

Near the Cross Emmaus



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Are You Jesus?

A few years ago a group of salesmen went to a regional sales convention in Chicago. They had assured their wives that they would be home in time for Friday night's dinner. In their rush to make the return home flight, with their tickets and briefcases in hand, one of the salesmen accidentally kicked over a table which held a display of apples.

Apples flew all over everywhere. Without stopping or looking back, they all managed to reach the gate in time, but almost missed boarding for their flight back home.

ALL BUT ONE! He paused, took a deep breath, looked back, got in touch with his feelings, and experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl whose apple stand had been overturned.

He told his buddies to go on without him, waved goodbye to them, told them to call his wife when they arrived home and to tell her that he was taking a later flight. Then, he returned to the terminal where the apples were all over the floor.

He was glad he did. The 16-year old girl was totally blind! She was softly crying, and tears were running down her cheeks in frustration. At the same time, she was helplessly groping for her apples as the crowd swirled about her,

no one stopping and no one to care for her in her misery.

The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the apples, put them back on the table, and helped her organize the display. As he did this, he placed those aside in a separate basket. When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl, "Here, please take this \$40 for the damage I did. Are you OK?"

She nodded through her tears. He continued on by saying, "I hope I did not spoil your day too badly."

As the salesman started to walk away, the bewildered blind girl called out to him: "Mister..."

As he paused and turned to look back into those blind eyes. She continued, "Are you Jesus?"

He stopped in mid-stride, and wondered. He gently went back and said, "No, I am nothing like Jesus. He is good, kind, caring, loving and would never have bumped into your display in the first place."

The girl nodded solemnly and said, "I only asked because I prayed for Jesus to help me gather the apples. He sent you to help me, so you are like Him. Only He knows who will do His will. Thank you for hearing His call, mister." The salesman slowly

made his way back to catch a later flight, and all the while, that question burned and bounced about in his soul: "Are you Jesus?"

Wow! Has anyone ever mistaken us for Jesus? Isn't that really our destiny? To be so much like Jesus that people cannot tell the difference, as we live and act and interact in a world that is blind to His life, love and grace?

If we claim to know Him, shouldn't we live and walk and talk like Him?

Are we like those damaged apples, where Jesus stopped what he was doing, gathered us up, and paid for us on that hill at Calvary, no matter how badly damaged we were? We have been bought for a price!

The laying on of hands, prayer, service, sharing, caring, loving, being a visible Christian while learning the art of being an anonymous servant.

Christian action involves activity. It's not for our recognition but to lift up Jesus!

Dr. Perry Hope, one of the founders of Near The Cross Emmaus, brought this story to the Believers Sunday School class at First United Methodist Church, Jonesboro, which is blessed to have his Christ-centered lessons once a month. (Article submitted by Tom McDonald.)

Gathering Saturday At Jonesboro

December 1 is Community Gathering Day at First United Methodist Church, Jonesboro. Join us for fellowship, inspiration and preparation for 2013.

Potluck begins at noon, followed by a Fourth Day Talk, Christian singing and Holy Communion led by Rev. Marion Fleming.

This would be a good day for Sponsors from Walks #25 and #26 to bring the Pilgrims you sponsored, introducing them to people filled with Christian love and the Holy Spirit.

See you there!

Upcoming Dates

**Dec. 1 (noon) Gathering
9:30 a.m. Board meeting**

**Jan. 5 (noon) — Gathering,
Jonesboro FUMC**

**(Tentative, subject to
Mt. Zion Board)
Spring Walks
March 7-10: Men's Walk
March 14-17: Women's Walk**

**April 20: Emmaus
Training by Upper Room
Staff for all
Communities
In this Region
Jonesboro FUMC**

Ye Shall Receive Power

Acts 1:8

4th Day Talk Jim Markley

Prior to my pilgrim walk to Emmaus, my relationship with God was more of a Timothy experience than a Paul experience. From an early age, Timothy had known the scriptures necessary for salvation in Christ Jesus, and when he first met the Christians of the 1st century church, he immediately joined them.

Paul, on the other hand, had a very different experience in coming to Christ. The Light of Christ, which shone around Paul on the road to Damascus, was sufficient to finish Paul's mission of persecution. In an instant, one journey ended and another began.

Not so for me. My early Christian experience was more like Timothy's than Paul's. As far back as I can remember I have had a relationship with God.

For the first six years of my life I lived mostly with my grandparents, my mother's parents. In 1925 my grandparents were founders, builders, and members of the First Free Methodist Church of Seekonk, Massachusetts, and they were very strong in their faith.

Every day started with morning prayers and every day ended with evening prayers. We were poor and there was a lot of sickness in the house. We would pray for Christ to return so that we may have a better life in His Kingdom.

My grandmother and grandfather often prayed that God would call me into ministry. For some reason, they believed that I would travel far and wide to preach the gospel.

My mother's heritage was approximately 1/3 Native Ameri-

American, 1/3 African American, and 1/3 Australian aborigine. How that happened is an interesting story in itself that would take far too long to explain here.

My father was 100% Irish Catholic. My grandmother and grandfather on my dad's side immigrated to America in 1905. So my dad is 2nd generation, and I am 3rd generation Irish American.

When my mother and father married Nov. 23, 1950, my dad had to sign a document that I would attend Catholic or parochial schools for my education. Being protestant, my mother could not marry my father in the Catholic sanctuary. They had to be married in the rectory, and my mother had to stand two steps behind my father, and she could not take communion at the ceremony. In fact, as a protestant, she could never take Holy Communion in the Roman Catholic Church.

My parents always came home on weekends. On Sunday, my dad would take me to 8:00 am mass at the Church of St. Leo the Great in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Pawtucket is another Native American name. Then my mother would take me to Sunday School at 10:00 am, followed by worship at 11:00 am and Bible study on Wednesday nights at the Free Methodist Church in Seekonk. When I was old enough for school, I moved to Pawtucket to live with my parents and begin attending Catholic school.

My parents never told me one church was better than the other. They just said that after I was 18 I could make my own faith choice, but until then, they had a responsibility as my parents to give me a good Christian upbringing.

By the time I was 18, I had seen enough hypocrisy in both

churches that I wanted nothing to do with either one. Somehow in all my Biblical training I missed the fact that "we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23)

So at the age of 18, six months after I graduated high school, I joined the Air Force. Oh, I wanted to go to college, but we were poor. My family lived from paycheck to paycheck. The rent on the four-room tenement house we lived in was \$10 per week, and some weeks we could only come up with \$7. It never crossed my mind to ask my father to help with college expenses. I knew he could not afford it. So, I joined the Air Force to take advantage of the G.I. Bill and go to college after my four-year enlistment.

Now this was during the Vietnam era. So I naturally assumed I would be going to an air base in Thailand or Vietnam. On the day the orders were given out, there were about 50 of us waiting to hear our names and new duty assignment. Sure enough, they started calling out Thailand, then Vietnam, then Thailand again, then Vietnam again. But when they came to my name they said Camp New Amsterdam in The Netherlands. What a surprise! I spent three years in Europe and had a wonderful time.

During that time, I rarely attended church, but I prayed every day and studied my Bible occasionally. I came home on leave, got married, and took my new bride back to Amsterdam. When I got out of the military, I worked full time and attended college on the G.I. Bill.

I graduated from Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia, on June 12, 1978. I accepted a position with M&M/Mars, and for the first

time in my life I was not living from paycheck to paycheck.

We had two children, boys. We joined a small church in Cleveland, Tennessee. By then I realized that I suffered from the same hypocrisy I saw in my mother's church and my father's church. My wife and I longed for the fellowship of like-minded Christians.

In 1978, I became a Lay Speaker in that church. I had money in the bank, a good job, a loving wife and beautiful healthy children. All seemed right with the world. I was truly a happy man.

Then a strange thing happened. Having been poor since childhood, I had always prayed for Christ's return to be sooner rather than later. But now things were going so well that I prayed for God to delay His coming. I wanted more of this supposed good life. This thing called life became easy for me. I began to think, this is a piece of cake. I am having too much fun to leave now!

That was a big mistake. I do not recommend that you ever pray this prayer!

As my career progressed, the promotions came, and I began to travel more and more. My income was growing and I was providing a good life for my family. After all, isn't that what a father is supposed to do? What I didn't realize, until it was too late, was my relationship with my wife was falling apart.

One day in 1985 she surprised me by telling me that I was a great father and good provider, but she did not love me anymore. She said we had married too young, and now that she had seen part of the world, she wanted out of the marriage.

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Ye Shall Receive Power Ye Shall Receive Power

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I was stunned. I said, what about the children? She said, oh, I am too emotionally unstable to handle the children. You can take them. I was stunned again. On the one hand I was devastated that she was leaving. I loved her. On the other hand, I was delighted to have custody of my two sons.

My mom and dad, now both retired, moved in with me immediately to help raise their grandsons. I left M&M/Mars and started a new business with friends.

I moved to Columbus, Georgia, and joined St. Luke's United Methodist Church. In 1987, I married again, and in 1994, my second wife divorced me for another man. After my second wife left me, I asked my doctor what my problem was. He said: "stop marrying women that don't like you."

I called a friend in Chicago to tell him my second wife had left me. He said, "How would you know. You are never home." That was a wakeup call for me.

By this time, I had stopped asking Christ to delay His return. By now, my daily prayers were for Christ to return as soon as possible to save this troubled world, especially my troubled life.

In 1994, I moved to Jonesboro to be closer to our manufacturing facility. In 1996 I met the true love of my life and we married in 1998. I joined the Bay United Methodist Church where my wife Gale had attended all of her life. For seven years we taught a Sunday School class together, and I became certified again as a Lay Speaker.

In 2005 our then pastor Angie Gage announced that she was going away to the Walk to Emmaus for the weekend. I wondered what that was. In 2006 one of the members of our

Sunday School class, Allen Devereux, went on the Walk.

They both returned from Emmaus on fire for Christ. I was curious. So in 2007, when Allen asked to sponsor me, I jumped at the chance.

I arrived at Sendoff very nervous. I didn't know anybody. I didn't even know where they are taking us on the buses. I didn't sleep well that first night.

On Friday, I took a lot of notes. I found the material very interesting and helpful, but I was wondering, was this really so important that I was giving up a weekend with my family, and local church activities. I slept a little better the second night.

Saturday morning started much the same as Friday ended. But just before lunch, something happened I had never experienced before. The Holy Spirit showed up in my life in a way He had never done before.

You remember the TV show with Emeril Lagasse the chef? It was like **BAM**. The Holy Spirit was there! It was my first Paul experience. Later that night the Holy Spirit increased His presence in my life. It was like **BAM! BAM!** I slept very soundly the third night.

On Sunday, I didn't want to go home. I wanted to hear more. At Closing, I made a commitment to be a better husband, father, and friend. That was five years ago, and the Holy Spirit continues to guide my life in new and exciting ways.

Since my Walk I have become the Lay Speaking Director for the eastern section of the Northeast Arkansas district of my denomination. I was elected to the Board of Directors for NTC Emmaus, and in January of this year I became

chairman of the board. In the spring of 2012, the district superintendent asked me to be the Lay Pastor of the Farm Hill Church.

My first response was going to be "no," but I decided to pray about it before I gave him my final answer. In my prayer I told God that there were so many hours in a day, and I still had a day job. He answered that prayer very quickly.

Shortly after that prayer, we received an offer for the North American division of our company that we just could not refuse. We sold the North American division but I kept the United Kingdom and Australian divisions.

So, until further notice, I am the lay pastor of the Farm Hill Church.

My 4th day experiences have been an exciting time for me. And now as we reach the end of this calendar year, my term as NTC board chair will be over at the January 2013 meeting. Being board chair this past year has been a labor of love.

Over the years, I have been a part of many boards and teams, but I never have been part of a group that works harder. Every member of this board has a servant's heart. We communicate, coordinate, and pray for each other on a daily basis.

We have just completed this year's election. Joining the Board will be Shane West as clergy, with Marvin Day, Jason Chandler, Kathy Price and Pam Slaven as lay members. Leaving the board at the end of the year will be Ted DeWeese as clergy, with Tom McDonald, Bob Rogers, Jim Stillwell and Betty Waser as lay people. I would like to thank each one for an outstanding job.

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