

# Grace Church Lenten Book Study

## Walking Home: From Eden to Emmaus

By Margaret Guenther

### Week One

#### Intro:

1. Before you started the book, did you have any thoughts or reflections?
2. How has walking played a part in your Life?
3. "Traveling the road can be tough. If we walk the walk, our feet will get dirty worn and blistered." Any thoughts?

A little about Margaret Guenther: Born in 1929, an Episcopal priest, wife, mother of three children, grandmother, spiritual director, mentor of spiritual directors, retreat leader, "administrator, lay medical practitioner, scrubber of floors, washer of clothes." She is an Emeritus Professor at General Theological Seminary in New York City where she taught Ascetical Theology. She was also the Director of the Center for Christian Spirituality, a pioneering program for the training of spiritual directors. Currently she serves as Associate Rector of St. Columba's Church in Washington, D.C.

#### Chapter 1: You Can't Go Home Again

Adam and Eve: Expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3: 1-14

1. Have a story where 'boredom' got you trouble?
2. Has anyone read Paradise Lost? If so, would you share a bit?
3. Do you have any childhood impressions of the Story of Adam and Eve?
4. Margaret says about Eve – "I have to admire her intensity, her willingness to let go and risk all." Any thoughts?
5. Shame versus guilt? Margaret states: "Shame is so much more painful than guilt: it overwhelms."
6. How do you balance safety and risk in your life?
7. Do you have experiences where your own 'expulsion' from a situation might have actually been what you wanted or what you needed?
8. When the author writes, "Growing up, accepting autonomy and maturity, means expulsion from paradise," she is implying that sin is developmental, a part of our maturation process. Do you agree? Why or why not?

### Week Two

#### Chapter 2: Don't Look Back

Lot and Wife - Genesis 19:1-26

1. How do our memory and experiences play into who we are?
2. Are there different areas in your life where you feel differently about change? What do you perceive to be the merits of predictability? of surprise?
3. Think about the hardest person, place, or thing for you to walk away from. If

- God asked you to do so, for your own good, how would you respond?
4. The author posits different versions of looking back. What are the characteristics of each? What does each feel like when you are the one who is looking back?

### **Chapter 3: The God who Hears**

Hager - Genesis 21:8-21

1. In her story, it seems that Hagar is often seen as and treated as if she is just one thing: slave, fertile body, rival, problem to be dealt with. Have you had an experience where you felt overlooked or only seen by someone as only one thing? Who sees you in your complexity?
2. The author writes, "The walk with God or toward God must have a purpose beyond escape from the harshness of life." Do you agree or disagree? Why?
3. "There are walks not chosen, but taken out of desperation and helplessness." Have you ever been in a situation where God wanted you to go somewhere you did not want to go? Has your story, like Hagar's, ever been one of going forth and being sent back?
4. What do you predict were Hager's next steps?

### **Chapter 4: Are We There Yet?**

Isaac and Abraham - [Genesis 22:1-19](#)

1. Have you ever had to take someone you care about to a place that person did not want to go? What was difficult about that journey and how did you cope?
2. "I think about this story when people tell me that the Bible is the great source of family values." What do you think? What do you think about the way the author tells the story from Sarah's point of view?
3. The Catechism in our Book of Common Prayer asserts, "The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ" (p.855). Therefore our walk with, or towards, God always involves other people. How do you experience your spirituality as constitutionally involved with others?

## **Week Three**

### **Chapter 5: Take Off Your Shoes**

Moses and the Burning Bush, Exodus 3

1. What are the first words Moses hears God speak? What is important about this?
2. How do you keep alert of the 'burning bushes' in your everyday life?
3. The burning bush shows that it is possible to be on fire with the presence of God and yet not be consumed. When have you felt the dynamic presence of

God in your life?

### **Chapter 6: The Way Out**

Arrival at Sinai, Exodus 19:1-9

1. Can you name a comfortable station in life that you were called to leave? Did you experience an exodus?
2. The author reflects 'if we are spiritually alive, we keep repeating in our own small way the pattern of the sanctuary, slavery, escape, and arrival in the promised land'. Can you relate to this pattern? How are you handling "the wilderness?"
3. What are some of the 'divine signs' that lead you on your journey?

### **Chapter 7: Walking into Exile**

Sorrow and Hope in Exile, Psalm 137

1. This psalm combines the loveliest lyric we can sing with the ugliest emotions we can feel. What makes verses 1-6 lovely? What makes verses 7-9 ugly?
2. When, if ever, have you felt far from home in a strange land? How does this feel? Remembering your own experiences with 'homesickness' how would you evaluate these verses?
3. "Our world is filled with exile". Let's think about this. What can we do?
4. Many of us suppress our negative emotions. The way of prayer is not to cover them up so we will appear respectable, but to expose them so we can be healed. What negative emotion would you like healed?

## **Week Four**

### **Chapter 8 - Head for the Hills**

Mary goes to Elizabeth, Luke 1:39-45

1. Mary sought Elizabeth. Whom do you think of first when you receive a message so powerful that it has to be shared? Why?
2. In what ways do you think Elizabeth acted as a mentor to Mary? How has someone mentored you in the Lord? Has God used you to mentor others?
3. Have you ever taken a clarifying quest? What was it like? How did it turn out?

### **Chapter 9 - His First Walk**

Flight into Egypt, Matthew 2:13-23

1. What surprises you about the story of Jesus' early life? Does Jesus having to flee to Egypt maybe make him seem more human than his birth story?
2. "This is no ordinary baby, but a threat to the established order." Let's talk about this.
3. With all the dreams Joseph has, do you wonder how or if God speaks to you

that way? Do you remember your dreams? If you do, what do you do with those memories?

### **Chapter 10: A Day Trip with Consequences**

Transfiguration, Matthew 17, 1-9

1. How do you think the transfiguration affected the three Disciples' faith and purpose? Could this have been a reason why they were chosen to accompany Jesus?
2. If you were there, seeing this marvelous event, how would you have felt? What would you have done and said?
3. Can you recall a "mountaintop" experience? What led you there? What happened? What was it like during and after the descent?
4. How do we integrate our own "mountaintop" experiences into daily life?

### **Week Five**

### **Chapter 11: Tips for Travelers**

Jesus Send out the Twelve, Luke 9:1-6

1. Have you ever gone on a journey where you really didn't know the destination? Or one where you weren't able to dillydally?
2. Not including other people, what thing or things would you have a very hard time letting go?
3. "Harder still is letting go of the invisible, intangible impediments like envy, arrogance, neediness, and fear." What idea or feeling would you like to leave behind? How do we do that?

### **Chapter 12: A Walk Interrupted**

The Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37

1. What is Jesus teaching us about those who 'don't fit in' in our society?
2. Have you ever had an interrupted journey? Who or how was it interrupted?
3. Have you ever stopped to help someone whom you didn't know?

### **Chapter 13: Turning Around**

The Prodigal Son, Luke 13:11-32 I didn't write this down, sorry

1. What does this story teach us about compassion?
2. Have you ever had to retrace your steps because it turned out that you went the wrong way? What did you learn, not about the mistake, but about the work of turning around?
3. When people come back to you after making a mistake, or leaving you in a less than desirable manner do you find it easy to extend grace? Can you describe a time when you extended grace or withheld grace when you

shouldn't have? What do you find to be, or imagine to be, helpful for people feeling shame?

## **Week Six**

### **Chapter 14: No Turning Back**

Palm Sunday, Matthew 21:1-11

1. How do you feel about Palm Sunday? It has the conflicted tones of celebration and darkness.
2. Towards what or where have you "set your face"? Who's going with you? How can they help? How do we retain the determination that Jesus maintained during this journey and during the week to come?

### **Chapter 15: Just a Few Steps**

Bartimaeus Receives His Sight, Mark 10:46-52

1. What can we learn from Bartimaeus?
2. If Jesus asks you the same question he asked Bartimaeus, what would be your answer? Why do you think it is often difficult for us, or uncomfortable, to say what we really want?

### **Chapter 16: Dead Man Walking**

Carrying the Cross, Mark 15:16-22

1. Is there any way the soldiers would be able to do what they did to Jesus if they even had an inkling of who He was? So why does God choose to make unbelief possible in this world?
2. What do you think are our crosses? If our crosses are negative why must we bear them daily? If our crosses are positive why must we be reminded to bear them?

### **Chapter 17: The Miracle of the Chance Encounter**

On the Road to Emmaus, Luke 25:13-35

1. What is the significance of the disciples' inability to recognize Jesus when he begins walking with them?
2. Where are some of the places we might be meeting Jesus yet don't 'see' him?
3. Jesus shared Communion with them. Could all meals be regarded as a type of Eucharist rather than only those shared in worship services? Are there ways we can keep the Eucharistic sacrament real and simple and powerful — and focused on the unseen guest/host?