



## Burning Hearts and Opened Eyes\*

### Leader Guide

#### Introduction

At meals, much more can happen than the mere consuming of food. Around the table, as friends and family gather for a meal, relationships can be deepened, special occasions can be celebrated, important life matters can be discussed. In short, life is often shared over a meal. Many significant things happened over a meal during Jesus' earthly ministry. This study invites us to journey into the Scriptures and take a seat around the meal table where Jesus dines.

**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, may the Holy Spirit use this study to deepen our understanding of what grace our Savior extends to those who get to dine with Him, and how He continues to set a place for us to be nurtured by Him. Amen.

#### Setting the Scene

It had looked like all was lost. The One who had shown such promise, whom they had hoped would redeem Israel, now lay dead for some three days. Some women from their group had reported Jesus to have risen, but as these disheartened disciples make their way to Emmaus for an evening meal, their hopes seem far from alive. Yet, in the next hours, they will be joined by a "Stranger" who will kindle their hearts again with the promise of God's Word and open their eyes in a meal symbolic of the Church they will share in founding.

#### Into the Text: Read Luke 24:13-35

##### On the Road to Emmaus

<sup>13</sup> Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>[a]</sup> from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup> As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup> but they were kept from recognizing him.

<sup>17</sup> 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?"

<sup>19</sup> "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. <sup>20</sup> The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup> but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

<sup>25</sup> He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

<sup>28</sup> As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> 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?”

<sup>33</sup> They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup> and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” <sup>35</sup> Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

### 1. How does Luke establish the setting for this event?

Luke carefully provides the details of this encounter. He gives us the day it took place (on that first Easter), the location for the encounter (on the road from Jerusalem, where God’s plan of salvation had been fulfilled, to Emmaus, where the first recorded journey away from the cross and empty tomb was taking place), as well as the length of the journey (about seven miles from Jerusalem, which may have been the distance of a round trip from Jerusalem to Emmaus).

### 2. What exactly were the two disciples discussing?

The disciples were discussing all that had taken place in Jerusalem throughout Holy Week, including the report from the women that must have seemed unimaginable that Jesus had risen from the dead.

### 3. How does Luke introduce Jesus to the situation?

Jesus draws near to the disciples and journeys with them. However, they were kept from recognizing Him. Luke does not provide details for us as to whether or not this prevention of recognizing Jesus is miraculous or that Jesus simply keeps a covering over His face. However, their inability to recognize Jesus on the road allows them to focus on His teaching that will take place along the journey and sets them (and us) up for their moment of recognition in the breaking of the bread.

### 4. What does Jesus ask them? How do they answer? What does their answer reveal about their Christology? The Christology of chief priests and rulers?

It almost seems as if Jesus plays the role of His disciples’ disciple as He asks them to share the content of their conversation, and to relate what has happened in Jerusalem in recent days. Jesus’ question stops them in their tracks, and even their facial expressions indicate that they do not yet believe the good news that Jesus has risen. Their response to Jesus indicates that they do not have a fully developed understanding of Jesus and His role as the Savior. They knew He was a prophet, “powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.” They knew that He had been handed over by the chief priests and rulers of the people to the Romans to be crucified, but they did not quite see that Jesus’ crucifixion was all part of God’s plan of salvation for they then say that they had hoped that He was the one who would redeem Israel. They did believe the Messiah would redeem Israel, but their understanding of redemption at this point does not include the gift of salvation that comes with Jesus’ death and resurrection. These two disciples were aware that some of the women had seen the empty tomb and had reported about the angels who said Jesus was alive and that other disciples had gone and found the tomb as the women had said, but to their knowledge at this point, no one had seen Jesus alive, and their language seems

to indicate that they doubted Jesus' resurrection. The chief priests and rulers have an even poorer understanding of Jesus as the Christ for they hand Him over for crucifixion. If they believed He was the Messiah, this would have been an unlikely action on their part.

5. Why might Cleopas have been mentioned by name? See **John 19:25**.

<sup>25</sup> Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene (NIV).

There is a tradition in the early Church that Cleopas and Clopas refer to the same person. Clopas, mentioned in John 19:25, is the brother of Joseph and would thus have been Jesus' uncle. Many have speculated who the unnamed disciple is. Some suggestions have been that it is Cleopas' wife who was an eye-witness of Jesus' death. Others have suggested the unnamed disciple is Cleopas' son, Simeon, who was later the head of the Jerusalem Church. However, Luke gives no clear indication of this person's identity.

6. How does Jesus switch roles at this point (verses 25–27)? What passages of Scripture could you imagine Jesus using to teach these disciples about His mission as Messiah?

Where Jesus first seems to play the role of an inquirer, asking His disciples to inform Him about their discussion and the events that had taken place in Jerusalem over Holy Week, now in verses 25–27 Jesus takes on the role of teacher for these disciples, gently chiding them for lack of understanding of the Scriptures as they point to the work of the Christ, and then teaching them from all the Scriptures about Himself.

**Note to Leader:** Allow participants to discuss what Scriptures come to mind that they could see Jesus using to teach these disciples. The leader may wish to refer participants to passages such as Psalm 22, or Isaiah 53 that clearly teach of the Messiah's role as the one who would suffer and die for our sins.

7. How does the action shift focus in verses 28–29?

As they reached their destination at Emmaus, Jesus pretended to be going on, but the disciples practice hospitality with their still unknown traveling companion and urge Jesus to stay the night at their home where they will offer Him a meal.

8. Discuss the significance of the meal in verses 30–32.

Some think that this meal is a celebration of Holy Communion due to the formula that Luke uses that sounds similar to the beginning of the words of institution: that Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them. While this may have Communal overtones and participants may see a parallel that the Church does recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread at the Sacrament, since Luke does not mention wine being given, nor does he write that Jesus says this bread is His body, this is not a Communion meal. The leader may wish to note that the phrase, "Then their eyes were opened" is similar to what Moses wrote when Adam and Eve first sinned in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:7). This may be reflective of a theme in Luke's Gospel of the great reversal of God's grace that sinners' eyes once opened to sin and death now are opened to recognize Jesus who is the Savior. It is interesting to note that the disciples do not seem to take much note of the fact that Jesus vanishes from their sight. Rather, their focus is on how Jesus spoke with them and opened the Scriptures to them while they were traveling together.

9. In verses 33-35, what is the response of the disciples?

While evening has already come, these joyful disciples immediately journey back to Jerusalem to tell others that they had seen Jesus, how He had taught them, and that they recognized Him in the breaking of the bread.

10. What further lessons are here for the Church today?

Answers will vary from participants on this question, but the leader may wish to draw the group's focus on the fact that we confess who Jesus is based on the content of the whole of Scripture which reveals the Messiah through the work of the Holy Spirit. This question may also lead to a discussion of how Christ is recognized as truly present in Holy Communion.

### **Final Thought**

Jesus was a visitor, a sojourner, in Jerusalem during that first holy week, come from heaven and soon to return, having accomplished His Father's will for our salvation. Yet, before He physically departs, He draws near to these two ordinary followers. Before they embark on a journey of following this Messiah, He will equip them well. They will be taught all the things concerning Himself from God's Word, and their hearts, once slow to believe, will now burn with that Word. They will also have their eyes opened to recognize that their Savior will be with them in the breaking of the bread, where He will continually welcome and feed His children His very grace that will sustain them ... now sojourners themselves. In the Emmaus disciples we see ourselves — the life-long journey the same, the provision of our Savior, the same, and the sure hope of sitting at His table forever, the same.

**Closing:** Sing or say together verses 1 and 4 of "Look, Ye Saints, the Sight Is Glorious" (*LSB* #495; *TLH* #222), "O Splendor of the Father's Light" (*LW* #481), and close with the Lord's Prayer.

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\*Sixth Lesson of "At Table With Jesus"

A Bible study on Mealtime Conversations with the Savior

by Reverend Kristopher Whitby

All Scripture is from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

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