

# What Is a Walk to Emmaus

The Walk to Emmaus is a spiritual renewal program intended to strengthen the local church through the development of Christian disciples and leaders. The Walk to Emmaus begins with a 72-hour short course in Christianity, comprised of fifteen talks by lay and clergy volunteers on the themes of God's grace, disciplines of Christian discipleship and what it means to be a church.

A Walk typically begins on a Thursday evening and ends on a Sunday evening. Men and women attend separate weekends. Husbands and wives are strongly encouraged to attend walks close in time so that can share the joy and excitement of this renewal. The Walk to Emmaus is administered through the Upper Room ministry unit of the United Methodist Church. However, the Walk experience is open to participants of other denominations.

The Walk to Emmaus had its beginnings in the Roman Catholic *Cursillo de Cristiandad* or short course in Christianity which originated in Spain around 1949. The weekend retreat design was adapted by the Upper Room in the late 1970's and became known as the Walk to Emmaus based on the story found in Luke 24:13-35. This renewal has been so successful that Presbyterian and Lutheran denominations, among others, have started putting on their own versions.

Since 1978, nearly half a million people have attended in Emmaus weekends in over 300 sites around the globe, including the U.S.A., Australia, Brazil, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Germany, South Africa, India and even the former Soviet Union. In 1984, the Upper Room developed a youth-oriented version of the Emmaus experience called Chrysalis. Emmaus and Chrysalis are communities where growing Christians of all denominations come together in common affirmation of the essentials of the Christian faith.

## How Can I attend a Walk

You can attend a Walk to Emmaus weekend by contacting a friend who has already attended a Walk to Emmaus retreat. Ask them about their experience and to help you decide if the Walk would be helpful in your Christian journey. Or locate a nearby Emmaus community with members in a local church. If you do not know of someone in your area who has been on a Walk, please visit the Upper Room web site which lists [Emmaus communities by geographic region](#).

A friend or individual who knows you must agree to be your sponsor for a Walk. Each Emmaus community is different as to their requirements for attendance and scheduled dates for the Walk to take place. Please check with your sponsor for the specifics in the

area you are planning to take your Walk. However, the Walk itself will be nearly identical in almost all respects, with some minor differences, to every other Walk given around the world.

### **What Is an Emmaus Community**

An Emmaus community is made up of individuals in a local area who have attended the Walk. They meet in small groups or as a larger body for fellowship, Communion and encouragement. They also assist in conducting Emmaus Walks by agreement with the Upper Room.

### **What Is a Gathering**

A Gathering is made up of individuals in a local area who have attended the Walk and is a subset of a larger Emmaus community. They meet as a small group for fellowship, singing, Communion, prayer and encouragement. They also participate in supporting the Emmaus Walks held by the whole Emmaus community in many different ways, including: the sponsorship of pilgrims, serving on a team and prayer. Gatherings are always open to all people, even those who have not attended a walk. Often people thinking of going on a walk come, or spouses or children of those who have gone are very often in attendance.

### **What Emmaus Is Not**

The Walk to Emmaus is Not:

- A cult
- An exclusive club for 'super Christians'
- A replacement for a person's home Church
- A place to fix emotional, psychological, social and marital problems
- A reason for a person to act as if they are better than other

### **What Emmaus Is**

The Walk to Emmaus Is:

- A place where a person learns how to become a better servant to fellow believers in Christ (Philippians 2:1-11)
- A place where a person sees the love of Christ in action
- A time of spiritual renewal and re-dedication to Christ as Lord
- An opportunity to grow as a disciple of Christ
- A place to be reminded of one's "first love", Jesus Christ
- A gift of God's love for you
- An opportunity to re-valuate your priorities in life
- A place to experience God's power and direction in your life
- A time of prayer, fellowship and communion

- An opportunity to meet new brothers and sisters in Christ
- A discipleship group to encourage you after the Walk
- A program to strengthen leaders in the local Church
- A call for unity among believers

### **Why Separate Walks for Men and Women**

The Emmaus experience is designed for individuals to focus on their personal walk with Christ. It is a weekend where distractions are removed to create an environment that allows God to speak more clearly and directly to a person. Things like newspapers, clocks, cell phones, pagers, televisions, radio and romantic attachments are all left behind so that a person can devote their full attention to the Walk experience. Men and women together often do create distractions.

The Walk is not a ministry for couples and its purpose is to develop strong Christian leaders. Couples attend different weekends, and hopefully near in time to each other, because they can then share their experiences with one another. Most often the Walk experience will strengthen a couples' relationship with each other and with Christ.

### **What are Reunion Groups?**

After people attend a weekend walk or flight, then they are encouraged to join a small group which meets at a restaurant or in a home to have bible study, sharing and prayer. We believe that small groups help the faith of members to grow.