

## **Just Walk Across the Room Four-Week Experience Week Two: Living in 3D**

### **Introduction**

#### **PPT Slide 1/Just Walk campaign graphic, Week Two**

I don't know about you, but during the past week, with all these ideas in my head of "walking across rooms" and "entering zones of the unknown," I found myself thinking more about other people and what unexpected conversations –if any might come up! I sensed that God is touching lives in our church and some people we are in contact with, so I had a greater sense of expectancy than in an average week. Did you all experience this too?

Let me give you just one example of something that happened as a result of having this new perspective on evangelism ... Without going into the details of a personal conversation I met someone this week that I meet in passing most weeks. Usually our conversation is very light and short as we go about our business. However, last week we spoke for 15-20 minutes about a range of issues that were much more personal and significant. I felt it appropriate to mention what I do as that seemed natural in the conversation and relevant to the topic under discussion at the time. Walking across a room to acknowledge someone and asking how their day or week is going allows them to say as little or much as they wish; recognising other people and building friendships is always a good thing. It may or may not ever lead to the spiritual outcome we would like, but we are simply making ourselves available to God for the Holy Spirit to use us to speak for Him, where He opens doors and provides opportunities. Several people this week have spoken to me about conversations with people they hadn't met before, yet who brought the conversation round to Church /God without us having to initiate the topic. Allowing God the Holy Spirit to guide us and being sensitive to His leading will result in more opportunities for witness over the longer term. It is, though, important to grasp that this is not a four week high intensity activity that we can tick off at the end and think what will we do next year, by contrast it is a reminder of what it means to live for Jesus in the way in which He lived His life with the people He met 2,000 years ago. One thing I've noticed over the years is that God tends to use the people that are available and willing to be used by Him.

Remember the real reason we're doing this experience is so that we can all become walk-across-the-room people. That's the reason! Because walk-across-the-room people are typically the ones who get to be used in pointing people far from God to faith. Now He has modelled His love for people in Jesus who went to the most extraordinary lengths to show us His love for humankind. He wanted lost people to be found; people whose lives had lost direction to be refocused; people who were His followers to know what really matters in terms of priorities for their lives. And for those of you who really and truly desire to become more like Christ in your lives, I have some good news for you: you become most like Him when you help Him help lost people get found. Last week, if you recall, we finished with the exhortation to "just walk." We said that if we wanted to share the single greatest gift we can give other people—an introduction to the God who created them and loves them—then we will:

**PPT Slide 2/Recap of last week's three points ...** (slide builds from point one to point three in abbreviated form)

1. **Be willing to enter the Zone of the Unknown** ... by voluntarily extricating ourselves from our Circles of Comfort and being open to engaging with someone who might need a touch from God;
2. **Listen for the Spirit's promptings** ... by choosing to rely on his guidance instead of our own;
3. **Just walk ... remembering that Jesus took a long, cosmic walk for us...**

Today, I want to spend our brief moments together talking about what happens right after you decide to “just walk.” In other words, what should you be thinking about, praying about, and talking about in that Zone of the Unknown once you step foot into it? Because if you’re anything like me, agreeing to “walk” is one thing, but knowing what to do once you’ve reached the destination -the person standing across the room from you- is quite another.

I think these are valid questions for us all to ask:

After I make the decision to walk across a room ...

What do I think about?

What do I pray about?

What on earth do I say?

This week, we’re exploring what’s called “Living in 3D.” 3D Living is a framework for operating successfully in the Zone of the Unknown. It’s made up of three “D’s,” as you probably deduced. Here is the first “D”:

### **Point 1: Develop Friendships**

#### **PPT Slide 3/Point 1: Develop friendships**

Walk-across-the-room people are those who live life in “3D”; first, they constantly look for ways to:

- **Develop friendships**

If we’re going to reflect the Father’s heart, as individuals and as a church, then we must be in continuous search mode. We’ve got to make a habit of searching for new friendships on the horizon. That is the heart of a true Christ-follower. When you operate this way—when you operate in continuous “search mode” ... watching for ways to connect with people, looking for friendships in the making— building bridges with people you maybe havn’t met before or never really knew that well, God can use us in ways we never thought possible in His time. We are not in the business of brow-beating people into God’s kingdom. There are plenty of other religious groups –even some churches- doing that, but it is not Jesus’ way. He invited people to walk with Him on a journey and to see what He was doing and copy how He interacted with the people around Him. This is not always easy. Sometimes our offer of genuine friendship may be rejected. Yet when we are living in the way Jesus wants His followers to experience there is a sense of excitement and anticipation, as well as a little fear and nervousness at time if we are honest, as we invite the Holy Spirit to use us to build friendships with people God has placed on our pathway day by day. The question though is this-will you offer that hand of friendship and see where God will work by His amazing grace? All of heaven watches ... holds its breath ... waits ... and then exhales a shared sigh of relief—a joyous, celebrative sigh of relief—when you are obedient and do the thing that God is asking you to do.

In that moment, the cheers that break out all across heaven are thunderous ... raucous cheers ... utterly deafening cheers! Now, this is the way it should be, mind you. This is the way things ought to operate day in, day out, in the lives of Christ-followers all across the globe ... friendships getting formed that eventually might lead to something spiritual unfolding. Yes, this is the dynamic that we hope would play out with such frequency that the angels in heaven live in perpetual party-mode. But things don't always work out this way, do they? Why do you think it is the people who have come to faith most recently who have the greatest impact on others around them for Jesus? In part this is obviously due to the fact that their conversions have happened fairly recently, but that is not the whole story. Often they have a great deal more enthusiasm for Jesus than some other Christians who have been believers for years and have become too familiar with the blessings of the Christian faith and taken them for granted –forgetting that many other people in their street, workplace etc have no idea what they are missing out on, by not following Jesus.

However, there is a more fundamental matter that is significant; in fact it is the most important factor of all. New Christians have an intentionality about sharing their faith and an expectancy that other people around them will come to know Jesus in the not too distant future. This is reinforced appropriately, if they are attending a church where year by year other people come to know Jesus as well. In a 'normal' church, in the biblical sense, it is to be expected that people will be converted each year; that believers will be baptised; that new people will commit to serving in ministries in their local church and that each believer will grow in their faith in the Lord. The tragedy of Western Christianity is that too often we have accepted the abnormal –the lack of these characteristics of life- as normal, whereas in the two-thirds world the very opposite is the case. What is it that hinders Churches in Scotland-even in beautiful Broughty Ferry from being what they should be for Jesus?

**I think this twentieth century story makes the point very clear:**

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a little life-saving station. The building was primitive, and there was just one boat, but the members of the life-saving station were committed and kept a constant watch over the sea. When a ship went down, they unselfishly went out day or night to save the lost. Because so many lives were saved by that station, it became famous. Consequently, many people wanted to be associated with the station to give their time, talent, and money to support its important work. New boats were bought, new crews were recruited, a formal training session was offered. As the membership in the life-saving station grew, some of the members became unhappy that the building was so primitive and that the equipment was so outdated. They wanted a better place to welcome the survivors pulled from the sea. So they replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged and newly decorated building.

Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members. They met regularly and when they did, it was apparent how they loved one another. They greeted each other, hugged each other, and shared with one another the events that had been going on in their lives. But fewer members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions; so they hired lifeboat crews to do this for them. About this time, a large ship was wrecked off of the coast, and the hired crews brought into the life-saving station boatloads of cold, wet, dirty, sick, and half-drowned people. Some of them had black skin, and some had yellow skin. Some could speak English well, and some could hardly speak it at all. Some were first-class cabin passengers of the ship, and some were the deck hands. The beautiful meeting place became a place of chaos. The plush carpets got dirty. Some of the exquisite furniture got scratched. So the property committee immediately had a shower built outside the house where the victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside. At the next

meeting there was rift in the membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities, for they were unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal fellowship of the members. Other members insisted that life-saving was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all those various kinds of people who would be shipwrecked, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast. And do you know what? That is what they did.

As the years passed, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a place to meet regularly for fellowship, for committee meetings, and for special training sessions about their mission, but few went out to the drowning people. The drowning people were no longer welcomed in that new life-saving station. So another life-saving station was founded further down the coast. History continued to repeat itself. And if you visit that seacoast today, you will find a number of adequate meeting places with ample parking and plush carpeting. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown. [an abbreviated version of a story told by Thomas Wedel, *Ecumenical Review*, October, 1953]

It seems hard to believe, doesn't it—that this trend could take place in the life of someone who is genuinely walking with Jesus Christ? If you think about it, this whole dynamic is what makes the Circle of Comfort so comfortable. Almost all of us find it quite easy to love some people—maybe a spouse or our parents or our kids ... our friends at work, our friends at church. We see them, and our initial reaction is love. We want to bless them. We crave time with them. We're filled with joy when these people come to mind. Anyone relate to what I'm saying here? It's true: almost every human being has a loving heart toward some people. But here's what may not be so easy to admit. While almost every human being has a loving heart toward some people, almost every human being also has a secret list of people they just can't stand.

It might be a business partner who took some of your money and broke up your partnership twenty years ago. It might be a spouse who walked out on you. It might be someone who wounded you with words. You might have reasons—really good reasons—for not liking a certain number of people. But you know what? It even gets more complex than that. Some of us don't like entire groups of people. **Maybe some people with different political views**; I once stood on the doorstep of a home talking to a man who had once attended the church on whose behalf I was putting out leaflets. He told me that he was a prominent member of one of the major political parties in Scotland but told me that he knew of no-one else that voted for that party in the church and felt that he was made less than welcome so he left and was no longer attending a church. **Maybe some people of another ethnic or religious background** On another occasion when I was putting out leaflets for a particular church I met a man who was obviously a Sikh. We had a number of good chats, but as I got to know his story I could have wept. He had felt a serious attraction to following Jesus for many years before he decided to take the step of committing himself. In the community where he had lived at the time there was a prominent church building so he started going along. He went along but as the weeks, months and then up to a couple of years passed, although a few people said 'hello' in church—that was it. They never shared a coffee or tea together, despite being on his own no-one ever invited him to their homes for a meal or any other social contact and certainly never visited him at his home. He came to the conclusion that these people met for an hour on a Sunday morning and that was about it. The quality of community life in the Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) was far greater than in that local church. Very disappointed he went back to being a Sikh again. He had a high view of Jesus, but didn't find that the Christian people in his locality were living in a way that reflected Him. A year or two later he moved to the place where I met him. Our conversations were always very respectful and friendly, but for some time I speculated on what might have

been had he met followers of Jesus who had welcomed him to their community and given a hand of friendship to him... **Maybe people from a different social class** I never saw this as an issue in British Churches (including Evangelical ones) until I entered into the pastoral ministry. Where people from a different socio-economic background were made to feel less than welcome until they took the hint and left; I have seen it with respect to middle-class people in working class congregations and vice versa. **Maybe people of a different generation** elderly churchgoers unwilling to accept any changes in church life to include younger people in the congregation; younger churchgoers intolerant and impatient of older people and their approach to church; a biblical New Testament Church is a multi-generation family containing the very young to the very old (except in parts of the world where Christianity is very new). To be a New Testament Church is richly rewarding and a wonderful blessing and to be honest very hard work at times, but the rewards at the end of the day are out of this world! Followers of Jesus are called to be like their master and welcome equally all who want to follow Jesus with them in that local church. These issues are a reality rarely ever talked about, because we know it is wrong, but welcoming people outside of our circles of comfort takes that little bit more effort. Inside we might be thinking: “All right now, if you’re asking me to love some people outside of this circle, they have to be people I can get along with; they must not use up too much of my time..., they..[personal preferences...]” All of us in our busy lives have had thoughts of this kind. We want to be welcoming and give of our time and friendship...but in the pressures of life we can put all kinds of qualifications on the kind of people we want to spend time with. Officially in theory British society has never been more inclusive. In practise very little has changed, the saddest part of that is that too often churches reflect their social context more closely than the Lord they profess to follow.

#### **PPT Slide 4/Parable images**

Do you remember the three stories Jesus uses in Luke 15 for a particular reason - the lost sheep ... the lost coin ... the lost son? Jesus is seen in a marketplace having conversations with people who are irreligious—people who are really far from his Father and who had made lots of mistakes, parked their donkeys on double yellow lines, used terrible language, drank too much, slept in the wrong bed, cheated other folks out of their money ... the list goes on and on. He is interacting with them ... talking, listening and enjoying interacting with them. And as the scene plays out, we notice that the religious leaders—the scribes and the Pharisees—become a little troubled in their spirits. Actually, they think the whole scenario is utterly scandalous because the people Jesus is interacting with are the kinds of individuals who are totally different from them!—these are the precise people the scribes and Pharisees hate! And Jesus of all people is socialising with them! Luke writes the account in this way: *Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering round to hear him. <sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, This man welcomes sinners, and eats with them.* The logic of their case is this: we don’t do [long list of items], therefore God will be pleased with us. These people do [a selection of the items], therefore God wants nothing to do with them. Isn’t it funny that a high proportion of the people who get angry about being told they are sinners are religious people? They seem to have no conception that: *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23), and in practice, even if the words are never used, look down on the people they would view as ‘the sinners’.

So the Pharisees reasoned this way: “If God hates some people and loves others then its okay for us to do the same –and these people are in the former category! However, that viewpoint misrepresents God who loves all of His creation and declared it good. God hates sin, not sinners, because of the damage it can do to people’s lives and the heartache it can cause them when they go astray from the pathway He has planned for them. Jesus is well aware of the hostile reaction to His teaching from the religious leaders present in the crowd that day and so He tells three short stories to illustrate how God views lost people –that is people separated from Him by their sins. The first story is about a lost sheep –one in a hundred. The second: a lost coin- one of ten. The third: a wayward child who dishonours their parents. A shepherd has 100 sheep –would he really bother to look for one when ninety nine are safe? –actually yes if his love for his animals is like God’s love for the people He has created. A women has her dowry coins on a chain around her neck, maybe it broke and in the dark corners of her small home she can only find nine, does it matter? of course it does; she searches till she finds it. Then the longer story of a family with two boys, one who is an obedient, model, child and the other a cause of grief to his parents. Well there is one good child so one out of two isn’t bad and they can forget about the other one? Would you behave like that with your children? Of course not! Then how do you think your Father in heaven views His children? The crowd’s reaction as Jesus tells the story goes from shock at the young man’s actions, to disbelief that a Father could welcome back a son who had brought so much shame on the family. Jesus welcomes the prodigals home. Are you here today having been far from God? The message of this story is that the moment you turn to follow Jesus His Father in heaven welcomes you in His family, not because any of us are good enough, but based on His grace. This is the message in our different ways that we will share with other people when the opportunity arises.

## **Point 2: Discover Stories**

**PPT Slide 6/Point 2: Discover Stories** (second bullet will auto-build)

Walk-across-the-room people, remember, are people who live life in “3D”, constantly watching for ways to: • Develop friendships ... in order to

### **• Discover stories**

One of my colleagues Alan used to be pastor of another Baptist church some years ago. Amongst his other duties he was a chaplain at one of the local Primary Schools in that community. He spoke at assemblies and took part in a range of activities in the school, but saw no outward response to the faith he proclaimed. Mary [not her real name] was one of the teachers in that school. In the years prior to Alan moving on to another church, Mary had expressed no interest in Christianity, or any other religion for that matter, but was on friendly terms with the chaplain and basic greetings would be happily exchanged. However, conversations never turned to faith issues. Alan moved away from that part of Scotland, not returning to that church or community for seven years. On Sunday 22 August 2010 when he entered that church a lady came up to him and said do you remember me? His mind was a bit of a blur as the face was familiar but not in association with that church. With a real sense of hesitation he offered a name –which was correct! She then told him her story of how she had come to that church and how, in a few weeks, she was going to be baptised as a believer. It was about three years after Alan had left the town that she had some significant difficulties in her personal life which had led her to think deeply about the purpose of life. She recalled at that time some of the things my colleague had said in assembly talks and as a result started

attending that church. Some months later she was converted and started baptismal classes. What an encouragement to Alan, but had he not been paying a visit to that church, that Sunday, he may never have known the impact he had made **seven** years earlier. His conversations with Mary had been significant enough to cause here to think when she needed help that other people at that church might be able to help her in her time of need. We can be a link in a chain of people's conversion stories. Be encouraged to believe that your encouraging words or kind deeds over time will bear fruit. Living in 3D is about being alongside people and open to the Holy Spirit leading us to speak or act in particular ways.

Too many Christians don't have any friends they associate with who don't know Jesus. No wonder we are less than effective in sharing our faith. A fisherman can be the most skilled in his line of work, but if he rarely ever comes into a place where fish are found his success rate will be minimal. A major aspect of effective witness for our Lord comes through building friendships and discovering a little of people's life stories; If we ask the Lord He will in time connect us with people with whom we can be friends and discover their stories

### **Point 3: Discern Next Steps**

This is simply an opportunity to allow a friendship to develop further or even to risk telling something of your faith journey that you believe may be helpful to that person who has shared something concerning issues they are facing in their life at the present time. It involves being open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as we interact with other people in a range of social contexts. May we be willing to take the path that leads to investing in someone's life? That path that leads to sticking your neck out to provide someone a resource that will meet a pressing need they have. There's no telling what joy awaits those of us who boldly choose to take the next step with people this week!

### **PPT Slide 7/Point 3: Discern next steps**

This is our third point. Walk-across-the-room people are people who live life in "3D"; they constantly look for ways to:

- **Develop friendships**
- **Discover stories**
- **Discern appropriate next steps**

Once you've risked walking across a room to stick out a hand of friendship and unearth what another person's journey has been like so far, the very best thing you can do is to be responsive to the whisperings and guidance of the Holy Spirit. I want to show you a short clip that I think illustrates well this idea of taking appropriate next steps in situations that may be turning spiritual. You'll meet Dave, a sailing buddy of Bill Hybel's, who felt firsthand what it was like to have someone take appropriate next steps in his life.

**Show excerpt from Just Walk Across the Room Four-Week Experience DVD  
CLIP: Message Video Excerpt, Week Two (run-time 1:15)**

### **PPT Slide 8/"The next steps that mattered to me" activity explanation**

In the video clip, you probably noted several "next steps" that Bill took in the life of his friend Dave—steps that added up over time and led to some pretty remarkable things in Dave's life. So, what next steps did you pick up on? Bill wanted to develop a genuine friendship with Dave, but wanted God to take charge of leading him into that friendship. Stating the obvious Bill took a real interest in Dave and his wife Beth and their family

circumstances, but also was aware that he had a resource (a book) that might help him on his journey towards committing his life to Christ.

On Sunday 26 September at our 11am service we are participating in an initiative called 'Back to Church Sunday'. Today we have prayer cards in the pews that you can take away and put in the blanks the name of the person or persons you feel led to approach re coming to church on that Sunday. It maybe someone who is new to church altogether, but it may be someone who used to attend church, but for whatever reason has drifted away from following Jesus as they once did. In another couple of weeks I will put out invitation cards that you can use if you wish to invite them to church. Some people will accept the invitation and seriously consider coming with you that Sunday –others may decline, but just as Gary shared last week about Mary Begg and her persistent concern over a fairly lengthy timescale for his spiritual wellbeing, don't give up –we are in it for the long-term.

Here's my challenge to you ... my challenge to me. This week, let's commit to "living in 3D":

- **Developing friendships** ... with all sorts of people
- **Discovering stories** ... remembering to keep the focus on the other person
- **Discerning next steps** ... letting the Spirit guide our every action

This week, let's be spiritually alert to the Spirit's promptings, asking Him to lead us toward the people with whom we're supposed to build bridges of friendship, for Jesus' sake, Amen.