



A Walk To Remember - Luke 24:13-36

P.A.S.S. Questions For Sunridge Life Group Leaders

For the week of April 20-26, 2014 – #awalktoremember (Luke 24:13-36)

P - participation (get everyone involved in the dialog)

1. As we consider seasons when God seems silent, think of a time when a friend did not respond to an email or a phone message for a long time. How did the silence make you feel?

A - application (makes it personal)

2. Thielicke (pronounced: Tea-lick-a) determined the “secret wound of modern man” is an inner anxiety which can be traced to a “fear of emptiness” and then ultimately to a “longing to know where God is.”
 - a. How do you encounter anxiety in your life?
 - b. Have you ever considered anxiety to be connected to an inner longing for God?
3. Of the two causes of spiritual blindness (1-Looking for a change of circumstance instead of a change of heart, or 2-Not seeing Jesus in the ordinary), which one is more common in your life?
4. Read Psalm 139. Do you find it difficult to take your anxious thoughts to God? Why or why not?
5. How will knowing the whole Bible is about Jesus affect your reading – especially in the OT?

S - scripture (thinking biblically is a learned behavior! :-)

6. Jesus’ disciples had every reason to be troubled and discouraged. Their hopes for Jesus’ promised kingdom seem to be dashed. Jesus’ body had disappeared, and many of them even doubted His resurrection (v. 11) AND even denied him (22:54–62).
7. Suddenly, Jesus appears before the disciples—or at least what seems to be His ghost (v.37). When we think of our own brokenness and failures it seems easy to feel shame before God. One might expect this to be Jesus’ opportunity to rebuke and correct and maybe even condemn their faithlessness. But instead he speaks these good news words: “Peace to you!” (v. 36) How does this make you feel?

S - sharing –

8. Do you tend to work FOR God’s approval or FROM God’s approval?
9. How can our Home Group become more intentional at inviting and including newcomers at Sunridge?

I. INTRO

- A. I would like to begin this morning by raising the level of anxiety in the room...
1. There is a phrase that deeply affects every person in the room, and, probably on the planet: **When God is silent**. We've all had seasons in our lives when we have longed for God to speak and found God to be silent. Even atheists would admit that if God clearly spoke they would believe.
 2. There was a German scholar/theologian named Helmut Thielicke who lived through Nazi perpetrated holocaust and one of his books is titled, *The Silence of God*¹ published in 1962 after a period of reflection and research. In a nutshell here's what Thielicke found:
 - a. His research on young people (mostly students) found that **anxiety** was their "most basic reaction to life." Anxiety, he determined, is the "secret wound of modern man."² [The thesis statement of his book.]
 - b. He went on to say that our natural tendency is to view our anxiety as ultimately related to a fear of death. But, he said, World Wars I & II proved otherwise... [Russian soldiers, for instance, were more afraid of pain than death]
 - c. Thielicke traces our anxiety to a "fear of emptiness" and that our anxiety can actually be traced to a longing to know where God is. To quote Thielicke, "Where is God in face of the mass slaughter of war, or the frightening development of [technology] which seems to press us inexorably towards destruction and final catastrophe?"³
 3. A 4th century theologian and philosopher named **Augustine** had a similar take. He said, "God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you."⁴
- B. This morning I would like for us to consider, from the Emmaus Road passage, what it means – or maybe what it takes -- for us to have a **personal encounter, personal experience, or personal relationship**, with Jesus Christ. Let's pray...
- C. The first thing we can make note of is the word "*them*" in verse 13. Who are "*them*"? The first 12 verses tell us they were *disciples* of Jesus.⁵ Keep that in the back of your mind as we move forward...
- D. In **v.15** we find the resurrected Jesus approaching two disciples who are conversing as they walk on the road; **v.16** tells us, "*They were kept from recognizing Him.*" And in **v.17** Jesus asks them, "*What are you discussing together as you walk along?*" And notice the end of v.17: "*They stood still, their faces downcast.*" Why were they "*downcast*"?
1. Because in their minds the dream had died. They were on their way home from a long weekend of utter despair. Even after the tomb was found empty (vs. 11-12)!

¹ Eerdmans 1962.

² Pgs. 17–21.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Confessions* (Lib 1,1-2,2.5,5: CSEL 33, 1-5).

⁵ Some theologians have determined it is Cleopas and his wife.

2. Their hero and Rabi had been brutally murdered and one of their best friends had committed suicide. [Talk about shock & awe...]
- E. So, what we have on the road this Sunday morning are two **downcast, dismayed, and devastated** disciples, who could not recognize Jesus – they were spiritually blind.
- F. I would like to spend the next few minutes considering to **two questions**:
1. **What causes spiritual blindness?** How are we prevented from recognizing and encountering Jesus? (Even disciples can suffer from spiritual blindness.)
 2. **How do we encounter, experience, and have a personal relationship with Jesus?**

II. BODY

A. What causes spiritual blindness?

1. **We tend to think that our greatest need is a change of circumstances instead of a change of heart.**
 - a. Notice verses 19b-21a: [Cleopas] *“He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”*
 - b. The Jewish people were looking for a *Geopolitical King* to physically liberate them from oppression; instead they got a *Servant King*, intent on liberating the soul. The Jewish people viewed their anxiety, their stress, and their oppression as related solely to their circumstances. Our tendency is to do the same thing. All we **really** need is a **change of circumstances** – instead of a change of heart.
 - c. No doubt the disciples had moments of insight and revelation (e.g., Peter in Mat 16), but, in the end, *to find true liberation, we must come to the end of ourselves and **see our need for a Savior***. This is both an initial need and an ongoing need.
 - d. We want great coffee, great food, great wine, great sex, more money – what’s next...? None of those things are bad, but sometimes we use those things to temporarily block our inner, ultimate anxiety, our “fear of emptiness.”
2. A second posture that can result in spiritual blindness is, **We can fail to recognize Jesus in the ordinary**. Like these disciples on the road, Jesus is closer and more engaged than we realize.
 - a. **Jesus was extraordinarily ordinary**. Again, in Isaiah’s prophetic writings we read, *“He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him” (53:2)*.
 - b. *Jesus became an ordinary person to show ordinary people like us God’s extraordinary love.
 - c. Right now, today, I guarantee you that God is working in your life and using **people &/or trouble – circumstances**, in an attempt to reveal Himself to you – and to draw you to Himself.
 - d. God doesn’t take us AROUND trouble, He takes us THROUGH trouble. And here’s His offer: He’ll go with us – and teach us along the way.

- e. Remember, even disciples of Jesus can suffer from spiritual blindness. Question: Where are your current **difficulties or expectations** preventing you from seeing the active presence of Jesus in your life?
 - f. Certainly God can move in spectacular ways, but unless we are willing to see Him in the **routine** and **ordinary**, we may miss Him.
- B. This brings us to our second question: **How do we encounter, experience, and have a personal relationship with Jesus?**
1. **We encounter Jesus when we humble ourselves and see our need for full redemption.**
 - a. In v.26 we find Jesus giving a summary, or summation, of the gospel: Jesus said, ***“Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”*** [Why did He HAVE to suffer?]
 - 1) This summary statement is a direct response to Cleopas’ statement in v.21: ***“but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”*** In v.26 Jesus is saying that He **had** to die for full redemption to take place. What is FULL redemption?
 - 2) Again, Cleopas thought he needed a General, he didn’t fully realize he needed a Savior.
 - 3) Jesus wants to go deeper than our circumstances and heal the ultimate wound of our separation from God.
 - 4) **Here’s the BAD NEWS:** God demands perfect holiness to enter into His presence. The tiniest, most miniscule sin will separate you from God forever. To miss the mark by even a little bit is still to have missed the mark. [Some of you have already missed the mark by stealing some of your kid’s Easter candy this morning ☺]
 - 5) **The GOOD NEWS, it’s actually great news** -- That Jesus the Christ lived a perfect, sinless life, was brutally murdered to take away our sins, descended into hell, and then was resurrected on the third day. As our hearts are AWAKENED to this act of perfect love, we receive the gift of Christ’s righteousness. It is un-earnable. What Christ has done...
 2. This brings us to the **second point** regarding how we can have a personal encounter, or relationship, with Jesus: **We encounter Jesus in the Scriptures**
 - a. V. 27 - ***And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.***
 - b. They were on a seven-mile journey, which takes about 2-3 hours depending on the terrain.
 - 1) What we have here is THE most important Bible study of all time. What we learn from this verse is, The whole Bible is about Jesus.
 - a) If we think the Bible is about us, we tend to view it as a rulebook – what we **MUST DO** to please God – which will intensify our anxiety.

- b) But, if we see that the whole Bible is about Jesus – we will focus more on what Jesus HAS ALREADY DONE, rather than than what we MUST DO.
(That's the gospel)

3. We encounter Jesus as we come together

- a. Luke 24:30-31a: *When He had reclined at the table **with them**, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them.* ³¹ **Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him.**
- b. We encounter Jesus when we share our lives together... We see this at the beginning of the Emmaus Road narrative as well as at the end. **A six-week spring session of Home Groups will begin meeting on Sunday, April 27, and conclude on June 8.**
- c. Luke 24:13-15 – ¹³*And behold, **two of them** were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, [and] **While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them.***

III. CONCLUSION –

- A. As we draw to a closing song of Easter celebration I want to return to the German theologian's conclusions regarding the root of human anxiety and our fear of emptiness:
1. Thieliicke writes that the “positive force, which defeats anxiety, is love.”⁶ *“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”* 1 John 4:18
 2. “Anxiety is a broken bond - and love is the bond restored...Once we know in Christ that the world has a fatherly basis and that we are loved, we lose our anxiety.”⁷ He likens it to holding on tightly to a father's hand in a dark forest.
 3. In both Matthew and Mark's accounts of the crucifixion they record the anxious cry of Jesus exclaiming: *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34
 4. Yet a closer examination will reveal that even in excruciating death Jesus never let go of His Father's hand. *“My God, My God...”* Jesus brings His anxiety to His Father. And because He did, so can we.
 5. That is why in Luke 24:36 – *“While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘**Peace be with you.**’”* – because He has defeated the “secret wound of modern man.”

⁶ Pgs. 23–24.

⁷ *Ibid.*

P.A.S.S. Questions For Sunridge Life Group Leaders

For the week of March 30-April 5, 2014 – #gracetogo (Matthew 28:16-20)

P - participation (get everyone involved in the dialog)

10. In your world, where have you seen God's glory (His infinite worth and beauty) displayed?
11. Is the idea that a Christian is called to serve as a missionary to family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues new to you? How do you feel about that?

A - application (makes it personal)

12. Who do you know in your life right now who has a tangible need that you could meet?
13. As a home group, study group, or interest group how could we "*seek the welfare of the city*" (Jer 29:7) together? (Serve at The Brook together? Serve a neighbor with a need? Offer to babysit? Throw a block party on your street?)

S - scripture (thinking biblically is a learned behavior! :-)

14. Using the Cheat Sheet, review the components of a missional church.
15. How might our view of the Bible change as we realize it's a book about God and not about us? (Although it's written for us.)

S - sharing – As there is time over the next couple of months, review the updated values of Sunridge.

- Do they reflect who we are?
- Where are we strong?
- Where do we need to grow and develop?