

JUST WALK ACROSS THE ROOM
(4) GRANDER VISION LIVING

Luke 5:1-11

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(with material from Bill Hybels, used by permission)

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PROLOGUE

[++PPT Slide 1/Just Walk campaign graphic, Week Four++]

Three weeks ago, we began exploring a new paradigm for Christian witness. We asked the question, what if evangelism really were as simple and straightforward as ... what? Yes, as a "walk across the room."

We were reminded of the single greatest gift we can offer the people around us, which is an introduction to the One who created them, loves them, and has a purpose for their lives.

We looked at what it means to "live in 3D" – anyone remember the first D? Yes. Develop friendships. Followed by discovering stories and discerning appropriate next steps. The 3D framework reminds us to take things slow with people, allowing the other person to be in the spotlight, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead the dance.

We dove into the power of story, refreshing our understanding of how much weight our words carry ... and of how critical it is that we steward God's story and our own faith stories well.

As I said last week, I want to encourage you to write out your faith stories – your individual faith story. Create your hundred-words-or-less story written in a clear, succinct, and simple manner. Read chapter 6 of *Just Walk Across the Room* if you need help.

Perhaps you came to faith gradually over a long period of time so you do not have a distinct before-and-after story. That's fine. Most American Christians are in that category. But let that be part of your story. Tell us what your faith means to you now. How has it made a difference.

If you came to faith at a young age, consider how you would describe what you were like prior to developing a thriving, more mature relationship with Christ.

[++ PPT Slide 2/Let's Hear Your Story ++]

Once you are satisfied you have completed your story, please consider sending me a copy. By sending me a copy you are also giving permission to publish the story. I am hoping we can compile the stories we receive in time for the Celebration Dinner on November 19.

[++PPT Slide 3/Just Walk campaign graphic, Week Four (second appearance)++]

Today our topic is "Grander Vision Living." Listen carefully to this account of the encounter between Jesus and some of those who would soon become his followers.

[++PPT Slides 4-15/Luke 5 text w/ painting ++]

SCRIPTURE

¹Once when he was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd was pushing in on him to better hear the Word of God. ²He noticed two boats tied up. The fishermen had just left them and were out scrubbing their nets. ³He climbed into the boat that was Simon's and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Sitting there, using the boat for a pulpit, he taught the crowd.

⁴When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, "Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch." ⁵Simon said, "Master, we've been fishing hard all night and haven't caught even a minnow. But if you say so, I'll let out the nets." ⁶It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. ⁷They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch. ⁸Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell to his knees before Jesus. "Master, leave. I'm a sinner and can't handle this holiness. Leave me to myself."

⁹When they pulled in that catch of fish, awe overwhelmed Simon and everyone with him. ¹⁰It was the same with James and John, Zebedee's sons, coworkers with Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "There is nothing to fear. From now on you'll be fishing for men and women." ¹¹They pulled their boats up on the beach, left them, nets and all, and followed him. (Luke 5:1-11 MSG).

INTRODUCTION

[++PPT Slide 16/Just Walk campaign graphic, Week Four (third appearance)++]

Can you imagine how elated Peter, James, and John were because of this monstrous catch of fish? They'd never seen a catch like this! Quite a red-letter day for a few career fishermen.

Supernaturally filling some fishing nets seems to be an odd way to recruit a few disciples. But there is a purpose behind it. It is as if Jesus had said:

"Peter. James. John, so far, you three have spent your days being fishermen. But what I'm inviting you to do – starting right here, right now – is to become fishers of men and women. Instead of investing your precious time and energy in catching six-inch fish, let's go after the six-footers! I'm asking you to give up everything you have and everything you are for the sake of people's souls. Come with me, and you'll see what real living is all about!"

But here's what I think is even more interesting: I believe this "odd miracle" sets up one of the most critical aspects of Jesus' teaching: the idea of small fish versus big fish.

Think about this. From the moment he arrived on the scene ... all the way up until today, Jesus has been asking all sorts of people, not only career fishermen, but business people, teachers, chefs, bus drivers, athletes, government workers, parents, grandparents and all the rest – this one question: Are you going to throw your one and only life into pursuing small fish, or will you risk tossing your nets out there in anticipation of catching the human-sized ones? Are you going to dive headlong into the Grander Vision, or will you be the type who settles for the lesser one?

Here's the first observation I want to make.

POINT 1: THE PRIORITY IS PEOPLE

[++PPT Slide 17/Observation 1: The priority is people++]

Jesus desperately wanted three career fishermen ... as well as the fine people of First Pres ... to understand that this life is all about people. In Grander Vision Living, the priority is always people. He wanted them – and us – to prioritize people above everything else that vies for attention.

Prioritizing people. This is what so much of our four-week series has been about. Taking walks across rooms for people. Caring more about other people than about yourself. Having a sort of "radical inclusiveness" for people, even if they look different, talk different, act different, vote different, and so on.

And so Jesus asks all of us who say we want to be walk-across-the-room people ... Will you choose the Grander Vision in your situation?

It's the big-fish opportunity that awaits us all:

- You can catch fish ... or become fishers of men and women.
- You can be a successful businessperson ... or get all over the business of redeeming lives.
- You can be the top student ... or focus your attention on studying people.
- You can shine as a superstar sales rep ... or care more about letting your light shine in the lives of people all around you!

I am *not* saying that you should literally quit your job or stop going to school or give up on your career – unless there are other compelling reasons to do so. Rather, in whatever station of life you find yourself, do you have the big picture, the grander vision, of how God can use you?

[++PPT Slide 18/Matthew 5:16++]

Jesus was clear about which was the better path. He said:

"Let your light shine before others in such a way that they may see your good works and then glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16).

"Make sure your light shines in such a way," I think Jesus is saying, "that people can come to know God because of how you treat them. Because of how you respond to them. Because of how you embrace them.

[++ PPT Slide 19/Just Walk campaign graphic, Week Four (fourth appearance)++]

And whose light was Jesus talking about in the Matthew passage we looked at? "Let your light shine before others in such a way that they may see your good works and then glorify your Father who is in heaven." Let your light shine. Not "your pastor's" light. Not "your small group leader's" light. Not "all your Christian friends'" lights. No, he says, *your* light. Meaning each one of us has a role to play.

You may recall from the video segment we aired during week one's services when Bill Hybels said, "If we would all do just the small thing we can do, we would touch a lot more lives." Let it sink in for a moment that the way you can let your light shine is simply to do the small things that you can do for the watching, waiting world around you.

Here's how Bill Hybels explains how he's come to think about this "people priority" in his own life. Let's watch this brief video segment together.

[++Show excerpt from Just Walk Across the Room Four-Week Experience DVD
CLIP: Message Video Excerpt, Week 4
(run-time 1:05)++]

"Never just means 'no' for now." It's a perspective that forms another vital part of Grander Vision Living, and it serves as the second observation.

POINT 2. THE FOCUS IS ON POTENTIAL

[++PPT Slide 20/Observation 2: The focus is on potential++]

Observation number two about Grander Vision Living is that the focus is always on potential. It didn't seem to matter to Jesus that his soon-to-be disciples were immature lads whose first response to his commands was a little south of obedient. Remember when Jesus asked them to put the nets over the boat to catch some fish?

"But we've been fishing all night! And we've caught ... nothing!"

At this stage, they were not contending for any Disciple of the Year awards. But Jesus saw what these guys could be like once they chose to live the Grander Vision.

This same propensity to see past someone's "no" or "never" and envision them submitting to Christ one day is what Hybels was alluding to in the video we just watched.

- To look past the self-centeredness ... and see the potential for servanthood
 - To look past the rebelliousness ... and see the potential for righteousness
 - To look past the quick temper ... and see the potential for kingdom-building
- [Pause]
- Aren't you glad Christ did this with you? I know I am.

Everybody has something that needs some shaping, a little refinement, a healthy dose of God's perspective before they come to Christ. The key is to let God do his work in people's lives instead of suiting up to become lifestyle referees for everyone we meet.

I think the reason many people in the Church object to evangelism is because they associate it with judgmentalism. In Paul's day, he used the word "outsider" to avoid that very thing. In his day that was not a negative term. Rather, it was his matter-of-fact way of describing someone not connected to any church. Today we might say "unchurched," or some may even say "seeker." Bill Hybels often uses terms like "unconvinced."

It is helpful to speak this way because then we get away from the idea of judging people. We do not know who is saved and who is not saved. From time-to-time I have met people who have acted like they have had this knowledge but I am sure they did not. I am reminded of the words of Mark Twain who said, "Having spent considerable time with good people, I can understand why Jesus liked to be with tax-collectors and sinners."

The Scriptures make it clear that only God knows our individual destinies (Matthew 7 *et al*). Furthermore, it is God himself who does the saving (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Titus 3:4-7) and he can be trusted to be completely just in whatever he does (Gen 18:25). It is our job to be a loving and non-anxious witness – a gracious witness to what Jesus has done for us.

I hope we all approach people with the same radical inclusiveness, the same eye for potential that we are so grateful God had for us, remembering that he saw something so valuable in us that he was willing to take us in ... right in the middle of our sinfulness. As we looked at in week two, God has no "hate list." Nor can we, if we want to be used to accomplish the work of the Holy Spirit.

Think about the impact Christ had on a guy named Levi ... Levi or Matthew. Different names, same guy. Do you remember this story? It's found later on in Luke chapter five.

²⁷After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." ²⁸And he got up, left everything, and followed him. ²⁹Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. ³⁰The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" ³¹Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; ³²I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance: (Luke 5:27-32 NRSV).

What did following Jesus mean to Matthew? For starters, walking away from his business, his identity, his comfortable routine ... not to mention his financial security.

But what else did it mean? It meant that Matthew would be prizing – and prioritizing – the people he once swindled. He'd be looking for the potential good in them, rather than the potential vulnerability that he could exploit. Tax-collectors weren't the kindest, most respected lot in those days. Much would be shifting for Matthew now that Christ was in his life ... much more than even he could imagine!

In those early days as a disciple, though, Matthew probably wasn't altogether sure what he'd gotten himself into. “I'm definitely going to part of something bigger,” he probably thought,”Now I just wish I could figure out what that means!

This leads us to our third point. And here it is: start small!

POINT 3. START SMALL ... BUT START!

[++PPT Slide 21/Exhortation: Start small, but start!++]

Like Matthew, you may be chomping at the bit to start living this Grander Vision life. You're on board with the "people-priority" and "potential" pieces ... you're just a little perplexed about what's supposed to happen in your life-today ... right here and right now – as a result!

So what did Matthew do? He hadn't had time to go through the disciples' official Evangelism 101 course. He was too new to have memorized any canned formulas. But all of his old buddies were standing there in their tax-booths – the same spot where he used to work ... just days ago, in fact!

Their lives would be so blessed by knowing Christ, but he had no idea how to get that introduction made. There he stood in his newfound Circle of Comfort ... he saw them there in that once-familiar but now unknown zone ... and something tugged at his heart ... Just then, he decided what to do. Matthew decided to take a walk. He'd already cleared his plan with Jesus and the disciples.

Keep in mind that Matthew was a brand-new Christ-follower. "Giving" wasn't exactly a tax-collector's natural-born instinct. He didn't know any of the catchy praise choruses to sing. He didn't have the prayer thing down pat yet. But there was one thing Matthew was good at: he was good at throwing parties!

He hatched a plan to throw a party. But not just any party. A party where he could stick his old tax-collecting buddies in a room with his new friends – the Christian ones – and just see if some of the good stuff might rub off on the ones who had yet to taste grace.

“What if, instead of just hanging together, what if a few of my new friends actually take walks too – walks across my living room and stretch out a hand to my old buddies?” Matthew may have thought. What if a couple of interesting conversations get started ... maybe about what happened to their crazy buddy Matthew! And what if some seeds are planted in the minds and hearts of my friends ... What if a few of those guys actually come to faith as a result of this one, simple party?! That would be amazing!

[++ PPT Slide 22/Just Walk campaign graphic, Week Four (fifth appearance)++]

CLOSING

The invitation has been extended. Will you opt into Grander Vision Living, or will you settle for your lesser visions? Christ came to bring abundance ... redemption ... transformation ... to anyone who would accept his way of living. He came to bring not tranquility, but utter upheaval to the world! It's a beautiful upheaval to those of us who have been wrecked by grace. And this is why we take walks across rooms ... in order to share this beautiful upheaval with people who do not yet have the hope of heaven. Who do not yet have the assurance of abundance here on earth.

[++PPT Slide 23/Do Start++]

Throughout this series we have talked about steps you can take to make this happen. Start small but do start.

[++PPT Slide 24/Simple Steps - Learn to become++]

You can learn to become a “Just Walk Across the Room” kind of person. Learn to look for those who need a simple welcome, a friendly greeting, a listening ear, a gracious word. Just this type of thing alone can have a tremendous impact on our witness.

Listen for the Spirit’s promptings. If you have ever felt that nudge which seems to be prompting you to meet a neighbor or introduce yourself to someone new at church or school or a ball game or ask a co-worker out to lunch – that was the Spirit talking to you. If you're a living, breathing Christ-follower, then the Spirit is asking you to walk. He's asking us to make a difference in the lives of the people we see each and every day!

[++PPT Slide 25/Simple Steps – Know God’s story++]

Know God’s story. This is not only for your own benefit but also for the benefit of those who may ask you about God. If the bridge illustration helps you then use it. If not then use some other illustration that helps you explain in a simple and clear way what God has

done for us.

[++PPT Slide 26/Simple Steps – Know your story++]

Know your story. Personal stories are powerful. Even if you do not turn in your story to me, I encourage you to write out your own faith story. This will strengthen your own faith and has the potential to inspire others.

Now there is yet another thing you can do that can help bring people into the kingdom. If you are more of a social kind of person then I urge you to consider throwing a party!

[++PPT Slide 27/It's Time to Party! activity explanation++]

If you want to be part of something that is vibrant, alive, active, awe-inspiring – then do what Matthew did ... throw a party. Put a few of your Christ-following friends in a space with some of your unconvinced friends ... and trust God with the results.

Keep it simple. Your "Matthew party" does not need to be elaborate or expensive.

Do what makes sense for you to do ... if you have a pool, consider a pool party. If you live near a park, consider an afternoon picnic. If there's a cool place to meet at your apartment complex, lean into that resource. Think through what works in your environment.

Whatever you do, get the ratio right! Do not outnumber your unconvinced friends with your Christian friends. Otherwise, those other friends will feel ganged up on ... and once that happens, you will have an impossible time wooing them back again.

Throw a party!

[++ PPT Slide 28/Just Walk campaign graphic, Week Four (sixth appearance)++]

What a magnificent gift we get to give a waiting world! The gift of a relationship with the One who is like no other. The One who cast his own agenda aside in order to reach out to people on the beach, people on the side of the road. The One who saw faithful disciples in the dripping-wet, smelly clothes of a hand full of fishermen. The One who saw a passionate follower in the booth of a wretched tax gatherer. The One who saw limitless spiritual opportunities in something as fun as a party!