

SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship: The Most Important Job of All

The quality of sponsorship influences the Pilgrim, the health of the Emmaus movement. And the Church being affected by the Movement.

1. Good sponsorship is the first act of agape before a Walk ever begins; the experience of the Walk for a pilgrim really begins with how we handle sponsorship.
2. Good sponsorship undergirds the whole weekend with sacrificial love on behalf of each pilgrim. Sponsors use discernment in recruiting Pilgrims, embody the personal commitment of the community to each Pilgrim, and provide personal acts of agape on the weekend for the pilgrims. These acts of agape include prayer, agape letters, presence at candlelight and closing, and follow-up.
3. Good sponsorship is the foundation for a healthy, effective Emmaus Movement that is fulfilling its true purpose—the development of Christian leaders and the renewal of the church in ministry. Bob Wood writes in Day Four: The Pilgrim's Continued Journey.

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 (p 51).

Why do we sponsor? What is our aim?

The aim of a sponsor should not be "to get all my friends to go," to fill up the weekend, to fix people's problems, or to reproduce one's own religious experience in others. Rather, the aim of the sponsor is to bring spiritual revitalization to Christians who will, in turn, bring new life and vision to the work of the church in the congregation, home, workplace, and community.

The aim of sponsorship is to build up the body of Christ.

Whom do we sponsor?

One's awareness of, and commitment to, the purpose of Emmaus influences who is sponsored and how they are sponsored. Emmaus is for active Christians and members of churches whose own renewal will mean new energy, commitment, and vision in the church and everyday environments, for Christ's sake

Emmaus is right for many people, but not for everyone! In some cases, Emmaus can be wrong for a person because of his or her religious background or emotional condition. In other cases, a person can be wrong for Emmaus because of the negative effect he or she will have on an Emmaus Weekend or because of the divisive influence they will bring to the church. Sponsors should be sensitive to these factors. Some examples of **questionable** sponsorship are:

1. Non-Christians and persons with no relationship to the Church of Jesus Christ;
2. Persons undergoing an emotional crisis (family break-up or severe grief) or who are psychologically unstable;
3. Persons who decide not make a Walk after being presented the opportunity. A potential sponsor should not feel like a failure if a prospect says no. Perhaps the timing is not right. Perhaps God will renew them in some other way. Remember, the Walk to Emmaus is not the way to renewal for every Christian;
4. Christians whose theology and/or practice is notably different or incompatible with the traditional theology and practice represented by the Walk to Emmaus. For example, Adventists who will want to be faithful to Saturday Sabbath and strict dietary stipulations; members of independent groups who will feel a need to defend the uniqueness of their beliefs throughout the Walk; persons who do not accept other kinds of Christians; or persons who do not share beliefs in traditional doctrines of the faith basic to the major denominations of the church and to Emmaus;
5. "Church hoppers", members who continually have an ax grind against the church; persons who will use Emmaus as a tool to divide the Body, to

further their own theological agendas, or who will create an “Emmaus church,” and

6. Persons who are always looking for another spiritual high or another experience to help them “arrive.”

There are two kinds of Sponsorship:

Qualities of wise sponsorship:

Purposeful, prayerful and discerning;

Results: Eventually strengthens a theologically centered movement of the Holy Spirit integrated and honored by a variety of churches. This movement will effectively convey God’s grace, the call to committed discipleship and our unity in Christ.

Qualities of unwise sponsorship:

Haphazard and undiscerning;

Results: Eventually will produce a movement which has become a “religious fringe group” separate from the established churches. Such group benefits the individual but do not impact the relationship with the established churches in the community. This forfeits the purpose of the Emmaus Movement.

How do we Sponsor?

1. Pray for the person’s openness to God’s call to discipleship, not for how to get him or her to go on a Walk.
2. Make an appointment with the person or couple for the purpose of discussing their participation in Emmaus.
3. Extend an invitation. Invite them to attend for the sake of a more vital relationship with Jesus Christ, not just a weekend to go on. Share your faith; explain the basic elements of the Walk, its purpose, and follow-up dimensions which help us live in grace for the rest of our lives. Have the attitude that you are giving them a wonderful gift rather than that they need to go.
4. Ask them to make a commitment by filling out the registration form. If the person is married, speak with both partners and encourage an equal commitment by both spouses.

5. Continue to pray, prepare agape letters, enlist the support of their pastor. Collect eight to twelve personal agape letters. So not ask the team to deliver personal gifts during the weekend.
6. Support the Walk through your prayers during the 72-hour Prayer Vigil and your presence at Send-off, Sponsor's Hour, Candlelight, and Closing. Support the Pilgrim's family by house-sitting, baby sitting, watering plants, picking up mail, feeding pets, or just checking in with a spouse to see if any help is needed.
7. Encourage the pilgrim in his or her Fourth Day involvement. Give your friend an opportunity to talk through and appropriate the experience. Help them find a group. Or, be prepared to start a group with him or her for a period of time until they find others to be in the group. Take them to Gatherings as your guest for a couple months.
8. Help the pilgrim re-enter their church and consider ways to act out new commitment and enthusiasm.
9. Inform the Pilgrim of how he or she can serve the Emmaus Community and future Walks.
10. Help the Pilgrim sponsor others.

Sponsorship is an act of love for God, for the Pilgrims, for the Emmaus community, and for the church. It is a demonstration of agape love. It is making oneself an instrument of prevenient grace.

JOHN 10:14 - 16

I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen, I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.

