

When I was a kid, my mom, Gertrude Schulz, always wanted me to present myself well when I was around other people. She would say to me, “Mark, keep your shoulders back as you walk, you don’t want to become round shouldered or leaning forward when you get older. She would say, Mark, “make sure you walk on the outside if you are with a girl”. My mom stressed that people tend to size you up by how you look and present yourself. She emphasized that when talking to people, get into their world, ask them questions about their life, just don’t talk about yourself.

Today, I would like to use my mom’s philosophy to analyze our first impressions on a couple of disciples of Jesus from the town on Emmaus. Let’s listen in to their conversation. They are talking about everything that has happened in the past few days. “Why did the people turn against Jesus? He could have come down from the cross. Why didn’t he? He just let Pilate push him around. What do we do now? Some say he is alive, but that can’t be”!

And what about their faces and how did they carry themselves? We are told that “They stood still, their faces downcast.” These guys were down in the dumps. Sulking. Stewing in self pity. They were experiencing heartbreak. So in comes Jesus. Jesus wanted to change their countenance, liven up their lives. As we study his conversation with them, we’ll get to see how Jesus takes them and Us to “From Heartbreak to Heartburn”.

Isn’t it true that when life gets tough and we face discouragements, we all have an Emmaus that we like to go to? Where is your Emmaus? Maybe it’s mindlessly looking at your cellphone or IPAD and reading news story after news story, or playing a card game, or some video challenge. Maybe it’s out to the golf course, or taking a drive down south in the Villages. Maybe it’s out shopping with your mask on, as you get those needed food items. Maybe it’s the TV remote that takes you away from it all as you mindlessly channel surf every single evening. We try to escape our troubles, but those troubles end up being like the sky above: they extend over everything and we finally know there *is* no escape. But these strategies of ours, are only temporary diversions, because the discouragements remain, and no solution is in site.

But guess what. When you and I are struggling and trying to make sense out of our lives, Jesus Christ is walking right there beside us. When we wrestle with our disappointments and our frustrated expectations, Jesus Christ is right there with us! Isaiah 57:15 says “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.” Even though God lives way up there in heaven, He is willing to show up down here and walk alongside ordinary people like us.

But the irony of this story is that even though WE realize that Jesus is right there with the disciples, THEY don’t realize that Jesus is right there! They think they’re talking with some ordinary Jewish guy! Disappointment will do that to you. It will blind you to the very presence of God. Disappointment turns our eyes inward. God could be walking next to us, but our vision is clouded.

The disciples had hoped Jesus would free Israel. They had hoped he’s kick out the Romans. They’d hoped Pilate would be out and Jesus would be in. But Pilate was still in, and Jesus was dead. Unfulfilled expectations, God didn’t do what they wanted him to. But aren’t we glad the prayer of Cleopas and his friend went unanswered? My friends, God knows more about life than we do. My time is in his hands. People wanted

him to redeem Israel, but he knew better. He would rather his people be temporarily oppressed than eternally lost. When forced to choose between battling Pilate and battling Satan, he chose the battle WE couldn't win. He said no to what they wanted and yes to what they needed. He said no to a liberated Israel and yes to a liberated humanity. And once again, aren't we glad he did?

Now be honest. Are we glad he says no to what we want and yes to what we need? Not always. If we ask for a new marriage, and he says, honor the one you've got, we aren't happy. If we ask for healing, and he says learn through pain, we aren't happy. If we ask for our job back, and he says, you will have to wait for another month, we aren't happy. When God doesn't do what we want, it's not easy. Never has been. Never will be. But faith is the conviction that God knows more than we do about this life and he will get us through it.

Remember, disappointment is caused by unmet expectations. Disappointment is cured by revamped expectations. I like the story about the guy who went to pet store to buy a singing parakeet. Seems like his apartment was too quiet. The next day he came home from work to the sound of beautiful music. But when he went to feed the bird, he observed that it only had one leg. He felt cheated. He went back to the store, where the storeowner said, "What do you want, a bird who can sing or a bird who can dance?"

Good question for times of disappointment. What do you want? Do you want temporary freedom- or eternal freedom? Jesus sets about the task of revamping their expectations. You know what he did. He told them the story. The story of God's plan for his people. Fascinating. The cure for a broken heart is the story of God.

These disciples were all upset because Jesus wasn't the warrior Messiah they were hoping for. Instead, they were getting a BETTER Messiah than what they were hoping for! Instead of getting a Messiah that would redeem them from their slavery to the Romans, they were getting a Messiah that would redeem them from their slavery to sin! They were getting a Messiah who would be with them always, even to the end of the age.

In verses 25-27, Jesus is saying that 'if you guys really paid attention to the Old Testament, you wouldn't have lost faith in Me to begin with!' He says "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" And beginning with Moses and the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning Himself." I'm thinking that Jesus took them through the book of Leviticus. And he explained how the Old Testament sacrifices pointed ahead to the day when the Ultimate Sacrifice would appear on the scene and give His life on the cross as a ransom for many. He showed the disciples how Moses lifted up a bronze serpent in the wilderness, and how all who looked in faith were saved from the poisonous snakes. So Jesus was lifted up that all who looked up to him in faith were saved.

And I'm guessing that Jesus took them to the ancient prophecy of Psalm 22:16, where it says 'a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.' And I believe that Jesus also took them to Isaiah 53:5, which says that the servant of the Lord would be wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds, we are healed." And I am convinced that Jesus would have taken them to the great prophecy of the resurrection in Psalm 16:10 which says "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay." Or Jesus pointed out to the disciples how Jonah was

in the belly of the fish for 3 days, so I was in the belly of the earth for 3 days. Jonah was a type of myself from the Old Testament.

The point is that if you want to have a close encounter with Jesus Christ, you have to have a close encounter with the WORD of Christ. This is where we experience the power of God! This is where we encounter the grace of God! And this is where we first learn about the love of God. For the last few hours, The Emmaus disciples have been listening to one of the greatest explanations of Holy Scripture that has ever been given. They're so excited by what they've been learning that when it's time for Jesus to leave, they say, "No! Don't leave! We want more! You've been feeding us the word of God for the last few hours. Now let us have the privilege of feeding you. Come over to our place."

Their heartbreak had been turned into heartburn! So Jesus goes with them. When they sit down at the table, Jesus took bread. He gave thanks, he broke the bread, and he gave it to the disciples. And that's when the lights go on! And they say "Ohhhhhhh!!!!"

And then He disappears. You know why? Because Luke is trying to tell us that is more important to see Christ in the scripture and in the sacrament than it is to see Him in the flesh. It is more important to see Christ with the eyes of your faith than it is to see Him with the eyes of your head. And then the disciples say, "Wow! No wonder our hearts were burning within us. We were having Bible study with Jesus!"

The cure for heartbreak is the story of God. He started with Moses and finished with himself. Why? I think I know why.

We need to hear that God is still in control of this universe. We need to hear that it's not over until he says so. We need to hear that life's mishaps and tragedies are not a reason to bail out. They are simply a reason to sit tight. A man named Corrie ten Boom used to say, "When the train goes through a tunnel and the world gets dark, do you jump out? Of course not. You sit tight and trust the engineer to get you through. Why did Jesus tell the story? So we'd know the engineer still controls the train.

The way to deal with discouragement. Go back to the story. Read it again and again. Read the story and remember, their story is yours. The challenge of life too great? Read the story. That's you crossing the Red Sea with Moses. Too many worries? Read the story. That's you receiving heavenly food with the Israelites. Your wounds too deep? Read the story. That's you Joseph, forgiving your brothers for betraying you. Your enemies too mighty? Read the story. That's you with the 300 marching with Gideon against the Midianites into a battle already won. Your disappointments too heavy? Read the story of the Emmaus bound disciples. The Savior they thought was dead now walked beside them. He entered into their home and sat at their table. They remarked that "it felt like a fire burning within us when Jesus talked to us.

Next time you're disappointed, don't panic. Don't jump out. Don't give up. Just be patient and let God remind you he's still in control. Jesus is alive and well. With Him by our side, we travel from heartache to heartburn.