

GREATER SIDNEY AREA EMMAUS SPONSORSHIP TRAINING

THE PURPOSE OF THIS TRAINING IS TO EQUIP THE COMMUNITY FOR THE SAKE OF THE PILGRIM EXPERIENCE. "IN THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION AND CHARITY".....PLEASE DO NOT JUDGE THIS EXPERIENCE UNTIL YOU HAVE HEARD THE ENTIRE PRESENTATION. AS WITH THE WALK ITSELF, DO NOT JUDGE THE IN PART, BUT WAIT FOR THE ENTIRE INFORMATION TO BE SHARED AND ALLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BRING US INTO AGREEMENT FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

Primary references for this workshop:

1. Day Four: The Pilgrim's Continued Journey, Bob Wood and Marie Livingston Roy, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1986
2. The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus, Stephen D. Bryant, The Upper Room, 1989
3. What is Emmaus?, Stephen D. Bryant, The Emmaus Library, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1995

[Individuals quoted or mentioned are International Directors of the Walk to Emmaus.]

THIS PRESENTATION HAS ALSO BEEN REVIEWED BY ELEVEN MEMBERS OF PRESENT AND PAST BOARDS OF DIRECTORS. THEY HAVE PRAYED OVER THIS TRAINING, ITS FORMAT AND CONTENT SO THAT IT MAY STRENGTHEN THE BODY OF CHRIST IN OUR LOCAL EMMAUS MINISTRY.

[Significant individuals quoted and mentioned:

1. Bob Wood - first International Director of Walk to Emmaus
2. Stephen D. Bryant - second International Director of Walk to Emmaus
3. K. Cherie Jones - third International Director of Walk to Emmaus]

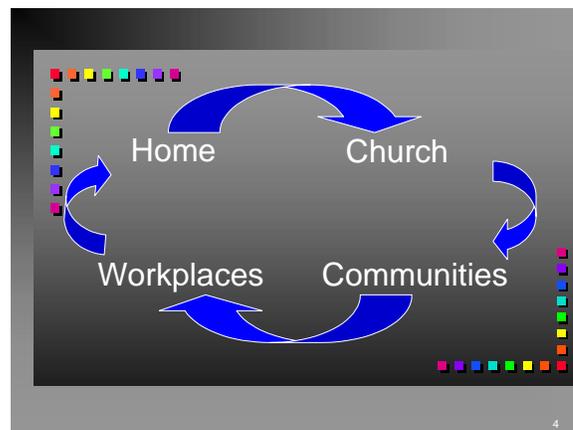


THIS TRAINING HAS SEVERAL SECTIONS. THEY ARE:

- Purpose of the Walk to Emmaus
- Basis for the Walk to Emmaus
- Importance of Quality Sponsorship
- Purposeful Sponsorship
- Questionable Sponsorship
- Ten Steps of Sponsorship
- Decision-making Approach

As you can tell, the topic is not for the faint of heart...neither is the process of being a quality sponsor. To him whom much is given, much is expected. Luke 12:48

“The aim of Emmaus is to inspire, challenge, and equip local church members for Christian action - in their homes, churches, workplaces, and communities.” [Stephen Bryant, What is Emmaus?, The Emmaus Library, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1995]



The strength of any Emmaus Community is greatly affected by the community's sponsoring practices. If the community is committed to recruiting strong church leaders for the purpose of strengthening the local church, then the community will be a strong vital force in the renewal movement.

[Taken from Bob Wood and Marie Livingston Roy, Day Four: The Pilgrim's Continued Journey, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1986]

Emmaus is a movement raised by the Holy Spirit for renewal of the church. As a movement it is more than another religious program or retreat. It is an extraordinary act of love. People loving other people into a deeper realization of God's love. But Emmaus doesn't stop at the end of the 3-day event. The goal of Emmaus is to give persons the means to persevere in grace for the rest of their lives.

THE EMMAUS SPONSORSHIP MODEL

From The New International Version Luke 24:13-35 reads....

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; they day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

From this scriptural basis for the Walk to Emmaus, we recall that Jesus joined two DISCIPLES. He could choose anyone but he chose people who already were believers.

During their time together faith was **RE-EXPLAINED** - not presented for the 1st time. In the re-explaining knowing becomes believing / living and doing becomes being. Talks and meditations on a Walk To Emmaus weekend provide the re-explanation.

Upon arrival in the village of Emmaus, the disciples recognized Jesus and grace was **RE-EXPERIENCED**. Somewhere in their journey of faith they had previously experienced God's grace. On a Walk To Emmaus weekend sacred moments burst into our lives through communion and agape acts. We encounter it all with folks who are strangers.

The disciples **RE-TURNED TO THE LITTLE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY** in Jerusalem to share their experience. The disciples together became the body of Christ in the world. They supported one another as they walked in the spirit of Jesus and shared the gospel of grace with those around them. They shared their experience with others who had also experienced the risen Jesus in different ways. While with our table on a Walk To Emmaus weekend, we learn that what we experience is not a "private gift" but something that needs to be shared with others.

Remember that "the purpose of Emmaus is the renewal of the church as the body of the risen Christ in the world through the renewal of church members as faithful and committed disciples of Jesus Christ.

Emmaus **EXPANDS** participants' spiritual lives, **DEEPENS** their discipleship, and **REKINDLES** their gifts as Christian leaders in their churches and communities."

[Stephen Bryant, The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus, The Upper Room, 2001 pg 2]



IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY SPONSORSHIP

[Reference: Stephen Bryant, The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus, The Upper Room, 1989, page 21]

First - the whole experience of a pilgrim is impacted by how they first hear about the Walk To Emmaus and how they experience the agape acts that bring them to register for and, ultimately, attend a Walk To Emmaus weekend.

Second - the operative words here are sacrificial love by the sponsor on behalf of the pilgrim. Here we move from the discerning process leading up to the weekend to the weekend itself. Sponsor's acts of agape include prayer, agape letters, Candlelight, Closing, and post weekend follow-up.

Third – Quality sponsorship affects the foundation for a healthy, effective Emmaus movement fulfilling its true purpose. That purpose is the development of Christian leaders and the renewal of the church in ministry.

“The strength of any Emmaus Community is a direct result of that community’s recruiting practices. If the community is committed to recruiting strong church leaders for the purpose of strengthening the local church, then the community will be a strong vital force in the renewal movement.”

[p.51 Day Four: The Pilgrim’s Continued Journey, Bob Wood & Marie Livingston Roy]

CHERIE JONES, THIRD INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR OF WALK TO EMMAUS, HAS STATED IN THE INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER (FOR WALK TO EMMAUS) AND TRAINING EVENTS THAT OVER 90% OF THE PROBLEMS THAT SHE DEALS WITH ARE ROOTED IN POOR SPONSORSHIP.

PURPOSEFUL SPONSORING

[Reference: Stephen Bryant, *The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus, The Upper Room, 1989, pages 21 & 22*]

Sponsorship should never be haphazard or a casual effort. It should always be based in prayers of discernment. Sponsors' prayers for discernment should be centered on the purpose of the Walk To Emmaus.

Sponsors must keep in mind that Emmaus is for active Christians and members of churches whose renewal will mean new energy, commitment, and vision in the church and everyday environments.

Ideally pilgrims on weekends will come from the following pool of people:

Church Leaders: these are clergy and laity from local church settings who will bring new vision, commitment and understanding back to their congregations who need the renewal and grace Emmaus provides

Here we are primarily referring to those folks who are in designated leadership roles (chairpersons, women's / men's group presidents, etc.). However, don't overlook those who are the quiet leaders of the church. These folks may never hold a designated leadership position in the life of the church.

Dependable Church Members: These are the folks who are always there when you need them. They may never have any desires to hold leadership roles, but the church knows they are supporting its efforts and ministry. These are the people who live a life of discipleship.

Less Active Members:

- First there are people who at one time may have been more active members; they may have even been leaders in the church.
- Second there are people whose journey has not yet brought them to leadership roles or regular involvement as members of the church.

Regardless of which type of person, they need their awareness of grace rekindled or deepened, to renew their commitments to the spiritual journey, or they may need to make additional commitments for the next part of their journey.

Christians hungry for "something more" or who want to grow spiritually:

Christians maturing in their spiritual journey should realize that God is wanting "something more" for them. This is not a case of wanting another experience just for the sake of it. Instead, God brings experiences and people into one's midst to help refine the understanding of what it means to be a Christian disciple.

(Purposeful sponsoring continued)

Members & leaders representing a cross-section of the church & society: A potential sponsor needs to be open to the fact that the pilgrim God is leading them to may not be from the same economic, cultural, ethnic, denominational, theological, or geographic background as they are.

Being open to God's movement in this way will help the Emmaus community to remain sound theologically. An ecumenical movement like Emmaus should be centered on the essentials of our common faith and open to different perspectives of the church.

For a community to be true to this goal, the leadership and membership of the community will need to intentionally address this area and be open to God's movement.

Respected laypersons & clergypersons: These are folks who are validators for others of the Emmaus experience based upon their sharing of what they have experienced in the Emmaus community. Their participation, support and leadership will end up encouraging others to take the Walk.

The church and leadership in the church is comprised of BOTH laity and clergy. Therefore, sponsors need to be open to God leading them to sponsor clergypersons as well as laypersons. When a sponsor is in dialogue with a clergyperson, the emphasis should be on their Emmaus journey as a Christian disciple needing renewal.

QUESTIONABLE SPONSORSHIP

[Reference: Stephen Bryant, The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus, The Upper Room, 1989, page 22]

Just as sponsors need to be purposeful in who they look to sponsor on an Emmaus weekend, they also need to be sensitive to the fact that Emmaus is not for everyone. Potential sponsors should seek the leading of the Holy Spirit as they pray through the discerning process.

The Walk to Emmaus is designed to foster Christian community; it is not a place of theological or religious debate. Persons who challenge the basic tenets of the Christian faith may become disruptive agents or may become silent and withdrawn.

Persons with no relationship to the Church of Jesus Christ: Remember what we said at the beginning of this workshop - the vision of Emmaus is to revitalize church leaders. This assumes that pilgrims are Christians and that they have an existing relationship with the church of Jesus Christ. It is from a local church that a pilgrim comes and it is to that same local church that they return. Emmaus is not intended for pilgrims to meet Jesus for the very first time - it is not a converting experience but rather a confirming / reaffirming time.

Persons undergoing emotional crisis or who may be experiencing psychological instability: Although our temptation is to seek to sponsor pilgrims in order to “fix” their emotions and / or situations, we do an injustice to them if we urge them to become involved in Emmaus in order to solve their ills. As sponsors we need to be careful not to build unrealistic expectations by promising pilgrims that Emmaus will heal their grief, emotional distress, or broken marriage. Current or recent emotional crisis often distracts a pilgrim from experiencing the full impact of the weekend.

Psychological instability can also be an extremely disruptive factor on a weekend by either distracting the efforts of leadership team or the attention of other pilgrims. In addition, Emmaus may be damaging to individuals who are psychologically unstable as they listen to the personal testimony, talks, discussions and chapel experiences. These are often very emotional experiences and may cause additional turmoil rather than good.

If a pilgrim is borderline in this area, it is important that the sponsor make information available to the community registrar. This information is always held in strictest confidence between the registrar and the weekend leadership team.

Persons who decide not to make a walk after being presented the opportunity: No one should ever feel like they are a failure if a prospect says no to the invitation to attend an Emmaus weekend. We need to accept the no response and not pressure the person to reconsider or attend a weekend anyway. We as sponsors may not know all of the circumstances. The timing may not be right for the individual or Emmaus may not be the vehicle by which this individual will experience renewal.

Christians whose theology and/or practice is notably different or incompatible: Different theologies who may feel a need to defend their positions to the point that they would become a disruption to other participants. Emmaus is about emphasizing the commonality of Christians; not those things that make them different.

“Church hoppers”: Some individuals are constantly moving from church to church because their local church is not what “they” want it to be. There is always another axe to grind or something that the current church is deficient in. When they experience resistance they give up and move on to another church that might be more receptive to their efforts. These folks are never satisfied with where God has placed them in ministry.

Persons who are always looking for another spiritual high or experience to help them “arrive”: For these folks no matter how meaningful an experience is, they will never be happy. They cannot deal with coming down from the mountaintop experience. When the valley is encountered they will either attempt to invalidate the Emmaus experience or rush to find the next mountaintop experience.

TEN STEPS OF SPONSORSHIP

[References: Stephen Bryant, *The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus, The Upper Room, 1989, pages 23 & 24* and Bob Wood and Marie Livingston Roy, *Day Four: The Pilgrim's Continued Journey, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1986, pages 51 - 57*]

Pray: Prayer is the foundation of the Emmaus movement and it is the enabler of the movement. A sponsor's prayer focus needs to be on who might become more vitally alive as a Christian disciple in all of their environments. Long before a potential pilgrim is spoken to, the sponsor should be heavily involved in prayers of discernment and direction by God. These prayers need to be prayers for openness on the part of the potential pilgrim to God's call to discipleship.



Be very sure that as a sponsor you are offering prayers that will help identify individuals who are ready to continue a life-long journey of faith and discipleship. Once the focus is clear to the sponsor, then it is safe to move on to the next step. Remember to be in prayer between and during future steps.

Make an appointment: No doubt you will have had numerous casual conversations with an individual prior to reaching this point. Casual conversations and comments are good foundations but ultimately if you are serious about asking someone to become part of the Emmaus community you will want to make an appointment to extend such an invitation.

You may want to provide the individual a copy of the Emmaus Library booklet entitled "What is Emmaus?". [This is also available through The Upper Room – Nashville] By doing so, your task of providing information about the Emmaus movement will be simplified and your time with the potential pilgrim will be a time for questions and answers and clarification of issues. If you have not provided the individual with the booklet, be prepared to talk in detail about the Emmaus movement, the weekend retreat and follow on activities. You may even want to take a copy of the booklet with you as a reference point. In any event make sure you cover the same items that the booklet covers.

Remember that there are no secrets in the Emmaus movement. Too often the movement has had claims leveled against it that it is a secret society. As you speak with individuals concerning their weekend, try not to overload them with details. That doesn't mean there shouldn't be surprises - do not volunteer information you are not questioned about. But if you are asked specific and direct questions about "dying moments" or agape gifts or candlelight or etc. make sure you answer the question.

(Make an appointment continued)

If the individual you are meeting with is married, the meeting should include their spouse. Equal commitment represents wisdom not law. The equal commitment rule guards against Emmaus becoming a divisive influence in a marriage. *[Foundational to why this is important can be found on pages 26 -27 of The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus and page 54 of Day Four book. Make sure you are familiar with this aspect of the Emmaus movement.]*

You should always attempt to get an equal commitment to at least experience the weekend retreat. Often you can get a spouse to attend as a supportive measure for their mate. You as the sponsor, though, need to know the couple well enough to know whether it will be okay to recommend to the community board of directors to allow one party to attend without the other. Emmaus should never be a wedge in a relationship. If you are married and your spouse has experienced an Emmaus weekend both of you should meet with the couple even if only one of you will act as the sponsor. If there is resistance on either mates part encourage them to talk about Emmaus and pray about their joint involvement and then make their decision.

Extend an invitation: After you have shared the details of the Emmaus movement, what your personal experience has been in Emmaus, and what a difference Emmaus has made in your life - you will want to extend an invitation for them to consider embarking on a lifetime journey. Make sure they understand you are not inviting them just to a three day retreat but rather to a whole new way of life including reunion group, community gatherings, team membership and formation, and renewed interest in serving their church. The potential pilgrims should be encouraged to pray about all that they have heard and seek God's direction. If there is resistance to the invitation, invite the individual to attend a community gathering with you or invite them to join your reunion group.

Seek a commitment: Once you have extended an invitation, seek a commitment without appearing pushy. Too often we tell the story and share all the information and extend an invitation but do not encourage a commitment to begin the Emmaus journey. Once a commitment is reached help your pilgrim to fill out the application and forward the necessary paperwork and fees to the community registrar. If the person is married and intends to attend the weekend, help them fill out their application as well.

If the person's response is "no" or "not now" honor their decision and carry on your relationship in the same manner as before. Do not let a "no" cause your relationship to change. Continue to pray for the person and be open to the possibility that at some future time they may change their mind. Invite them to community gatherings and other activities if it seems appropriate.

(Ten Steps of Sponsorship continued)

Continue to pray, prepare agape, enlist pastoral support: Your work as a sponsor is not done once you get a commitment - if anything it has just begun. Just as you began with prayer, prayer needs to continue. Your prayers for your pilgrim should be for God to prepare them for the Emmaus retreat and the rest of their spiritual journey. Stay in close contact with the individual in the event they have any questions or concerns. Begin the process of collecting agape letters from family and friends of the pilgrim as well as enlisting their prayer support.

If the person's pastor has not yet experienced the Walk to Emmaus or has not had any other parishioners involved in the Emmaus movement - meet with pastor to help them visualize how the person might be used in ministry upon their return from the experience. Make sure that you solicit a letter for the pilgrim from their pastor.

Personal agape gifts should not be delivered on the weekend but rather be delivered personally after the weekend (on the way home or during the first week).

Support the Walk: Tend to the family at home especially if there are children (babysitting, house-sitting, tending to pets, attending sporting events with children) or individuals with special needs. Attend send-off, sponsor's hour, candlelight, closing but at other times give your pilgrim whatever space they need to experience the walk as God intends. Continue to pray and make sure your name is on the 72-Hour prayer chart.

Help pilgrim on their Fourth Day: After the weekend experience is over, the sponsor's responsibilities don't end. Begin the process of debriefing on the the way home from the retreat center - take the pilgrim to dinner on the way home.

Schedule a time to meet with your pilgrim after the weekend to help them digest what they have experienced and answer any questions they may have. Help them to properly channel their newfound enthusiasm about being a renewed disciple.

Help pilgrim re-enter their church: Make sure the pilgrim returns to their local church enthusiastic and ready to serve. As you talk with them help them consider ways to live out the commitments they made on their weekend and help them channel their enthusiasm in constructive ways.

Try to set up a meeting with the person, their pastor and yourself to assist the assimilation process back into the life of the local church. If the pastor has not attended a Walk to Emmaus, this may be an ideal time to share more about the renewal movement.

It is important that you remain in dialogue with your pilgrim to make sure things are going well on the local church front.

Help pilgrim serve the Emmaus community: As you work with your pilgrim after their weekend help them understand the ways in which they might serve the Emmaus community. Help them understand the support needs that exist. Help clarify the information they receive at Fourth Day Insights if they have questions. Make sure they understand who to contact to sign up for the 72 hour prayer vigil. Give them ideas for agape gifts if they need help. Help them understand what it means to serve on a leadership team. Through all of your dialogues make sure you emphasize the fact that the service being talked about is “servant leadership” and help them understand the concept if it is new to them.

Help pilgrim sponsor others: Sponsoring comes full circle when you help the person you sponsored sponsor their first pilgrims. They may want you to be present the first time they speak to someone about Walk to Emmaus. They may need you to act as a co-sponsor the first time they sponsor.

Assist them in the discerning process of who to approach and how to approach them.

DECISION MAKING APPROACH

Let us share with you reflections from K. Cherie Jones (former International Director of WTE) that gives emphasis to how important a job sponsorship is in the life of the Emmaus movement. Her comments deal very succinctly with the discerning process and improper expectations:

“You know, it’s interesting how people interpret the movement of the Holy Spirit. At times there seems to be no understanding of the necessity of testing the spirits to see who in fact is behind the suggestion. I (Cherie) wrote an article several years ago about discerning the movement of the Spirit and used the quadrilateral (Wesleyan approach to decision making) as a filter for testing.

So you look at:

Scripture - which has nothing directly to say about who should attend Emmaus or what should happen on the walk;

Tradition - of Cursillo and Emmaus which assumes from the beginning a basic knowledge of the Christian faith and active church membership and offers a specific model for the weekends;

Experience - of the community both the good experiences and the bad ones for both the individual pilgrim and the other pilgrims at table;

Reason - which bases decisions on the vision of Emmaus (strengthen individual disciples, strengthen congregations, and take Christ’s light more brightly into the environment”).

SPONSORSHIP THE MOST IMPORTANT Job of All ...

“Now as far as I know, only Jesus perfectly perceived the guidance of the Spirit; the rest of us need the help of others in checking our perceptions. Certainly the Spirit prompts persons to attend Emmaus but that is not the same as saying every registration is prompted by the Spirit.”

“I also become concerned when persons think that Emmaus can be everything to everyone. That’s an enormous burden on the program and packs in with unnecessary import. It readily lends itself to making Emmaus an idol. There are limits for Emmaus....”

Yes brothers and sisters - in the life of an Emmaus community - it truly is “The most important job of all.”

[Stephen Bryant entitles the section on sponsorship in The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus (The Upper Room, 1989)]

