

## Simple Sundays

### What Does Jesus Want Me to Do?



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## Main Idea

This famous resurrection story deals with two miracles. First, there is the miracle of Jesus' resurrection. Second, there is the miracle that takes place when our "sight" is adjusted to enable us to see God's presence in our midst.

## You Will Need

Bibles, uncut loaf of bread, pitcher of water, plates, cups, napkins

## Faith Statement

We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God. Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, and calling all to repent and believe the gospel. Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition, Jesus was crucified, suffering the depths of human pain and giving his life for the sins of the world. God raised this Jesus from the dead, vindicating his sinless life, breaking the power of sin and evil, delivering us from death to life eternal.

—A Brief Statement of Faith (lines 7-26)

## Background

The story of Jesus' encountering the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is the first resurrection appearance in Luke. In the other Gospels, Jesus appears first to Mary Magdalene and the other women at the tomb, then to the other disciples. In Luke's account, the women at the tomb meet an angel, who tells them about the resurrection, but they do not meet Jesus himself. When the women tell the other disciples, they are met with skepticism.

Luke tells us that the same day, two disciples traveled to the village of Emmaus. The exact location of Emmaus is unknown. Most ancient Greek manuscripts of Luke say that it is about sixty stadia (seven miles or about eleven kilometers) from Jerusalem. Some manuscripts place it at 160 stadia (twenty miles or thirty-two kilometers) away. A town did exist at this latter distance, and it has since been excavated. Even twenty miles was a manageable day's journey in a preautomotive era.

As the disciples walked, they were joined by a stranger to whom they opened their hearts. They had hoped that Jesus would be the messiah, but they felt his death clearly showed he wasn't. The stranger talked to them about what all the Scriptures said about the messiah.

When the disciples reached their destination, they persuaded the stranger to stop and eat with them. It

is noteworthy that his disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of bread. This suggests that the church believed, very early, that Jesus could be recognized in a unique way in the Lord's Supper, or communion. Luke may be reflecting that idea here. It may also be that Luke is expressing an early understanding of sacramental theology. In the Lord's Supper, Jesus is revealed to us in a distinct way that is not possible without the sacraments.

Luke also puts an emphasis on how the disciples learned as Jesus opened the Scriptures to them. Could it be that they would not have recognized Jesus, even in the breaking of the bread, if they had not been prepared by talking about the Scriptures?

## You and Your Youth

Many youth have simply accepted Christ's resurrection without question, but they are now getting to the age when it is natural to raise questions about their faith, including the resurrection. Even though their questions may seem like doubting their faith, it is a natural part of internalizing their faith for them to examine and question the beliefs that have previously been handed to them by their family and their church. In short, expect questions and even enjoy them. They don't hurt! Just don't be in too big a rush to give pat answers—it is valuable for youth to struggle and find their own answers.

 **Enter**

Learn names, encourage interaction, and laugh together as the session begins.

**Hidden Images**

As youth arrive, ask them to use their smartphones or tablets to visit [www.magiceye.com](http://www.magiceye.com) or [www.vision3d.com](http://www.vision3d.com) and look at the “hidden image” artwork. Encourage youth to compare notes on what they see, and/or to help each other see what’s “really” there.

End the activity by suggesting that God may sometimes be like that hidden artwork. God is present in our lives but sometimes difficult to see because of all the other things that keep us from seeing the patterns.

**Opening Prayer**

God of grace and truth, we ask that you send your Spirit down upon us this day. Help us to set aside the worries, concerns, and plans that distract us. Give us peace of mind and body. As we search for truth, we ask that you open our eyes, minds, and hearts to your living Word revealed to us in Scripture and through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

 **Explore****Study the Bible***Bibles*

Invite youth to find Luke 24:13–35 in their Bibles. Ask volunteers to read the story. As the story is read, have the group note what Cleopas and the other disciple are doing. Encourage the youth to imagine what they think Cleopas and the disciple are feeling whenever the two are mentioned.

For example, verse 14 says they were talking “about all these things that had happened.” This probably meant Jesus’ suffering and death, since they hadn’t heard about the resurrection. They might have been feeling despair, sadness, anger, or any manifestation of grief and disappointment.

List below what the youth report about each time the disciples are mentioned, what they were doing, and how they might have been feeling at that point. Ask:

- At what points did their feelings change?
- What caused the change?

Ask the youth to identify two things in the story that helped the disciples understand what Jesus was saying and come to faith in the resurrection. (The two key elements were that Jesus explained the Scriptures to them, and then they knew him “in the breaking of the bread.”) Help youth talk about what those two elements mean. Then ask how those same elements in the story are part of the life of your congregation. Ask:

- How does studying the Bible help us come to faith in Jesus?
- How does communion help us come to faith in Jesus?

**Search for Other “Eye-opening” Resurrection Stories**  
*Bibles*

Assign one of the four Gospels to each person or pair. Have each team locate the resurrection stories (Matthew 28:1–15; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–18) in their assigned Gospel. Ask each person or pair to briefly tell about the stories they found and what made them “eye-opening.” Ask:

- What was the “trigger” or event that caused the person to recognize Jesus?
- What are some examples of times when the obvious escapes our attention too? What triggers recognition?
- How can you learn to recognize the Lord in your life?

**Express**

*These discussions are an opportunity to apply the Scripture to our lives. If you do not relate to these situations, change them to make them relevant to your own life.*

**Youth Issue**

Invite volunteers to tell their stories that parallel the Emmaus road story. Ask them to think of a time when they did not initially recognize Jesus’ presence in their lives but later saw that Jesus had been with them all along.

Prompt them by suggesting that people often speak of Christ’s presence in this way when they talk of wrestling through a hard decision or narrowly escaping a fatal accident.

Silence is OK. Allow the learners time to ponder. If no one volunteers a story, you may tell one of your own. Remind the learners Christ is with us even when we can't see him with our eyes. Part of our faith is to know and to rest in that.

### **Action Steps**

*Uncut loaf of bread, pitcher of water, plates, cups, napkins*

A "love feast" is a sharing of bread and drink with deep roots in the history of the church. It is similar to communion, except there is no wine (juice) and there are no words of institution.

Have one person break the loaf into as many chunks as there are persons in the room and distribute them. Another person can pour water into the cups. Remind the group that the simple act of eating together is something Jesus and his disciples must have done countless times. Therefore, it is not surprising, particularly given the importance that Jesus put on eating together at the Last Supper, that it was during the act of breaking bread that the disciples finally recognized Jesus.

Invite persons to share how they have learned to grow in faith through their journey with Cleopas and the other disciple to Emmaus.



**Exit**

### **Closing Prayer**

Almighty God, we thank you for the many different perspectives and clues you have given us to help us in our search for you. Help us to find the ways to share with one another what we believe, celebrating the things that are the same and respecting the things that are different. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.