

SPONSORSHIP TRAINING

“The purpose of an Emmaus Walk is to inspire, challenge and equip church members for christian action in their churches, homes, workplaces and communities.” (What is Emmaus book)

“The strength of any Emmaus Community is a direct result of that community’s recruiting practices. If the community is committed to recruiting strong church leaders for the purpose of strengthening the local church, then the community will be a strong, vital force in the renewal movement. (Day Four book)

Sponsorship is not a casual effort. It should be based on discernment and prayer.

As in the Emmaus Model (Luke 24:13-35) it is for folks who are already believers. During this weekend, Faith is re-explained and Grace is re-experienced. They return to their Christian community to share their experience.

PURPOSEFUL SPONSORSHIP - (Folks who would benefit from an Emmaus Walk)

- Church Leaders
- Dependable church members
- Less active church members
- Christians hungry for something more
- Christians who want to grow spiritually
- Members and leaders representing a cross section of the church and society
- Respected laypersons and clergy persons

QUESTIONABLE SPONSORSHIP

- Non-Christians and persons with no relationship to the church of Jesus Christ
- Persons undergoing emotional crisis or who are psychologically unstable
- Persons who decide not to attend a walk after being presented the opportunity.

- Christians whose theology and/or practice is notably different or incompatible
- Persons who are always looking for another spiritual high or experience

10 STEPS OF SPONSORSHIP

TEN STEPS OF SPONSORSHIP [References: Stephen Bryant, The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus, The Upper Room, 1989, pages 23 & 24 and Bob Wood and Marie Livingston Roy, Day Four: The Pilgrim's Continued Journey, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1986, pages 51 - 57]

Pray: Prayer is the foundation of the Emmaus movement and it is the enabler of the movement. A sponsor's prayer focus needs to be on who might become more vitally alive as a Christian disciple in all of their environments. Long before a potential pilgrim is spoken to, the sponsor should be heavily involved in prayers of discernment and direction by God. These prayers need to be prayers for openness on the part of the potential pilgrim to God's call to discipleship.

Be very sure that as a sponsor you are offering prayers that will help identify individuals who are ready to continue a life-long journey of faith and discipleship. Once the focus is clear to the sponsor, then it is safe to move on to the next step. Remember to be in prayer between and during future steps.

Make an appointment: No doubt you will have had numerous casual conversations with an individual prior to reaching this point. Casual conversations and comments are good foundations, but ultimately if you are serious about asking someone to become part of the Emmaus community, you will want to make an appointment to extend such an invitation.

You may want to provide the individual a copy of the Emmaus Library booklet entitled "What is Emmaus?". [This is also available through The Upper Room – Nashville] By doing so, your task of providing information about the Emmaus movement will be simplified and your time with the potential pilgrim will be a time for questions and answers and clarification of issues. If you have not provided the individual with the booklet, be prepared to talk in detail about the Emmaus movement, the weekend retreat and follow-on activities. You may even want to take a copy of the booklet with you as a reference point. In any event make sure you cover the same items that the booklet covers.

Remember that there are no secrets in the Emmaus movement. Too often the movement has had claims leveled against it that it is a secret society. As you speak with individuals concerning their weekend, try not to overload them with details. That doesn't mean there shouldn't be surprises - do not volunteer information you are not questioned about. But if you are asked specific and direct questions about "dying moments" or agape gifts or candlelight or etc. make sure you answer the question.

If the individual you are meeting with is married, the meeting should include their spouse. The equal commitment rule guards against Emmaus becoming a divisive influence in a marriage. [Foundation as to why this is important can be found on pages 26 -27 of The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus and page 54 of Day Four book. Make sure you are familiar with this aspect of the Emmaus movement.]

You should always attempt to get an equal commitment to at least experience the weekend retreat. Often you can get a spouse to attend as a supportive measure for their mate. Emmaus should never be a wedge in a relationship. If you are married and your spouse has experienced an Emmaus weekend, both of you should meet with the couple even if only one of you will act as the sponsor. If there is resistance on either mate's part, encourage them to talk about Emmaus and pray about their joint involvement and then make their decision.

Extend an invitation: After you have shared the details of the Emmaus movement, what your personal experience has been in Emmaus, and what a difference Emmaus has made in your life - you will want to extend an invitation for them to consider embarking on a lifetime journey. Make sure they understand you are not inviting them just to a three-day retreat but rather to a whole new way of life including reunion group, community gatherings, team membership and formation, and renewed interest in serving their church. The potential pilgrims should be encouraged to pray about all that they have heard and seek God's direction. If there is resistance to the invitation, invite the individual to attend a community gathering with you or invite them to join your reunion group.

Seek a commitment: Once you have extended an invitation, seek a commitment without appearing pushy. Too often we tell the story and share all the information and extend an invitation but do not encourage a commitment to begin the Emmaus journey. Once a commitment is reached, help your pilgrim to fill out the application and forward the necessary paperwork and fees to the

community registrar. If the person is married and intends to attend the weekend, help them fill out their application as well.

If the person's response is "no" or "not now", honor their decision and carry on your relationship in the same manner as before. Do not let a "no" cause your relationship to change. Continue to pray for the person and be open to the possibility that at some future time they may change their mind. Invite them to community gatherings and other activities if it seems appropriate.

Continue to pray, prepare agape, enlist pastoral support: Your work as a sponsor is not done once you get a commitment - if anything, it has just begun. Just as you began with prayer, prayer needs to continue. Your prayers for your pilgrim should be for God to prepare them for the Emmaus retreat and the rest of their spiritual journey. Stay in close contact with the individual in the event they have any questions or concerns. Begin the process of collecting agape letters from family and friends of the pilgrim as well as enlisting their prayer support.

If the person's pastor has not yet experienced the Walk to Emmaus or has not had any other parishioners involved in the Emmaus movement - meet with the pastor to help them visualize how the person might be used in ministry upon their return from the experience. Make sure that you solicit a letter for the pilgrim from their pastor.

Personal agape gifts (other than the 15 letters) should not be delivered on the weekend but rather be delivered personally after the weekend (on the way home or during the first week).

Support the Walk: Tend to the family at home especially if there are children (babysitting, house-sitting, tending to pets, attending sporting events with children) or individuals with special needs. Attend send-off, sponsor's hour, candlelight, closing but at other times give your pilgrim whatever space they need to experience the walk as God intends. Continue to pray and make sure your name is on the 72-Hour prayer chart.

Help pilgrim on their Fourth Day: After the weekend experience is over, the sponsor's responsibilities don't end. Begin the process of debriefing on the way home from the retreat center - take the pilgrim to dinner on the way home.

Schedule a time to meet with your pilgrim after the weekend to help them digest what they have experienced and answer any questions they may have.

Help them to properly channel their newfound enthusiasm about being a renewed disciple.

Help pilgrim re-enter their church: Make sure the pilgrim returns to their local church enthusiastic and ready to serve. As you talk with them, help them consider ways to live out the commitments they made on their weekend and help them channel their enthusiasm in constructive ways.

Try to set up a meeting with the person, their pastor and yourself to assist the assimilation process back into the life of the local church. If the pastor has not attended a Walk to Emmaus, this may be an ideal time to share more about the renewal movement.

It is important that you remain in dialogue with your pilgrim to make sure things are going well on the local church front.

Help pilgrim serve the Emmaus community: As you work with your pilgrim after their weekend, help them understand the ways in which they might serve the Emmaus community. Help them understand the support needs that exist. Help clarify the information they receive at Fourth Day Insights if they have questions. Make sure they understand who to contact to sign up for the 72-hour prayer vigil. Give them ideas for agape gifts if they need help. Help them understand what it means to serve on a leadership team. Through all of your dialogues make sure you emphasize the fact that the service being talked about is “servant leadership” and help them understand the concept if it is new to them.

Help pilgrim sponsor others: Sponsoring comes full circle when you help the person you sponsored sponsor their first pilgrims. They may want you to be present the first time they speak to someone about Walk to Emmaus. They may need you to act as a co-sponsor the first time they sponsor.

Assist them in the discerning process of who to approach and how to approach them.