

Open Eyes, Burning Hearts: Confirmation

This is a resource that can be used in group settings with middle school or confirmation students. It can also be a tool for reflection at home between parents and their children. The questions and prompts are meant to be a way for adults and students alike to share stories of life and faith – where they see God in their own stories.

Week One: Walk

Read Luke 24:13-16 (CEB)

¹³ On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. ¹⁶ They were prevented from recognizing him.

Reflect

Read through the passage twice, with a pause in-between.

- Where were the disciples going? Why do you think they were headed there?
- How do you think they were feeling while they walked?
- What do you think they thought of this guy that joined up with them?
- Why do you think they couldn't recognize that it was Jesus?

Most people have a place where they can rest. For some people, it's their home. For others, it's being with a certain friend or person they trust. When things are rough in our lives, we often want to be in a place where we can feel taken care of and rested. The disciples had just lost Jesus. They were probably sad, confused, angry, and needed to be in a place that was familiar. So, they were headed to Emmaus. Try to imagine what that seven-mile walk felt like to them. Think about how eager they must have been to get where they were going.

- When is a rough time in your life when you wanted to be home or with people you loved?
- What did it feel like to finally make it?
- Can you imagine Jesus walking with you on that journey?
- Was Jesus there and you may not have recognized him?

Create

Here are some ideas to get creative with God's story and your own.

- Social Media (if you have it): Take a picture of your feet for Instagram or snapchat. #walkingwithjesus
- Color in the mandala for week one.
- Draw a picture of the people or places in your life that make you feel at home.
- Send a text to someone who has made you feel loved and cared for and let them know what the means to you.

Pray

Most of us, when we think of prayer, think of bowing our heads and closing our eyes and folding our hands. This week try something different. Go for a walk. Talk to Jesus while you're walking. Notice the beauty of the world around you. Imagine God giving the ground beneath you to hold you with each step. Pay attention to your breathing. Notice Jesus walking alongside you. If you are unable to take a walk, try to spend some time outside in God's creation.

Week Two: Question

Read: Luke 24:17-20 (CEB)

¹⁷ He said to them, “What are you talking about as you walk along?” They stopped, their faces downcast.

¹⁸ The one named Cleopas replied, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?”

¹⁹ He said to them, “What things?”

They said to him, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. ²⁰ But our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.

Reflect

Read through the passage twice, with a pause in-between.

- What do you think the disciples were saying to one another before Jesus showed up?
- How do you think they were feeling while they talked?
- What do you think they thought when he didn't seem to know what had happened?
- What do you think it felt like for them to share the story with Jesus?

We've all had someone say to us, "Hey! How are you?" And what's the answer we're supposed to give back? "I'm good! How are you?" Only, have you ever had someone say to you, "No, I mean really, how are you?"? It's powerful, isn't it? In that moment, you know that person isn't just asking you because it's what they're supposed to do. They're asking you because they really want to know. How are you doing? How are things going for you? They want to celebrate with you if things are going great and support you if they're not going so well. When Jesus asks the disciples what they are talking about and what things have happened in Jerusalem, these are powerful questions. He wants them to share what's on their hearts – what things they are struggling with. In those two questions, he demonstrates how much he cares about them and what they're feeling.

- When is a time that someone asked you how you were really doing?
- How did that feel?
- Can you imagine Jesus asking you that question today?
- How would you answer him?

Create

Here are some ideas to get creative with God's story and your own.

- Social Media (if you have it): Take a picture of your face with an expression that demonstrates how you're really feeling today for Instagram or snapchat. #howimfeeling
- Color in the mandala for week two.
- Draw a self-portrait of how you're feeling right now, in this moment, and share it with someone you trust.
- Send a text to someone who you haven't talked to in a while and ask them how they're *really* doing.

Pray

Most of us, when we think of prayer, think of bowing our heads and closing our eyes and folding our hands. This week try something different. Write a letter to Jesus. Tell him how you're really doing. Share with him the best thing and worst thing about your week. Imagine him sharing in your joy and comforting you in your sadness. Pay attention to how you feel and be honest about it. Notice where you feel God's presence. If you are unable to write a letter, talk to him as you're falling asleep and tell him all about your day.

Week Three: Dream

Read Luke 24:21 (CEB)

²¹ We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago.

Reflect

Read through the passage twice, with a pause in-between.

- What emotions do you hear in these sentences?
- What do you think were some of their hopes and dreams for what Jesus would do?
- How do you think it felt to lose those dreams and hopes?
- How do you think Jesus felt when he heard their disappointment?

As human beings, we have hopes and dreams in our lives. We especially like to think of the future and what it might bring. We imagine all the exciting things that might happen to us and all the possibilities before us. But, sometimes it doesn't turn out like we had hoped. Sometimes our dreams are lost. Sometimes the possibilities turn into disappointments. The disciples had some very strong ideas and dreams of what Jesus would do on earth, and his death meant none of it had turned out the way they wanted. They were devastated. But, their disappointment didn't mean that God was done with them quite yet.

- When is a time that you were disappointed in something?
- How did you deal with it?
- Can you imagine sharing that disappointment with Jesus?
- What does it mean to you that God isn't done with your story yet either?

Create

Here are some ideas to get creative with God's story and your own.

- Social Media (if you have it): Take a picture of something that represents your dream for the future for Instagram or snapchat. #hopinganddreaming
- Color in the mandala for week three.
- Draw a picture of something you're dreaming of in your future – a team you want to make, a play you'd like the lead in, etc. – and imagine how you'll feel if it happens (and how you'll feel if it doesn't).
- Send a text to someone you know who has been recently disappointed and remind them that God isn't done with their story yet.

Pray

Most of us, when we think of prayer, think of bowing our heads and closing our eyes and folding our hands. This week try something different. Write a story about one of your dreams, and what would happen if it came true. Write another story about one of your dreams, and what would happen if it didn't come true. With the help of an adult, light your stories on fire and watch them burn up. In this way, you're giving them as an offering to Jesus. You're reminding yourself that whether all your dreams come true or whether none of your dreams come true, Jesus is never done with your story. Imagine Jesus sitting with you and watching them burn. Pay attention to his reminder that you can trust him in all things. If you're unable to burn your stories, seal them in an envelope and put them somewhere safe.

Week Four: Listen

Read Luke 24:22-24 (CEB)

²² But there's more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ and didn't find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them he is alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn't see him."

Reflect

Read through the passage twice, with a pause in-between.

- Do you think the disciples believed the women's story?
- Why or why not?
- What would have been different if they had taken them seriously?
- What do you think the women felt like to not be believed?

Most kids have had the experience of not being believed. Adults will most often take the word of another adult over the word of a child. If you're a young person – you've probably experienced this and it's probably frustrated you a lot. You know that you are a human being with just as much worth as an adult and you want to be taken seriously and heard. We all want to be believed when we share things from our experiences. In our world, there are groups of people that are frequently not taken seriously. Women, people of color, people with different sexual orientations or gender identities, people with differing mental and physical abilities, people who are significantly younger or significantly older – all these people at some point experience not being listened to or believed because of who they are. The women in our story are a good example of this. They shared their experience of a vision of angels and an empty tomb, and the male disciples didn't believe them! If they had, they wouldn't have had a long, sad journey to Emmaus, instead they would have been celebrating!

- When is a time when you weren't listened to or taken seriously?
- How did that make you feel?
- What are some ways we can take the time to listen to the voices around us that usually aren't believed – the groups named above?
- What joy do you think we would find if we really listened to and believed everyone?

Create

Here are some ideas to get creative with God's story and your own.

- Social Media (if you have it): Take a picture of something that will remind you to listen to everyone's story for Instagram or snapchat. #listen
- Color in the mandala for week four.
- Draw a picture of an ear using the letters for the word "listen" and put it somewhere that it will remind you.
- Send a text to someone you haven't always listened to very well and ask them to tell you a story about their life.

Pray

Most of us, when we think of prayer, think of bowing our heads and closing our eyes and folding our hands. This week try something different. Try to find a story to read this week of someone who has had a different life experience than you have. Ask God to give you ears to listen and a heart that is open to believe them. Pay attention to where this might make you feel uncomfortable and give your discomfort to Jesus. Listen for where God might be giving you joy through someone else's story. If you're unable to find something to read, ask someone who is different than you to tell you a story from their life.

Week Five: Invite

Read Luke 24:28-29

²⁸ When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. ²⁹ But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

Reflect

Read through the passage twice, with a pause in-between.

- Why do you think the disciples invited Jesus to stay, even though they didn't know it was him?
- How do you think Jesus felt, getting this invitation?
- Do you think any of Jesus' teachings from earlier motivated them to give this invitation to a stranger?
- Why or why not?

Most of us have had an experience when we've had to rely on someone else for help. Maybe we left our lunch money at home and didn't have anything to eat so some friends shared their food. Maybe we were supposed to walk home from school but it was pouring down rain and a friend's parent picked us up and gave us a ride. Maybe we forgot a pencil for the test and someone lent us one of theirs. It can feel vulnerable and uncomfortable to not have what we need. Jesus was soon going to be on an open road in the dark – not a safe place to be. The disciples, even not recognizing him, invited him in to share a meal and get out of the dark. They knew what it was like to be scared and alone, so they made sure this mysterious man was taken care of.

- When is a time when someone else helped you out?
- How did that make you feel?
- What are some ways you might be able to give an invitation to someone else who might be in a tough spot?
- Are there times when it has been hard for you to share?

Create

Here are some ideas to get creative with God's story and your own.

- Social Media (if you have it): Take a picture of something you have that you can share with someone else for Instagram or snapchat. #inviteandshare
- Color in the mandala for week five.
- Draw a picture of something that someone has shared with you that made you feel cared for.
- Send a text to someone you care about and invite them to spend some good, quality time with you.

Pray

Most of us, when we think of prayer, think of bowing our heads and closing our eyes and folding our hands. This week try something different. After checking with an adult in your life, invite someone from your church over for a visit – someone who might be lonely. Or ask them if you can go visit them where they live. Your pastor will have some recommendations. Folks who are more senior in years often have lost a lot of the people they care about and can be very lonely. See your time together as time that you get to spend with them and Jesus. Imagine Jesus hanging out with you in the room. Ask them questions about their lives and get to know them. You might just be surprised where God shows up in your conversation. If you can't do a visit with someone who is lonely, write a nice card, pray over it, and send it to them.

Maundy Thursday: Eat

Read Luke 24:30-31 (CEB)

³⁰After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight.

Reflect

Read through the passage twice, with a pause in-between.

- Why do you think the disciples only recognized Jesus when he broke the bread?
- What do you think went through their heads when they recognized them?
- Are there any other stories of "breaking bread" in the Bible that this reminds you of?

- Does this remind you of anything we do together in worship?

Food is connected to important parts of our lives. Think about the food you eat when you're sick to help you feel better. Think of the special food that is prepared for you on your birthday. Think of the elaborate meals you share with your family on holidays or special events. Food is how we show love and care and how we celebrate special moments. It was the same for Jesus. There are many stories in the Bible of Jesus sharing meals with those he loved – at weddings, religious meals, or just day-to-day meals with friends. There are also many stories of Jesus feeding other people, sometimes in miraculous ways. Imagine if Jesus wanted you to know that you were loved so he made you a special meal. Now remember that he actually does give you a special meal every time you come to the communion table.

- What is your favorite food and how does it feel when you get to eat it?
- When do you eat special foods as a family and what are they?
- How does it feel when someone makes you a special food that's just for you?
- How does it feel to know that Jesus makes a special meal just so you know how much you're loved?

Create

Here are some ideas to get creative with God's story and your own.

- Social Media (if you have it): Take a picture of your favorite meal of the day for Instagram or snapchat. #eatwithjesus
- Color in the mandala for Maundy Thursday.
- Draw a picture of the food you would share if someone special was coming for dinner.
- Send a text to someone thanking them for a time they gave you delicious food and letting them know how that made you feel.

Pray

Most of us, when we think of prayer, think of bowing our heads and closing our eyes and folding our hands. Today try something different. Work with an adult in your life to make some cookies or a meal for someone you know who is struggling. Pray for them while you bake or cook. Imagine Jesus joining you in the kitchen. If you're unable to bake or cook, have an adult take you to the grocery store so you can pick out a special treat for that person. Pray that as they eat it, they will know that you love them and that Jesus loves them too.

Good Friday: Wait

Read Luke 24:31-32 (CEB)

³¹Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. ³²They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?"

Reflect

Read through the passage twice, with a pause in-between.

- What do you think that was like to have Jesus disappear right after they recognized them?
- How do you think that made them feel?
- Do you think they wished that they had recognized him earlier?
- Do you think they felt his absence more or less than when they were walking on the road?

We all have times when we feel especially close to God. We can see God's Spirit at work all around us and in us and through us. But, we also have times when we feel like God is missing from the action. This is a normal and healthy part of our spiritual lives. We don't need to feel frustrated or like we're doing something wrong if we don't feel God's presence. Good Friday is especially a day when we feel the absence of God. Jesus disappeared

from his disciples' presence after they walked with him along the road and broke the bread with him. It must have been more than a little jarring for them to watch him die on the cross, think that they had lost him for good, have him show up in their house after they didn't recognize him, and then have him disappear into thin air after they figured out who he was.

- When is a time when you have felt particularly close to God?
- When is a time that you have felt like God was absent?
- How have you gotten through those times when it didn't feel like God was there?
- What would you tell someone else who was going through that experience?

Create

Here are some ideas to get creative with God's story and your own.

- Social Media (if you have it): Take a picture of something where something obvious is missing from the picture for Instagram or snapchat. #absence
- Color in the mandala for Good Friday.
- Draw a picture of someone that you miss.
- Send a text to someone that you haven't seen in a while, and who you miss being with. Let them know you're thinking of them.

Pray

Most of us, when we think of prayer, think of bowing our heads and closing our eyes and folding our hands. Today try something different. Sit in silence and don't say anything. Try to clear thoughts from your head. When a thought jumps in there, let it go in one side and out the other. Try to let go of what you think you should be doing and just allow yourself to be present in the moment. If it's uncomfortable, let it be uncomfortable. Keep your breath slow and deep. Instead of noticing where God is showing up, pay attention to where God feels absent.

Easter: Share

Read Luke 24:33-35 (CEB)

³³ They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together.³⁴ They were saying to each other, "The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as he broke the bread.

Reflect

Read through the passage twice, with a pause in-between.

- Why do you think the disciples went the 7 miles back to Jerusalem, and did it in the dark?
- What do you think they talked about on the way back?
- Why do you think they went straight to the 11 to share with them what had happened?
- How do you think the 11 felt when they heard the story?

We all love to share good news. Think of what it feels like to share something amazing with people you love. "Guess what? I made the team!" "You're never gonna believe it – I got an "A" on my test!" "Hey, everyone, I've got a new baby sister!" Imagine that feeling in your chest where it almost feels like you're going to explode. Think of how loud your voice gets when you're sharing the news. Picture the joy on the other person's face when you tell them. Imagine what it must have been like for the disciples to go back to Jerusalem and tell the 11 that they had met and walked with and broken bread with Jesus! They had thought he was gone, their

dreams were lost, and everything they had hoped for was finished. And then, in one singular moment, all of that was given back to them.

- When is a time you had good news to share?
- What did that feel like?
- When was a time when you felt God showing up in your life?
- What would it be like to share that story with someone else? Can you share it right now?

Create

Here are some ideas to get creative with God's story and your own.

- Social Media (if you have it): Take a picture of something in which you see God for Instagram or snapchat. #goodnews
- Color in the mandala for Easter.
- Draw a picture of something that was good news in your life.
- Send a text to someone who needs to hear some good news and hope and offer them some encouragement.

Pray

Most of us, when we think of prayer, think of bowing our heads and closing our eyes and folding our hands. Today try something different. Sit with someone else and share with them what's going on in your life. Ask them to share with you what's going on in their life. If you feel comfortable, hold hands or place your hands on each other's heads, and pray out loud for each other. It may feel awkward – that's okay! Just try it and see how it goes! God hears our prayers no matter what we say!