

“With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, . . .”

Have you ever run into someone you haven’t seen in a very long time? If so, you know that it can go one of two ways.

One, it can be a **fun, joyful, surprising moment**—one in which the person immediately exclaims, “I can’t believe it’s you!” But that doesn’t always happen.

Sometimes we get the second possibility—the one in which the other person knows **exactly who we are**, but we find ourselves thinking, **“Who is that?”**

And if the conversation is brief and few cues are provided, we might find ourselves walking away without **knowing who we had just bumped into**. And that can be more than a little frustrating—a kind of “missed opportunity”.

The story we just heard is familiar yet confusing. You see, it’s the kind of story that makes some of us want to ask follow-up questions so that we can fill in the blanks, get the **additional details we need to understand it better**.

And what immediately comes to mind is the question, “Did the two men on the road actually **know Jesus from somewhere else?** Had they personally met him before? If they did, why does Jesus keep them from recognizing him?

Perhaps, they “knew” something about Jesus, but had never met him, heard him preach, experienced his miracles, or understood his mission. Wouldn’t that make a **difference** in how we are to **understand** the story?

At its most basic level, this story is about our ability to **recognize** Jesus or not, our ability to keep our eyes **open** or keep them **closed**, our ability to be ready to **encounter** Jesus or **miss** the God who is standing before us.

The truth is, Jesus will always seem to be **absent from the places we don't expect him to be**, always seem to be hiding (in plain sight) if our hearts and minds are closed to the possibility of seeing him, or always seem to be **distant if we never expect him to be close**.

In other words, God wants us to see him, experience him, and recognize him in places, experiences, and people we would never expect to “encounter” God **where we can't imagine he would ever be**.

- In the boss **we don't like** and in a co-worker who is our best friend.
- In the neighbor who **drives us crazy**, and in the one who always allows us to borrow his tools.
- In the college acceptance letter and even in the college **rejection letter**.
- In the most virtuous person we know, and in the person who makes **bad choices after bad choices**.

These God-moments are what we call “grace”. God **pouring out his very life, his very self into our world and every person in it**, immersing and revealing himself in countless ways.

Jesus walks with us all the time, accompanying us on every journey, wanting nothing more than for us to be aware of him, to recognize him, to listen to him, to be astounded by him.

Yet too often our eyes remain **closed**, our hearts hardened by cynicism, our minds distracted by more things than we can count, our attention focused **mostly on ourselves**.

Yet, God doesn't abandon us in those moments, doesn't turn around and head in a different direction, looking for someone else who will pay attention to him. He just **keeps walking with us**, saying to us over and over again, "**I'm right here.**"

The challenge is to not let these opportunities, these holy moments, **these profound encounters pass us by**.

Where is God in this experience? Where is God in this person? What is God trying to tell me, show me, teach me, reveal to me?

In other words, am I ready to let God come to me **on his terms** rather than **on mine**? How we answer that question might not just make a **few moments** more meaningful; it might just change the way we experience **every single day of the rest of our lives**.