

Near the Cross Emmaus



November 2011

Volume 6, Issue 9

Follow-up and Gathering Saturday, Nov. 5

Welcome Pilgrims From Walk #21

Scott Bass	Jonesboro	Jonesboro Central Baptist
Rafe Binns	Brookland	Messiah Ministries
John Broadaway	Bono	Herman Missionary Baptist
Jeff Cline	Jonesboro	Southwest Church of Christ
Ken Day	Quitman	Quitman UMC
James Ferris	Corning	Corning UMC
Robert Garland	Jonesboro	Jonesboro Central Baptist
Gary Grant	Heber Springs	Quitman UMC
Jon Healey	Batesville	Batesville UMC
Paul Holifield	Batesville	Batesville UMC
Jim Johnston	Paragould	Paragould Westview Baptist
Jim Kuzilik	Heber Springs	Holly Springs Missionary Baptist
Bert McCargo	West Memphis	West Memphis FUMC
James Mitchell	Quitman	Quitman UMC
John Pickering	Jonesboro	Walnut Street Baptist
John Riggs	Quitman	Quitman UMC
Todd Sipes	Brookland	Messiah Ministries
Chance Smith	Jonesboro	Herman Missionary Baptist
William Spades	Jonesboro	Jonesboro FUMC
Terry Stotts	Lake City	Lake City First Baptist
Chuck Swift	West Plains, Mo.	West Plains Genesis Church
Mark Treece	Paragould	Southwest Church of Christ
Ron Tunnell	Quitman	Quitman UMC
Billy Vanderbilt	Monette	Jonesboro FUMC
Anthony Wall	Brookland	Messiah Ministries

Let's Celebrate with 54 New Members

The 54 Pilgrims from Walks 21 and 22 will gather with their sponsors for a Follow-up session Saturday, Nov. 5, at First United Methodist, Jonesboro. Following their meeting, the Emmaus community will celebrate with them for our monthly gathering starting at noon.

Rev. Marion Fleming has arranged for another 4th Day Talk from one of our group and then we will celebrate Holy Communion.

At the Closing ceremony Oct. 9, several women shared the love and spirit that inspired them at Walk #22. "This has been a humbling and awesome experience," one of the ladies remarked. "I've been truly blessed so much that I want to encourage others to attend and to form a Reunion Group to relive this experience."

Some other comments:

"I am beyond honored to tell you what a blessing this has been to me. God's timing was perfect, and this was his time right now."

"I got a brand new start on my walk with the Lord. Now I'm on fire!"

"We talked, cried and laughed! When I get home, I plan to do my best for Christ and his church."

"I never knew how many people loved me. I felt bathed in prayer."

"This was a time for me to be quiet and listen to the Lord."

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Who is holding you back? Who is holding you back?

Welcome	Walk #22	Pilgrims
Cheryl Allen	Marion	W. Mem. FUMC
Jodie Baker	Jonesboro	Jonesboro FUMC
Bennie Burks	Batesville	Batesville FUMC
Crystal Cline	Jonesboro	SW Church of Christ
Alice Crouse	Corning	Corning 1st Baptist
Margaret Elchesen	Lakeview	Mt. Home FUMC
Tracie Fletcher	Jonesboro	Cornerstone UMC
Tammy Freeze	Bono	Missionary Baptist
Kerin French	Eads, TN	Sycamore C. Christ
Dorothy Fuller	Blytheville	Bly. First Baptist
Stephanie Gulley	Jonesboro	Jonesboro FUMC
Brandy Hawkins	Jonesboro	Temple Baptist
Karen Holifield	Batesville	Batesville FUMC
Laurie Johnson	Jonesboro	Central Baptist
Carolyn Jones	Olive Branch, MS	Sycamore C.Christ
Melissa King	Jonesboro	Cornerstone UMC
Heidi Kuzilik	Heber Sprngs	Holly Springs MBC
Debra Lazenby	Blytheville	Bly. 1st Lutheran
Leah Lewert	Tuckerman	Swifton UMC
Shea Marsh	Paragould	Cornerstone UMC
Connie Moseley	Blytheville	1st Assembly God
Angela Newby	Paragould	Paragould UMC
Keri Pickle	Greenwood Springs, MS	Crossbound Church, Smithville, MS
Brenda Stotts	Lake City	Lake City FBC
Mandy Sutton	Kennett, Mo.	Kennett FBC
Rebecca Tice	Blytheville	Bly. Fairview Baptist
Jaquetta Wells	Jonesboro	Central Baptist
Anita Wicker	Jonesboro	SW Church of Christ
Melissa Williams	West Plains, Mo	W.P. Genesis Church

Fourth Day Talk — Running without being Held Back By Kathy Pillow-Price

You were running the race so well: Who has held you back from following the truth? (NLT)

My name is Kathy Price, Near the Cross to Emmaus #20, table of Sarah. I want to thank you for the honor of being invited to deliver a fourth day talk. When I was asked to speak, I was a little surprised and whole lot nervous. While I speak for a living, it not usually to a
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Spirit Enflames Men on Walk #21

At the Closing ceremony of Walk #21, many men described their filling with the Holy Spirit . “I have an ugly story, but I found out there are a lot of us,” one of the men related. “I found out that God’s grace extends to where it’s badly needed. When I got those Agape letters I couldn’t keep from bawling.”

“Thursday I was still finding excuses not to go,” another man said. “I was going down a road where I didn’t need to go, but this weekend I resubmitted my life to Jesus, to my wife and kids.”

“God has never given up on me,” a Pilgrim declared. “He has an unconditional love that I have seen this weekend. I’m going to get others involved, including my dad.”

“Since my time at John 3:16, I have forsaken the Living Waters.” one of the men said. “Emmaus is like going through those waters and being restored.”

“This weekend reminded me that I’m not the only man who has forgotten that God is his first love, “ another Pilgrim commented. “God is a God of second chances over and over.”

“I knew I’ve wanted to make changes in my life and here I sat with guys who shared what they needed to do,” one of the men said. “I wrote down my priorities: 1. work, 2. hunting, 3. fishing, 4. family. I realized that I didn’t put God first in my life. That’s going to change.”

Another said: “I’ve been a Christian for a long time, but I didn’t think I needed to go on this walk. Then I realized I was burned out with church. Listening to these men made me realize I was not alone.”

Important Dates

Nov. 5 Follow-Up, 11:00 a.m.
 Gathering, noon
 1st United Methodist,
 Jonesboro.
 Dec. 3 Gathering, noon
 1st United Methodist,
 Jonesboro.
 Jan. 7 Gathering, noon
 1st United Methodist,
 Jonesboro
 (Spring walk dates not set)

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Who is holding you back?

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rough crowd like this. You see, Christians sometimes scare me, especially large groups of them, but I'll tell you more about that in a minute.

As I prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to guide what I should say today, one verse kept running through my head over and over again. It is found in Galatians 5:7, and the American King James Version says it like this: "You did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth," while the New Living Translation asks, "Who has held you back?" Well, in normal fashion (for me), I tried to discuss (or argue about) this scripture selection with God. You see in daily life and in my Christian walk, I believe it is pretty evident that I don't know much about running and almost nothing about running well. And that is when God said, but you DO know about being hindered or being held back. OK. Got it. So today, I want to talk to you about running well, being hindered, and finding my way back into the race.

You DID run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?

Living a life of faith is not new for me. I was raised in church. I became a Christian in third grade at a church camp in Siloam Springs. It was an exciting event, and I came home from camp bursting with the news, ready to tell my mom and dad. When I got home, I found my parents had separated and filed for a divorce. As you might imagine, that was not an easy time for me. But my grandparents made sure I stayed in church every Sunday and bought me a Bible. It was my grandma who taught me to study scripture and pray every day. I look back now and see how God's prevenient grace was at work and how his presence was every real to me when I needed Him even as a child.

I grew in my faith, had a fairly typical high school Christian youth experience full of more church camps, being active in a youth group, and I had close Christian friends who I bonded with and who

held me accountable. I graduated high school and left home for the University of Arkansas (Go Hogs!) and there I lived in Baptist housing and sang in the New Creations, a choir at University Baptist Church. It was there I met a Christian guy who I dated and then married after my first two years of college. I completed my degree in Early Childhood education, became a teacher, and a mother to two precious children.

You DID run well.....At the time and on the outside, we looked like the perfect family. We had two children, a boy and a girl, my husband had a great job, we had a beautiful home, and not only were active in church — but I also looked good on the outside, picture perfect even, but we were in the process of falling apart even as we were trying to run well, even when it appeared to everyone else that we were running well. But this is not a talk about how or why my first marriage ended. I'm here to talk about what Emmaus did for my faith.

I believe God calls us to our Emmaus walk for different reasons. Some pilgrims need to catch fresh fire, some need to experience His love in a new way. Some need to seek forgiveness, some need to repent and turn from a specific sin in their lives, some need better study habits, and me — well I needed to lay down some burdens that were hindering me from having the daily relationship I deeply desired.

I was a reluctant pilgrim, and I came to my Emmaus walk with two very heavy burdens — one known to me and the other revealed to me through Emmaus and my fourth day. It was the one revealed to me that almost kept me from going on the walk at all. In fact as the walk got closer and closer, I came up with several excellent excuses why I should not or could not go. In fact, if my husband had not gone to the men's walk the weekend before and encouraged me to go, I probably would have backed out. And yet, I felt compelled to go — and the words "you NEED this" kept filling my thoughts.

When my Pastor, Kay Burton, asked me what was really holding me back, I told her, "I'm just not that excited about being locked up with a big group of Christians for an ex-

tended period of time. They can be pretty mean folks." And so we come to the burden revealed to me at Emmaus and to the second part of our verse, WHO did hinder you or hold you back from obeying the truth. You see, when I went through my divorce almost 16 years ago, I was deeply hurt by some of the actions, reactions, and words of my fellow church members and Christians. I eventually ended up leaving the denomination that I had been raised in and worked in for 28 years. At that time and for quite a while after, I lived with constant self-condemnation. I was broken. My pastor in college, H. D. McCarty, used to say that "Christians have the only army in the world in which soldiers are willing to shoot their own wounded." Unfortunately, he was right. Lately God has been in the process of showing me that we come across a lot of people in our daily lives and even in our churches that are what I call the "walking wounded." They can't even think about running the race — because even walking has become difficult or impossible. And yes, some of their wounds may be their own fault and may even be a direct result of sin in their lives, but lately, I've been reflecting on how willing I am to restore the walking wounded that I encounter.

Now I don't want to make it sound like every Christian I knew was horrible, because they weren't and they aren't. Some were incredibly understanding and compassionate, but at that time, I was not at a point where I could accept the help and love they were offering. I eventually sought and found forgiveness for my sins, found a new church home, and slowly started back down the path of being restored to a Father who was waiting for me as I started over. But even as I ran back to my Father — I did not readily embrace His other children. I continued to walk somewhat wounded, and I kept most of His people at arm's length.

The Emmaus experience forced me to acknowledge how much I need to let other people of God show me love and share my burdens. Emmaus forced me to confront the fact that I have been trying to walk or run my race alone, on my own terms, and that showing up for church with others and being distant but polite is not what God intends for meeting my need for fellowship. Emmaus helped me see that I need brothers and sisters in Christ who will be models, mentors, partners, and supportive friends. Emmaus helped me see that I need

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to find inspiration, advice, and constructive criticism from others and that I need to give and accept from others emotional, intellectual and spiritual care. The burden of going it alone was robbing me of much needed support, and it was a burden. I needed to surrender. Does that mean I suddenly believe all of you are perfect and that all of God's people have suddenly decided to actually act like Christ and show love to others? No. I am not naïve, but the breakthrough I have had is that it is not about me or them — it is about me and HIM. It's not about how others act or what they say; rather it is all about what God says and has said about who I am and whose I am.

Since I love music, it seems that at any given moment, I have a constant soundtrack of some kind running through my head and music is one way I feel God speaks to me. If you haven't noticed yet, He also speaks to me by running messages in my head over and over again. Luckily, I know as a teacher that repetition is a great way to learn things. One song that I have heard over and over on my fourth day and that has been stuck in my mind since my Emmaus walk is a song by TobyMac called "Lose My Soul." Now, it is not a song that would normally not appeal to me. I mean, he raps in parts of it — and I don't like rap — but the words and the refrain I love. Especially the part that just keeps running through my head where he repeats — "all eyes are on You, God. All eyes are on You."

You did run well; WHO did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?

You can see the WHO holding me back was not other people, but was mostly myself. For years I used things that happened in my past as an excuse to get out of serving fully and getting close to people who might ask that of me. I would feel God calling me, drawing me, and I would only go so far because I felt I wasn't worthy to "really serve" Him. I could skate by with making the excuse in my mind of not trusting people — but in my heart, I wasn't willing to really surrender everything — there was a part of me that didn't

trust God enough, and even though I knew I was forgiven, I just didn't feel like forgiveness qualified me to get back in the race.

During my fourth day, God has called me to reflect on what I learned at Emmaus and how I will move forward in my faith life, and He insisted on showing me that He wants me — ALL of me — in His service. He is the God of second chances, and the third chances and more. He has shown me through my studies these past few months that the Bible is filled with examples of people that have BLOWN it and yet were still used by God in a way our amazing and forgiving God could use them. All the while, He has been asking what MY story will be. He is ready for me to put away the old. He has shown me in I Cor. 2:9 that "my eyes have not seen and my ears have not heard the things God is preparing for me." He is making me new, and I pray daily that I will stay out of His way and let Him work.

I have made several changes as a result of my walk, which I believe are allowing me to continue to grow and to prepare for the plans God has for my family. First, I am now addicted to K-Love and a lot of other kinds of Christian music. While I have always enjoyed music, I listen to Christian music on a daily basis now, and what a blessing it is to me. Second, my daily devotions are no longer another thing to make off my "to do" list, but an essential part of my morning. I can't wait to see what God is going to say to me through them. Third, I have started to keep a prayer journal and write out my monthly prayer lists, and I even write out whole prayers. Being an academic, I need evidence and facts to prove things to me a lot of the time and now I have it. I can quickly look back and see written down how God is at work in my daily life. Last, the presence of God has been very real to me in a manner that is difficult to explain, but I feel Him and hear Him in a tangible way, and it is so wonderful. One of my friends who is considering going on an Emmaus walk herself asked me to describe how I felt. I told her that "I left Emmaus feeling like I had been overwhelmed with love," and that "up to that point, I had been living totally overwhelmed." He is real. He has risen. He loves me, and I know it. I have learned so much, and there simply not enough time for me to share it all with you, friends. (But if you want some music or reading suggestions, email or contact me on Facebook, because I would love to share more about what God has been having me learn.)

I have even been challenged during this time to begin writing out a mission state-

ment for my life which I always thought was a little hokey before. It's a work in progress, but Wesley had 3 simple rules, and so far I have 3 principles and a daily request. My first principle is based on Matthew 22:37-38, and it is that I am here to love God and to love others — that is my highest calling. The 2nd principle is from Jeremiah 29:11 and is that I need to follow God's plans and not my own. The 3rd one is to always remember that Christ is counting on me, and my one daily request is from James 1:5 and is that I ask Him for wisdom in all that I do.

Has my fourth day been all sunshine and roses and happiness? In a word, no. Remember I said I came to Emmaus with 2 burdens? Well the 2nd burden is a problem that is still present in my life, but I am asking God to use it and teach me through it. Sometimes it causes me pain, but God has also allowed me to share my problems with others who are praying for me, and that has been a big step in helping me. I am trusting Him, and He will work this out. I have to believe that God will do in this situation what I cannot do. As a matter of fact, one of the scriptures He has given me says that He can do immeasurably more than I can ask or imagine. And when I am tempted to take back control, I have to ask myself if I want only what I can imagine. Then I pray again, "God teach me to trust you and to desire trust instead of control, knowing that you only want my ultimate good." I am trying in every situation to ask if my eyes are on Jesus. All eyes are on You, God. All eyes are on You.

I am learning in my 4th day that following God does not mean He will keep us out of trouble or free from storms. But He will be with us. He is with me. Maybe you are in a race right now that may not be easy, but that does not mean you are out of God's will. Sometimes He uses storms to make us better and to grow our faith and patience. And maybe you were running well at one time, and like me, you messed up and missed a hurdle — maybe a big hurdle. Know that one of the worst things you can do is not learn from that mistake and keep messing up again. Perhaps, you still bear some scars that He desperately wants to heal. Friend, He wants you in the race, unhindered. He's there on the sidelines calling your name and urging you on, and he is so proud of you! Take that image with you this week. The God of Heaven is cheering you on. His face is shining on you. He will provide you with the grace you need to keep on. All eyes are on You, God; all eyes are on You.

De Colores!

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