

## Stop

*And he said to them: 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?'  
They stood still, looking sad.*

The Bible has many examples of journeys being interrupted. Perhaps the most well-known account is that of Saul's trip to Damascus being brought to a standstill by a vision of Jesus (Acts 9:3-6). Saul's mission to arrest followers of the Way is transformed as he sees with new eyes and tells people in the synagogue about the way of Jesus.

Here, on the road to Emmaus, the followers of Jesus are stopped by a question from a stranger. The comment breaks into their grief and disillusionment. It literally stops them in their tracks. 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' asks Cleopas, no doubt with more than a hint of frustration that the world seems to be carrying on as normal despite the pain and disappointment he's currently experiencing. Yet, this annoying, off-putting question from a stranger gives the followers of Jesus a chance to reflect on what's upsetting them. Not only have they lost their dear friend and mentor, he has been killed by those in power whom he was supposed to overcome. The long-awaited promise of redemption seems far away. It's also probable that they felt some guilt that they couldn't stop it from happening.

At this point, in the stopping, reflecting, grieving and wondering, the stranger begins to turn things around. All kinds of circumstances are used by God to bring us to a standstill and, in so doing, start something new.

Sometimes a profound life change, such as loss, or moving house, or the birth of a child, can provoke a reappraisal. A moment when we pause in the rush of our days. When we are working through our to do list, we need to be open to the first of our discipleship actions: the willingness to stop.

### **A disciple stops**

For Ron Hilditch, a former West Kirby United Reformed Church member, the time for stopping and reflecting came with retirement. He 'asked the Lord for something useful to do' with the skills he had been given. Before long, Ron received an answer.

'One Sunday, Kat Taylor, the Foodbank Project Coordinator for Kings Lynn, Norfolk, came to my church and spoke about how the Lord had blessed the work there,' said Ron. 'I felt the Lord say to me: "Go and offer to make furniture, specifically beds, for the work in King's Lynn."'



Ron followed this direction and was informed by Kat that there were many homeless people who the charity could help provide accommodation for, but not furniture.

Inspired by James Hudson Taylor, a 19th century British protestant Christian missionary to China, who said: 'God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply,' Ron set about sourcing material for his work.

Elders at Upton URC, which had closed, donated 12 pews and wood from an organ. This enabled Ron to make five single beds.

Kat said: 'Ron's kindness is such a blessing and an answer to prayer for us here in King's Lynn.'

In Birkenhead, Ron went onto make 25 beds for The Wirral Ark Project and was then asked by the Charles Thompson Mission to make storage racks with old pews from the Claughton URC, which had also closed.

For this transformation, that came through a time of stopping and reflecting, Ron gives God glory: 'I have been greatly blessed by this project, and the Lord has given me guidance throughout, down to every last detail. From concept through to manufacture, to polishing and final pick-up and delivery – the Lord's guidance was there.'

### **Something to ponder**

Have you been 'too busy' or 'too distracted' to think about where you find God, or where God finds you? Could you stop, even for a short time, to put the baggage of everyday busyness down and give yourself time to meet with God?

### **Prayer**

Ever-present God,  
You meet us in the middle of our life's journey.  
Help us to recognise the moment that you want us to stop.  
Give us grace to resist our craving for control,  
courage to recognise your voice in that of the stranger  
and the willingness to be still.  
Amen

### **Suggested response**

**Interrupt your morning routine, put your to-do list to one side, and for five minutes practice coming to a standstill. What might God reveal to you in the stillness and silence?**