

“Was It Not Necessary?”  
Luke 24:13–35  
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What is the best real life story you can tell? I’m not a big joke person but I love to hear stories that really happened. There’s a couple I know that I’ve heard their engagement story which takes about an hour and half to tell and it’s a great story. At the end of it I wanted to ask a question and depending on which one of them you are talking to you can get a different perspective. The question was ‘from the time you got out of the car and got back into the car, how much time passed?’ One of them would say ‘maybe 15 minutes’ yet it’s an hour and a half story. I didn’t know you could measure the wind blowing and the mood of the wind blowing across the rocks when you’re on your knee.

One of the things I get convicted about is when at times I feel I can know too many details about something yet when I get to something like Holy Week, every year without exception I’m convicted that I should know the details of Holy Week better. It’s like I’m reminded about things I didn’t remember as I get into the Holy Week devotional so one of the things I’ve tried to do over the years is to just take a piece of that story.

Imagine that all of Holy Week is laid out before us and go scene by scene. You would certainly want to look at the death of Lazarus and him being raised from the dead because that triggers a lot of what will take place right after that. Then there is Palm Sunday and there is a blessing in that. Pick any day of that week and study it. Then the insight and understanding gained from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday and studying the seven last words of Christ. Work your way through all the appearances of Christ after His resurrection and then the ascension. Most of these in any one act are probably one or two chapters at the most in the Gospels, so go through all of them and build your understanding of Holy Week. This past week the staff took all the passages that referenced the Garden of Gethsemane and deciphered what we could learn from that.

In this study we are going to look at the road to Emmaus. This one is pretty easy because there is only one Gospel that gives us this account so we don’t have to harmonize with the other Gospels to put this together. In this study I want us to get a better understanding of what actually took place on that road to Emmaus. This is an interesting example of Jesus appearing to two disciples and them not recognizing Him.

How many of you would remember Christmas Day of December 1983 in Alabama? What if I told you it was the coldest day in the history of Alabama for it was 2 degrees that day. My brother and I used to get tickets to what was known as the Blue Gray game. It was a bowl game in Montgomery that was an all-star type game. We wanted to go and this game was on Christmas Day for we celebrated Christmas as a family more on Christmas Eve. We get in the car to go and a little ways into the trip we see this guy walking on the side of the road with a piece of a blanket so we pulled over and found out he had slept outside the night before. He looked frozen but he got in the car and didn’t talk for about 30 minutes because he couldn’t. We gave him some hot chocolate and food. Then we got into this conversation with him. He was in his early to mid 50s, lived a bit of a rough life, was headed to Florida so he would take a ride to Montgomery in a heartbeat.

We began talking sports with him and he starts telling us this story about him playing on this little basketball team in Indiana. It seemed that every team in Indiana no matter how big or

small the team they all entered the same tournament. He told us about his small high school team going to the state championship after beating this really big high school team and it was a pretty cool story. We let him out in Montgomery as we gave him the rest of our food and then we go to the game. The only reason we stayed at the game was because they were giving a car away at the end as we were freezing to death hoping we would win it. We did not win it and so we came back.

Now fast forward about three or four years. I'm playing football at Samford University and a group of guys say 'hey let's go see a movie.' It's a sport movie about a little basketball team in Indiana and they win the state championship against a great basketball team. About a third of the way through the movie I'm thinking I know the character of Jimmy because it was the guy we picked up on the road several years back. I was shocked so as soon as I get out of there I go call my brother and tell him he has to go see the movie Hoosiers. I didn't tell him about it and he goes to see the movie and right after he saw it he calls me and says 'You've got to be kidding me, that guy was in our car!' This man we picked up played on this team, now neither one of us can remember which one he was but it was amazing to see this story coming back together.

To some degree this is what happens with the disciples that have this encounter with Jesus Himself only to find out later at the very end of it, who He actually is. So let's look at this passage in Luke 24. So far in context we know that Mary, the women, Peter and John have all gone to the tomb. Luke 24:13–36 which says [13] *Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. [14] They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. [15] As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them; [16] but they were kept from recognizing Him.*

[17] *He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup> One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" [19] "What things?" He asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. [20] The chief priests and our rulers handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him; [21] but we had hoped that He was the One who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. [22] In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning [23] but didn't find His body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said He was alive. [24] Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."*

[25] *He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! [26] Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" [27] And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.*

[28] *As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. [29] But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So He went in to stay with them.*

[30] *When He was at the table with them, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. [31] Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, and He disappeared from their sight. [32] They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"*

*[33] They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together [34] and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." [35] Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when He broke the bread. [36] While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

In terms of studying a passage like this concerning Jesus, I approach this passage like a disciple. In other words, I want to learn everything I can from this passage in order to faithfully handle this passage with other people, whether it just be a friend or someone I'm discipling or whoever so I would approach a passage like this from three different vantage points, perspectives.

First of all, is approaching this as an observer. This is where you are putting yourself at the feet of the narrators as a listener. In this case, the narrator is Luke. So as an observer I want to receive the story and make some observations that are general. I want to put the story in context so that I will interpret it correctly.

Secondly, I want to understand this story as a recipient. In other words, Jesus Himself is in this story and He is talking directly to people so I am going to put myself into the shoes of the disciples He is talking to, because I know that if Jesus is talking I need to learn something from what He is saying. I want to understand what Jesus is saying to me in this passage.

Thirdly, I want to approach this story as an apprentice. Now I'm going to put myself in Jesus' shoes because as a follower of Christ He is not only telling us knowledge, He is modeling for us how we're to behave. So how Jesus deals with people is Him being a model where He is teaching us what we should do so I want to approach it as an apprentice. That is what we'll be doing in this study. I will do three basic observations from each one.

So as an observer I want to hear and understand the context of the story so Luke lays it out and he points out some things in the story that can help us. Luke says that two of the disciples are walking to Emmaus and one of them is named Cleopas. What does this remind us of? It reminds us of something that often times we forget and that is that there are more than twelve disciples. We have a hard time putting into a category or context anything beyond the twelve. How do I know this proves out there are more disciples? One of the reasons is that none of the eleven (Judas Iscariot is dead/betrayer) are named Cleopas so clearly this is someone outside the eleven but very much closely connected with Jesus. After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus chose to reveal Himself to Mary and then Cleopas and an unnamed disciple.

This isn't unique because think about when Jesus was born. Because He chooses a group of people who will be the heralds who go and tell about His birth and this group of people are the shepherds. God/Jesus is doing this intentionally and one of the reasons He is doing this is because He doesn't want you to be able to say 'well, I'm not Peter or Luke' but you can be a Cleopas. The only thing we know about Cleopas is his name. So this person can be anybody that God would use because He is not looking for the right person to use, but He's looking to use people and make them the right person. God chooses Cleopas and we know there are more than twelve disciples. There is another reference where Jesus is sending out the 72 in pairs in Luke 10 which is a larger group of disciples. In Acts there is a reference to the 120 followers of Jesus that are a part of the body. Then there is the appearing to over 500 who are referred to as brothers so we can conclude that there are these different groups. Even within the twelve there is the three.

Luke then points out the town that the two disciples are going to is Emmaus. We don't really know much about Emmaus nor are we told why they are going to Emmaus. We could

guess at a number of things like perhaps that's where they are from and we know they clearly have a place to stay there but we're not told it's their place, but Emmaus is a destination for them. We also are told that Emmaus is a seven mile walk from Jerusalem. If it's a seven mile walk it's roughly a two hour walk and they get there just before dark then we know they are leaving somewhere in the mid to late afternoon. We also know they heard from Mary and Peter early in the morning because those events started at dawn. So I would suggest that this is an ongoing conversation between these two about what took place earlier in the day. I think that Cleopas and the unnamed disciple concluded from those extended conversations that it seemed like an idle tale to the disciples.

I would guess it took them longer than two hours to get there because along the way they get taught the Scriptures. On one occasion it says they stood still and listened, but I would say they got back to Jerusalem a lot faster because they needed to tell what had happened. Luke tells us they were kept from recognizing Jesus and that's important. It wasn't just that they were slow to believe for they were but they were Divinely kept from recognizing Jesus. The same had happened to Mary as well so in God's purposes He kept them from recognizing Him until the right time. So we can conclude that God is that sovereign and that as we pray and minister to people that part of our objective is to ask God to allow them to see Jesus, because it will take the work of the Spirit to see that.

Now let's play the recipient and put ourselves in the sandals of these two disciples. They have had one incredible week and have experienced some incredible things. Their mindset is very important for us to understand this story. They would certainly know about Lazarus being raised from the dead, Jesus going into the triumphal entry and we concluded that they believe Jesus going into the city from the triumphal entry was about Jesus redeeming Israel and in a short five days it all came crashing down. So they misinterpreted Him going into Jerusalem. It fit what they wanted Jesus to be defined by but it didn't fit what Jesus was doing. Jesus was redeeming Israel but just not their way. They looked at in a more political way that Israel would be free out from under Roman control. They watch all the events unfold from the trials, the crucifixion and even what they found out the morning of this day.

We also know they acknowledge that it's been the third day and that's not saying it happened three days ago. They are giving significance to that because they know what had been said and have been debating that morning with the women, Peter and John about Jesus saying He was going to rise on the third day. We know that John believed when he saw the empty tomb. The women believed and were reminded by the angels and Jesus Himself that He had risen just as He said. Put that testimony in the room with the rest of the disciples and yet the rest of the disciples don't believe it and think it's an idle tale. These two disciples walking on the road heard the testimony so why is it that they still don't believe? Even though they have heard these eye witnesses, they have not seen Jesus and because of that then they can't believe. We may not be letting Thomas off the hook but it's getting to be a crowded room for these two are in the exact same place Thomas is in – I'm not going to believe it until I see His body.

Here are a few observations about the recipients of the story. One, I believe they have a messed up world and life view which makes what they are trying to process wrong. They have not only been in a good church but the best church ever, with the best pastor ever, Jesus Himself, yet they have missed it. They are hearing not good teaching or great teaching but the Truth but they don't get it because their preference is for Israel the nation to be redeemed. They call Jesus the great Prophet for they have seen Him heal people, raise people from the dead, heard His preaching but they make their own conclusions. This is the great work of Satan. Satan is

masterful at simply taking the right, pure truth and just twisting it. It's like when you're in a Bible study and someone refers to a nation and another person assumes they are talking about America. What is happening is, we are hearing and reading something and we have a filter which is where things get interpreted from and perhaps at that time the person wanted the nation to be America. These disciples wanted Israel to be the one redeemed.

Once again, they are not the only ones who feel and think this way. We even see this in Acts 1 where the disciples are talking to Jesus right before He is about to ascend and they say in Acts 1:6, [6] *So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* They have the same question as these two disciples but Jesus fixed these two disciples views. Jesus responds to this group in Acts 1:7–8 which says [7] *He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. This is a very polite way of saying that this was none of their business. [8] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* I would bet that after He told them the Holy Spirit would come upon them that many thought He would conclude it by saying 'and you will lead the redemption of Israel.'

They had the wrong perspective, the wrong view of Jesus, the wrong world and life view and they needed that world and life view fixed. They just needed a tweak and they aren't evil people for having this view, they were just misinterpreting what God's agenda is, but because of that misinterpretation they missed Jesus' greatest act. They misinterpreted what actually took place for Jesus did redeem Israel but He also redeemed all of mankind. This was something much greater than the oppression that Israel was under for it was the oppression that all of mankind is under due to sin. Their world view was so messed up that I would describe their perspective as 'my will be done, not Thy will be done.' They wouldn't articulate that but that is really what they want. They wanted Him to work it out the way they think it should be.

It's easy to get the wrong perspective about Jesus. It's easy to think one of Jesus' main purposes is to make me happy and answer my prayer requests the way I think they should be answered, to reveal to everyone else that I'm right. We can all fall into this trap to think that Jesus is to redeem our church, our community, our nation. It's easy to fall into these traps to not understand the true mission that He is on.

The second observation I would make about the recipients is they say to each other 'did not our hearts burn?' They don't know actually what they are saying. They answer is that yes their hearts did burn and so do ours because that's the work of the Holy Spirit. I don't like it when people say 'I knew it was Jesus but I didn't say anything.' Those people drive me crazy. As the Word is put before us and Christ communicates to us, the Holy Spirit does that work in our hearts. Are we not convicted by the Word or the Holy Spirit? Didn't Christ actually tell them that this was good? Which would you rather have – walk on the road seven miles with Jesus Himself or you can have the Holy Spirit living in your heart? Please choose the Holy Spirit because Jesus made that decision for you.

Jesus said in John 16:7 [7] *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.* We would end up saying to Him just what the disciples said in that it would not be good for Him to go away. We have the opportunity with the Holy Spirit for Him to remind us of all truth and to open our mind to understand the Scriptures. So just as Jesus did for those two on the road the Holy Spirit does to us day in and day out. We don't have to find Him on the road to Emmaus for we walk with the Spirit daily.

The third observation from the recipients is they finally use the word, indeed. When these two finally met Jesus they go back and tell the other disciples, 'He is risen indeed' to which Peter, John and Mary said 'I know' but the others said 'are you sure?' because they had not seen Jesus. Now it will be a few moments from then that Jesus will show up amongst them and they will embrace the statement 'He is risen indeed' for it is saying that it is true. Indeed says that it is true, you can bank on it, count on it and build your life around it no matter what.

Now how would we look at this from the vantage point of an apprentice or a disciple – someone wanting to mimic Jesus? So we put ourselves in Jesus' shoes to try to understand what He was going through. Jesus has done all that He said He was going to do, exactly the way He said He was going to do it, the way it has been prophesied for thousands of years and now He appears to these two disciples on the road to Emmaus and they don't get it. They have been with Him but have completely misunderstood. I confess I do not like being misunderstood for this drives me crazy. I'm sure there are many others who feel the same way. I get frustrated with people who don't know me, misunderstand me and take me out of context but it's even more frustrating when it's someone I'm close to or knows me fairly well. Knowing that, Jesus is going to interact with people who don't get it and misunderstand everything He said and did.

So how does Jesus respond to the people who misunderstood Him? He drew near and walked with them. Ponder that for a week. He knew they didn't get it. He knew they wanted Him to be and do something different than what He did and yet He ministered to them. He came along side of them. He didn't rebuke them. He did tell them they were foolish and needed to learn but then He taught them. We have to see people the way Jesus did. We have to try and understand them, come along side of them, minister to them and not see them as the enemy or the opposition. Remember these are people who have messed up world and life view. They may be misinterpreting the Scripture but it's because they are entangled. They aren't the enemy.

So, we need to draw near to them and walk with them, but it's not just due to the fact we don't know when they will begin to understand truth. The second thing Jesus did was He shared the Gospel with them. When did He share the Gospel with them? Jesus says in Luke 24:26, *[26] Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?* This was necessary to happen and this is Christ going to the cross. Through this He was able to reveal to them what was necessary for Christ and for them as it relates to Christ.

Going back to the story I told at the beginning of picking up that man on the side of the road, the most compelling story that came from that hour and a half drive was a story about a basketball team winning a state championship in Indiana and it wasn't the Gospel. Why not? It was because we failed, we missed the opportunity to share the Gospel. We gave the man a coat and fed him and gave him an hour and a half ride. We loved on him but we didn't give him the Gospel. I'm sure he felt somewhat better and appreciated the ride but we let the most compelling story to come out of the ride be about a basketball team from Indiana. Who could possibly care about a basketball team from Indiana when we had the opportunity to say 'do you know Jesus? Do you know why two young guys would stop and pick you up and take you to Montgomery? It's not for our credit but it's for Jesus.' We failed there but I wish I could also say that was the last time I missed an opportunity to tell someone about Jesus. So many times I miss the opportunity to share the Gospel with people and I let some useless conversation be the compelling essence of the talk rather than the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The third thing Jesus did with the two disciples is that He interpreted the Scriptures to them concerning Himself. I love that and I would love the notes from that conversation. This was the original finding Jesus in the Old Testament study as Jesus Himself gave it to them. I can

only imagine what He told them about Isaiah 53 that is about His trial, crucifixion, the piercing, the burial and resurrection and them think, ‘wow all that just happened and it’s about Christ’ yet He still didn’t reveal Himself to be Christ but He revealed Christ to them. Many times we are tempted to need another mechanism to share the Gospel with someone but whatever we use, make sure it’s 98 percent Gospel, Bible, Scripture, Truth, because that is the power.

Someone said this to me while sharing a prayer request; ‘Bruce, I’ve shared the Gospel with my granddaughter multiple times and I’m not sure what to do because I don’t want to beat her over the head with the Bible.’ If you mean that literally then please don’t do it. Send her a verse every day. Don’t ever stop putting Scripture before her for that is the power the Spirit will use in their life.

In conclusion, what about our road to Emmaus? In many respects we are continually on the road to Emmaus in that we continually need to be recalibrated. We all have tweaked world and life views. It’s easy for the culture to tweak our world and life view, for our preference to come out in what we want Jesus to do so we need to walk with Jesus for a while. We need for the Holy Spirit to take the Scripture and interpret them to us and 99 percent of the time that will probably be us opening the Bible, immersing ourselves in Scripture to gain insight, even in the context of preaching, teaching, small groups and Bible studies. We need to pray that our eyes are opened. Pray ‘Lord, what am I slow to believe? What am I being foolish about? What am I holding onto stubbornly that would be a blind spot?’ If there is a blind spot in your perspective or world view what almost always has to happen is, you have to listen to someone else.

I had someone tell me I had a blind spot and I said to him, ‘Well, what is it?’ He responded ‘I’m not going to tell you.’ I said ‘I don’t know what to do for how can I know what I don’t know? You have to tell me what my blind spot is.’ He said ‘No, you should know.’ ‘Then, I’ll have to go ask the pastor.’ ‘He won’t know.’ ‘Are you the only one that knows what my blind spot is?’ ‘Yes, I think I am.’ ‘Please tell me what my blind spot is.’ We still haven’t finished this conversation but this is how we minister one to another but let’s live with the expectation that we all have some blind spots. Therefore, we can help one another, not see it our way but use truth, Scripture to have our eyes opened by the Spirit.

Finally, I would say you probably have some people in your life that are slow to believe or slow to trust or slow to get it. Be careful not to make them the enemy or see them as the opposition or to grow frustrated with them. Draw near to them and walk with them but walk with them with truth. Let them hear the graciousness come out as you unfold for them by the power of the Holy Spirit, your faith, trust and beliefs in the Holy Scriptures pointing them to Jesus Christ. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You so much for Your Word, for this account in Luke and for unfolding for us the road to Emmaus. Lord, thank You for the way that You minister to us for Lord we would acknowledge to You that we are the foolish ones, slow to believe and hold our preferences where we want You to redeem Israel, to do things our way so we recognize that we have blind spots. Lord, use Your Spirit, Your Word, Your church and those who You have put in our lives as spiritual leaders to help us address those and deal with them so that we can have a right perspective that He is risen indeed. I pray that Your Spirit would do that work in us and through us but that You would use us as a mechanism to help others as we walk side by side with them in a loving manner, seeking for them to embrace truth and to come to know You if they don’t or if

they do, to walk with You if they aren't in accordance with Your Word for Your glory. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.