

JUST WALK ACROSS THE ROOM

(0) INTRODUCTION

Matthew 4:18-20

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SCRIPTURE

¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him” (Matthew 4:18-20 NRSV).

MESSAGE

Our Scripture text is a fishing story. It is a fishing story about Simon Peter. Peter was a fisherman by trade. He fished the Sea of Galilee. It was and is a big lake, thirteen miles long and eight miles wide. Peter had his own fishing boat and he was in a fishing partnership. It was a fishing family with his brother Andrew and their business partners, James and John. Basically, they were gill netters. They weren't sports fisherman. Gill netting was and is hard work. The fishermen would fish all night. The fish wouldn't see the nets during the night. In the morning, they would take in their haul of fish, salt their fish, and take it to town to sell their fish at the market.

One particular day, Jesus came near and what he said to them changed their lives forever. He said, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

Disciples have a command to follow. Jesus wants disciples to fish for people. He was not telling them that he wanted them to teach other people how to catch fish in the Sea of Galilee. He was using fishing as a metaphor for the work of making new disciples. Later in Matthew's Gospel we read:

“Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Mt 28:18-20).

This is a command and not a suggestion. It is not just for Presbyterian disciples. It is not just for Baptist or Roman Catholic disciples. It is for all disciples – all followers of Christ.

God commands us and empowers us to be his witnesses (Matt 4:19; Acts 1:8). Sharing with others — sometimes called witnessing since we are witnesses to Christ — is a vital part of the Christian life. The most important part of our witness is how we relate to people. The Bible tells us, "Let your conversation be always full of grace" (Col 4:6 NIV). Gracious behavior generally invites a gracious response.

One of our core values here at First Presbyterian Church is to be a Gracious Witness. Starting next week we will be going through a series called, "Just Walk Across the Room," to help us as a congregation and as individual Christians be a gracious witness to the Good News of Christ. And it does need to be gracious.

A pastor gave a message on home evangelism and one family thought they had better do something to witness to Jesus. So they invited their neighbors to dinner the following Friday night. When it came to the meal, the believers were keen to show their neighbors that they upheld Christian standards in their home. So she asked little 5-year-old Johnny to say grace. Little Johnny was a bit shy. "I don't know what to say." There was an awkward pause, followed by a reassuring smile from the boy's mother. "Well darling," she said, "Just say what Daddy said at breakfast this morning." Obediently, the boy repeated, "Oh dear God, we've got those awful people coming to dinner tonight."

Needs to be gracious. . .

You don't have to be a member of First Presbyterian Church to benefit from this series. Any member from any church is welcome to participate and will receive encouragement and practical help for this important aspect of our common mission. Indeed, you don't have to be a member of any church to participate. No matter where you are on your journey of faith, there is something here to inspire you. This is because we are talking about something that is so foundation to who we are and what God wants us to be. As Theodore Williams, the legendary theologian and missionary, has put it:

"We face a humanity that is too precious to neglect. We know a remedy for the ills of the world too wonderful to withhold. We have a Christ who is too glorious to hide. We have an adventure that is too thrilling to miss."

Now you may be wondering, "Why is it called, 'Just Walk Across the Room?'" I'm glad you asked.

[JUST WALK ACROSS THE ROOM PROMOTIONAL VIDEO]

A simple walk across the room. Boil down anyone's journey to faith, and it typically began with a walk across a room.

- Someone reached out a hand of friendship ...
- Spoke a kind word ...
- Asked a good question ...
- And the rest was history.

A simple walk across the room. This is something you can do. This is something we all can do! For the next four weeks, come learn how. In his best-selling book, "Just Walk Across the Room," Bill Hybels describes how taking a few steps and an interest in someone standing across the room can wind up impacting eternity.

There are three ways to participate in this program:

You can read the book. You can do this at your own pace or follow the recommended schedule printed in the bulletin. So, for example, we encourage you to read chapters 1 and 2 by next Sunday. Books can be purchased through us for \$10 or you can obtain a copy through your usual sources for books (Amazon, Barnes and Noble, etc.).

You can follow the sermon series. There are four different Sunday morning messages that go along with this series. If you miss a Sunday you can go to our website and read or download a copy or listen to the podcast.

You can be part of a small group. Each small group consists of between 4 and 12 people meeting once a week for 4 weeks starting the week of October 1-7. Some of the groups meet Sunday morning after service. Some meet during the week including at least 1 daytime group. The teaching material is on DVD and each group has 1 or more hosts to facilitate discussion. We are encouraging groups to meet for an optional 5th time for the sole purpose of discussing whether they would like to continue meeting on a regular basis as a small group and what type of study the group would like to try next.

You can read the book or you can follow the sermon series or you can be part of a small group or some combination of the three. "Just Walk Across the Room" will inspire you to:

- Discern when the Holy Spirit is speaking to you

- Reach out to people far from God in a natural way
- Clearly and humbly tell your faith story — in 100 words or less
- Spread God’s love through something as simple as a walk across the room!

Join us for a Four-Lesson series that will refresh your appreciation for the Holy Spirit’s mysterious ways, rekindle your passion for people, and revive your belief that the single greatest gift you can give to your friends and family members is an introduction to the God who ...

created them

loves them

and has a purpose for their lives.