

**CORE: GROUPS**  
**LUKE 24:13-35**

**Summary**

Jesus is in the process of building the church and believers. (Matthew 16:18)

Jewish travelers would not consider it unusual for a stranger, who is also a fellow Jew, to join their small company walking for some distance, especially if they assume him to be a Passover pilgrim on his way home.

News spread quickly by word of mouth, and public executions at a feast would be widely discussed. No matter where a Greek-speaking pilgrim visiting Jerusalem for the feast was from, he or she would probably have heard something about these matters.

Hospitality demanded no less than the lodging these disciples offered Jesus, especially because it is approaching sundown; night travel, particularly as one got farther from Jerusalem, would be dangerous due to robbers. Jewish people throughout the ancient world welcomed fellow Jews who were traveling to spend the night, and insistence was part of hospitality (e.g., Judg 19:5–9; 1 Sam 28:23). It was also part of hospitality to offer bread to a guest, no matter how late in the evening. After the long walk, these disciples would be hungry anyway. But by giving thanks and giving bread to them, Jesus takes the role usually held by the head of the household, which he had exercised among his disciples.

What takes place in groups inevitably travels through relational networks.

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The story of Jesus' appearance on the road to Emmaus is the first of three resurrection appearances reported in Luke and is unique to his Gospel. The second, the appearance to Peter, is also reported within this account (24:34). The story is one of the longest in Luke and consists of four parts. The first involves Jesus' encounter with the two disciples traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus (24:13–16). The second (24:17–27) concerns (1) the ensuing conversation in which one disciple, Cleopas, explains to the stranger about Jesus' death at the hands of the Jewish leadership; (2) the women's report concerning the empty tomb, which had been confirmed by others; and (3) the report of the angelic visit to the women. At this point the stranger explains from the Scriptures the necessity of the Messiah's death and resurrection. The third part tells of the two disciples inviting the stranger to stay at their home and of the subsequent meal. When the stranger (as in the Lord's Supper) takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and begins to distribute it, their eyes are opened. They recognize that the stranger is Jesus, and his teachings concerning the divine necessity of the passion are confirmed. Jesus then disappears (24:28–32). The final part involves the return of the two disciples to Jerusalem, where they are informed that the Lord has risen and appeared to Simon (24:33–35). In turn they share their experience of the risen Christ and how he was revealed to them in the breaking of the bread. (Stein)

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This account provides an interpretative key for much of Luke's theology, for a number of important theological emphases appear. It is the most important passage in the Gospel for understanding how Luke interpreted Jesus' death. On the human level Jesus' death was caused by the Jewish leadership. Luke in fact went so far as to say the Jewish leadership crucified him (24:20; cf. Acts 5:30). Yet Jesus' death must be understood as ordained by God, for only through death could he enter his glory (Luke 24:26). Jesus' death was therefore not a tragic accident but a divine necessity taught in Scripture. Jesus' death was not the end, for the tomb was empty (24:22–23). The angels had declared that he lives (24:23). Two disciples on the Emmaus road had seen him (24:31), and so had Simon (24:34). This emphasis will appear again in the next account (24:44–45).

Luke revealed how his readers could come to know the certainty of the things they had been taught (1:4). One way was by the reading of this Gospel. Having laid out before his readers his credentials (1:1–3), Luke anticipated that his record of the events surrounding the life and death of Jesus would support what his readers already had been taught and thus would confirm this earlier teaching. Luke did not expect this account to be treated with the historical skepticism of those who argue that everything in the Gospels is to be disbelieved unless it can be proven true. Luke expected that the “burden of proof” lies with those who would deny his Gospel. Thus the very reading of his “orderly account” (1:3) should confirm what the readers had been taught.

A second aid to such certainty is the proof from prophecy. All that Jesus taught and did, all that he experienced, was prophesied beforehand. Thus the Scriptures witness to the truthfulness of what Luke's readers had been taught. This involves not only the facts about Jesus but also the interpretation of those facts.

A third support involves the various witnesses to the resurrection. These include an empty tomb, an angelic message, a resurrection appearance to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and an appearance to Peter. The doubt and unbelief of the disciples lends support to the overwhelming nature of these witnesses. Brown notes: “The slowness of the disciples to accept the corporeality of Jesus' resurrection [24:41], just as their refusal to accept the story of the empty tomb, guarantees the *asphaleia* [certainty] which is the author's purpose to establish.”

A fourth aid to faith for Luke's readers involves the reading of Scripture and breaking of bread within the community of faith. Through such participation they could come to assurance of the truth. They too could experience their hearts burning within them in the context of “devot[ing] themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). The applicability of the experience of the Emmaus disciples to the situation of his readers caused Luke to deal with it at great length. The lack of such applicability in the case of Peter's experience (24:34) may be why Luke dealt so briefly with it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert H. Stein, vol. 24, Luke, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1992), 614.