

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



April 19, 2026

OPENED

new vision and old scripture

by Drew Downs

One of the most perplexing phrases for me may be “opening the scriptures” because I think we all think we get the point. We just aren’t going to agree on what it looks like in practice. Some people think Jesus had a really good Bible study with two of his disciples. Others think he waved his hands and people magically comprehended it all for the first time. And still others think his presence brought new revelation to what they already knew.

The power in the passage, however, is not in the particular. It is in the fact of it — that the disciples came to understand what they *thought* they understood before. And this is an essential message for every generation. That we know things. AND that we may know things more in the future. We may be right enough for today and wrong tomorrow. Both are true. And that there will be renewed faith and devotion when we experience Christ, breathing new life into old words.

EASTER

2026

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

How to Get 10 Years Back

While many have found the impact of cell phones and social media use to be an obvious net negative for us, a collection of recent studies have shown it to be much worse than we assume, with dramatic cognitive decline evidenced by the extended usage that is now the norm. The impact on attention and thinking matches the cognitive decline of aging *and* seems to stick as we continue to use them, according to scholars quoted in *The Washington Post*.

The good news is that the evidence points to erasing that cognitive decline by taking a "digital detox". The simple act of ditching the mindless phone usage — and only the phone, not the computer — for two weeks seems to erase the negative effects completely.

Focus for a second on what seems to be happening and why. I'm not making a "technology bad" argument. Nor is this about "well, I handle myself really well, so this doesn't apply to me." Notice what the *mindless* use of this particular technology is doing to our minds. People who are, say, 65 years old are becoming 75 just by scrolling *and not realizing it*. And their brains are telling them "oh, we're just having some fun to pass the time." And then, even when they put the phone down, *they're still 75 in their bodies*.

There is something we can do for each other and that is to learn how to be more present and encourage others to be present with us. Perhaps a few of us need interventions, but resist the posturing and the itoldyousos. We need to help each other kick the habit — and to do that, they have to realize it is a habit that is dangerous, not just to our mental health, but to our long-term health as well.

With love,
Drew+

EASTER

2026

FOR SUNDAY

Easter 3A

April 19, 2026

Collect

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

from Luke 24:13-35

Now on that same day two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. . .

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

EASTER

Reflection

To mention Emmaus in many circles is to speak of revelation and transformation. It is a city which has become synonymous with evangelical zeal, not because the city is itself a hotbed of faith, but because of this story, this walk. In the twentieth century, ministries like Cursillo and those using variations of Emmaus Walk as their name sought to capture the energy captured in this story: of two people of faith having that faith supercharged by a direct encounter with Christ.

I made my Cursillo in southern Tennessee several years after I was ordained a priest. It was an energizing (and outdated) experience. And one I can see as addicting, actually. Which is also what I observed from these ministries: that people who do them want to keep doing them AND what church to become more like it, too.

During Holy Week, I reminded the congregation that perhaps the most important statement for this season may be this one from John, when Jesus tells the disciples who have witnessed Jesus's presence with their own eyes, including Thomas, who has received the same experience as the others: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Because they all have been blessed already with sight and time and experience so others might be blessed, too.

While all of the power of this story seems to rest on this amazing conversation and opportunity that these two disciples have as they meet Jesus on the road and have the scriptures opened to them, I want to point out that it doesn't strike me as the story we're all called to long for, because, once again, these are people who have seen. The blessing comes later for all the rest of us. Not trying to manufacture an experience of the divine on our own terms, but in being somewhere, on a road, perhaps, talking to a stranger, and finding out after the fact that it was Jesus. Or being at home, getting to hear from one of the travelers and praising God for their encounter.

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