

not expect us to give them something designed and shaped for them?

Unless the Holy Spirit is in our preaching our preaching is powerless. We know this to be true. It is not wise, however, to spend a lot of time trying to figure out what part the preacher did and what part the Holy Spirit did. We work as though everything depended on our effort, we pray as though it all depended on God, but I don't know any formulae by which to say I did this and the Holy Spirit did that. Just give it all to the Holy Spirit.

Praying and preaching are twins. It is speaking with God that authorises what we say about God. If we do not speak with God, people can tell. How easily and glibly can we share the Gospel, without sweat, agony or tears. We can just be witty and clever and dash it off. People can tell, because the one thing people want most is that our preaching be an act of worship. They have some sense of the presence of God in a way that is achieved not by lighting another candle or changing the accoutrements or lowering the lights, but through praying. Praying authorises preaching.

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## DAMASCUS OR EMMAUS?

Stephen Cottrell

For a long while a crisis model of conversion dominated most of our thinking about evangelism. People needed to be brought to a moment of decision and response. The great biblical story which inspired our efforts was Paul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus. During the Decade of Evangelism we have re-learned that for most people becoming a Christian is much more like a journey than an event. John Finney's research on how people become Christians, published as *Finding Faith Today* (1992, Bible Society) showed that for a majority of people of all denominations

and -traditions, faith dawned gradually. The great biblical story which inspires this approach to evangelism is the Emmaus Road.

But are these stories actually saying different things? Paul's conversion takes place on a journey. Who knows what impact the martyrdom of Stephen had had on his questioning mind? After he receives his vision he still requires Ananias to help him interpret the meaning of the revelation and to fully initiate him into the Christian way through the gift of the Holy Spirit and baptism.

Equally, the Emmaus Road is not just a gradual process - it has its dramatic high points. Jesus is suddenly made known to the two disciples in the breaking of bread. There is also the tentative invitation, as the two disciples urge Jesus to stay with them. They can then see how Jesus had been with them all the time on the road. They interpret the journey in the light of the event.

In other words the Damascus Road is a dramatic event at the heart of a process and the Emmaus Road is a process containing dramatic events. While I think it is good to speak of an Emmaus Road model for evangelism, it is important to emphasise that this is not because dramatic Damascus Road conversions do not happen any more - clearly they do. The point is that we must see and understand the interplay between event and process, evangelism and nurture in the on-going ministry of making disciples. The Emmaus Road story is probably more helpful today because it describes a journey with Jesus while people are still unaware of his identity. This is similar to many people's situation today. They are longing for meaning and value in their lives but are not yet conscious of walking with Jesus. We need to bring them to that same point of tentative invitation which is in the Emmaus Road story as a means of helping them encounter Jesus.

On the road Jesus explores and explains the true meaning of scripture. This also affirms the Church's role in teaching and exploring our beliefs and traditions before we are able to encourage people to respond to the Gospel. So many people grow up with little or no knowledge of the Christian tradition that it is rarely possible for us to preach directly into their situation. A lot of pre-evangelism is necessary as we walk with people and help them explore the claims of faith. But none of this means a rejection of Damascus. What is a process, other than a series of events?

The Emmaus Road events are very instructive:-

- Jesus meets people where they are
- He walks with people while they are going in the wrong direction
- His identity is concealed - their eyes are prevented from recognising him so they are able to make a free response to all that God has done for them in Jesus
- He listens before he speaks
- He lets their questions set the agenda
- He explains and explores the scriptures
- He waits to be invited in
- After he is made known to them they are literally turned around and the first fruits of their recognising Jesus is their longing to share that knowledge with others.

These are biblical principles for evangelism which are vital for every church. They are at the heart of the Emmaus programme which seeks to provide both a model, and practical resources, for a local church to be evangelistic in all its life. The Emmaus programme understands the journey of faith as having three stages:

### **1. Contact**

On the Emmaus Road Jesus meets people where they are. He walks with them while they are going in the wrong direction. He listens before he speaks. His first question is, what are you talking about as you walk along?

The Contact stage of Emmaus is a small book which helps churches listen to and serve their community. It is about making new contacts and using existing contacts more creatively. The aim of this stage is to so love and serve the community that people will come to a point where they are wanting to discover more about the Christian Faith: the journey has begun.

### **2. Nurture**

On the Emmaus Road Jesus teaches the two companions about himself. He breaks open for them the true meaning of the Scriptures.

The Nurture stage of Emmaus is a 15-session nurture course which aims to teach the basics of the Christian faith. There is opportunity for questions and debate but also a solid grounding in

the faith. There are extensive leaders' notes and photocopiable handouts for group members so each group only needs one book.

Because the Emmaus Road is an accompanied journey, the Emmaus programme intends that inquirers will be accompanied by ordinary church members on the journey. There is also liturgical material so that as people grow in faith the different stages of their journey towards full membership of the Church can be celebrated.

At the end of the Nurture stage it is hoped that many people will have made the free response of love and are wanting to be received into the church's life through baptism or confirmation or renewal of baptismal promise. But this is not the end of the journey.

### **3. Growth**

On the Emmaus Road the two companions recognise Jesus at the breaking of bread. There is a dramatic moment when their eyes are opened. Earlier they had urged Jesus to stay with them, even though they still did not know who he was. Later they remembered how their hearts had burned within them when he had spoken to them on the road. They rush back to Jerusalem eager to share with others their wonderful experience of God.

The Growth stage of Emmaus is about helping people to deepen their faith. The aim is not just church membership, but active discipleship. This is what makes the Emmaus programme different: it is not just a course, it is a whole programme for the Church. It starts much earlier and it goes much deeper.

The Growth stage consists of 13 short courses published in 3 volumes. There are detailed leaders' notes and photocopiable handouts for group members. The idea is not-to slavishly work through all of the sessions, but to treat this material as a menu from which to select the different courses that will nourish a particular group. Thus, on-going discipleship is built into the daily life of the church. The Growth courses can also be used to deepen the faith of existing church members.

Emmaus has been produced by people in the Wakefield Diocese who come from different traditions in the Church of England. There is a sacramental emphasis in the material, something that is often lacking from other courses, but most important of all is the understanding of faith as a journey and the understanding of

conversion as a combination of event and process. On the Emmaus Road and on the Damascus Road there are layers of response. On the former, explanation is followed by tentative invitation followed by dramatic revelation. On the Damascus Road dramatic revelation is followed by tentative invitation followed by exploration. All three elements are vital for full initiation and growth into discipleship and ministry. The important lesson for all churches to learn is that faith is a journey, not just for those seeking after faith, but also for those of us who are already Christians. Christians were once called "Followers of the Way" and we need to constantly remind ourselves that the journey does not end until that day when we see God face to face. For those at the earliest stages of enquiry, and for those of us who are mature in the faith, our God still has more to teach us, more to show us and new paths along which to lead us. He is always a gracious and courteous God and he is always waiting for our response.

The Emmaus programme is a way of doing evangelism for all types of churches and especially for those who usually do not think that evangelism is their thing. It is a resource to help all churches to be more effective and more holistic in the ministry of evangelism.

Emmaus: the Way of Faith is published by Church House Publishing and Bible Society.

**The Revd Stephen Cottrell** was Chairman of the team of authors who developed *Emmaus: The Way of Faith*.

## TEN BOOKS I WOULD SAVE FROM THE FLAMES

Julian Reindorp

This article allows me to rescue ten books from my blazing study. I am also allowed a Bible (NRSV) and a Hymn Book (Hymns Old and New, New Anglican Edition) of my choice.

Two commentaries - Dennis Nineham on *Mark* (Penguin 1963) sceptical, but packed with insights, and Diarmuid McGann's