



Just Walk Across the Room
The Four-Week Church Campaign

Just Walk Across the Room “Living in 3D”

(Biblical Text: I Corinthians 9:16-23)

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Last week I talked about how you can make a difference in a person’s life by simply walking across the room. I asked you to be open to God showing you opportunities and then to take the risk of extending a hand in hospitality. And if you’ve you might have been tempted to ask the next logical question... ***“Then what?”***

“What will happen after I walk across the room?” “What will I say?” “What if we start talking normally and then they ask me a question about God?”

Pretty soon fear and doubt come creeping in and we return to our comfort zone like it was a turtle shell and we decide we ought to just play it safe.

That’s how we feel when we’re about to step into the ***Zone of the Unknown.*** We’re afraid of what we **might** find, what **might** happen, and that fear keeps us from taking the next step...and every step after that. ***Why is that?***

It turns out that we are really good at making friends with other Christians. That’s not a bad thing. But Bill Hybels says that before we became active Christians, most of us had a circle of say 20 un-churched friends. By year two, that dwindles to about 10. Year three? About 5. ***So, little by little we end up with no meaningful interactions with anyone who isn’t already a Christian.***

Our closest friends become Church or Sunday School friends, members of our Life Group or Bible Study, or active Christians in other Churches. To use the language of our **Church Vision**, it’s hard to share God’s story when we surround ourselves only with people who have already found that story...

Most of the time Christians don’t pay much attention to that personal dynamic. Regardless of the denominational label on the door, most of the time we make it our marketing goal to entice people to ***“come to us, come to us, come to us.”*** But I’ve been doing a dangerous thing.

I have been actually reading the Bible. I know, right? I have been reading how Jesus and his disciples ***shared their faith*** when Christianity actually got started. They went to Temple, just like we go to Church.

But there is no evidence that they invited people to come to the Temple. **Instead, they went where the people were.** They listened to them, talked with them, and built a relationship with them.

Jesus modeled this so much that his detractors (who were all people of faith) criticized him for making friends with *“wine-bibbers, tax-collectors and sinners.”* (Check out Matthew 9:9-12) And when Paul came along, he followed that pattern. And when our spiritual grandfather, John Wesley, reached my ancestors in Wales with the Good News of a God who loved coal miners as well as company owners, he followed that same method.

We'll take a closer look at that method this morning in 1 Corinthians 9 beginning with verse 19, if you want to follow along in your Bibles.

As you find the text, I want to tell you a little about Paul. Many of you know that he wasn't always a Christian. He was about as far from being a Christian as you could imagine. He persecuted the early followers of Jesus. But once he experienced personal faith, he devoted himself to helping others believe that Jesus was the Savior. Our text from I Corinthians is about how he did it.

¹⁹Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a servant to all, to win as many as possible. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, to win the Jews. (To those under the law as one under the law.) ²¹To those not under the law, I became as one not under the law, so as to win them too. ²²To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all means I might save some.

Paul is saying is that in order to do the work of God, we need to meet people **where they are, not where we want them to be.** (Let me say that again.) It's just so easy to be *judgmental* about other people's lives. In fact there is a whole generation of people out there that associate Christianity and the Church **only** with harsh judgment rather than doing the work of Jesus.

But how will they ever know there's another way unless there are people willing to show them? See what I mean? Paul says that he becomes like those around him in order to win them for Christ. Not that he acts exactly like them, but just that he's willing to do anything short outright sin, in order to have the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with them.

And Paul is honest about his expectations of success. Not everyone will respond. He says in verse 22, *“I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.”* I might. Save some. We're not going to reach everyone. We're not - especially not by ourselves.

Bill Hybels says that sometimes the **best** we can do is to move someone's idea of Christianity from a "-10" to a minus "-8." But if I remember my high school math, that's still positive progress. You and I have the privilege of helping move people a little closer to finding their place in God's story.

And honestly, doing that is much simpler than we often fear that it will be. Walking across the room is really just being willing to do three simple things. It's what Bill calls "Living in 3D." And it's something we all can do.

According to him "Living in 3D" means we "**Develop, Discover, and Discern.**"

We develop friendships with unchurched people.

We discover their stories by taking time to listen to them.

And we discern next steps that God would have us take.

And we don't have to do anything more than be ourselves to do it.

When you are at Starbucks, or McDonalds, depending on your taste in coffee. When you're at the Royals game this afternoon. At lunch today. At work this week. At Hen House or Hy-Vee or Trader Joe's or IKEA, have mercy! We are surrounded by opportunities. Will it always work out like you plan? No, it won't. At least it doesn't for me.

When I lived in Wichita, I used to stop by a local malt shop regularly and take a chocolate malt home to Ann on my way home. (*Usually as a peace offering to make up for me being a jerk in some way!*) The same young woman waited on me every time, so I tried to practice what I preach.

One day she said, "*I keep thinking I know you from somewhere.*" I said, "*Well, you might have seen me on TV from the Church service at First United Methodist Church, downtown.*" She said, "*No that isn't it. I know! You are one of those lawyers that advertises on late night TV!*" So much for my ego!

But here's the deal. I am who I am today because of the ordinary people who risked "*Living in 3D*" around me. **Bill**, my high school teacher who never gave up on me. **Marion**, who listened to me when I had given up on the Church. **Rose Marie**, who slipped me Ann's phone # after a community choir practice. Why did they do it? They followed the three "D"s.

They developed a relationship with me. They discovered my story. They discerned next steps. **When you live your life in 3D - it is amazing what God can do through you!** In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.