

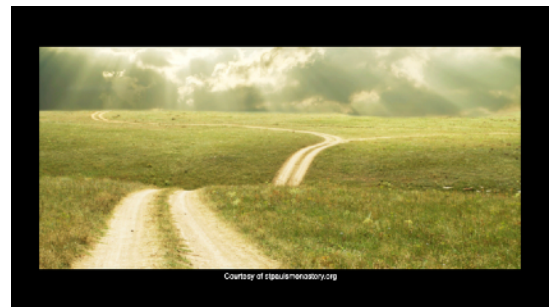
On the Road with Jesus, week 2

When You Hit Barriers on the Road

Luke 24:28-29, John 14:16-18

Last week, we began our sermon series “On the Road with Jesus”. During May we’re dwelling with Jesus as we walk through Luke 24:13-35, the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Last week we met the disciples, who had hit the skids as a major barrier faced them after the crucifixion of Jesus. They had been in Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified. They had heard the reports of the women who went to the tomb and who had been met by angels who announced that Jesus was alive. But the disciples on the road had hit the skids so hard they did not recognise Jesus standing with them.

They had come to a standstill like we all can in life. A crisis, deep grief, great anxiety, deeply hurt. And the risen Lord Jesus comes to them. The risen Christ is among them. The risen Lord of heaven and earth will now get them moving along the road and travel with them, teaching them as they go.



So did you have an opportunity in this past week to listen? Did you have an opportunity to listen to God? And did you have an opportunity to listen to another, I wonder? May I encourage you to consider those opportunities as they come to you this week? A huge gift you can bring by listening someone into free speech, where they can share their story — be encouraged in that.

Today we listen again to God, and we hear in the story as it continues in Luke 24 with these words:

Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day now is nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him.

Luke 24:27-30

Jesus teaches the disciples on the road. He stays with them and feeds them in the meal. Their eyes are opened.

They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within while he was talking to us on the road, while he opened the scriptures to us?”

Luke 24:32

What a wonderful transformation takes place for the disciples who had been standing still, to recognising Jesus as he comes first of all to listen to them in the place where they stand still, but then let’s move forward! Let’s go on, and let’s go on together, Jesus says. And on the road he teaches them, and their hearts burn as he opens the Scriptures to them. This is the adventure that God promises for you and me and for us as community, also. Like those disciples back then, we

know what it is to face barriers in life, at least from time to time, I think. Like those disciples, we don't have it all together all the time. But the risen Jesus is with us. He promises this and he is faithful.

So, are you ready to go on this journey with Jesus?

Let's pray...

In my life, I've been blessed by people who on my journey have taught me and shown me Jesus. Can you think of anyone in your life who has done the same? On this Mother's Day, I can joyfully say that my mum, although not large in stature and not a power broker in the world (she did seven years of school, as was typical when she grew up in rural South Australia), was a giant of the faith who rocked in the faith, who taught me and showed me Jesus. And I am so blessed by someone who showed me Jesus on the way. Today I want to encourage you who are mums who journey life with your children, maybe grandchildren, maybe great grandchildren to do the same. In fact we can all do this for others in our lives. Many of my faith formers are people who are not in my family, for example. What a gift they are. You can be too... I want to encourage you that you can be exactly the same for someone else. And if any of you have a mum, a grandmum, a great grand mum, maybe an aunt or another person in your life with whom you are close, may I encourage you today to encourage her/them by assuring her that Jesus is on her life journey with her, too.

We're all on a journey. As a congregation, God is calling us forward on the journey, and part of that call occurred last week when we gathered together as a community of faith, and we called Sue into this Pastoral Associate role, and today we get to celebrate that, as we did at the start of service, with the good news that she accepted that call. We're on a journey — it won't be long (we hope and pray and trust) before there'll be all sorts of building works here. And next Sunday we'll ponder this further too. But I want to encourage you to know that Jesus is with us on the journey, and it's an adventure that we go on, together with Jesus on the road.

For he is here and calling us on. "I am with you. I am with you always." He promised this when you were baptised, and together we are disciples on the road. So are we ready to go on this adventure road, wherever it is that Jesus might be calling us to?

And as we are on that road with the disciples going to Emmaus, do you know the Scriptures? Do you recognise Jesus for you, as the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promises in our Gospel reading, brings these scriptures alive for us by pointing us to this same Jesus?

I know from my own devotional life, how hard a struggle it can be sometimes, and how easily I can miss Jesus in my day-to-day happenings. How about you? Do you find that too, sometimes?

So for the next few minutes, I want to encourage you in the opportunities there are for you and I to grow in our faith, as part of this community of faith. So that together we can hear the call of Jesus, to be taught by him on the road, and to follow him where he leads on this adventure. Are you growing in your faith? And through your growing are you ready to go further down the road?

Here at St Paul's and beyond are a few of the many opportunities God provides for time with Jesus and with each other to grow in the Word:

Are you...

**Are we ready to go on the adventure
road wherever it takes us with
Jesus?**

- **Worship:** The service carries us in the Word of God. This is a wonderful place where we grow in faith. Not only do we *hear* the word, but we *respond* with the word — our liturgies bring us both to listen to and to speak and enact the word of God. Be encouraged in your worship life.

- Devotional opportunities that we have in life. Some people I know tap into the daily LCA devotions, where they send an email overnight for you to tap into in the morning. Share with me what you find helpful.

- Daily Bible Readings

- Online resources such as Lectio 365, which Cathy Beaton & I both find helpful.

- I want to get you ready for a lovely devotional resources that some of our pastoral assistants, Trina and a few others, are working on that will appear on our St Paul's website starting soon. I'm very, very encouraged by this, and we'll learn more about it as we get closer to unveiling it. I'm a big fan of good online resources where we can act and interact with one another. In contrast, there are so many places online that take us down rabbit holes which are not helpful, which are not helpful for anyone let alone for us as Christians; so I want to encourage you that we are presenting something to you very, very soon.

- Dwelling in the Word with one another, and the worksheets are available for you as you go along.

- In a few months' time also, we'll be running a course called "Living as a Lutheran"; and we'll be working through this resource called "God for Us", and we'll tell you more about that as that gets closer.

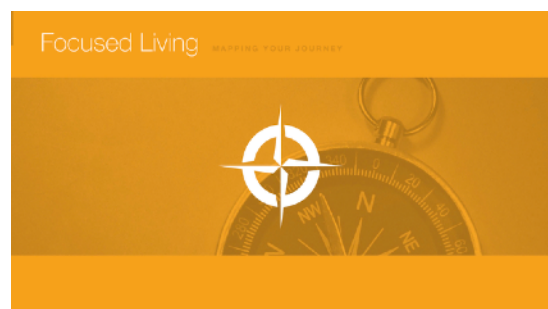
- FISH for young people is one of the things that happen in our regular schedule, along with:

- Safe House
- Young Adults
- Small Groups
- Gospel Fluency Workshop (coming up)
- Australian Lutheran College
- Focused Living

... there are just so many places where we keep growing in our knowledge of an living in the Word.

One of those that I'd like to introduce to you today with the help of David Paech is called Focused Living. As David comes forward, I'll mention that yesterday David and Chris celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary [applause] ... so it's really good that you turned up today, David, thank you! So tell us something about what Focused Living is, and why we might want to learn about it?

David: How many times in our adults lives do we ask, "Where are you, God? Where are you?" We feel alone, deserted... where is the God of our Sunday School & Confirmation



lessons? Our lives have grown more complex, we face significant adult challenges, and those beautifully simple answers no longer satisfy. Don't get me wrong — Sunday School and Confirmation are vital in our growth, in our journey, in our life-long learning; but life can be very confusing, as it was for the disciples on the road to Emmaus....What has just happened? Was this what we expected? It was so good when we were with Jesus, when Jesus walked with us... But where is our Jesus now?

Our life stories as painful or confusing or even as ordinary as they may feel, are in fact being woven, moulded, shaped, written as masterpieces as we read in Ephesians 2:10 — the POIEMA [workmanship] of the Lord God of the Universe — as baptised children of God, Jesus continues to walk the road with us, often without us knowing (or feeling) this!

Focused Living provides an opportunity to intentionally revisit our life story, and to grow in this understanding that the Lord has always been there, holding us, calling us to grow into the persons he created us to be....

And that even the ordinariness of our lives, or even our confusion, (like those disciples on their way to Emmaus), great transitions in our lives, even pain, and even our woundedness ... especially our boundedness ... all will be used by Him in the masterpiece — the *poiema* — that is our life.

This is the gospel at work in us, and through our lives... blessing those around us... those we do life with. And our God calls us forward with His Spirit encouraging, comforting & guiding us — as we hear in John 14:16-18 ..."our Father gives us the Spirit of truth who abides with us and in us..."

Ok, thank you David, that gives us a good start; and thank you to you and Chris for your leadership, and the wonderful work you are doing in this space. Can you tell us a little more about the course itself please?

Focused Living was first done here at St Paul's back in Pastor Allan Heppner's time. That's when Chris and I did it, in around 1996, along with a significant number of St Paul's members, some of whom were used as mentors in our course last year.

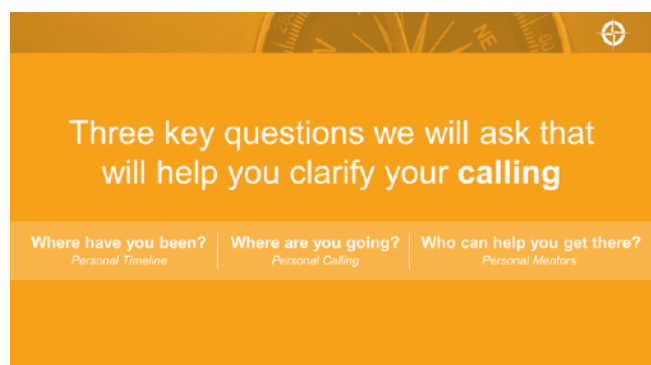
So Focused Living is a course of six sessions, where we seek to grow as adult disciples, clarifying our calling, through an intentional process of biblical reflection, prayer & discussion, and with the support of a personal mentor between sessions.

Last year participants met on Saturday mornings, starting with breakfast, and then Chris and I (as registered FL facilitators) worked through the Focused Living course material together with the group. We met for six sessions, three weekly for about 5 months.

One of the participants of Focused Living last year was Christine Sindt. Christine is currently visiting family in WA but she was kind enough to write some thoughts of her experience of Focused Living and a some are available in the foyer as you leave if you'd like to know more.

So what you're seeing now on the screen is sort of a scaffold of the course. So there are three key questions we ask that help to clarify our callings:

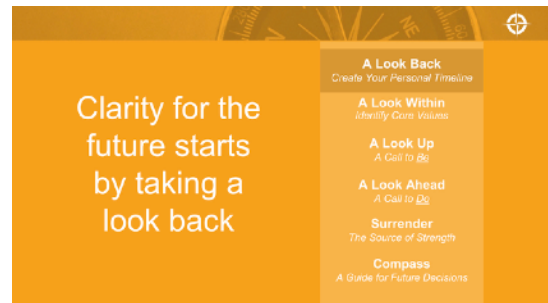
- Where have you been, which is



where we develop our own personal timeline — a very, very powerful tool. Those of you who are involved in management in the secular world know that the power of our story is huge — it shapes who we are. And for us as disciples, it's wonderful.

- Then we look at where we are going. So we explore this idea of a calling.
- And who can help us to get there? Of course there are the personal mentors there, but it is also a community of faith.

We see that clarity for the future starts by taking a look back, so that's the first part of the course. Then we look within, at core values. Then we look up at the call to be — not to do, but to be — Alan Heppner used to say that “Authentic doing is always preceded by authentic being”. Authentic being is first, and the doing follows. We've so often got that around the other way — I value myself by what I *do* — but I'm a human *being*, not a human *doing*.



Surrender — the source of our strength. For people of faith who walk with the risen Christ, whose Spirit lives within us and abides with us — that is a super source of strength.

And then of course the compass, a guide for future directions.

So we are hoping to start a Young Adults group for Focused Living shortly, and then a second group later in the year, with more details to come about that. So our invitation is to prayerfully consider whether Focused Living might be for you at this time in your life, for whatever reasons. We prayed last year, in the lead-up to the course, that the Lord would bring the right people, and we had a wonderful group of people and mentors, who found the whole Focused Living scaffold/course very, very helpful in their lives, in terms of the questions we just showed on the screen. So, God bless you as you consider, amongst the many opportunities to grow as disciples here at St Paul's, whether Focused Living might be for you.

Thank you David and Chris for your leadership, and people like Sue and Andrea behind the scenes, and to all of the mentors and people who are involved in Focused Living.

Jesus does teach us on the road. Do you hear him? What might you do to listen more attentively to the voice of God for you?

He promises us today in our Gospel reading:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

John 14:16-18

And Jesus dwells with us in this house, this physical and spiritual home we share where he hosts us who travel the road. He bids us to come here and find rest as he feeds us with the bread of life, and as he teaches us the way as we make our way on life's road. This is my Son, the Father says. Listen to him. Grow in your knowledge. Grow in your faith. With eyes being opened, go confidently on your way and do likewise for others you walk with.

Let's spend a moment considering these questions for self-reflection.

Video of the service including the above address:
<https://youtu.be/P4gDru3bLk0>

Questions for self-reflection

- "They said to each other, "were not our hearts burning within while he was talking to us on the road, while he opened the scriptures to us?"
- Am I growing in my faith?
- Am I actively seeking to grow in my faith through study and devotional life in the Scriptures?
- What might I do and who might I talk to, to actively explore this further?