

Week 3: Journeying

Title: **The Resource of Journey**

Key Scripture: **The disciples on the Emmaus Road – Luke 24:13–35** (NKJV used, unless otherwise marked)

Daily Guide corresponding pages: **pp56–59**

Three points: **Travelling through life. Connecting with their story. The bigger story.**

PowerPoint pointers are marked in this colour.

Introduction

We are now in the third week of the series, Paraclesis: Journeying Together. So far, we've looked at caring and loving. This week is all about journeying. Today we are going to explore what it means to journey alongside others.

Travelling through life

The Gospel accounts show that Jesus continually journeyed with others. ***'Jesus traveled from one city and village to another. He spread the Good News about God's kingdom. The twelve apostles were with him'*** (Luke 8:1, GW).

From Jerusalem to Galilee, Jericho to Capernaum, He encountered people like Nicodemus, Zacchaeus and the woman at the well. And when He did, He stopped to get alongside them as they opened up their lives to Him.

1 Peter 1:18 says ***'Your life is a journey you must travel with a deep consciousness of God'*** (*The Message*).

John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory of the journey of life and its struggles. Very often, when we face those struggles we need someone to journey with us to be the 'consciousness of God'.

The challenge of the journey [Fill in Daily Guide]

Life has ups and downs. Job put it like this: *'man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upwards'* (Job 5:7, NIV).

That is a fact of life, but **Hosea 2:15** says *'I will give ... the Valley of [trouble] as a door of hope'*. God can use us to be that 'door of hope' to others. Just joining someone's journey gives them hope. It tells them that they're not alone – that someone is willing to journey alongside them.

Psalm 23 is a 'journey' psalm. The psalmist, David, was facing hardship yet he knew he was not alone: *'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death ... You are with me'* (v4). God was guiding, directing, supporting and journeying with him. The psalm itself begins with *'The Lord is my shepherd'* (v1).

The gift of the journey [Fill in Daily Guide]

Our key verse for this series (**2 Cor. 1:4, The Message**) says that God comes alongside us in our hard times. And when He does, He gives us something, deposits something in us, for us to use in coming alongside someone else on their journey.

Your journey, 'valley' or 'hard time' has significance for someone else's life. In church, we tend to have a lot of teaching on gifts: the gifts of the Spirit, personal gifts, spiritual gifts, natural gifts, temperaments etc. But there's a neglected, overlooked gift in the church, a gift we bring to church each week and take home again, week in, week out.

It is the gift of our 'resource of journey'. Our life experiences – the events and circumstances we have faced and overcome (eg divorce, bereavement, job loss, illness) – can become a resource if we them it to come alongside someone facing a similar event or circumstance. Then they become a gift that God has given us to give to others.

In a church like this, of about [number] people of an average age of [number] years, we have [number x number] years of journey experience in our midst. If we allowed God to release that gift to each other and beyond the walls of this church into the community, what an impact we could make!

The process of the journey [Fill in *Daily Guide*]

Many of us have heard that famous line from *Forrest Gump*: **'My momma always said, "Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get.'"**¹ And isn't it true?

In the Greek, the **'hard times'** used in **2 Corinthians 1:3–5** means pressing, squeezing or pressure. It refers to life's struggles. Jesus refers to it in **John 16:21** when He talks to a woman in childbirth. This illustration is used to show us that out of struggle comes new life.

From hard times come life, purpose, vitality and healing for others.

'Gently encourage the stragglers, and reach out for the exhausted, pulling them to their feet. Be patient with each person, attentive to individual needs' (1 Thess. 5:14, The Message).

Back to our word 'paraclesis'. Another word in Scripture for paraclesis is a fascinating word: **consolation**. The first time paraclesis is mentioned in the New Testament, it is actually about 'consolation'.

It appears in **Luke 2:25** when Mary and Joseph, according to the law, present Jesus in the Temple. A man called Simeon was there and the scripture says he was **'waiting for the Consolation [paraklesis] of Israel'**.

Paul also said, ***'our consolation [paraklesis] ... abounds through Christ' (2 Cor. 1:5)***. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us – the One who comes alongside.

CONSOLATION: Bringing calm and peace, easing and soothing hurt; finding rest and giving hope.

The opposite of consolation is **disconsolation**. It is an old-fashioned word for being depressed. It has to do with loss, grief, sorrow, disappointment, failure and hopelessness. We console the sad, bereaved, the heartbroken, the distressed, the dejected, the disconsolate, the disillusioned and the downcast.

In **Luke 24:13–35**, Jesus joins the journey of two dejected, disconsolate, disillusioned and downcast disciples. Let's pick up the Emmaus Road story and see how the divine Consoler journeys with them.

It is the model or pattern for journeying, Jesus style.

‘Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem’ (Luke 24:13, NIV).

Notice it says ‘the same day’. What day is that? It’s resurrection day. Jesus, raised to new life the very day these dejected and disillusioned guys were heading back home. It’s hugely significant because the first ministry act of Jesus as risen Lord is to come alongside and bring consolation to two disconsolate disciples. Do you think He might be telling us that journeying has a significant role to play in the new kingdom?

So what did Jesus do along this specific journey?

Connecting with their story

They were telling their story and also their back story. (When you get alongside people, you are in the moment, but there’s always a back story.)

The disciples talk about a living memory and present reality [Fill in *Daily Guide*]

‘they talked together of all these things which had happened ... they conversed and reasoned’ (Luke 24:14–15).

They’d been longing and hoping for years that, after centuries of oppression, this man Jesus would be the Saviour and Deliverer of Israel. This was their dream, their hope. But now that memory of the centuries past was linked to a current experience. They had just seen that hope and dream die on a cross and be buried in a tomb.

They were speaking the language of despair, trying to make sense of it. They were in confusion. When we are confused and struggling, we tend to play things over and over again in our minds. Psychologists call it our inner monologue: self-talk. When something happens, a past memory is linked to the current circumstance and present reality. Journeying allows someone to talk out their inner monologue. It’s the beginning of consolation.

Jesus connects and commits [Fill in *Daily Guide*]

‘Jesus himself drew near’ (Luke 24:15).

Jesus approaches and joins them, becoming part of their journey. He was in for the long haul. This wasn’t a ten-yard dash, it was a seven-mile walk, maybe taking three to four hours. He gently catches up to them from behind, falling into step. He doesn’t ambush them.

You can learn a lot by how people enter, participate in and exit a conversation. A self-centred person barges in, hijacks, dominates, sabotages and controls the conversation. They want to tell you all about themselves. Journeying alongside starts by just showing up and 'being there' – not wanting to talk about ourselves, not wanting to take over. Our presence alone is 50% of the care that God wants us to bring to someone else's journey.

Jesus builds rapport [Fill in Daily Guide]

'Jesus ... went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him' (Luke 24:15–16).

They were deep in conversation. Jesus patiently walked beside them. He didn't jump in front and say, 'Hey fellas, I'm risen from the dead, here I am!'

He could have done, but He did something else instead. He built rapport with His quiet, calm, soothing presence. Consolation is the first step of journeying: being there, journeying alongside and bringing and being the peace of God.

Listening to their story, Jesus:

Uses a door opener [Fill in Daily Guide]

'He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?"' (Luke 24:17).

Jesus then asks this open-ended question. Another way of putting it is, 'Help me understand what you're talking about.'

He then asks them ***'What things?' (Luke 24:19)***. He knows exactly what has happened. This is Jesus on resurrection afternoon. He has been the main subject and focus, yet says to them, 'What things?' Do you think He asks because He doesn't know? No, He knows fully but He wants to give them the opportunity to talk it out.

Expresses empathy [Fill in Daily Guide]

'as you walk and are sad?' (Luke 24:17).

Jesus is listening to the conversation. He's said nothing but He's hearing something deeper than the words He is listening to.

He reads their body language, looks at their faces, the way they're walking, the way their shoulders were slumped. He reads the signals they are sending out. He demonstrates emotional intelligence. And then He identifies what they are feeling and reflects it to them.

When you come alongside others, be careful, warm, genuine and attentive. Like Jesus, do not be intrusive but allow others time to express their pain. If needed, use a 'door opener' to help them express more.

Lets them tell their story [Fill in Daily Guide]

'He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him ...' (Luke 24:19).

They're probably halfway through the journey by now. When you journey with someone it takes time to let them tell their story and unburden their heart. The disciples clearly want this 'stranger' to know and understand their broken world. And Jesus doesn't cut them short but continues to listen to their story. He has the answer, or rather, *is* the answer, but He wants them to discover it. He could have imposed it on them as soon as He met them but Jesus understands the importance of the *process* of the journey.

The bigger story

Jesus has walked with them, listened to them and now He talks with them about the 'bigger story'. **Jesus is carefronting.**

CAREFRONTING: Shows care and concern for the individual, not just challenging the issue. It is not so much trying to change the person but trying to help them see themselves and their circumstances more accurately.

By carefronting, Jesus:

1. Earned the right to speak [Fill in Daily Guide]

Having taken time to understand, feel their pain and show respect, Jesus earns the right to speak. They were now willing to listen to what He has to say. We cannot speak effectively unless we understand how people feel. When we feel understood, we will listen.

2. Helped them face reality [Fill in Daily Guide]

When Jesus says, **'O foolish ones, and slow of heart' (Luke 24:25)**, that does not mean, 'you stupid idiots!' The Greek word for 'foolish' here means **a lack of understanding**. They were failing to understand something. The J. B. Phillips translation puts it: **'Aren't you failing to understand, and slow to believe'**. Jesus wants them to understand the reality of their

circumstances. His starting point was to use something familiar to them: ***'all the prophets have spoken'***.

3. Focused on perspective and hope [Fill in *Daily Guide*]

The disciples had a twofold problem:

A **head problem** (loss of perspective)

A **heart problem** (a lack of belief and loss of hope)

Hope directly relates to perspective. Knowing they are familiar with the prophets, Jesus takes their inner monologue, their subjective reality, and relates it to objective truth. If you've walked with God and God has brought grace and truth to you in your struggle, then you have found perspective and hope.

To help the disciples see the **'bigger story'**, Jesus:

- **Brings grace and truth**

'beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself' (Luke 24:27, NIV).

Jesus has been gracious, letting grace flow towards the disciples. Now He brings truth. It is said of Jesus, ***'we beheld His glory ... full of grace and truth'*** (John 1:14). Grace precedes truth. When we take the time to let the grace flow by walking and journeying, then truth flows from it. Here in the story, Jesus was not giving an Old Testament history lesson. By talking about His reality, His circumstances and His suffering, He was linking their story to His story: Gods story. That's what our key verse says: ***'He comes alongside ... he brings us alongside someone else ... so that we can be there for that person [with grace and truth] just as God was there for us [with grace and truth]'*** (2 Cor. 1:4, *The Message*). Grace and truth bring perspective and hope, and hope is at heart of journeying.

- **Ministers to their need**

'they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them ... He sat at the table with them ... He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them' (Luke 24:28–30).

Seven miles on, they've journeyed with Jesus and, despite the long amount time already spent together, they're not ready to part when Jesus indicates that He's moving on. They **'constrained Him'** – this is a strong word in Greek, much like grabbing or restraining a prisoner. They are desperate for Him to **'Abide with'** them – to live, to remain. Something was really happening here. They invite Him in and He goes in at their urgent request. In journeying, He had become a caring friend, a supportive companion, gaining their confidence and trust. The risen Christ of grace and truth has been pouring Himself into their lives. Now they are so connected with this 'stranger', they want to hang out with Him. Now they're not journeying, they're sitting, communing, sharing grace and truth.

- **Brings enlightenment**

'Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight' (Luke 24:31).

Jesus takes bread and breaks it, then suddenly He's gone, mission accomplished. Realisation dawns in the disciples' spirits; scales fall from their eyes as Jesus vanishes from sight. This is a moment of enlightenment, an 'aha' moment, an epiphany. His presence is made known to them and their eyes are opened. They saw the light – Jesus is just who we need in times of struggle.

They looked at each other and ***'said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"'*** (Luke 24:32).

They both reflected back to their journey but they didn't compare notes, they compared hearts. They had received a visitation of divine light and divine heart. They didn't just see something, they *felt* something. Hope was restored and disconsolation faded. They felt their hearts burn.

- **Re-energises them**

'So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed ...!" And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread' (Luke 24:33–35).

As enlightenment dawns in their spirit they suddenly realise that there are other people to journey with, more disconsolate people back in Jerusalem, where they were seven miles

ago. They couldn't finish their food, they couldn't rest. With hope restored, perspective changed, spirits energised and hearts on fire, they rise up from the table immediately. They don't walk back to Jerusalem; they run, they leap, they shout. Something has happened in them. Two grown men whose lives just a few hours ago had been disconsolate, on a downward spiral, are transformed by the power and presence of Jesus in the process of a journey.

Their hearts which burnt were now bursting. They journeyed now with hope, transported by joy – all is not lost after all! They go to tell their story to others. That's the joy of journeying, which God has for you.

Jesus is the centre of this story. He came alongside us at the cross, forgave our sin and guilt, but did not leave us there. He set us on a journey where we can come alongside others with the grace and truth He's imparted to us. If you've received any measure of grace and truth in your experience, God calls you to take that resource and to journey with others. This is the Jesus model.

This type of journeying is not just for Sundays. There are [number] people in this church. If every one of us took this to heart and started journeying with two other people, every week our church would be journeying with [number x 2] people from Monday to Saturday. And if any of these people were those outside the church, then this ministry of paracletis will be working out into the world. This is a model of journeying evangelism.

May God quicken to your heart the possibility and potential of your journey and life experience because, after today, you can never say again that you have nothing to bring to someone else's life. You have a gift. Don't bury it; don't bring it to church just to then take it home again. Ask God to use it in the lives of others. Let Jesus be who He is to us and through us, as we connect our story and the stories of others with God's story.

¹ www.imdb.com/title/tt0109830/quotes

For further reading, see chapters 5, 6 and 7 of *Love with Skin On*, Trevor J. Partridge (Farnham: CWR, 2016).

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