

Retreat of Silence, Jesus Meets Discouraged Disciples (Lk 24:13–35)

By Carolyn Carney and Joe Moore

Introduction

This guide will lead you through a retreat of silence from one to three hours long, but it can also be used for longer periods. It is intended to work within the current parameters of social distancing.

We retreat today in the midst of our world being turned upside down by Covid-19. Something too small to see has disrupted our lives. We need to know that God is good and loving, without equating that with health and safety. How can we be resurrection people when there seems to be death and dying all around us with no end in sight?

Getting Ready

Before sitting down to pray:

- Minimize distractions as much as possible.
- Consider putting your phone in airplane mode.
- Make sure you have some paper, a pen, and your Bible.
- Divide the time you have set aside into three equal periods.
 - For example, if you have set aside one hour, each period will be 20 minutes long.
 - Feel free to be flexible and change the time allocated for each period as you go.

Period 1: Arrival

Begin the retreat by finding a place to settle. Take several deep breaths. As you exhale, try and release any tension you are carrying in your body. Relax. Breathe in the peace of Christ.

- What cares, concerns, and people do you want to entrust to God's care today? Lift these to Jesus and share your heart with God.
- How have these last weeks affected your spiritual life? Take some minutes to talk with the Holy Spirit about how you've been affected.
- What do you come seeking today?

Before moving on in the retreat, sit quietly with Jesus, listening for God's voice and being aware of God's presence.

Period 2: Gospel Contemplation

Read: Luke 24: 13–35 slowly. Read a second time and as you do imagine the scene. It is about a seven mile journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus. These two disciples have probably not slept much in the past few days because of all the turmoil. They did not go themselves to investigate the empty tomb. What may have kept them? Using your imagination, put yourself into the passage, become one of the characters. What do you experience with each of your senses? Feel the dust on your feet, the weariness in your muscles, the sweat on your brow from the journey.

InterVarsity's Staff Care Team created these resources to equip InterVarsity staff to care for students and faculty during the COVID-19 crisis.

Reflect:

- As you walk away from Jerusalem toward Emmaus, what dreams are dashed?
- What's your experience of Jesus walking with you? Tell Jesus the concerns on your heart.
- *"Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (26)* Take a moment and imagine our Suffering Servant in today's world, in the midst of this pandemic. How do you imagine him to be?
- Sit with Jesus around that table as he gives thanks, breaks the bread and offers it to you. *"Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him..." (31)* If you are having trouble recognizing Jesus in these days, ask him to show himself to you. Imagine the Risen Jesus walking amongst every corner of the globe during this pandemic. What does Jesus do? What is he saying? What difference does it make that he is there? What is Jesus offering to you through this?

Rest: Take the remaining time in this period to simply rest in God and allow him to deepen those themes within you. Be attentive to what the Holy Spirit is doing in your heart.

Period 3: Lament and Prayer

As you pray this prayer of lament (from Ravi Zacharias Ministries), allow the Lord to bring to mind those whom you know and love and serve.

Hear our cry, Almighty God. Listen to our prayer. How long will we have to hide in our homes from this invisible enemy? Where will it strike next? And whom? And what if...? Our screens relay a continuous escalation of suffering and death around the world. Panic and anxiety abound. Our souls are weary from the strain of the life-altering unknowns.

Heavenly Father, from the depths of our pain and confusion, we cry out to You. From fear-filled hearts and anxious minds, we plead with You: Rescue us, Father of compassion and grace. We lift up our eyes to You, Lord God, the One who sits enthroned in heaven.

- On all who have contracted the virus - Lord have mercy
- On all who have lost loved ones to this sickness and are in mourning and anguish - Lord have mercy
- On all who are unable to earn an income because their jobs have been suspended - Lord have mercy

We cry out for healing and needed resources. We cry out for comfort and peace

On all medical professionals and caretakers attending to those infected with the virus - Christ have mercy.
On all scientists and technologists striving to find a vaccine and to make it available - Christ have mercy
On all leaders of institutions and governments as they make decisions to try and contain the virus - Christ have mercy

We pray for strength in the long and exhausting hours of labor. We pray for wisdom in the research and difficult decisions

- On all who have not yet contracted the virus - Lord have mercy
- On the most vulnerable of our society who are unable to buy extra food or get proper medical attention - Lord have mercy
- On all disciples of Jesus Christ discerning how to reflect His love to others within this crisis - Lord have mercy

We plead for protection of health. We plead for all to remain calm and kind.

(Add your own lament.)

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the expanse of the universe. And yet this earth is no longer as You created it to be. Holy Father, our earth groans from the devastation caused by the curse of the Fall. My God, Your Word is true. One day You will liberate creation from its bondage to decay and death.

Life is sacred and precious in your sight. You are the God Who sees us and sustains us.

Nothing can separate us from the Father's unfailing love and kindness, not even sickness or the fear of tomorrow. You are our Light as we walk in this darkness. We will remember to celebrate the beautiful gifts You have given us in this present moment.

Almighty God, You are our Rock, our Refuge from the enemy, our hiding place. You calm our frantic thoughts and fill our despairing hearts with joy and strength. In Your Presence living water springs forth in the wilderness. You restore our souls. <https://www.rzim.org/read/rzim-global/a-prayer-of-lament-over-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

We cannot shed a tear, but that tear has already blinded the eyes of Christ. We cannot be without tears, but that constriction of the heart has constricted His Heart. He has known all and every kind of fear that we know, and there is no possible loneliness, no agony of separation but it is Christ's; indeed, not one of us can die, but it is Christ dying. And Christ, Who faces all these things in our lives, has overcome them all and has sanctified them by His limitless love. His love made every moment of His Passion redeeming and healing and life-giving, and this love, this Christ-love, is ours, just as much as His suffering is.