

“A Walk Through the Cemetery of Broken Dreams”

Luke 24:13-35

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How can you help someone who is walking through the cemetery of broken dreams? It appears that was what the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were doing. I can imagine them walking ever so slowly, hardly able to put one foot in front of the other. Why?

The one in whom they had placed their hopes and dreams for a better world had been crucified and buried. How could they have been so wrong about his future and theirs? This was not how his promising ministry was supposed to end. What were they to do with all those dreams they had accumulated over the past three years? I suppose they had no choice but to bury them.

Have you ever felt this level of despair? Do you know someone that is there now? How can you help them?

What did Jesus do to help these two disciples that were reeling in despair? Our text reveals that he did three things. **He joined them on their journey and walked with them. He encouraged them to talk about what had happened and he gave them hope, a reason to run again.**

Do you know what I notice about these three things? Anyone can do them. These are not tasks that only a select few can do. All of us can do these and when we do, we become the presence of Christ in a broken world.

Anglican priest and author Tom Ehrich helped me see this. “Ministry is about small gestures,” he writes. He’s right.

So, how do you help someone that is walking through the cemetery of broken dreams? **The first thing you do is join them on their journey and walk with them.** This is what Jesus did for the two on the way to Emmaus. He became their friend when they needed a friend the most and entered their world precisely where they were.

You need friends when you are grieving and confused. There is no substitute for people that will help you carry your burdens, especially when they are so heavy.

I like the way psychotherapist Gary Neuman states it, “We heal through loving connection. Every time we hurt or feel that we can’t go on, it’s someone reaching out and connecting that makes the difference. Love, no matter how it is offered and when it comes, can build a bridge to something better.”

I think I realize why Luke shared this story with his readers. He wanted them to understand this was exactly the role of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Jesus modeled the function of the Spirit on the road to Emmaus when he walked alongside the two grieving disciples. This had to comfort them as I hope it does you and me.

However, Jesus did more than walk with these two disappointed disciples. He encouraged them to talk and listened to their stories.

I am intrigued by the fact that Jesus encouraged the two disciples to talk. Wouldn’t you expect him to do the talking? Actually, he did, and what did he say? “What are you discussing with each other as you walk along?”

Perhaps this story inspired McAfee professor, Dr. Ron Johnson, to write his book, [How Will They Hear if We Don’t Listen?](#) In this book, Johnson stresses the vital role of listening in preaching and personal evangelism.

Our text reveals that Jesus certainly knew the value of being a good listener. The first thing he did when he began walking with these two dejected disciples was to encourage them to share their story with him. Why? Didn’t he know what they were discussing? Sure he did, but he also knew how therapeutic and beneficial this would be for them. They needed to verbalize their feelings and sort through their confusion and he gave them that opportunity.

In addition, don't you think he realized that if he took the time to listen to them, they would listen to him? Why do you think they invited him to stay with them when they arrived at their home? This good listener was becoming a trusted friend.

Last Friday marked the 40th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. In anticipation of it, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* included a commemorative section in the paper the previous Sunday. They asked twelve people to relate a memory from the day that King was killed. I learned things about that day I had not known.

As informative as it was, I imagine it was therapeutic for those that shared their personal memories. There is value in verbalizing even painful memories. Jesus knew this and this was one reason he encouraged these two disciples to talk.

Jesus did more than listen to these two disciples, though, as important as that was. **He gave them hope.** He helped them to see light where there was none by sharing his faith and knowledge of the scriptures with them. He accepted their invitation to visit in their home and stay for a meal. When he broke the bread and blessed it, their eyes were opened. Suddenly, they saw and understood things that had been hidden and what a difference it made. This newfound hope gave them a reason to run again.

Grief has a way of blinding us, doesn't it? Heartbreak and confusion limit our visibility and drain our energy. They rob us of our joy and the ability to plan for the future. What a gift hope is and what a difference it makes.

Just look at these two disciples for an example. These tired and lifeless pilgrims that struggled to put one foot in front of another ran seven miles back to Jerusalem to share with the other disciples what they had experienced and learned from the resurrected Jesus. What a gift Jesus gave them.

Who gave you this gift? Who accompanied you through your darkest valley and lifted your spirits? Who gave you a reason to live again?

Who needs this from you now? Who needs you to walk with them through the cemetery of broken dreams?

Let me encourage you to find them and be their friend, for remember, "Ministry is about small gestures." Helping friends, or even strangers, carry heavy burdens is at the heart of the gospel.

In Superman: The Movie, Superman first reveals his powers to the world with a dramatic rescue of Lois Lane. Lois is dangling from a cable high above the Daily Planet building and screaming at the top of her lungs. Just as she begins her long fall, Superman changes into his power suit and swoops up to catch her in midair.

At the same time, a helicopter parked on the edge of the building starts to fall straight toward the crowd below. Superman reaches out and grabs it with his one free arm and gently sets both it and Lois safely back on the launching pad.

When he turns to leave, Lois stammers out the words, "Who are you?" Superman simply replies, "A friend."

I know we would all like to be this kind of friend who can perform miracles and rescue people from grave danger. We'll never be able to do this, but there is something we can do. We can accompany people that are walking through the cemetery of broken dreams and help them carry their load. We can listen to their stories and share our own filled with the hope of Easter. What a difference this will make in their lives and ours. Will you be this kind of friend this week to someone that is walking through the cemetery of broken dreams?