

90 minutes. If someone would give me an extra 90 minutes in a week – what I could do with them! So a year ago...when the ARISE program was first announced...if I'm being totally honest (and I guess that I'm in the right place to do that!)...my first thought was "an hour and ½ - for six weeks...I don't have that kind of time."

But as the days drew closer to the official sign-up weekend, I decided to try and find the time to allow a little more spirituality into my week. As I get ready to sign-on for the third installment of ARISE, I can assure you that I found it to be well-worth those 90 minutes each week.

I know everyone's experience of ARISE has been and will be unique. But what I do think has been a common experience, has been a slowing down and a relaxing into a deeper conversation with Christ.

I found it interesting that we're talking about ARISE today, on this Sunday, when we're told in Mark's Gospel that even the disciples who were so close to Jesus "did not understand...and they were afraid to question." In ARISE, each of us is invited to enter into those questions that frighten or challenge us. I have found that these same questions, when shared with others, become tools for wisdom and learning. I recently read a quote that I liked: "Questions are good companions for the spiritual journey."

While ARISE is not a traditional "scripture study" course, I found insights into the Gospels that I would never have had without the ARISE experience. Some nights I had a lot to share; other nights I had little to share, but much to reflect upon. Without exception, I found the comments, discussions and sharing of my fellow participants to be extraordinary. Some nights we laughed, some nights we shared a tear...but I never left an evening of ARISE feeling that I had wasted my time.

While I'm still full of questions at times, I can honestly say that through ARISE - I developed an ability to enter into a deeper relationship with God. And this is something that has provided a deeper peace within me during the laughter – and also the tears.

And at the end of those first six weeks I thought, all of that in just 90 minutes...

If you have any questions about the ARISE program, there will be folks at the doors as you leave church. We'll also be downstairs, along with some refreshments, if you'd like to find out more about ARISE.

Thank you.