads to mission. When Jesus reveals Himself to us, He expects us to spread His glory and fame through our witness to others.

- **Why was it natural for these two disciples to share the news of Jesus’ resurrection?** *Answers will vary.*
- **What can help our evangelism feel more natural?** *Answers will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, refer students to pack item #9, which contains an artistic biblical timeline. The timeline highlights how all of Scripture points to Christ and what He accomplished through His death and resurrection.

SOURCES

1. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers: Being the Second Part of The Lord of the Rings* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966), 362.
2. Darrell L. Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke, Vol. 2, 9:51-24:53* (Ada: Baker Academic, 1996), 1910.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPRisenFAL17)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for **free online training** on how to lead a group visit
MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject