



SONrise January-February 2001
EMMAUS
NEWSLETTER
... Strengthening the Local Church

Are you Cold or Coaled?

One of my favorite stories is about a pastor's visit to an inactive church member. After serving the pastor coffee by the fireplace, the man said, "Pastor, I know why you've come. You're going to try to get me to come back to church. Well, I don't need to come to church. I have a personal relationship with Jesus. I've got my Bible right here and I read it and pray every day. I give to charities and do community service, so why do I need to come to church?" The pastor picked up the fire tongs, and pulled a red-hot coal from the fire out onto the hearth. The glowing coal began to grow dim, then gray with ash, and finally black. The man looked up at the pastor and said, "I'll be there Sunday morning."

The purpose of Emmaus is to build up the local church, not to provide an alternative to church. Continued participation in the Emmaus community helps us accomplish that purpose. God has called some members of the community to very active participation – to serving on teams and committees and sponsoring pilgrims. Not all of the more than 2,000 people who have experienced a SONrise Walk, Flight or Journey are called to these roles, but there *is* a role that God has called all of us to – to be a part of a community of believers, a hotbed of live coals keeping each other glowing in the fire of a shared experience of the power of God. It's a role that can easily slip away. I know because it happened to me. When God no longer called me to the active roles, I quit participating in Emmaus altogether. Though I remained active in my church and close to God, something was missing. I didn't realize my coal had grown cold until God pushed me back into the fire of Emmaus again. Though each person's experience of Emmaus is different, there is one aspect that is the same – it is a powerful experience of God – and there is something exhilarating about being with people who have shared such a powerful common experience. It provides a basis of understanding and acceptance that overshadows all our differences. There is no other place in my life where there is this sense of community – where there is a common basis for sharing things too deep for words – a place where I can be "Coaled".

How can you get Coaled? Participate in a Walk each year, and come to a Gathering each quarter. If your prayer life has grown dull and ashen, visit the prayer chapel on a Walk or a Gathering, or attend Sponsor's Hour and participate in the 72-hour Prayer Vigil. If you need to feel God's presence in your life, listen to what God is doing in the lives of others at Closing and 4th Day Talks and see what God is doing in your own life. If you need to feel loved, come to Candlelight or serve a meal and let God's Agape Love flow through you to others. Above all, surround yourself with a few hot coals - be active in a reunion group or weekly Bible study. Don't grow cold out on the hearth, or let others grow cold. Invite an Emmaus friend who is no longer active to come to a Gathering or to Candlelight with you. Offer to pick them up and bring them. Ask them if they are Cold or Coaled and tell them your story.

De Colores

Sparky Dyson
Community Lay Director