



STORIES **AND** RITUALS

LESSON 31

Stories & Rituals: The Bible in Broad Strokes

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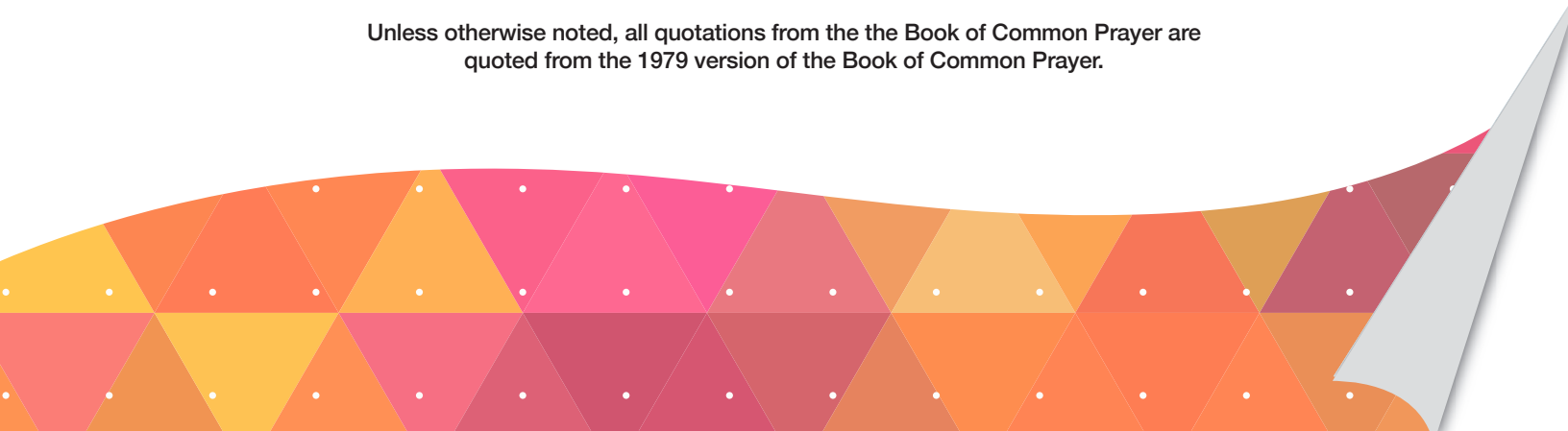
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The Road to Emmaus

Texts: Luke 24:13-35

Big Idea: The presence of Jesus is found in community.

Lesson Objectives

Participants will:

1. Evaluate the value of community by playing a game.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of how the presence of Jesus is found in community by engaging in a re-telling of Jesus' appearance to disciples on the road to Emmaus.
3. Formulate an understanding of Christian community by sharing their definitions of community with the group.

ACTIVITY (TIME)

Dive In (10 minutes)
Group Check-In

Community Builder (15 minutes)
Who's My Neighbor?

The Story (15 minutes)
The Road to Emmaus

The Ritual (15 minutes)
Community

Dig Deeper (10 minutes)
Part of One Whole

Wrap it Up (5 minutes)
Closing Prayer

MATERIALS NEEDED

• Nothing

• Copies of Lesson Sheet 31.1
• Pencils or pens

• Copy of Lesson Sheet 31.1

• Soft, instrumental music (optional)
• Method for playing music (optional)
• Craft Sticks • Markers
• Glue • Box

• Index cards
• Magazines
• Scissors • Glue

• Nothing

LESSON OVERVIEW



What's the Story?

Today your group will explore the story of Jesus appearing to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, found in Luke 24:13-35. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his followers. Through these appearances, Jesus showed them that he is risen and still a part of their community. We do not know who the two disciples in this story are. The text suggests that they are not a part of the eleven, some of Jesus' closest followers.

Jesus appears to two disciples while they are travelling on the road to Emmaus. They just experienced Jesus' death, and were talking about it with each other. When Jesus appears, they don't recognize him at first. Instead, they tell him about the events that happened, surprised that this stranger was in Jerusalem and had no idea what was going on. They also reveal that they don't totally believe what the women told them: that Jesus is alive. The stranger responds to this doubt by interpreting prophecies about the Messiah and his resurrection.

When they arrive in Emmaus, the disciples invite the stranger to join them for a meal. It is through the breaking of the bread that they realize that the stranger with them is Jesus. Their eyes are opened to the presence of Jesus, and they told Jesus' followers about this encounter.



What's the "Big Idea?"

Today's lesson focuses on the big idea that the *presence of Jesus is found in community*. Jesus tells us that "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Matthew 18:20) We are each made in the image of God, and because of that, we can seek out God's presence in each other. Through Christian friendship and fellowship, the nature of Christ is revealed to us. Author Victor Hugo writes in *Les Misérables*, "To love another person is to see the face of God."



What's the Symbol?

We identify as a part of many different communities. However, today's lesson will focus on the community that comes from being in Christian fellowship. Find different photos of your church and its community of members. Intentionally choose photos that illustrate the nature of your church community.



What's the Ritual?

Today's ritual will invite participants to think about the qualities and characteristics that define a community rooted in the presence of Jesus. Then, the group will work together to create a visual definition of this type of community. Finally in the Dig Deeper activity, participants will pray for all communities and those who are (and are not) a part of them.



Setting Up Your Space

Set up your "altar" area. Cover a large table with a piece of fabric or linen. On the altar place some candles, a large cross, and your collage of photos. Prep any materials needed for the ritual, and place the box you are using in a central location where everyone can see it. If you are using the Community Builder or Dig Deeper activities, prep any materials needed.

DIVE IN (10 MINUTES)

Group Check-In

Materials:

- Nothing

During the session:

- Open your session with a quick prayer. Use this one or a prayer of your own:
Holy Lord, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see your love and faithfulness in the world around us. Help us see your love for us in your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
- Let's start our time together by sharing some of the great and not-so-great things that have happened to us this week. What were the high points and low points of your week? Go around the group and invite everyone to share.

COMMUNITY BUILDER (15 MINUTES)

Who's My Neighbor?

Materials:

- Copies of Lesson Sheet 31.1
- Pens or pencils

Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 31.1 for each person in your group.

During the session:

- Hand each participant a copy of Lesson Sheet 31.1 and a pencil or pen.
- **Together, our group makes up a community. Let's help each other learn something new about everyone in our community.**
- Ask participants to answer the questions on the Lesson Sheet. They should not write their name on the sheet.
- Once everyone has filled out the questionnaire, collect them. Shuffle the papers and pass them out, so that everyone gets someone else's sheet.
- Give participants one minute to look over the sheet and read through the answers to the questionnaire.
- At your signal, participants should find a partner. Once they find a partner, each person should ask their partner one of the questions on the questionnaire.
- If the partner does not answer the question with a matching answer, then the participant must keep searching for someone who can give matching answers.

COMMUNITY BUILDER - CONTINUED

- After five matching answers, the participant should show their partner the questionnaire. If the partner recognizes the sheet as the one they filled out, then the two become a team.
- If the partner has a questionnaire filled out by another person, then the two must work together to find the person whose sheet they have.
- Continue playing the game until either everyone has determined whose sheet they have, or until you run out of time. Then, process the experience with the following questions:
- **Was it easy or hard to seek out the person who filled out your sheet? Why?** [Answers will vary.]
- **For those of you who had a partner to help you, how did that make the task easier? How did it make the task harder?** [Answers will vary.]
- **Do you think it is easier or harder to complete a challenge like this when you have the help of a community? Why?** [Answers will vary.]



THE STORY (15 MINUTES)

The Road to Emmaus

Materials:

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 31.2

Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 31.2
- Practice reading through the story several times so you are familiar with it.

During the session:

- Tell the story on Lesson Sheet 31.2
- After the story, ask: **What is this story telling us about God?** [Answers will vary, but may include: God is with us, God is revealed to us through others, God calls us to be in community with other people, etc.]
- **What is this story telling us about humanity?** [Answers will vary, but may include: We don't always recognize the presence of Jesus at first, we seek the presence of Jesus in others, we recognize when Jesus comes to us during significant moments, etc.]

THE STORY- CONTINUED

- **What is this story telling us about the world?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: The world is filled with the presence of Jesus, it includes many different communities of which we are a part, etc.]*
- In this story, the two disciples travelling on the road to Emmaus create a mini-community with the stranger they encounter on their journey. They don't realize that this man is Jesus! However, they discover the identity of the stranger after they sit down to break bread with him. They discovered the presence of Jesus in their little community, and it transformed them!



THE RITUAL (15 MINUTES)

Community

Materials:

- Soft, instrumental music (*optional*)
- Method for playing music (*optional*)
- Paper
- Craft sticks
- Markers
- Glue
- Box

Before the session:

- Find a box to use for this activity. It should be big enough that each participant can glue 2-3 craft sticks on it. Depending on the size of your group, a large shoebox or cereal box works well.
- Test out the activity by gluing a couple of craft sticks to the box. You may need to use a heavy-duty glue (or even tape) to get the sticks to attach to the box.

During the session:

- If you are playing music, begin playing it softly.
- **We are all members of many different communities. What are some communities of which you are a part?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: school, sports team, family, neighborhood, church, etc.]*
- **There are many different values, characteristics, and qualities that define a particular community. Today we are going to think specifically about what things define a Christian community, or a place where we might see the presence of Jesus.**
- Give each participant 2-3 craft sticks and a marker.
- Invite each person to think of a few values, characteristics, and qualities that define a Christian community. They should write one thing on each craft stick. Give participants time to think and write.

THE RITUAL - CONTINUED

- In a moment, we are going to share what we wrote on our craft sticks. How do you define Christian community? After you read what is on your sticks, you will bring them forward to our box. This box represents the foundation of our community, and all of our values and qualities build on top of it. You will glue your sticks to the box so that we “build” a strong community together.
- One at a time, invite participants to share what they have written on their sticks. Then, invite them up to glue them to the box. If you have a large group, you may wish to have more than one person approach the box at one time.
- After everyone has attached their sticks to the box, ask the following questions:
 - **What are some similarities you noticed between your words and those of others? Are there any common themes, values, or qualities in our definitions of community?** *[Answers will vary.]*
 - Today we specifically reflected on the definition of Christian community. **What makes a Christian community different than any other community?** *[Christian communities are centered on Jesus.]*
 - Earlier I mentioned that our box symbolizes the foundation of our community, upon which everything else is built. **What is the foundation upon which our Christian community builds itself?** *[Jesus!]*
 - **What makes a Christian community unique is that it is centered on Jesus.** We know that Jesus is present with us, even when there are only a couple of people gathered together. We seek the presence of God in each other, and through that Christ is revealed to us. Being in Christian community can transform us!

DIG DEEPER

(10 MINUTES)

Part of One Whole

Materials:

Index cards • Magazines • Scissors • Glue

Before the session:

- Make a sample index card to show the group.

During the session:

- Hand each participant an index card.
- **Today we have talked about how the presence of Jesus is found in communities. Sometimes we are good at welcoming others into our community, and sometimes we aren't. We are going to pray for those who are in our community, and also for those who might be excluded.**
- Invite participants to think about people who remind them of the presence of Jesus in their community. Then, invite them to look through the magazines and cut out letters from the pages that spell the names of these people. Letters should then be glued to the index card.
- After a couple of minutes, invite participants to think of some people who are not included in their community, for whom they can pray. Examples of these people might be: those who think differently, those with whom they don't agree, those who come from a different background, etc. Ask participants to, once again, look through the magazines and cut out letters from the pages that spell the names of these people. Then, have them glue the letters to the index card.
- After everyone has finished gluing, invite participants to look at the names on their card.
- **Let's pause for a minute and pray for the people who are on your card. Thank God for those who are already in your community, and pray for those who may be excluded. Pause for a minute to allow participants time to reflect and pray.**
- If the group is comfortable doing so, invite them to share some of the names on their index card.
- **A community is made up of many people. It is important that we welcome everyone into our Christian communities, because we never know how the presence of Jesus might come from those who are different from us! What are some ways in which we can help everyone feel like they are a part of one whole community?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: let them share their opinions, invite them to an event or activity, learn more about them, help them, etc.]*

WRAP IT UP

(5 MINUTES)

Closing Prayer

Invite the group to share any prayer concerns or requests they may have for the week. Close your time together in prayer. Use the following or pray your own prayer:

Jesus, you made your presence known to others by being in community and breaking bread with other people. Open our eyes to see your presence in everyone we meet, and to seek you in our communities. Amen.

Lesson Sheet 31.2

“Who’s My Neighbor?” Questionnaire

Answer the questions below!

What is your favorite color? _____

Where were you born? _____

What is your favorite subject in school? _____

What is your least favorite subject? _____

What is your favorite ice cream? _____

If you could pick any vacation spot, where would it be? _____

What is your most embarrassing moment? _____

Who is your best friend? _____

What is your favorite animal? _____

What is your favorite Bible story? _____

Lesson Sheet 32.2

The Road to Emmaus

A story from the Gospel according to Luke:

One day, two disciples were travelling on the road between Jerusalem and Emmaus. They saw everything that happened to Jesus: his crucifixion, death, and even heard about his resurrection. As they walked, they talked to each other about these things. While they were talking, Jesus appeared and started walking with them, but they didn't know that it was Jesus. They just thought that he was a stranger walking along the road.

The stranger asked them, "What are you talking about?" The two disciples stopped walking and looked at the man, sadly.

One of the disciples, named Cleopas, asked, "Are you the only person who visited Jerusalem and did not hear about what happened to Jesus? Have you not heard about everything that's happened over the last few days?" The man responded by asking, "What happened?"

The disciples began to tell him about Jesus. They told him about all of the things that Jesus did and said, and that many people saw him as a prophet. Then, they told him about how the chief priests and other leaders arrested Jesus and crucified him. They even told him about the women who visited the tomb and found it empty! They didn't understand exactly what happened, or why Jesus was crucified. They especially didn't understand how he could be resurrected!

Then the man (who was Jesus) said to them, "How is it possible for you not to believe all these things that have happened? Didn't all of the prophets say that the Messiah would suffer, die, and then enter into glory?" Then, he interpreted for the disciples everything that the prophets said about him, starting with Moses.

When they came to Emmaus, the man began to walk away as if he was going to travel further. But the disciples asked him to stay, since it was evening and the sky was getting dark. So, Jesus entered their house to stay with them. When they arrived in the house, everyone sat down to share a meal. The man sat at the table, and then he took the bread, blessed it, and broke it. And, as he broke the bread, the disciples realized who was actually with them—it was Jesus! Immediately, Jesus disappeared from their sight. They couldn't believe that Jesus was with them the whole time, and that they didn't recognize him!

The disciples got up right away and ran to Jerusalem. They found the eleven who followed Jesus, along with all of their friends. The disciples began to tell everyone about everything they had just experienced, including how Jesus made himself known to them in the breaking of the bread.