



## A life-transforming encounter

Reflections on Luke 24:13-35

by Greg Elsdon

Luke's account of Jesus' meeting with Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus is without doubt one of the most poignant and powerful stories in the Gospels [Luke 24:13-35].

In the days following the execution of Jesus, two of his downcast and disillusioned followers were walking away from Jerusalem towards Emmaus. As they walked they were mulling over the events of the previous days when a 'stranger' suddenly joins them and enquires of them what it is they have been discussing along the way.

The travellers respond with incredulity that anyone could have been in Jerusalem and be unaware of what had taken place. In response to their obvious grief and consternation the stranger begins to explain to them that these terrifying events can only be properly understood as the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures – "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures." [24:27]

And still they did not recognize him! As readers of the story we know the identity of the stranger, and so are mystified when the two men fail to recognize him. **Is there perhaps more to recognizing and understanding Jesus than simply hearing what he says?**

As evening drew near, and they still hadn't reached their destination, the two travellers insisted that Jesus spend the night with them.

It is only now, as the still-unrecognised risen Jesus shares a meal with them that "their eyes are opened and they recognize him" [24:31]. Jesus, the guest at the table, becomes the host when he takes the bread, blesses it and gives it to them. In words powerfully reminiscent of the Last Supper, Luke tells of their sudden recognition that they had been walking, talking and sharing a meal with the very same Jesus they had seen crucified and buried just a few days before.

Then, as suddenly as their eyes had been opened, the stranger was gone – "he vanished from their sight" [24:31]. But they would never be the same again. Their lives were changed forever.

*"The moment of recognition that follows ("their eyes were opened and they recognized him" [v.31]) is also the moment of Jesus' vanishing. Curiously, the sudden disappearance of the Lord they had just regained does not seem to dismay the disciples. But the narrative makes here an important point. The community of faith that is to grow out of these experiences will not have the physical presence or sight of Jesus. But that does not mean they will not have him as companion upon the journey." [Brendan Byrne]*

Not waiting until morning, they get up from the table where they had recognized Jesus and hurried back to Jerusalem in the darkness to share the news of their encounter with the risen Jesus with the disciples and other followers of Jesus who were mourning his death.

**Just as Jesus came alongside the two troubled travellers on the road to Emmaus, so the Risen Christ companions his people today. He comes alongside us and transforms us by his presence, reassuring us in our despondency and inviting us to join him on the road.**



**An Emmaus Prayer by Frank Schaefer:**

**Meet us, Lord, on the road to Emmaus,  
Guide us on the path toward our destination,  
and renew our strength as we continue to walk  
and commune with you.**

**Open our eyes, so we see the signs  
of your presence around us;**

**Open our hearts, so we may receive  
your peace and love;**

**and empower us to pass on to others  
the grace you have shared with us so freely. Amen.**

## Feeling the Daveron Park Love

"Good morning, LOSER!!" 12 year old Ryan greeted me with a resounding battle-cry on the last morning of camp - still relishing in his victory over me in chess the night before.

I knew in my heart that I had been accepted.

Last week I had the immense privilege of spending four days by the river with around 30 young people and their leaders. My brief was to facilitate an opportunity for campers to learn through God's story, but I got so much more than what I bargained for.

Being immersed in a community who are reaching some of the most disadvantaged kids in our city was one of the most enriching ministry experiences I've had so far - here are four lessons these guys helped me with:

### 1. RELATIONSHIP IS EVERYTHING

I noticed that any influence the leaders had among the campers was deeply rooted in relationship.

The young people in this community seem to carry an inbuilt resistance to anything that smells like

authority - demonstrated by ignoring, talking over, or walking away.

When I heard some of their stories of how authority has been misused in their lives, it is little wonder that they discount any

influence a 45 year old, male, teacher-type person might seek to exercise over them.

I found myself constantly monitoring my use of authority in the sessions I had with them, while still trying to facilitate an environment for learning. Shh-ing never worked, sometimes a hand in the air had some effect, a few times I found myself entering into the conversations

groups were having while I was trying to present - sometimes I managed to steer their attention back to what I was presenting, other times I just couldn't.

What I did notice was that the leaders who had invested time and relational energy into the young people were the ones who were more likely to gain their attention - some of the time.

### 2. EXPECTATIONS MUST BE FLUID

I've never been one to hinge everything on "the last night of camp" for people to respond with faith decisions to God and His story, but I have found that the story of God often naturally brings people to a point of response. So, we planned a run for a response session on the final night of camp, but it just didn't go as planned.

There were a few contributing factors, not the least of which was when the time came for me to invite the community to consider trusting God for the first time, there were a group of girls nattering away about something completely unrelated, and if I put pressure on them to be quiet it would have completely blown any relational traction I'd gained

with pretty-much everyone in the room - so I wrapped it up.

The whole week was a journey of me (and the other leaders) constantly adjusting expectations. What was really cool, was

that often we were surprised by responses we weren't expecting - leaders told stories of how kids accepted me as a story-teller, or how they engaged with some of our learning activities, or even how the campers were happy for the leaders to pray for them.

### 3. VALUE THEIR FOCUS

Something that I really appreciated was the





conversations I had with the kids - talking about their interests, their dreams - but it was usually in short bursts. More than once, campers would bowl up to me and start chatting, then, after a few sentences (and sometimes in mid-sentence), they would walk away.

It was during these momentary bursts of interaction, that I realised that often their focus would be fleeting - so rather than get frustrated with their 'lack' of focus, I began to intentionally capitalise on the focus they did give me, and I found I was gifted with some unique opportunities to speak into their lives.

This insight also shaped how I retold the Bible stories we shared with them.

When setting the scene for our Bible narratives, we usually give people a 'narrative hook' - short stories about life that introduce some of the feelings experienced in the Bible narrative.

During this camp, I found it far more effective to use the narrative hooks for large group retells than asking questions from the content of Bible narrative - my theory is that this at least replayed their experience of the Bible narrative through their association with the narrative hook.

#### 4. CELEBRATE THE 'SMALL WINS'

The leaders at camp were exceptional at noticing and celebrating the contribution of the kids to the community.

One example of this was when some of the kids walked out on my session. Instead of just leaving

the room, they asked their leader, John, if it was ok for them to go. As he allowed them to walk out, John had the presence of mind to validate them in the fact that they thought to ask - rather than lamenting the fact that they weren't in the room, John noticed this shift in their behaviour, and celebrated that as a contribution to the culture of the community.

All week, I was so encouraged by leaders noticing the small things of kids doing duties, looking out for one another, or lasting longer before relational conflict - and they celebrated the small wins.

This not only became a rich source of affirmation for the kids, but it provided the leadership team with some tangible examples of transformation - for many contexts these examples might be considered small and inconsequential, but here there is genuine cause for celebration.

There's probably a bunch of other things I still have to learn from this amazing community, but this is what I have for now: RELATIONSHIP IS EVERYTHING; EXPECTATIONS MUST BE FLUID; VALUE THEIR FOCUS; and CELEBRATE THE 'SMALL WINS'.

I will never forget the love I felt from my new friends from Daveron Park - and I've come away with a deep assurance that God is at work in this community. Who knows how these kids might change the world?!

*Travis Johnson*

*Director of Access The Story*





## Conversations on Mission: Vietnam

Join us for coffee, cake, and a unique opportunity to connect in conversation and share together with Pastor Thuy, who leads the GMP supported church program in Vietnam.

**Friday 19 May 2017,  
7:30pm**

**Happy Valley  
Church of Christ  
179 Hub Dr  
Aberfoyle Park**

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You can help CareWorks secure \$33,000 to help address Social Isolation by supporting the "**Gravity Groups**" initiative through "Fund My Community".

**Gravity Groups** are small groups which are planned to run in partnership with Churches as an outreach to local communities.

Visit [www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/fmc\\_rounds/fund-my-community-2017](http://www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/fmc_rounds/fund-my-community-2017).

There you will be able to register with YourSay, learn about Gravity Groups, view other projects, and select which ones you think should receive funding (up to \$1,000,000).

Remember to include "**Gravity Groups**" (the CareWorks' project) in your recommendations and submit them by 5:00pm Monday 29 May 2017.



## Save the Date!

Conference 2017

November 17 & 18

Marion Church  
of Christ

November						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

## Piano to Give Away

A structurally sound Beale iron frame upright piano which has a few marks on the outside. It has a good sound.

It can be yours for the cost of transport from Nairne. Contact Glen Thornley on 8368 0459.