

**1. When we arrived in Cairns and I bought a car, it came equipped with some free extras.**

Car dealers are always having some kind of special deal. So my car came factory fitted with satellite navigation for the same price as the standard version. What an excellent invention for people in a new place! **A free guidance system.**

That means when I want to come and visit any of you, I punch in your address and it guides me right to your door. Occasionally though I like to do things my own way. You know...think for myself and figure out the route as I go. That way you get to learn and explore as you go!

Now I wouldn't normally admit this, but on one of my visits here in Cairns I met a person who wasn't expecting a visit from a pastor. They were still very friendly from behind the screen door (which I couldn't see through). But they didn't respond to any of the names I tried calling them by. And for good reason...

I got it all wrong! I was at the wrong address and the wrong house and asking for a person (one of you) who didn't live at that address. My flawed sense of direction had taken me on a major detour and dead end. I needed a route recalculation. "Route re-calculation" is what these new guidance systems in cars "cry out" at you when you're going the wrong way.

**2. Were Cleopas and the other un-named disciple in the gospel reading going in the right or wrong direction as they headed for Emmaus?**

**What we know is that they were in the fast lane heading out of Jerusalem.** We know they were two "sad" and disappointed disciples. And we know they've hit a bit of a dead end in their faith journey.

We might use "D-words" like...disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, despondency, depression, despair (a lot of D-words!) to describe what's happening in their hearts. Sometimes that's how people feel when they hit a dead end.

**They'd staked so much in Jesus, and he had let them down - big time, or so they think.**

They sigh, "***We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel***" (v. 21), but instead he has been "***condemned to death and crucified***" (v. 20).

Human hope is a fragile thing isn't it? When things seem to continually spiral in your life, despair can set in pretty quickly. It can be difficult to see any light through the tunnel. Sometimes we can even be afraid to hope because we believe we couldn't cope with another disappointment. Sounds a bit like the two disciples on their way to Emmaus...

***"We had hoped ..."***, Cleopas and his friend had said. They were saying, "*We don't expect it now, but once we did. We had high hopes for the future, but now those hopes are gone and all we have left is disappointment.*"

*What about you today? Has God ever disappointed you or not measured up to your expectations or hopes? Has your faith in God been challenged?*

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### **3. We pick up the journey of these two disappointed disciples as they head to Emmaus.**

We're told in Luke's account that someone had merged with them on that highway they were travelling along - and that person is Jesus!

He is the one they had been unloading their disappointment and dashed hopes on after He asked them, ***"What are you discussing together as you walk along?"*** They didn't recognize Jesus - but he was there listening as to their descriptions of how He has let them down.

Jesus walks along the road with his downcast and confused disciples and shares in their troubles. The same is true for each one of us today. We might find ourselves in hard places and think God is far from us - or we may even blame him for letting us down. And there He is right beside you listening to every word - the insults, accusations and the cries for help. But He's there.

When all those terrible 'D-words' (disappointment, doubt - whatever word describes where we're at) fill our lives, Jesus is the unseen "stranger" walking alongside us, listening to us as we pour out our hearts to Him with no facades, no false godliness - even when it's raw, or we're vulnerable and blatantly honest.

Jesus "Emmanuel - God with us" is there walking beside you - just like he was with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus...

### **4. So while Jesus and the two are walking along, Jesus offers much needed guidance and provides the "Route re-calculation" that these disciples need more than anything.**

Jesus tells them, ***"How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.***

***Q: Did you hear how Jesus helped them out of the dead end they were in? How does He bring about the route re-calculation they so urgently need?*** (Yes he opened the Scriptures to them - all the scriptures concerning himself)

Aren't you glad that the verses Jesus explained to them aren't printed again in this passage of Luke's gospel today? (Or do you wish they were written here?)

I am glad they're not in Luke 24! Or we might only ever read Luke 24 - if there's a short cut, you can be sure that we'll use it and bypass the treasure chest contained in the full witness of scripture.

The good news is that all the scriptures Jesus opened to those two disciples (for the best OT lesson ever) are inside your bibles today. That's divine wisdom in action... ☺

### **5. In the midst of their distress at what had taken place; in the midst of their slowness of heart to believe - Jesus opens the scriptures for them. Luke tells us that, ***"beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*** "**

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That two-hour walk to Emmaus must have seemed like five minutes. What a journey! The two disciples could feel the despair and sorrow they felt in their hearts change into ***understanding and hope*** as the "stranger" [Jesus] explained that His death and resurrection was a part of God's great plan of salvation. **Jesus hadn't let them down at all!**

In fact Luke even describes the feelings of those disciples when they recognize Jesus and remember the words he spoke to them,

***"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us."*** Luke 24:32

Burning hearts are hearts that are a-glow with faith. They're hearts warmed by the comfort and assurance that God's word gives us – pointing us again to Jesus and His work of salvation for us on the cross.

- *There is hope.*
- *Resurrection and Easter hope!*
- *Hope that the bible says will not disappoint – or lead us to despondency or the plethora of "D-words" that set us on the highway out from God's presence.*

Instead the route re-calculation that Jesus effects in your life points you to Jesus and a living hope. It re-orientes our faith journey away from the dead ends we find ourselves faced with. It guides us towards the cross of Jesus. That's always the destination we need to be guided towards:

- The place where we can lay down all our "D-words" and struggles and sins.
- The place where foolish and slow hearts are revived and filled with the joy of faith, forgiveness, new life and the warmth and glow of the Holy Spirit.
- Filled with life that is lived with God who is alive and present – even walking along side His people.
- That's what a relationship looks like!
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### **5. The result of all this for the disciples at Emmaus is an abrupt U-Turn.**

All of a sudden they've got to get back to Jerusalem and share the joy! Back on the Holy Highway to the city of God.

They were heading out of the Holy City and now they need to get back and tell their story (v. 33). I wonder if they encountered other downcast and disappointed people on their way back to Jerusalem? The bible doesn't tell us if they did or didn't.

One thing I can imagine though, is these two disciples heading back with such excitement. Maybe even ***being Christ*** to other people heading away from Jerusalem disappointed and "sad".

Maybe these two were able to do for others what Jesus had done for them: ***to "come near" and "walk with"*** people stuck walking their own dead-end routes. Not joining them, but offering a route re-calculation – opening the scriptures for them and pointing them to their Risen Messiah.

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We don't know what happened on the road back to Jerusalem, but we can ask...

***What's a significant way we can share part of our journey of faith and bring Christ to those we love?***

We're about to embark on a journey later this month. Young people are going to come and encounter Jesus in the Scriptures as we walk together the journey of learning and discipleship we call confirmation ministry.

One thing they'll be asked to do is bring a bible with them. Then as we journey through the scriptures we'll be highlighting bible texts and writing in the margins words and phrases that refocus us on Jesus and point us to the cross and new life we have in Him.

Why couldn't we do that as a church? Why couldn't we have a culture change here in Cairns? Why couldn't we turn up to church with our bibles? Let's be doers and not just hearers of the word!

Today I'm inviting you and encouraging you as your pastor to do that. To pick up your bible as you come to worship. My hope is to see bibles coming out from everywhere and opening up as someone comes forward to read the daily readings and as I prepare to bring God's word to you.

Then I challenge you – like the youth to highlight/ underline/ mark the texts that we read and hear preached on. To write words in the margins that encourage you, or new insights that comfort your heart or make it skip a beat...

I hope that we can all join with the confirmation ministry group of *being in the scriptures, being shaped by them and allowing God's word to point us to Jesus and His cross - that our hearts would be ablaze within us as the Word is opened to us.*

And then when you open the word at home or in your small group, you'll see all the underlining, all the words and phrases you've written and recall how that word made your heart burn within you. Over time you'll see how God's word brought comfort and warmed your heart through the joys and the tough times. How it set you straight sometimes and how it touched a nerve or calmed them in a special way!

*Then one day, I want you to give the bible away to someone you love.*

Being that it's Mother's Day today, I share with you that the NIV study bible I read from during services belonged to my Nanna (my mum's mum)– maybe you've noticed her photo in my office. There's nothing outwardly special about it – it's just an old NIV study bible.

But it is special to me because she gave it to me at a time in my life when I needed a route re-calculation of my own. How precious are the highlighted verses, the underlining, the well-worn pages that have been passed on to me from a woman of faith that I adored.

Today I have a new bible with me that I purchased on Thursday. I've marked it (***particularly verse 32 – were not our hearts burning within us***) and I'll keep on marking it each week. And one day when the time comes I'll give it away...God only knows who to.

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Perhaps one day, your bible with all the underlining and highlighting will have a profound impact on someone you love – having first impacted your life - continually pointing you to Jesus, his cross and setting your heart ablaze with faith. Amen.