

# Story 4: The Road to Emmaus

God's  Changes Everything.

*(Remember to set up your space: Altar cloth in the center of your circle, unlit candle in the middle, letter tiles scattered, filled water bottle, flip flop, question mark, and scripture book around the candle.)*

*Additional Supplies Needed for this Session:*

*Plain paper for each person*

*Markers*

OPENING RITUAL:

Leader: **We gather together as God's people, intentionally seeking a word from God, believing that God's word has the power to change us.**

Leaving the tiles scrambled, remind the group of the purpose of the tiles: **We long to hear God's word. In a world of abundant words, spoken and written, we struggle to discern God's word to us. It takes intentional time and effort to wrestle with the words before us and listen for what God longs for us to hear. On any given day, we may hear a different word from God. Each person may hear the word differently. We gather to intentionally seek God's word, to listen, to wrestle, to discern, to be open to God's word changing us.**

LETTER TILES FOR THIS SESSION: Leaving the other letters scattered, pull out the letters H-O-P-E spelling the word HOPE on your altar area.

STORY FOCUS: God's hope changes everyting.

GATHERING ACTIVITY: Link Tag

*Find a large open space for this Gathering activity. Have everyone find a partner. All pairs should spread out around the room. Partners should link arms, standing side by side. Choose one of the pairs to start the game. One person from this pair is now the IT and the other is the person running from the IT. The person running can "link" with the free arm of any person in another pair. When they do this they become the new pair, and the original partner who was not "linked" by the runner, must now be the new runner and must try to go link with another pair*

*before he/she is caught by the IT. When the IT does catch a runner, the roles switch; the tagged runner becomes the new IT and the old IT becomes the runner.*

(You can see a demonstration of Link Tag at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vq9dCg45rc4>)

#### Add a Game Element:

*Once you have established the basics of the game, add this element. While the game is going on, throw out questions for the pairs to discuss. If they are “freed” to link up with a new pair, they should share their responses with their new partner. It will be hard for youth to focus on the questions while the game is going on. They will be distracted. This is the point. They may be confused by some of the questions and not as able to ask for clarification because the game will be going on at the same time. Ask the questions anyway.*

Questions to add to the game:

- **Who often walks with you?**
- **What do you and your friends talk about when you walk together?**
- **What road do you travel on the most?**
- **What destination do you most often walk to?**
- **What is your favorite thing to do on a road? (ex. Bike, skateboard, hike, sit in a car, make chalk drawings)**
- **What is your favorite thing to eat with others?**
- **Who do you wish could stay with you more often?**
- **If you could go anywhere when you left here today where would you go?**

After the game, return to your group circle and debrief:

- **Who can name everyone that they were linked with throughout the game? Was there anyone you were never linked with?**
- **Did you pay more attention to who you were linked with or more attention to what was going on around you?**
- **Who can tell us something they learned about someone from answering the questions you were given during the game?**
- **Did you find yourself able to listen to your partner’s answers to the questions or were you distracted by what was happening around you?**
- **Was this game confusing or overwhelming to anyone? Why?**

*(You may choose to spend some time re-asking the questions from the game in this seated setting as you are now able to share your responses as a way to get to know your group and further enter the text for the day.)*

## THE STORY:

Leader: **In our Scripture reading today, two friends are walking together. Questions and concerns fill their heads. Jesus has been crucified. They have lost hope. As they walk side by side, a third person shows up. They do not recognize this person as Jesus. As they walk Jesus explains scripture to them, revealing who he is, but they do not understand and still do not see that it is Christ. Grief and current events distract them from hearing and seeing Jesus with them.**

*Have someone from your group volunteer to read from "The Word" scripture book Luke 24 verses 13-16.*

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 24: 13-16

*<sup>13</sup>Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup>and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup>While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup>but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.*

RITUAL ACTION: Light the Candle

Leader: **God comes to us, during our mundane tasks, within our ordinary days, while we are distracted and calls us by name to unexpected and extraordinary opportunities to join God in God's work. We light the candle to remind us of God's presence with us, here amidst the ordinary, despite our distraction.**

Consider:

- **What keeps you distracted from recognizing Jesus in your midst? What grief, uncertainty, or current event is clouding your vision of God?**

*(You may choose to share responses with the group.)*

Return to the text:

*<sup>17</sup>And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup>Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" <sup>19</sup>He asked them, "What things?"*

Consider:

- **Did Jesus really not know what they were talking about? He obviously knew the things that had taken place but he asks "What things?"**
- **Why does he ask?**

*(Take time for responses.)*

Ask:

- **Do you think God knows what we talk about as we travel through our days?**
- **Do you think God knows what is happening around us?**
- **Does God still ask us “what things?”**
- **What does God desire for us to share with God? Why?**

Return to the Text:

*They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup>and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup>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 took place. <sup>22</sup>Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup>and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. <sup>24</sup>Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.”*

REFLECTION ACTIVITY:

**Leader: The disciples say “But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel”. Consider the word “hope”. Often we think of hoping as wishing.**

*(Give each person a blank sheet of paper and markers. Have them write the word “wish” on the top of the paper. Then have them draw an image that comes to mind when they hear the word “wish”. If they need a little prompting give them one example: a candle on a birthday cake, a star in the sky, a coin thrown into a fountain, a genie in a bottle, a dream of something they really wish they had like a car or lots of money. After a few minutes, share your images.*

*Ask everyone to flip their piece of paper over to the blank side and write the word “Hope” at the top of the page. Have them write words or images that think of when they hear the “hope”. Share what was written.)*

**Ask: What is the difference between wishing and hoping? (Share thoughts.)**

**Leader: Often we think wishing and hoping are the same things. But while wishing is casting out a desire into the universe, HOPING is a sure and steady faith that trusts and clings to God. Too often we “wish” upon God like God is a cosmic genie that grants our desires if we wish loud enough. The goal of wishing is to get what we want. God does not desire our wishes but instead gives us hope, a faith that trusts that God is in control even when everything around us seems to contradict that truth.**

**Our text reads, “But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel”. “Hoped” is past tense. The disciples on the road have lost hope, lost faith, have stopped trusting in God’s promises but Jesus is there to restore their hope.**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- **What do you HOPE for?**
- **When have you lost HOPE?**
- **How does Jesus restore your hope?**

Return to Scripture:

*<sup>25</sup>Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!<sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” <sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. <sup>28</sup>As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.*

CONSIDER:

- **Jesus has just opened up all of the scriptures to these disciples. He has just explained all that is happening around them. Do the disciples recognize him yet? Do they believe the good news yet?**

RITUAL ACTION: QUESTIONS

Leader: **The word of God does not always carry answers that fulfill our questions. Often we fail to find the hope we long for simply by understanding scripture. Even after hearing the word, walking with the Living Word, these disciples still do not have clarity.**

Pass around the question mark and instead of sharing your questions today, simply sit in silence, giving each person a chance to hold the question mark. Remember that God brings hope, brings faith, when answers, when words, are not enough. Then place the question mark on the altar saying:

Leader: **We bring our questions to you God; give us hope. Amen.**

Return to the text:

*<sup>29</sup>But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”*

**Leader: For the disciples, hope comes when Jesus stays with them. They recognize him as they share in communion around the table. They then look back upon their experience on the road and say “Oh yeah, God was up to something back there.”**

RITUAL ACTION: One member of your group should pick up the flip flop and share a response:

- **How have you experienced “holy ground” this last week (or since our last gathering)? In other words, when has your “heart burned” within you because you realized Jesus was with you on the road? When have you had that “Oh yeah, God was up to something back there moment” lately?**

Continue around the circle until everyone has had a chance to share.

Return to Scripture:

*<sup>33</sup>That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup>They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” <sup>35</sup>Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

SENDING RITUAL ACTION:

*Take the water bottle.*

**Leader: Jesus stays with the disciples, equips them around the table and then sends them out back onto the road. They go forth in hope and declare “The Lord has risen indeed!” Today dip your finger in the water and trace the sign of the cross on your own forehead with this prayer “Lord stay with me, give me hope out on the road.”**

*These “Story Kit” resources were developed for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA, by Shivon Miller, Minister of Congregational Life at Trinity Lutheran Church in Duluth, MN. Permission is granted to use and reproduce for individual use within a congregational setting. For more resources:*

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