



WHAT IS THE WALK TO EMMAUS?

The Walk to Emmaus is a spiritual renewal program intended to strengthen the local church through the development of Christian disciples and leaders. The Walk is a 72-hour short course in Christianity, comprised of 15 talks by laypersons and clergy persons on the themes of

God's grace, disciplines of Christian discipleship, and what it means to be the church.

The course is wrapped in prayer and meditation, special times of worship, and daily celebration of Holy Communion. The "Emmaus community," made up of those who have attended an Emmaus weekend, support the 72-hour experience with a prayer vigil, by preparing and serving meals, and other acts of love and self-giving. Men and women attend separate events. It is held in a retreat center over a three-day weekend.

WHY THE NAME "WALK TO EMMAUS?"

The Walk to Emmaus gets its name from the story in Luke 24:13-35, which provides the central image of the three-day experience and follow-up. Luke tells the story of that first Easter afternoon when the risen Christ appeared to the two disciples who were walking together along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Like Christians and churches who are blinded by preoccupation with their own immediate difficulties, these two disciples' sadness and hopelessness seemed to prevent them from seeing God's redemptive purpose in things that had happened.

And yet, the risen Christ "came near and went with them," opening the disciples' eyes to his presence and lighting the fire of God's love in their hearts. As they walked to Emmaus, Jesus explained to them the meaning of all the scriptures concerning himself. When they arrived in Emmaus, Jesus "took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them," and their eyes were opened. They recognized him as Jesus, the risen Lord, and they remembered how their hearts had burned within them as they talked with him on the road. Within the hour, the two disciples left Emmaus and returned immediately to their friends in Jerusalem. As they told the stories about their encounters with the risen Lord, Jesus visited them again with a fresh awareness of his living presence.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE THREE-DAY EMMAUS EXPERIENCE?

The Walk to Emmaus is not a relaxing retreat. While the Walk is fun and rejuvenating, it is also concentrated and full. The three days have distinct phases and reflect a trinitarian framework. The focus of the five talks on day one is God and the relationship God offers. The five talks on day two focus on Jesus Christ and each disciple's response to the grace of God in the context of Christian community. The five talks on day three focus on the Holy Spirit and the call to live as an active member of the body of Christ through service in church and community. All three days point to living every day after the Walk as a walk with Christ in the company of one another, through a lifestyle of regular prayer, study and service.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW BEFORE ATTENDING?

Emmaus is for church persons. It is not an evangelistic outreach to non-Christians. The content of the Walk assumes a certain familiarity with the basics of the Christian faith.

Emmaus is for people who want to grow spiritually. It is for persons who want to understand the Christian faith more fully and to mature as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Emmaus is ecumenical in Christian theological outlook. It is a common meeting ground for the great diversity of Christians in our churches who celebrate their unity in Christ and feel they can learn from one another, be they traditionalists, evangelicals, liberals, conservatives, activists, or charismatics. Emmaus is for those who seek to follow Christ without regard to labels and camps.

Emmaus is for building faith and discipleship. It is not for working through grief or psychological problems.

Emmaus is for fostering unity in Christ. It is not for theological debate and arguments about denominations. Emmaus tries to foster appreciation and openness to the different faith perspectives of the participants. A spirit of Christian tolerance and charity toward all is needed.

Emmaus is a concentrated three-day course in Christianity. It is not a relaxing retreat. Don't bring work from the office or have hopes of taking an afternoon off to read. Except for break times, Emmaus is a very full experience. Come with empty hands and open hearts, planning to give yourself completely to the Emmaus Walk.

WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED OF ME?

Be yourself. No one is asked to sing a solo, make a speech, or bare themselves spiritually before the community. No one is expected to be pious, saintly, or have a thorough knowledge of the Bible. Participants are expected only to be honest, to participate fully, and to respond genuinely to the message of the Walk as it unfolds.

Come with openness to the message of the three days, to others, and to God. Emmaus is not the place for observers and spectators.

Must be present for the whole three-day course. Each component of the Walk is important and plays a part in conveying the overall message. Each participant becomes an indispensable member of the three-day community and of his or her table group.

Leave your world behind for 72 hours. Emmaus is a time apart with God. Participants are asked to work out their affairs ahead of time to really be away for all three days without interruption, to remain on site the entire time, and to refrain from making telephone calls to home or work except in case of emergency.