

Jesus opens the Scriptures

Luke 24:13–35 • Lesson 5 in Knowing God through His Word

Estimated reading time: 18 minutes

They know the events, but they cannot yet make sense of them. Jesus has been crucified. His tomb has been found empty. Women from their group have brought an astonishing report. Yet two disciples are walking away from Jerusalem looking discouraged. Their conversation on the road to Emmaus shows how close a person can be to the facts and still miss the hope those facts announce.

The risen Jesus meets them there. Luke allows us to know His identity before they recognise Him, so we listen to the conversation with a question growing: what will help them understand? Jesus does not begin by announcing His name. He opens the Scriptures and shows why the Messiah's suffering and glory belong together. Prepare to follow that discovery patiently. The children need more than a surprise ending; they need to see why the cross did not mean God's promise had failed.

The risen Jesus shows that His suffering and glory fulfil Scripture, so we can trust Him as the Saviour rather than treating His cross as a failed promise.

Trace the change from disappointed hope to news of the risen Lord. Explain why the Messiah's suffering belongs with His glory, and distinguish Luke's report from an invented detail.

Our prayer is that children will trust the real, risen Saviour and receive Scripture's correction of their expectations. The cross belongs to God's saving purpose; Christian hope is more than a change of mood. Faithful retelling can be interesting without adding an unreported conversation.

Read Luke 24:13–35, then the whole of Luke 24. Mark what the two disciples know, what they hope, what Jesus corrects and what changes before they return to Jerusalem. Notice the difference between understanding the Scriptures on the road and recognising Jesus at the meal. The account joins these experiences without treating them as identical.

Read Luke 18:31–34 to see Jesus' earlier teaching about His suffering and resurrection, and 1 Corinthians 15:1–8 for a concise apostolic explanation of their saving meaning. John 1:1–3,14 grounds our confession of who Jesus is. The complete memory verse, Luke 24:27, describes His work as interpreter. Learn it with verse 26 in mind, so that the sentence keeps its connection with suffering and glory.

This is resurrection day. Luke has already described the women coming to the tomb, finding Jesus' body absent and hearing that He has risen. The apostles initially regard their report as nonsense. The two travellers are therefore not people who have never heard of Jesus. They belong to the wider company of His followers and have heard the morning's news. Luke names one, Cleopas; he leaves the other unnamed. We should be content with that boundary.

Their destination is Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem in the CSB's rendering of verse 13. That distance helps us appreciate a sustained conversation and the significance of returning that evening. We do not need to identify an exact modern site or draw a historically precise road map. The activity's four stops are stages in Luke's account, not a claim about the geography between two excavated locations.

Four movements follow Luke's story: disappointed disciples recount the events; Jesus explains the Scriptures; they recognise Him at the meal; and they return with news of the risen Lord. The second movement supplies the meaning that makes the final announcement more than an unexpected reversal.

Hope seems to have failed — Luke 24:13–24

Luke begins with a conversation already in progress. The disciples discuss and argue about everything that has happened. Jesus approaches and walks with them, but they are prevented from recognising Him. The text identifies a real restraint on recognition without describing its mechanism. Do not explain it as a disguise, poor eyesight, tears or a changed face. Those details may sound plausible, but Luke has not supplied them.

Jesus asks about their conversation, and they stop, discouraged. Cleopas is astonished that this apparent visitor seems unaware of Jerusalem's recent events. There is a quiet irony here: the One they think knows least is the One who understands most fully. We can let children notice that without mocking the disciples. Their grief and confusion are serious, and Jesus takes time to draw their account into the open.

They describe Jesus of Nazareth as a prophet powerful in action and speech. That is part of their account, not Luke's final limit on Jesus' identity. His Gospel has already called Him the Son of God (Luke 1:35), and the chapter ends with His followers worshipping Him. When teaching, distinguish a character's partial understanding from the whole truth the narrative reveals. Jesus is truly a prophet, but He is much more than a prophet.

Their account places His death alongside their disappointed hope that He would redeem Israel. Redeem carries the idea of rescuing or setting free. The disciples had hoped in Jesus as God's deliverer, but the crucifixion seems to have overturned that hope. The text does not give a complete political programme they expected Him to fulfil. We can say that they fail to fit His death into redemption without claiming to know every detail of their expectations.

They have not ignored all the new evidence. They mention the third day, the women's report of the empty tomb and angels saying He is alive, and confirmation that the tomb was as the women described. Yet they end with the absence of a sighting by those visitors. Facts are accumulating, but their understanding has not caught up. This is the tension Jesus addresses. He does not need to deny the crucifixion in order to restore hope; He needs to explain it.

That distinction helps us pastor children honestly. Christianity does not ask us to pretend that frightening events did not happen. The cross was real suffering and death. The question is what God was accomplishing through it. Do not turn this into a promise that every disappointment in a child's life will soon have an explanation they can see. Luke is revealing the saving purpose of this particular death and resurrection.

Jesus joins suffering and glory — Luke 24:25–27

Jesus' reply is searching. He identifies foolishness and slowness to believe all that the prophets have spoken. The problem is deeper than missing a useful fact. Their understanding has not received the whole scriptural witness. We should retain the seriousness of His correction while resisting the temptation to use His rebuke as a classroom technique. The teacher is not the risen Lord, and a child's difficulty with an unfamiliar word is not proof of culpable unbelief.

His question in verse 26 supplies the central connection: the Messiah must suffer these things and enter His glory. Messiah means God's promised, anointed King and Saviour; Christ is the corresponding title used throughout the New Testament. Suffering does not cancel His calling. In God's saving purpose, it belongs to the path by which He enters glory. The cross is not an accident that forces God to devise a replacement plan.

Then Jesus begins with Moses and all the Prophets and interprets what concerns Himself in the Scriptures. Moses refers to the books associated with Moses, and the Prophets to the prophetic writings within Israel's Scriptures. Jesus is not introducing a rival message detached from what God has already said. He shows the

unity of God's promise and fulfilment. The disciples need the meaning of their Bible opened, not simply a more cheerful account of their circumstances.

Luke does not list the passages Jesus explained. That silence is important for responsible teaching. We may study Isaiah 53 as a genuine biblical witness to suffering and vindication, or consider other passages the New Testament applies to Christ. We may not announce that Jesus certainly quoted a particular verse on this road when Luke does not say so. Distinguishing a warranted canonical connection from a reconstructed speech honours both the unity and the limits of the text.

Nor does verse 27 authorise finding a secret reference to Jesus in every object or detail. The road is a road, the village a village, and the evening meal a meal within the reported events. Scripture's unfolding promises, patterns and fulfilments have a real relationship to Christ. That relationship is discovered by attending to the Bible's own teaching, rather than assigning meanings that make an imaginative retelling more exciting.

Here the lesson's interest and its interpretive discipline meet. We are allowed to feel the surprise: the event they thought defeated redemption belongs to God's redeeming purpose. We can help children articulate that change. Their answer need not include technical words about interpretation. "They thought His death meant hope was over; Jesus showed that the Messiah had to suffer and then enter His glory" is a substantial explanation rooted in the passage.

The guest is recognised — Luke 24:28–32

As they approach the village, Jesus gives the impression that He is going farther. The disciples urge Him to stay because evening is near, and He enters with them. Luke then describes Him at the table taking bread, blessing it, breaking it and giving it to them. Their eyes are opened, they recognise Him, and He disappears from their sight. The One explaining the Scriptures is the very Lord whose death has occupied their conversation.

The meal has naturally invited comparisons with other meals in Luke, including the feeding of the crowd and the last supper. We can notice the familiar actions without turning this scene into a detailed instruction for the Lord's Supper. Luke's stated emphasis is recognition. He does not say that the bread has become magical, that a particular gesture forced their eyes open or that they identified Jesus by seeing wounds in His hands at that moment.

The disciples now recall their hearts burning as He talked with them and explained the Scriptures. This describes the powerful effect of His teaching on them. It is not a medical symptom or a command to manufacture an inward sensation. The order matters: Jesus explained what was true, and they were deeply moved. Their feelings did not make His explanation true or cause His resurrection.

That is a pastoral point worth handling gently. A child may be moved to tears by a Bible passage; another may listen quietly and explain it carefully. Neither response alone tells us whether the child has saving faith. Encourage attention to Christ and His Word without demanding an emotional display. Christian assurance rests in the trustworthy Saviour and His promises, not in reproducing the intensity of someone else's experience.

The account also keeps understanding and recognition distinct. They hear the explanation on the road before their eyes are opened at the table. Do not collapse the route into "they recognised Him, so they finally heard what He said". The children's narrative stops preserve the order so they can explain both changes. Jesus corrects their reading of events, and the encounter then confirms that He Himself is alive.

Good news takes them back — Luke 24:33–35

That very hour they return to Jerusalem. The day had seemed nearly over when they invited the traveller to stay, but now they have news to share. We do not need to invent their running speed, the weather, the route's hazards or an unrecorded conversation on the way back. The reported action already carries energy: the people who walked away discouraged now go back with the news of their encounter.

In Jerusalem they find the Eleven and others gathered. The group announces that the Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon. Then the returning disciples describe their own experience on the road and at the meal. Keep the speakers straight. The travellers do not arrive as the only people with news, and verse 34 is not their report of an appearance to Simon which they themselves witnessed.

Luke's account accumulates testimony to a real resurrection. The next scene makes its bodily reality especially clear: Jesus shows His hands and feet, speaks of flesh and bones and eats in their presence (Luke 24:36–43). His disappearance at Emmaus therefore does not mean He is a ghost or merely a memory alive in their hearts. The same Jesus who died is bodily risen, though His risen life is not constrained in all the ordinary ways they knew before.

The narrative ends our allocated passage with witness rather than private satisfaction. The disciples tell what happened and how He was made known to them. Their renewed hope has a public object: the risen Lord. Help children keep the same centre when they retell the account. The strongest ending is not “they felt happier” but “Jesus really is risen, and His suffering and glory fit God's promised saving purpose”.

The cross belongs to God's saving purpose

God's purpose is more faithful than the disciples' understanding of it. The death that appears to destroy their hope fulfils His saving plan. This does not make the cruelty of the crucifixion good or excuse those responsible. It shows that evil cannot defeat His wise and gracious purpose. He has not forgotten His promises while His followers struggle to understand them.

The risen Son also shows patient, truthful care. He asks, listens, corrects and explains. His kindness includes challenging their unbelief; His correction serves their understanding. We can learn from that care without imagining that we share His perfect knowledge of a child's heart. Teach confidently from the text and patiently within your own limitations.

We can prefer a story of rescue that leaves out the cost of our sin. The disciples cannot yet fit suffering into the Messiah's mission. We too may welcome promises of comfort while resisting the cross, repentance or a call to costly obedience. Jesus teaches us to receive what God has said as a whole rather than keeping only the parts we expected.

We also depend on help. These followers have heard reports, know the Scriptures and love Jesus, yet they need His correction. This should give teachers humility and learners room to ask. Do not imply that confusion is harmless, but do not treat it as beyond the reach of grace. Bring questions back to the trustworthy Lord and the meaning of His Word.

Christ is the centre of this passage, so the gospel connection need not be added as an unrelated ending. The question is why His suffering belongs to redemption. First Corinthians 15:3–4 supplies the saving explanation: He died for our sins, was buried and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. His death addresses our guilt before the holy God. It is more than an inspiring example of courage in suffering.

Jesus is God's eternal Son, fully God, who became truly human (John 1:1–3, 14). He lived without sin and gave Himself for sinners. In His substitutionary death He bore the judgement we deserve; in His bodily resurrection He conquered death. We do not earn this rescue by understanding every prophecy or by telling

the Emmaus account without a mistake. The One the Scriptures reveal is the Saviour in whom we must trust.

Luke 24:46–47 brings suffering, resurrection, repentance and forgiveness together. Invite children to turn from sin and rely on Jesus. Explain that repentance is a real turning towards God, not a promise to repair ourselves before He will receive us. Faith rests on Christ's finished saving work. A memorised answer or an excited feeling is not a substitute for that trust.

For children who already trust Him, the passage encourages continuing confidence and teachability. We can ask for help when Scripture corrects our expectations. We can speak truthfully about Jesus without adding details to make our testimony sound stronger. The gospel is substantial enough to tell as it is. His cross and resurrection give grounds for hope even when our feelings are unsettled.

The unity of Scripture is demonstrated by Jesus' explanation of what concerns Himself in Moses and the Prophets. The Old Testament belongs to the same saving purpose as the Gospel accounts and apostolic letters. It should be read in its own historical and literary setting, then related faithfully to its fulfilment in Christ. Unity does not erase the distinctive meaning of each passage.

The resurrection is an event involving the real Jesus, not merely a change in His followers' outlook. Their hope changes because He has risen, not the other way round. The eyewitness reports in Luke 24 and the bodily details in its next scene protect us from reducing resurrection to a symbol of optimism. Christian hope rests on what God has done in history.

Questions to handle with care

Who was the other disciple? Luke does not name that person. Various suggestions have been made, but none is necessary for the lesson. Leave the person unnamed rather than turning a suggestion into fact.

Which verses did Jesus explain? Luke tells us the scope and subject of His explanation, not a list of quotations. We can name biblical passages that truly teach about Christ while saying honestly that we do not know whether He used each one on this occasion.

Why did they not recognise Him? Verse 16 says they were prevented. Verse 31 says their eyes were opened. Luke does not explain the mechanism. We can trust his account without supplying one.

Must my heart feel hot when I understand the Bible? No. The disciples describe how deeply Jesus' explanation affected them. Children may respond differently. Ask what the passage teaches about Him and whether they are relying on Him, without turning a sensation into a test of faith.

Was Jesus a ghost? No. Read the next scene in preparation. His hands, feet, flesh and bones and His eating before the disciples establish bodily resurrection. His disappearing from sight does not overturn that clear testimony.

The route's evidence check should build honesty, not suspicion of every detail in Scripture. Tell children that Luke gives enough for his purpose even though he does not answer every question we can imagine. We can be curious about the unnamed disciple or the complete conversation while accepting the account we have. A faithful retelling includes what is given, explains its meaning and leaves unreported details open. That habit will serve them as they read other narratives and hear confident claims about the Bible.

Receive this truth before you teach

What would be lost if you told this account as a surprise appearance and hurried past verses 25–27? Practise explaining why the cross belongs within God's saving purpose. Then name one boundary between what Luke reports and a detail you have heard added in a retelling.

Consider your response when Scripture challenges an expectation you value. Are you willing to receive correction from the risen Lord? Ask also whether your manner of teaching gives a quiet child room to understand without being compared with someone whose emotions are more visible.

Thank the Father for the Son who suffered for sinners and rose bodily. Ask for understanding, humility and joy grounded in His Word. Pray that the children will hear the gospel clearly, trust Jesus and learn to distinguish faithful explanation from an attractive invention. Ask for patience with questions and freedom from the need to produce a dramatic response.

Carry the truth into the classroom

Memory verse — Luke 24:27

READ ALOUD

27 Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.

Luke 24:27, CSB

Practise the complete verse and reference. Interpreted means explained the meaning; verse 26 identifies suffering and glory as the central connection.

Your preparation checklist

- **Choose and rehearse.** Choose one illustration: choose the empty-chair story or the unfinished-sentence example; both are spoken and need no materials. Keep its allotted time, then read Scripture. Plan 40 minutes: welcome 2; teaching 18; memory 3; activity 15; prayer and tidy 2. Study, prayer, rehearsal and materials are additional to article reading. The print pack is in Downloads.
- Print the seven-page pack single-sided A4 at actual size. Give each group pages 1–4 (route markers) and 5–6 (Luke 24:13–35); display page 7 (memory). Place markers on accessible tables or stable low surfaces. Seated pointing equals walking. These stops trace the account, not exact locations.
- Allow 2 minutes to model/distribute, 8 to arrange, investigate and revise, 3 to narrate and 2 to check. Children explain events; no one acts Jesus, enacts a meal ritual or simulates miracles. Offer verse-finding and pointing roles. Reject the invented detail because Luke does not report it, not because it was impossible.
- **Readiness check:** Explain disappointed hope, suffering and glory, explanation and recognition, and verse 34's speaker. Give the gospel and explain bodily resurrection. Rehearse the full reading and one stop, leaving learners the remaining work. Keep the passage accessible to every group.

After Nehemiah's gathering, the risen Jesus explains Scripture concerning Himself. This completes the hearing-and-understanding unit. Supply the resurrection-day setting for newcomers; assume no previous attendance.

Next time, recall what Jesus' explanation changed before recognition. Distinguish reported events from imagined details and follow Scripture's meaning towards trust. No Home lesson is required.

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