

# GROUP RETREAT

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# REFLECTION

*Never a Stranger*



## Group Retreat Reflection

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# INTRODUCTION

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Hindsight is a wonderful thing. It's often much simpler to discern God's hand on our lives when we're no longer searching for direction. But it's a healthy spiritual practice to ask for God's guidance as an on-going ethos in our spiritual lives. We don't always recognise that God is walking alongside us, that he comes near to help us understand when we're confused or life is weighing us down.

A Bible story which illustrates this place of confusion and God walking alongside us, is the road to Emmaus in Luke.

This reflection is based on a modern day painting of the disciples and Jesus walking together. There is also a written reflection that can be used as an individual but is best narrated to a group.

There are a variety of resources here, please feel free to use whatever is appropriate for your context.

# PRAYER

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Lord Jesus Christ,  
Walk with us we pray,  
in every part of our journey,  
no matter how full of doubt or fear we may be today.

Through your Holy Spirit,  
we pray that you will open our eyes.  
Help us see you as our risen Lord  
in all your beauty,  
and in all your loving power.  
Amen.

# READING – LUKE 24 (NRSV)

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### The Walk to Emmaus

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” 19 He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23 and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” 25 Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29 But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

## IMAGE

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'Emmaus' by Janet Brooks-Gerloff (1992 – Benedictine Kornelimünster Abbey, Aachen)

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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Have you ever had a moment of revelation where God has suddenly seemed more present?

Can you think of a time in the last month when God has walked alongside you?

What does the landscape tell you about the story, physically and metaphorically?

What would you have been saying if you'd just experienced the first Easter?

What does this image say about 'direction'?

Where is the focal point of this image and why is that important?

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# REFLECTION : 'AT A CROSSROADS'

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Are you there? Are you there Lord? If you are, I need some help. I don't know which way to go... Choices, choices in life that are so difficult. If only you were here, walking beside me, we could talk it all through.

I guess I'm at a crossroads, bit cliché isn't it. Do you believe in clichés? Do you believe in anything, do you need to? I guess you believe in our abilities, our faith, our hope, our heart song?

That's it, I need to be on a path to fulfilling my heart song – but what about the kids, the rent? I know you feed the birds and the lily in the field – consider the lily, I get that...

Do you guide us even when we don't recognise you? Are you there in the friends, family and colleagues who help us through? Your face is almost recognisable in that eccentric lady at church who always seems to know exactly what you need to hear.

I guess you are all the time – is that it? Is that what you need me to know? That you're always walking beside me? I don't always recognise you, maybe I've not been looking?

How do I know which way to go? There's no burning bush here, no voice as I sleep... People try to help but there's so many voices in the world, how do we know which ones to listen to? I guess I need you to reveal yourself, make yourself known.

Reveal yourself Lord...

You do don't you...

You are there in the people around us.

You are there in nature, in creativity.

You are there as we gather together.

You are there as we break bread.

You are there in the stillness.

You are there in our struggles.

You are there at the crossroads.

He is amongst us but we don't discern him

He is different, strange, but never a stranger.

### Further Resources

- Songs
  - I Can See (The Emmaus Road) by Steve Green
  - As the two Disciples Walked to Emmaus (Saviour Walk with us Today) – Johnston
  - Emmaus Road (O Lord whose Love Designed this Day) – Idle
  - Emmaus – Tony Alonzo
  
- Art
  - Camino de Emaús, by Lelio Orsi, 1560–65
  - Jesus and the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1571
  - Der Gang nach Emmaus, Joseph von Führich, 1837
  - Gang nach Emmaus, Robert Zünd, 1877