

## Easter Lesson

# A Heartwarming Conversation

### MAIN IDEA

Jesus explained the Scriptures to two of his followers on his resurrection day.

### QUESTION TO EXPLORE

How does the risen Christ want to communicate with us about his word?

### TEACHING AIM

To lead adults to rejoice in the risen Christ and to seek his guidance in understanding his word



## Bible Comments

### Understanding the Context

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Luke 24 both proclaims (24:1–12) and interprets (24:13–35) Jesus’ resurrection. Women had ventured to the tomb on Sunday morning to anoint Jesus’ body. They discovered upon arriving the stone that sealed the tomb’s entrance was rolled away, and Jesus was not there. Two angels announced Jesus had risen as he had promised during his Galilean ministry (Luke 9:22; 18:32–33). The women remembered his words and returned to report to the apostles what they had seen and heard. Although the eleven were skeptical of the women’s story, Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself. The body indeed was gone.

The Gospels recount the events surrounding Jesus’ resurrection differently. Harmonizing the accounts has proved elusive. When I long for more uniformity in the reports, I remember that unique and diverse narratives offer a breadth of explanation that a single story cannot produce. Distinct, but similar, these accounts also strengthen the value of the witnesses, suggesting that early Christians were viewing the same story through their personal experiences. They did not worry about harmonizing the details to prove the resurrection.

Each Gospel evangelist focused on a particular theme. Matthew emphasized Jesus’ appearances in Galilee, ending with his commission to take the gospel to all nations. John stressed the impact on individuals: Mary Magdalene, the “beloved disciple,” Thomas, and Peter. Mark mentioned the empty tomb but no resurrection appearances. Luke highlighted Jesus’ instruction to the disciples regarding the significance of his death, both in this lesson’s text as well as in Acts 1:1–5. Luke also noted the doubt of some disciples that Jesus had resurrected, sometimes even after he had appeared to them (see Luke 24:11, 21–25, 37–38, 41).

The length of the account of the Emmaus road episode indicates Luke deemed it important. In these verses, Jesus explained the purpose of his death in the context of his life and God’s plan and promise as revealed in the

Old Testament. What the two persons on the road were experiencing was, likely, the same thoughts and struggles of all of Jesus' followers.<sup>1</sup>

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## Interpreting the Scriptures

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### A Stranger Joins Two Disciples Journeying to Emmaus (24:13–16)

**24:13.** Luke offered an extended account of two of Jesus' disciples who were disturbed by the events of the day. Only one of the two (Cleopas) was identified (24:18). The men were heading to the village of Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. The precise location of this village cannot be documented with any certainty. We know it was within several hours walking distance from Jerusalem. Luke used the word “now” to introduce something new and important in his narrative.

**24:14–16.** As the two men walked, they discussed the events of that day, trying to make sense of some strange incidents (“all these things that had happened”). During their conversation, Jesus approached and joined them. Luke stressed the fact that it was Jesus. The words “Jesus himself” are emphatic. The two men did not recognize Jesus. One possible reason they did not immediately recognize Jesus was their deep engagement in their conversation. They may have only glanced at the stranger because they were engrossed in their dialogue. Jesus appears to have said nothing at the time. He merely accompanied and listened to them.

The reason “their eyes were kept from recognizing him” is not stated. Was it the time of the day when the sun was in their eyes? Was it because Jesus had been crucified and was dead, and they had no expectation he would appear? Perhaps it was because they lacked the faith God could raise Jesus? Or, in some unexplained and unique way, did God prevent them from recognizing Jesus until he had explained what the Scriptures taught about his life, death, and resurrection? The latter hypothesis offers the best explanation, though it does not exclude the others.

## The Pair Describe their Distress (24:17–24)

**24:17.** Jesus finally spoke and asked them what they were discussing. The word “discussing” suggests great animation and engagement. They stopped and looked at him with sadness in their eyes.

**24:18.** Cleopas responded, astonished their traveling companion knew nothing about the events that had occurred or were rumored to have happened in Jerusalem. The duo assumed he must have been a visitor to the city. Many Jews had crowded into Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Many surely knew the Jewish authorities had arrested Jesus, and Pilate had ordered the popular Jewish rabbi executed. Jesus was so important to the pair they could not imagine someone being ignorant of the events surrounding his death.

**24:19–21a.** When Jesus asked them “What things,” they launched into a summary of Jesus’ work. They identified Jesus as one who came from Nazareth. He had performed mighty works and proclaimed with great power the word that came from God. Despite his miracles and teachings, Jewish leaders (“chief priests and leaders”) arrested and tried Jesus. Then they persuaded the Roman governor Pilate to crucify him.

The pair explained they “had hoped” (an emphatic verb) he would be the Messiah (“the one to redeem Israel”). Many Jews of that day believed the Messiah would reveal himself at the Passover feast to deliver Israel from its enemies. The emphatic tense of the word “hope” suggests an ongoing process, a constant practice. Their longing had been crushed by his crucifixion three days earlier.

**24:21b–24.** Also, the two disciples were perplexed because some women followers of Jesus had reported his body was missing from the tomb. The women explained that angels told them Jesus was alive. Then the two travelers told the stranger what the reader already knows, that some of the disciples went to the tomb but did not see Jesus (24:12). In the phrase “did not see him,” the pronoun “him” is emphasized. To this point in Luke’s account, the resurrected Jesus has not appeared. Luke was building suspense into his story.

## The Stranger (Jesus) Explains Scripture (24:25–27)

**24:25.** At this point, Jesus responded somewhat harshly and took control of the conversation. He may have been disappointed in their failing to recall what he had taught them. He called them “foolish” for they had failed to think thoroughly through the situation. They had neglected to think through the Hebrew Scriptures, which would have explained the strange reports they were hearing. Reflecting on and believing the teachings of Scripture would have provided the two disciples with the resolution they sought. The verse may also suggest part of their problem was a lack of faith.

**24:26.** Jesus continued, pointing out how the Scriptures taught that the Messiah would suffer. This suffering was necessary for him to enter his glory. The statement, “it is necessary” is translated in various ways and is frequently used in Luke’s Gospel (2:49; 4:43; 15:32; 19:5; 24:7).

**24:27.** Jesus continued to instruct the two men regarding the Old Testament scriptures. Luke named no specific texts. He did note the teachings came from Moses and the prophets. These two terms were often used to refer to the entire Hebrew Scriptures. To make this even clearer, Luke added the phrase “in all the Scriptures,” perhaps because the two travelers, followers of Jesus and familiar with the Old Testament, were so distraught they had not applied the Hebrew Scriptures to the circumstances surrounding his death.

## The Pair Recognize the Stranger as Jesus (24:28–35)

**24:28–29.** When the two men reached their home, Jesus appeared ready to continue his journey. But they “urged” him to stay the night with them. They compelled him to stay, perhaps because of the conversation, but also because of the importance and expectation of offering hospitality to strangers. Luke used the same verb in Acts 16:15, where he reported Lydia urged Paul and Timothy to stay with her family in Philippi after her conversion.

**24:30–32.** When the trio sat down to eat, Jesus “took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.” These words are nearly identical to those Luke

used to describe the Last Supper (22:19). Luke wanted his readers to see the meal at Emmaus as linked to Jesus' final meal with his disciples.

The duo recognized Jesus as he broke the bread. The words suggest a full recognition and belief that he was alive. Whatever had prevented recognition previously had now disappeared. Jesus then vanished; however, his appearance had served its purpose: his followers believed he was alive.

They realized then what they had not recognized earlier, that they were absorbed with Jesus' words ("were not our hearts burning"). The term "burning" suggests a warm, inner glow. Perhaps his explanation renewed their hope that he was the Messiah. Perhaps subconsciously they began to recover the hope they had lost. They recognized Jesus as the anointed one as he had entered his glory through his suffering.

**24:33–35.** The pair arose and hurried back to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven and others gathered with them. Before the two could share their story, the Jerusalem disciples reported Peter ("Simon") had seen the resurrected Jesus. Then Cleopas and his companion related to those gathered all that had happened to them. In their report, Luke again emphasized the importance of the breaking of bread as the point at which they recognized the stranger as Jesus.

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### Focusing on the Meaning

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The Emmaus story is our story. The mystery of the story—only one of the two travelers on the road was named; the uncertain location of Emmaus—encourages us. The story is appropriate to any Christian, anywhere.

Listening to the conversations of troubled Christians is important. Jesus walked and listened while the two talked about strange and tragic events. They struggled to make sense of it all. It is fair to say after Jesus had heard their concerns, he was better able to respond with words that addressed their struggles.

God's raising of Jesus from the dead demonstrated suffering and service as God's path to life in this world. Jesus reversed the world's concept of honor. To be honored is to be esteemed by others. Our society reveres those who are marked by success. Jesus, the Messiah, died a shameful death, but

his suffering was the necessary means by which he would achieve glory. God works in ways beyond our understanding.

The resurrected Jesus comes to us to encourage and instruct. Like the two travelers to Emmaus, we can become discouraged. Our world mirrors the violence of Jesus' day that led to his execution. Jesus may seem absent from our efforts and struggles. But just as he spoke to the two on the Emmaus road, he talks to us. He reminds us the Scriptures teach how glory arises from suffering. When we break bread in fellowship, whether in homes or by observing the Lord's Supper in congregations, Jesus brings us together in communion with him and others.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect with Life

1. Before the session, find and print two or three case studies of people who became famous for escapes from prisons or concentration camps (John Dillinger, Choi Gap-Bok, Frank Abagnale, Alfred Wetzler). Here is one example. (A copy of this story is available in Teaching Resource Items for this study at [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org).)

John (Jack) Sheppard was a petty thief in eighteenth-century London. He was first arrested at age 22 in April 1724 but quickly escaped from jail. The following month he was apprehended and put into a stronger lockup but escaped by picking the padlocks on his chains, breaking some bars, climbing down one wall, and scaling another. In July an informant turned him in, and he was confined to an even more secure prison. This time, his girlfriend smuggled in a file that enabled him to escape yet again. When the law caught him in September, he was taken to the strongest part of Newgate Prison and chained to the floor. Sheppard somehow broke the chains, wrenched a security bar from the chimney and used it to climb the chimney, force the bolts from two doors, and smash through the roof. He returned to his cell to retrieve a blanket that he used as a rope to lower himself from the roof to the ground. When he was finally caught and hanged in November of that year, he had become such a folk hero that over 200,000 people crowded in to watch his execution, effectively blocking the group of friends who had planned his rescue.<sup>2</sup>

2. Distribute printed case studies to volunteers to read aloud. Discuss characteristics that some escapees have had in common. Ask, *Why is public imagination stirred by successful escapes, such as those featured in literature and film?*
3. Transition into Bible study by saying, *Jesus did not escape from his tomb using force or subterfuge. His resurrection was based solely on the power and authority of God.*

## Guide Bible Study

4. Working in groups of three to six (small classes may work as one group), read through Luke 24:1–8 and list in order all the actions that took place (women took prepared spices; went to the tomb; found the stone rolled away; entered the tomb; did not find body, and so forth). Instruct groups to use the list of actions to create a short monologue from one woman's perspective which describes her experience on resurrection morning. Depending on class size, have all or some of the groups read their monologues aloud. Discuss the women's reactions to Jesus' resurrection.
5. Ask everyone to read Luke 24:13–35 silently. The week before the session, enlist four volunteers to perform a dramatic interpretation of the passage. One person will read the narration. Using their open Bibles, those taking the roles of the two disciples and Jesus will pantomime the actions in the narration and speak the dialog portions. (A copy of this passage to be used as a script is available in Teaching Resource Items for this study at [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org).)
6. Follow the dramatic interpretation by discussing *Study Guide* "Questions" one through three.
7. Say, *Old Testament law dictates the truth of a matter shall be established on the testimony of two or more witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). When Jesus was speaking to the two followers on the Emmaus road, he was one witness to the truth of his resurrection. Ask, What served as the second witness to Christ's true identity? (Luke 24:27)*

## Encourage Application

8. Say, *Every believer has escaped the chains of eternal death, not by our power or ingenuity, but by Christ's death and resurrection.* Keeping that truth in mind, have small groups discuss questions four, five, and six from the *Study Guide*.
9. Close the session with a corporate prayer of thanksgiving and praise.

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect with Life

1. Say, *Pop culture has produced dozens of literary, comic book, and movie heroes with secret identities.* Ask the class to name a few of these heroes. Explain that the Scarlet Pimpernel, created in 1905 by Emma Orczy, was the forerunner of all these heroes. In her book, Sir Percy Blakeney presented himself as a dull-witted English nobleman. In reality, he was a brilliant strategist and swordsman. Using masterful disguises, Sir Percy saved aristocrats' families from the guillotine during the French Revolution. Later, Orczy's Pimpernel served as a model for Johnston McCulley's Zorro, a character who first appeared in McCulley's 1919 novella *The Curse of Capistrano*.
2. Ask, *Why are some people fascinated by the idea of heroes in disguise?* Discuss the purpose of disguises and secret identities.
3. Transition into Bible study by saying, *Jesus wore no disguise after his resurrection, but his identity was at first hidden from his followers.*

### Guide Bible Study

4. Ask class members to recall what they know of Jesus' burial after his crucifixion. (Refer to information found in the *Study Guide*).
5. Recruit a volunteer to read aloud Luke 24:1–3. Discuss the women's reasons for visiting the tomb and their expectations for what they would find there. Ask, *What might their first thoughts have been upon discovering the empty tomb?*
6. Read Luke 24:4–8 aloud. Discuss why Jesus' disciples were so confused when he warned them of his death and resurrection. Ask two volunteers to read aloud Matthew 17:22–23 and Mark 9:31–32. Discuss possible obstacles to the disciples' understanding when Jesus tried to prepare them for his death. Consider the first question in the "Questions" section of the *Study Guide*.

7. Ask the class to read Luke 24:13–35 in round-robin style, each person reading one or more verses as they are willing. Assuming the unnamed disciple was Cleopas's wife or another close relative, refer to the comments in the *Study Guide* and ask the class to suggest a possible transcript of the disciples' conversation as they walked.
8. Ask, *Why did Jesus, known for love and compassion, rebuke the two disciples for their lack of faith when they were grappling with shock and grief?* Allow time for response.
9. Discuss why Jesus revisited prophetic Scriptures about himself instead of revealing himself directly. Read aloud Isaiah 53:3–7, 10–12. Ask, *What details of Christ's death and resurrection does this passage identify?*
10. Ask, *Why did the disciples finally recognize Jesus when he broke bread in their home?* Discuss their reaction when they realized who Jesus was and realized he was alive. Discuss question five from the list of questions in the *Study Guide*.

## Encourage Application

11. Enlist volunteers willing to share the best news they ever received. Ask them to describe their reactions and whether they passed on the news to anyone else. Ask, *Did anyone doubt the truth of your news when you shared it?*
12. Say, *Christians know the best news in the world: Jesus Christ died and rose again to provide forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God.* Ask, *Do you know someone who doubts the truth of that news? Do you know someone who believes and accepts the truth of salvation through Christ, but the joy of that salvation is not evident in his or her life? Say, Christians can't expect unbelievers to accept the gospel truth if we treat it casually.*
13. Close with prayer and praise.

**Notes**

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1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in this lesson are from the New Revised Standard Version.
2. <http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/The-Amazing-Escapes-of-Jack-Sheppard/>. Accessed 11/9/16.  
Go to <http://www.newsday.com/news/nation/prison-escapes-in-the-u-s-most-famous-include-john-dillinger-david-sweat-and-richard-matt-1.10519506> for more famous prison escapes.