

What My Walk to Emmaus Experience Means to Me

Note: It would be beneficial to the understanding of my writing if you will read the story of Jesus' Appearance on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35); two key passages are below.

[13] Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. [14] They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. [15] As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; [16] but they were kept from recognizing him.....

.....[30] When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. [31] Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. [32] They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (NIV)

Jesus may often walk beside us, unrecognized. Just as Jesus isn't recognized by the travelers to Emmaus, he can be with us and even encourage us in our struggles, even though we aren't aware that he is present...

I went on my pilgrim journey Walk to Emmaus in April of 1999. But first I need to tell you about how I got to that point. I was raised by good parents who attended church every week, and made sure that I went as well. The seeds for my adult Christian Faith were planted in these early days, although I had no inkling of what my spiritual journey through life would look or feel like. I went through the preacher's new Christians class with a number of my friends, and was baptized on my 12th birthday, which happened to be a Sunday.

Fast forward to college... Like many people who go off to school, I found other things to fill my life on weekends, and so dropped my regular "church on Sunday" routine. I guess you could have called me a C & E Christian at that point. After college, Linda and I were married, and we began our new life together, but going to church was not a part of our routine. We had been married 4 years when our daughter, Stefanie was born. I began to feel a tug of something, but didn't recognize it as Jesus, walking beside me, tugging on my sleeve. I had a God-shaped hole in me, that I had been trying to fill with all the wrong things.

In fact, Stefanie was three years old before we made a decision to start attending church again. Slowly, we began to get engaged and involved with our church. We were asked to become Deacons, and then I was asked to be an Elder. I "felt" like I was ready to step up to this role, and thought I was prepared for it. It took a retrospective view a number of years later to make me realize how woefully unprepared and equipped I was to serve as an Elder. All this was in three previous churches we attended prior to moving to Denver.

In 1996, my job brought me to Denver, and it only took one visit to South Suburban to realize that there was something special here. I couldn't put my finger on it at first, but there was an "energy" here in the body of the congregation that affirmed that the Holy Spirit was not just alive and well, but thriving here at SSCC. I thought I was "Walking with Jesus," but still felt that something important was missing

At South Suburban Christian Church we have a Mission Statement that says: **"Our deep desire at South Suburban Christian Church is to help people hear the CALL of a loving God to an intimate relationship and a life-giving ministry; to realize that we are GIFTED by God in our own unique ways to serve Him; so that we can be EQUIPPED and trained; in order to be SENT out into the world celebrating the Lord's purpose and power, His love and concern, as His fully devoted followers."**

I was called by God to a closer relationship, and responded by re-engaging with the church. God blessed me by gifting me with a love and compassion for people, the ability to worship with music, and a good sense of humor, but I began to realize that I was ill-equipped for the roles I served. And this equipping-void was preventing me from fulfilling my role of being sent to serve people and witness for Him.

Phyllis Bolsinger was one of the first people we met at SSCC, and she was the teacher of the present day Basic Bible Travelers Sunday School class that we are still an integral part of. You need to know that Phyllis was one of the first Emmaus members of the Emmaus of the Rockies Community. [and just as a side note, here are Sharon Matthew's comments: "I was Phyllis' sponsor on her walk to Emmaus! I attended my pilgrim walk in Northern Virginia in 1985 and was on the original steering committee and then the board of Emmaus of the Rockies when it first came to Colorado in 1990. The first two people my mother and I sponsored were my hubby and Jim Hollingsworth - - Walk #3. I think Deral was probably sponsored by Jim on maybe #5 (trusting my faulty memory). I sponsored 6 women on Emmaus of the Rockies #6 and Phyllis was one of those six. Among the women at least, I've been dubbed "the Emmaus virus of SSCC"] It wasn't long after we joined SSCC and became part of the BBT Sunday School class that Phyllis started a "campaign of encouragement" with me to go to an Emmaus Walk. Like most people, I made all sorts of excuses about not having the time, too many other things in my life going on, I was strong in my faith.... ..and on and on. Phyllis didn't give up on me, it took her three years, but I finally got to the point in life that Jesus' tugging on my sleeve was something I couldn't ignore.

What I came to realize is that you don't go in *your time* on a Walk to Emmaus; you go in God's time, and He knows when you're ready. You need to get to a point in life where you can be open to God's awesome Love and Grace. You also see that it is God's gift, passed from hand to hand by those who have made their Pilgrim Journey. It is the same personal contact that Jesus used in sharing his Father's love, through him to them, one person on on.

Back to my opening story. I attended my Pilgrim Walk in April, 1999 at Hermit Basin in Westcliffe, Colorado (Linda made her Pilgrim Walk in the fall of 1999). It was a life-changing event for me; a step function **UP** in my spiritual journey. Prior to that weekend, I thought I knew Jesus and thought I was walking close to Him. What I learned is that I was holding God an arm's length from me; God is ***always there, and as close as you will let Him be.*** I got a mega-dose of God's love, mercy, and grace that weekend. I came home filled to overflowing. It changed my relationship with my wife, our daughter, my church, and most importantly my relationship with my Lord. As most of you know, I am starting my third tour as an active Elder; I felt God's call to service again last year and signed up to serve again.

You need to understand that the Walk to Emmaus is not a church; it is not a religion; it is not a social club. It is an ecumenical (multi-denominational) **equipping tool for Christians**, which allows you to become a more effective lay person in your home Church. The common bond we share with others who have been on a Pilgrim Walk is the belief that Jesus is the Christ, and is our Lord and Savior. The program is designed to make you stronger in your walk with the Lord, which allows you to be a stronger better leader in your own church. No one is required to serve on a Walk after attending as a pilgrim, although I and many others do, because the program is so vital to strengthening the Universal Body of Christ. We serve not because we are required to, but rather because as slaves to Christ we are **called to**.

South Suburban Christian has been a dynamic, vibrant body of Christ in our community for several reasons, such as a visionary Senior Pastor in Deral Schrom who leads a gifted staff. But in addition, the fact that over 200 people who are members of South Suburban have experienced God's awesome love through the Walk to Emmaus program has given us a strong, vibrant core of lay leadership! A high percentage of the current lay leadership at SSCC has been on their Pilgrim Walk to Emmaus.

We have been equipped and sent to be the hands and feet of Christ in the Body of Christ, serving the world.

This message is one that needs to be shared with our younger members. We need to continue to equip those who are our future leaders. Please feel free to share it with our younger members! And remember, you are never too old to attend a Walk! There is also a youth version of the Walk to Emmaus, called “**Chrysalis**”. It is for youth ages high school through college. The Walks and the Chrysalis Flights are 3 day weekend spiritual journeys. The Walk to Emmaus is only one way of many to strengthen your relationship with God, but I know personally how significant it was for me.

Many people think this “Walk” or “Hike” is a physical journey, which it is not. Rather, it is a *spiritual journey* that allows you to “walk” closer to Our Lord. It happens when God taps you on the shoulder and says, “You’re ready!” If you have any questions about the Walk to Emmaus, please let me know, or contact any one of the people listed below, and we are happy to answer them (We also have brochures about Emmaus that we can provide).

At the close of my pilgrim walk, I was given the charge, “Christ is Counting on You,” to which I replied, “and I am Counting on Christ!”

So I ask you, to look within your heart, prayerfully, to see if the fire of desire to Walk closer with the Lord is burning. If it is, God may be calling you to become better equipped to be a part of the leadership of South Suburban as we move forward in growing and strengthening God’s kingdom here on earth.

-Randy Greenwood, Elder

(Walk #63, Emmaus of the Rockies; current member of the Columbine Emmaus Community)

A *partial* list of Columbine Emmaus Community people at South Suburban that you can talk with:

Randy & Linda Greenwood
Terry & Brenda Jennings
Wayne Schnick
Bill Yeagley
Joe & Carol Cox
Gary & Jani Landry
Sharon & Bob Matthew

Ralph & Mary Reed
Terri & Jim Huck
Steve & Vicki Kail
Angela Rodriguez
Judie Ritchie
J.C. and Betty White
Kelby Cotton

Deral & Garren Schrom
Jeff & Carol Deaner
Gail Lotz
Jack Chugden
Bill & Vee Tooley
Donna Macauley

There are many people in addition to this list that you can talk to. Ask, Have you been to Emmaus?