

READING THE BIBLE WITH JESUS

Luke 24:13-35

We have all endured the challenge of learning a new concept or witnessed that struggle in our children. It offers a familiar, relatable experience common to our education-oriented path to adulthood. While frustrating, struggling to learn a new concept generally carries low stakes. Imagine how that experience would change if the idea held unimaginable high stakes.

Jesus was a teacher whose teachings proved deeply challenging to his audience, even to his own disciples. But Jesus was also a teacher whose teachings carried the highest possible stakes. We will consequently consider the story of Jesus teaching two disciples in Luke 24:13-35 to see what insights it can offer us into both the challenge of Jesus' teachings and how he worked to overcome it.

"Their eyes were opened"¹

Near the end of his gospel, Luke records a conversation Jesus had with two of his disciples on the "very day" of his resurrection (*Luke 24:1, 13*). The disciples, traveling from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus (*Luke 24:13, 29*), were close to Jesus and had been with the apostles and other disciples in the days following Jesus' death (*Luke 24:22-24, 10-11*). Luke gives particular attention to the disciples' demeanor – they were "sad" and focused on the events surrounding Jesus' death because they "had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (*Luke 24:17, 21*). The disciples' attitude and their journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus indicate they were among those who, when they heard the reports of women who were witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, thought their words were "an idle tale, and they did not believe them" (*Luke 24:1-11*).

The two disciples did not believe the reports about Jesus' resurrection because they did not understand his mission (*cf. Luke 24:21*). They "had hoped that [Jesus] was the one to redeem Israel" (*Luke 24:21*), a hope that echoes Zechariah's prophecy at the beginning of Luke's gospel in which he announced God was sending His promised king to deliver Israel "from the hand of [their] enemies" (*Luke 1:67-71, 31-33; cf. Ezekiel 37:24-28; Daniel 7:1-14*). Like the apostles in Acts 1:6, the two disciples seemingly anticipated Jesus leading the Jews on an exodus out of Roman oppression (*cf. Luke 24:19, 21; Acts 7:22, 35*). Their misunderstanding of Jesus' mission resulted in the perception of his death as a defeat rather than a victory (*cf. Luke 24:17, 21*).

While traveling and discussing the events surrounding Jesus' death, Jesus joined the two disciples, "but their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (*Luke 24:15-16*). After explaining to him what they were discussing (*Luke 24:17-24*), Jesus called them out for their foolish and

¹ All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



unbelieving hearts "and beginning with Moses and all the Prophets...interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (*Luke 24:25-27*). In particular, Jesus explained why his death was necessary and how it became the means for his exaltation as God's promised king (*Luke 24:26; cf. Ephesians 1:15-21; Revelation 4-5*). But they did not recognize Jesus until they were eating a meal together in Emmaus (*Luke 24:28-29*). During the meal, Jesus reenacted the final supper with his disciples – a meal he used to reveal his identity as God's sacrificial lamb (*Luke 24:30-31; 22:14-20; cf. John 1:29*). Luke connects the disciples' recognition of Jesus to their understanding of his mission and the necessity of his death, which prompted them to return immediately to Jerusalem to tell the apostles that "the Lord has risen indeed" (*Luke 24:33-35*).

Learning from Jesus' discussion with the disciples

- Just as culture and personal bias kept the disciples from understanding "Moses and all the Prophets" (*Luke 24:21; cf. Acts 1:6*), it can keep us from understanding Jesus.
 - Jesus' self-sacrifice fulfilled Scripture and offered the means of God's redemption, not from Roman oppression, but from sin's tyranny (*Luke 24:21, 30; 22:19-20; Isaiah 52:13-53:12*). Yet the disciples were waiting for Jesus "to restore the kingdom to Israel" (*Acts 1:6; cf. Luke 1:30-33, 67-74*) and struggled to understand his teachings (*Luke 18:31-34; 24:1-11*).
 - Like the disciples, our cultural assumptions and personal biases can block our understanding of the Bible. Therefore, we should ask ourselves how our cultural context might influence our understanding of Scripture. For example:
 - How often do we use *Luke 22:35-38* to support our cultural beliefs about justified violence in ways discontinuous with Jesus' teachings (*Luke 22:49-50; Matthew 5:38-48*)?
 - How often might our assumptions about our nation as a place of freedom and opportunity prompt us to modify or withhold help from people without considering Jesus' teachings in places like *Matthew 5:38-42*?
- The seemingly widespread failure of the Jews in Jesus' time to correctly interpret the scriptures indicates the challenge it poses to readers. Jesus, however, assumes people should understand the "Scriptures" and their message about him (*Luke 24:25-26*).
- Jesus also believed that he is the key to correctly interpreting the Bible (*Luke 24:27*).
- It takes Jesus to open our eyes (*Luke 24:30-31, 45*); spend time reading and rereading the gospels so that you can allow him to teach you how to understand the Bible.
- Prepare yourself – Jesus' teachings offended people in his world and will continue to offend people today.

Jesus' Bible-revealed teachings challenge culture's influence in our lives. That challenge can be disruptive, raising the question, "Will we listen to Jesus or culture?"

