

# Responsible Sponsorship

Now that you've attended the Walk to Emmaus, you may be thinking about all of the people that you'd like to share the experience with. That's good, but let's make sure to sponsor the right people for the right reasons. Responsible sponsorship is one of the keys to the success of the Emmaus weekend. It's much more than just "signing people up." The quality of your sponsorship influences the value of the weekend that is experienced by the pilgrim.

What is the goal of sponsoring people to attend Walk to Emmaus? Your aim should not be to "get all my friends to go," to fill up the weekend, to fix people's problems, or to reproduce your own encounter with Christ in others. The aim of sponsorship is simple and straightforward: *to build up the Body of Christ.*

## Who should we sponsor?

There are many people who are wonderful candidates for the Walk to Emmaus:

- Church leaders (pastors and laypeople)
- Dependable church members who are the quiet backbone of the church
- Less active members who need their awareness of God's grace rekindled and their commitments renewed
- Christians who are hungry for "something more;" who want to grow spiritually and move to a new level of faith
- Members of different congregations, denominations, races, and ethnic groups

## Who shouldn't we sponsor?

Emmaus is right for many people - but not for everyone. Here are some examples of individuals who should not be considered as candidates for the Walk to Emmaus:

- Non-Christians
- Christians whose fundamental theology and/or practice is notably different or incompatible with the traditional theology and practice presented during the Walk to Emmaus
- Persons undergoing an emotional crisis (for example, a family breakup, job loss, or severe grief) or who are psychologically unstable
- Persons whose physical disability might make it unsafe for them to spend a weekend without intensive physical or medical care

## Steps for Responsible Sponsorship

1. Pray, pray, pray some more
  - a. For God's guidance on who to sponsor
  - b. For that person's openness to God's call to discipleship, not for how to get him to go on a Walk.
2. Extend an invitation. Invite the person to attend for the sake of a closer relationship with Jesus Christ, not just to go. Take the attitude that you are offering the person a wonderful gift rather than that they need to go.
3. Ask the person to make a commitment by filling out the registration form and sending in the required deposit.
4. Continue to pray for your prospective pilgrim. Once the pilgrim has been assigned to a Walk, begin to prepare agape letters and enlist the support of their pastor. Collect eight to twelve personal agape letters from spouse, family, pastor, and close friends.

5. Support the Walk of your pilgrim through your participation in the 72-Hour Prayer Vigil and your presence at Sendoff, Candlelight and Closing. Support the pilgrim's family by housesitting, baby-sitting, feeding pets, watering plants, or just checking in with a spouse to see if any help is needed.
6. Encourage the pilgrim in his or her Fourth Day involvement. Take them to the Fourth Day Reunion after their cycle of Walks. Help them find or start a reunion group. Take the pilgrim to the first Gathering after their Walk. You could even offer to baby-sit so your pilgrim can attend a Candlelight.
7. Help your Pilgrim to come back and work a walk. Get them involved.

## **The Equal Commitment Rule**

The equal commitment rule states, "husbands and wives should both be encouraged to make an equal commitment to participate."

Getting both to attend can help guard against the Emmaus experience becoming a divisive influence in a marriage. Emmaus can be the cause of someone changing their life's direction and the other spouse may not understand or appreciate at the time.

The equal commitment rule does not mean a wife can never go to Emmaus unless her husband has gone first. But, it is best if you can spouses' participation in the same set of weekends so they can share their experience and support each other. However, circumstances may arise when husbands or wives must attend their Walks at different times.

The main thing is to be careful that participation of only one spouse will not adversely affect the marriage.

## **What should I tell my prospective pilgrim about Walk to Emmaus?**

There are no secrets about Emmaus. That said, there are some unique and meaningful experiences that occur during the weekend that are personal and really can't be described to a prospective pilgrim and are best left for their personal experience.

There is plenty that you can describe about the Walk to Emmaus Weekend and no need to create anxiety or suspicion within an individual who you are led to invite to attend. Your pilgrim should know that he or she will be well fed and cared for, that he will meet new friends, that he'll participate in discussions and even in some special worship services during the weekend. Being secretive about the weekend does more harm than good. Share the blessing and peace that you received from the weekend and assure your pilgrim that the Walk to Emmaus can be a wonderful Christian experience.

Here are some suggested topics to cover with a prospective pilgrim:

- There are fifteen presentations (five each day) dealing with subjects like setting priorities, serving God in everyday situations, how to be a disciple, and how to persevere in faith.
- There are discussions of each presentation.
- Time is spent in the chapel meditating and praying.
- Communion is emphasized.
- There is plenty of good food and fellowship.
- Discuss sleeping and showering arrangements with your pilgrim.

Don't try to prejudge what a person's needs are or what someone will get out of the Walk to Emmaus. Simply tell your own story. There are no expected results other than experiencing God's love.

An application to attend the Walk to Emmaus is included in this booklet. Please remember to fill out both sides and to consider carefully and prayerfully the commitments to responsible sponsorship that you are asked to make. Sponsor wisely and make the Walk to Emmaus a truly meaningful experience for the pilgrims you send!