

They Met Jesus:  
*Faith In The Real World*

Life can be pretty discouraging sometimes, can't it? Sometimes we get ourselves into discouraging situations by our own bad judgment, but often life just seems to come at us with a vengeance.

Maybe some of your hopes have been shattered. Maybe some of your deepest dreams have turned into nightmares. Maybe you're feeling overwhelmed with discouragement.

- Maybe it's a marriage that shattered
- Maybe it's a serious dating relationship come to an end
- Maybe it was a couple of weeks from retirement and the doctors found advanced stages of cancer
- Maybe your adult children haven't embraced your faith in Jesus Christ.
- Maybe you showed up for work on an ordinary day – boss met you at the door – told to clean out your desk and you went home without a job.

How do we handle life's challenging but inevitable disappointments?

God wants us to learn from our weaknesses and trust in Him. He wants to walk down the road of life with us.

In the Bible we read about two totally discouraged men. Their hopes and dreams had literally been shattered. But then they had an opportunity to walk down the road with Jesus and find His encouragement. Today on this Easter morning I'd like you to see their story.

**Turn to Luke 24 page 1039**

This is the third message in a series we're calling, "They Met Jesus." What we're doing is going through the Gospels and looking at specific instances where people met Jesus face-to-face. What we've been seeing is not only what happened, but we're looking the lessons that God had for them and has for us.

Today we're going to see how God can speak into our discouraged lives.

The events in Luke 24 take place on the Sunday that Jesus rose from the dead. This is literally the first Easter Sunday.

Jesus was the hope of a lot of Jewish people. They were convinced that He was the long promised Messiah and deliverer of Israel. They had suffered under Roman invaders for so long, and finally Jesus had come on the scene.

He was their only hope. If He the Messiah the Old Testament prophets had spoken of, then He'd set them free. The Messiah was to bring in the kingdom of God.

The problem was Jesus was dead. He'd been brutally beaten and nailed to a Roman cross. Then, after He had breathed His last breath, He was placed in a grave just outside the city of Jerusalem.

The 11 remaining disciples had scattered and for all practical purposes, all hope was lost.

### **Read verses 13-14**

Here's two guys whose hopes have been dashed. They're apparently faithful Jewish men who had believed in their heart that Jesus of Nazareth was the hope of Israel. They were convinced that Jesus was truly the Son of God.

Now He was gone and so was their hope. They're walking the 7 miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus with their hopes shattered. Can you identify with that feeling: totally discouraged and without a shred of hope for the future?

These two guys were wrestling with disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, despair and death.

Let's see in the middle of all that if it's possible to latch onto some real hope...

### *I. In Times of Discouragement God Seeks Us Out* **Read verses 15-16**

For some reason the eyes of these 2 disciples were restrained from recognizing who Jesus was. Some people have thought that it was their preoccupation on their own disappointment and problems. But, I think that it was God's way of making them verbalize their feelings so He could lead them to find answers by seeing the truth for themselves.

God does this so many times in our lives.

The important thing for us to see is that Jesus sought them out. There's a significant lesson here for every one of us. God wanted to bring something home through these two. There's a reason why He chooses these two and a reason why God wanted this incident recorded in the Bible.

Discouragement can make us feel abandoned. If we're not careful we can sink down into depression and when our feelings are leading us, we can begin to question God's love for us.

This past year I went through an intense bout with anxiety. I was bitten by a deer tic. I was diagnosed with an infection called bartonella. There were times when I felt like I wanted to take my own life. I felt like it was never going to end.

What kept me hanging on was my love for my family and the knowledge that I had that God was real. I didn't feel it. I felt hopeless. But I knew the truth that God was with me.

Here's some great promises for those times we feel deserted by God.

Deuteronomy 31:8 *"And the LORD, He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed."*

Psalm 100:5 *For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.*

1Chronicles 28:20 *"Be strong and of good courage... do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God...will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you..."*

Psalm 36:5 *"Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies."*

Feelings are wonderful things. God created feelings. God wants us to experience life, in part, through our feelings. But feelings can't be the driving force in our lives.

There's a whole lot of us in this room who have been in trouble at one time or another because we did what we felt like doing instead of what we knew we should do.

Feelings have to be the caboose on our train, not the engine.

What these two despondent disciples were feeling was, that God had really let them down. This whole Messiah thing had gotten their hopes up, and then Jesus' death popped their balloon.

They were dragging because they thought they were back to a hopeless situation again when all the time God was right there. God was right there, but He just didn't let them see right away.

Jesus Christ was Israel's Messiah. He had fulfilled every prophecy down to the smallest detail. God hadn't failed them.

Most people who say that the Bible's not true haven't taken the time to check out the clear, definitive, prophecies of scripture.

God hadn't failed them and He doesn't fail us. Sometimes we don't see Him there in our lives, sometimes we don't feel Him in our lives, but His promises are real and true.

*I. In Times of Discouragement God Seeks Us Out* We just need to keep, our eyes open to His promises and His presence.

*II. In Times of Discouragement God Cares About Our Problems*

### **Read verses 17-18**

I'll guarantee none of us will ever forget what happened on Tuesday, September 11, 2001. We know where we were when we first heard and that will stick with us the rest of our lives.

My guess is that the events of that morning affected you so deeply that it was evident on your face. So let's say on the third day – on Thursday, Sept. 13 you are visiting with a friend when all of a sudden a stranger comes up to you and says, "Hey, you guys seem a little down. What's wrong? What are talking about?"

You'd probably be totally incredulous and say, "Man, where in the world have you been? What do you mean, what are we talking about? Are you the only person alive who hasn't heard about the things that have happened?"

There wasn't a person in and around Jerusalem, friend or enemy of Jesus who didn't know about His crucifixion.

### **Read v. 19-24**

The real problem here wasn't that Jesus had died, it was that His own disciples didn't believe that He was alive!

This wasn't a couple of ungodly men who were doubting the power of God to raise Jesus from the dead ... these were some of His disciples! These were two of the hundreds of people who had acknowledged Jesus as Lord. These men knew the details of what had happened.

One commentator writes: *Perhaps the witness of Christians in this unbelieving world would be more effective if we didn't go around acting like God is dead! This was a day of rejoicing, and they were retreating! This was a day of triumph, but they were trembling! This was a day for singing and shouting, but they were sad!*

*I. In Times of Discouragement God Seeks Us Out*

*II. In Times of Discouragement God Cares About Our Problems*

*III. In Times of Discouragement God Renews Our Spirits*

### **Read verses 25-26**

Whoa! I bet they weren't expecting that! This stranger rebukes them for not believing their Bibles. They had to be thinking, "Who in the world is this guy?"

Then Jesus went on to teach them what the Scriptures said about Himself! How'd you have like to have been there for that? A Bible lesson on Jesus by Jesus.

Now remember these are Jewish men. There is no New Testament written yet. There is no church to go to. What is Jesus going to use to demonstrate that He is the Son of God?

He opened the Scriptures. That means He talked to them about what we know as the Old Testament. And where did He start? He started at the beginning, in the books of Moses.

I would imagine he told them about:

Genesis 3:15 *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.*

The Redeemer would be a human being who would crush the serpent's head.

Deuteronomy 18:15 where Moses said, *"The Lord your God will raise up a prophet like me from among your brothers."*

Isaiah 7:14 *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*

Isaiah 9:6 *For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 53:6 *He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.*

Psalms 16:10 *You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*

Luke says: *"He expounded to them in **all** the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."*

He must have shown them that Messiah had to be a descendant of King David; that He had to be born in Bethlehem. Verse after verse, passage after passage that pointed to Him.

Now notice. Jesus is going to reveal His identity to these two. But at this point He still hasn't done it.

Doesn't that raise questions in your mind? At first I'm thinking, "Wait a minute, wouldn't Jesus words carry more clout if it was obvious that Jesus was the one speaking to them?"

In one sense it would, but there's a powerful lesson here that we need to understand: *The authority of the Bible is independent of the authority of the speaker.*

Hebrews 1:1 says that God's Word has been communicated in various ways.

At times, God has spoken through godly, faithful men. At other times He spoke through less than godly men.

Jonah was in rebellion, but he spoke God's message and the entire city of Nineveh tuned to God.

Balaam the Prophet spoke for God, and even his donkey did.

In the NT the apostle Paul said there were those who proclaimed the message of the gospel from false motives, and yet the gospel was advanced.

It's not the proclaimer who gives power to the Word of God. The Word of God has the power in itself.

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4:12, 13*

The Bible makes a claim that few other religious books do. It claims to be the actual Word of God.

There are all kinds of religions in our world that have books. In many of those religions the followers claim the books are from God. But, the books themselves don't make that claim.

The Bible makes that claim. The OT prophets would write: *"Thus says the Lord."* The NT says: *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..."*

In fact, very often when the NT authors quote the OT they write *God said* or *The Spirit said* rather than naming the human author.

## **Turn to I Corinthians 2 page 1119**

The writer was a learned man. Paul was trained in both Jewish and Greek literature and thought. He could have debated with the best of the philosophers. The Greeks in Corinth loved rhetoric and debate.

But look how Paul approached them: **Read 1-5**

The greatest church planter and proponent of Christianity said I was weak and scared, but I let the Word of God speak for itself.

If you think about it, Jesus could have identified Himself as the Lord to these two men in Luke 24. He could have taught them on the basis of His authority. Instead, Jesus taught them on the basis of the authority of the Bible.

Think about that and what it means to us. Instead of saying “I’m Jesus and you’d better believe what I say.” He taught this lesson as a total stranger, even as a guy who seemed out of touch with what was going on.

The two disciples rebuked Him for asking what things were going on in Jerusalem. They saw Him as ill informed, out of touch, and unenlightened. And then He turns around and rebukes them and teaches the greatest OT survey course ever taught.

The men are going to say later on that Jesus' teaching, “set their hearts on fire”, not just because Jesus taught them, but because the Bible was taught accurately, and with the power of the Holy Spirit.

It was the Bible explained by Jesus Christ and illuminated by the Holy Spirit that opened the eyes of these 2 disciples so that they were ready and able to discover who it was who was talking to them.

Why should knowing the Bible be a priority in our lives? Because that’s where the power is. The Bible has power in two major areas.

Romans 1:16 says its, “*the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...*”

The Bible is the place where we learn the facts:

- We are sinners who have violated God’s laws.
- We are headed for hell without God’s forgiveness.
- Jesus Christ died to pay for our sins.
- He is the one perfect sacrifice.
- There’s nothing that we can do to add to His perfect work.
- Salvation come by faith not works.



Those are clear biblical facts that we need to understand. But then the Bible does more than give us facts. Because it's God's Word the Holy Spirit uses it to open our hearts. *...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

That's one major area. The second area is in how we live.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* II Timothy 3:16, 17

The Bible gives us God's wisdom and instruction for living. Our Creator knows what's best for us. The Bible gives practical instruction on every area from marriage, to relationships, to communication, to parent/child relationships, to morality, to personal life choices.

The authority of the Scriptures is independent of the authority of the speaker. Anything I say up here doesn't have authority because of me. I'm just a fallible, sinful person like you are.

The authority of the Scriptures is found in the God who inspired them. The Bible is our hope in the darkest of times. God's promises are eternal and they'll never fail.

## **Read 28-32**

*In Times of Discouragement God Renews Our Spirits*

Why did Jesus say He wasn't going to stay around? Why did He tell them that He was keep going down the road?

The Bible doesn't say explicitly, but I think their response gives us a clue. Jesus had addressed their despondency with the power of God's Word, and then He gives them the opportunity to respond to it by asking for more or going back to wallowing in their own misery.

He's shown them that the events of the death, burial, and resurrection happened just like God had promised.

He's shown them that it wasn't the promises of God that had failed, it was their lack of faith in those promises that was the problem.

It was them judging God by their circumstances rather than judging their circumstances by the promises of God.

I believe that's the way Jesus works in our lives today. He's always accessible, always ready and willing to help by explaining and applying his Word to our life. But He doesn't force himself on us. If we want more of His truth, He'll stay and give it to us. If we want to stay in our hopeless mess, He'll let us stay there.

These men made the right decision. They were emphatic: "Wait a minute mister, you aren't going anywhere! You're staying with us tonight and telling us more."

So Jesus accepts their invitation. He was planning to stay all the time. This decision to act on the light they had been given just opened the door for more light.

Maybe when he broke the bread, He let them to see the nail prints in his hands, I don't know. However he did it, their belief in Jesus' resurrection was experientially confirmed by seeing him.

Now notice the order. This is crucial.

*First*, Jesus explained the scriptures to them that the Messiah had to die and be raised, so he must still be alive. They sensed the illuminating power of the Word of God. *Then*, they responded to the Bible by wanting to hear more. And because they did, they got to experience, even more deeply, the truth they had just learned and believed.

Now the Bible doesn't promise that we will see the resurrected Jesus like they did.

In fact, it makes it clear that during this age we won't see Jesus: 1Peter 1:8 *whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.*

1John 3:2 *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

Today we won't physically see Him but He'll be with us. When He was physically walking the earth He was with a limited number of people at a time. Today Jesus Christ is with all of us at every time.

The Bible doesn't promise that in this life we'll see the resurrected Jesus like they did, but it does promise that when we respond to Jesus' instruction, He'll give us greater experiential confirmation of His presence in our lives.

God will use His Word to convict you of its truth and application to your life. Then He'll wait to see how you respond. If you choose not to receive it, He'll leave you to your despondency until you become open to his instruction. But if you respond, He'll give you more understanding and experiential confirmation of his truth.

For instance: If you sin and try to cover up that sin before God you'll end up feeling guilt and shame. If you follow out the Biblical command to confess your sins you'll experience the joy and freedom of forgiveness.

If you don't give joyfully and generously to God's work, you'll become more self-focused and worried about finances. If you give cheerfully, you'll be aware of how God really does take care of our needs.

The truth is that God wants to set our hearts on fire. He wants to give us a burning passion for life. We say we're concerned with the eternal but we're too easily contented with the temporary. We all want to be a part of something worthwhile but we waste far too much time on the meaningless.

Reading, and then believing and obeying what we read. That's where a burning heart comes from.

Life can be pretty discouraging sometimes, can't it? Sometimes we get ourselves into discouraging situations by our own bad judgment, but often life just seems to come at us with a vengeance.

How do we handle life's inevitable disappointments?

God wants us to learn from our weaknesses and trust in Him. God wants to walk down the road of life with us.

God wants us to grab onto the central truth of Christianity, the central truth of the Easter season. Jesus Christ is alive.

Here's how the Bible puts it: *For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!* Romans 5:10