

## Just Walk Across the Room Four-Week Experience Week Four: Grander Vision Living

### Introduction

#### PPT Slide 1/Just Walk campaign graphic, Week Four

Three Sundays ago, we began exploring a new approach to personal evangelism. We asked the question, what if evangelism really were as simple and straightforward 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 their creator and redeemer, God Himself. We looked at what it means to “live in 3D”—anyone remember the first D? **Develop friendships**. Followed by **discovering stories** and **discerning appropriate next steps**? These three things are what we can think about, pray about, and act on when we’re operating in the Zone of the Unknown. 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 work in their lives at His own pace. We have explored 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 before- and-after faith stories Today our topic is “**Grander Vision Living**.”

I would venture a guess that this series has been a necessary wake-up call for all of us. We’ve come to appreciate the immeasurable value of taking these walks across rooms ... just to see what God might do. However, the question we face is this: “How do we maintain the momentum we’ve gained in the past three weeks?” How do we—as individuals and as a congregation—keep this evangelistic fire burning in the coming days, weeks, months, years ... so that instead of it being a one-time shot in the arm, this four-week experience can serve as a catalyst for a significant life change; for a deep transformation of our habits as it pertains to personal evangelism? What I hope to do today is to plant a seed in your soul that will take root and grow into an insatiable and undeniable desire to pursue this thing we’re calling the “Grander Vision” every day of your life. So that each day could be full of the inspiring, unpredictable, mysterious, vibrant, sensory-stimulating manifestation of the Holy Spirit in your life - impossible? No!

I want to start by taking you on a four-minute vacation. Anyone in need of a vacation around here? Imagine that you have been immediately transported to a tiny island in the Bahamas chain. Upon your arrival, you decide that snorkelling is a good way to explore the water around the island. Within twenty minutes, you find yourself kitted out with your mask and fins, your water socks and your swimsuit. The boat driver cuts the engine as you make a choice as to the exact spot where you’ll dive in. Once in the water, you fall into a peaceful floating rhythm along the top of the beautiful deep, blue ocean. The sun is high; the scattered clouds have promised no rain; and in a wonderful collaboration, both the water and the air have agreed that an ideal temperature shall surround every fibre of your being. Bliss! You’re there to snorkel, of course, but for now, you’re just relaxing on top of the water, taking in the serene, stunning cresting and falling of the gentle waves ... the bright rays of sunshine bouncing off the ocean’s surface ... a slice of peacefulness that quite frankly you’ve never known before.

So here’s my question for you: is there anything wrong with this picture? Of course not! There’s nothing wrong with this picture ... you’ve somehow obtained a free trip to the Bahamas; it’s a beautiful day; you’re relaxing uninterrupted in a calm ocean, the sun, waves, and clouds your only companions. Sounds pretty good to me! But what if I were to tell you that just under the water’s surface—right below your present line of sight—you were missing

out on an unbelievable universe of activity? Okay, so back to your imaginary vacation. You finally muster the energy to position your mask around your eyes, cup your lips around your breathing tube, roll onto your belly, kick up your legs, and dip your face into the edge that separates the warmth of the sky from the cool water below. Ahhh ... can you feel that? Do you all feel as happy as I do right now? As you take in your new surroundings, your mind peppers you with questions: Where did all these fish come from? Why didn't I feel them if they were this close to me all along? Is that a barracuda?! As you push back from the feisty creature, still trying to process the colours, the sights of this new world, you bump into a huge school of blue and neon yellow angelfish; this is amazing! You look ahead fifty metres away and see two reef sharks moving along. A green moray darts by you, seemingly smiling as he passes by. The bright gold reef below you looks like it's waving as its fingers reach up from the ocean floor. The ocean floor! I can see all the way down! Has the water been clear all this time ... and I just didn't know to look? There's a certain smell to your surroundings. Of saltwater; of things alive; You pop back up, lifting your face above the water to take in the ocean's surface again. The contrast is baffling. Strangely, above the surface, all is still. Calm, tranquil, surprisingly at ease; you dip your head back under the water ... activity ... movement ... challenge ... vibrancy! You pop your head back up ... serene. Back under ... colourful complexity! Back up ... silent. Back under ... breathtaking commotion! Back up ... smooth. Back under ... awe-inspiring chaos! So if you had to choose, which is the better view?

Life ... from a far different perspective ... acknowledging that there's much, much more to life than what appears on the surface. Living with what I'd like to call a "Grander Vision." But what is this **Grander Vision**, anyway? Please turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 5. This may be a familiar story to some of us but we may see what happened in a new light in view of our commitment to building friendships and sharing our faith with people who have still to begin their faith journey with Jesus.

### **PPT Slides 2-6/Luke 5 text w/ painting**

*One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding round Him and listening to the word of God,<sup>2</sup> He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets.<sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then He sat down and taught the people from the boat.<sup>4</sup> When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.<sup>5</sup> Simon answered, Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.<sup>6</sup> When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.<sup>7</sup> So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!<sup>9</sup> For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken,<sup>10</sup> and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.<sup>11</sup> So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed Him (Luke 5:1-11).*

Friends, can you just imagine how elated Peter, Andrew, James, and John were because of this monstrous catch of fish? They'd never seen a catch like this! I mean, their nets were bursting ... the boat was sinking, it was so full of fish. They'd never had to call in reinforcements before –this was the best work shift of their lives. How could we professional fishermen not catch fish when fish are supposed to be available –at night- and a local joiner correctly tells us where to catch our biggest ever haul in the full glare of the Middle-Eastern sun.

## **PPT Slide 7/Just Walk campaign graphic, Week Four (second appearance)**

Jesus probably laughs as He tries unsuccessfully to get the men's attention in the midst of their exuberance. "Hey, guys! You think netting a bunch of scaly, underwater creatures was fun? Try thinking a grander thought for a second ... Listen, how about multiplying the fun-factor you experienced in the last few minutes by about a thousand! "Not that there's anything wrong with catching fish. I know you're trying to earn a living, and taking fish to market day in and day out in order to earn a few shekels is as good a way as any. But instead of netting a few shekels, just imagine landing a few destinies. "That's where the action is!" Jesus' eyes probably glistened with enthusiasm at this point, their rapt attention spurring him on. "Peter, Andrew, James and John," Jesus said as he looked each of them in the eyes, "so far, you four 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!" Now I don't know about you, but in my estimation, supernaturally filling some fishing nets is a fairly unusual means of recruiting a few disciples. He could have employed a firm of religious 'head-hunters' to recruit some talented people from the congregations in the synagogues in Galilee. We can understand why an ad at the local job-centre (had there been one!) would not have been too successful. 'Disciples wanted by Jewish rabbi who claims to be the Messiah – unlimited hours, no salary, open-ended commitment, possible risk of execution by Roman authorities'. Some people think being a Christian is boring –it is anything but boring! Why did Jesus perform this particular miracle? Jesus started in their world with what they understood to point to the significance of something far greater than they had ever imagined. Using the language of big fish versus little fish Jesus sought to address the issue of priorities. What would matter most in their lives in the future? Their employment was essential to put food on the table and a roof over their heads, but within that workplace, neighbourhood or home God has a grander vision, a bigger purpose, for each of our lives. For each one of us – God has brought into our lives a whole range of people. We can ask Him to guide us as to how we can touch their lives for their good and God's glory by our actions and where appropriate by our words. **I want each of us to reflect on this question:** Am I going to throw my one and only life into pursuing small fish, or will I risk tossing my 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?

### **Observation 1: The Priority Is People**

#### **PPT Slide 8/Observation 1: The priority is people**

Jesus desperately wanted four career fishermen ... as well as the fine people of Broughty Ferry Baptist Church 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, as you'll recall. 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. The choice is yours...

You can be a successful businessperson ... or be most passionate about the business of redeeming lives.

You can be the top student ... or focus your attention on studying people.

You can shine as a superstar salesman ... or care more about letting your light shine in the lives of people all around you! It is not an either/ or situation. We do our best to serve our employer /customers/ employees in the work situation, but what we sometimes forget as Christians is that in that very same environment we are there as representative of the King of Kings.

### **PPT Slide 9/Matthew 5:16**

Jesus was clear about which was the better path. In Matthew 5:16, He said *In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

Let your light shine in *the same way* ... Let me stop there. "*In the same way*" mean Jesus is saying that we get to choose whether or not our "light" is going to impact people!

- Our light will either shine on people and point them toward the Father,
- Or we'll keep our light to ourselves, and in essence deny the people we supposedly care about a relationship with God.

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

### **PPT Slide 10/Just Walk campaign graphic, Week Four (third appearance)**

I can almost hear God telling each one of us in this room ...

"You can catch fish ... spend all your time netting some scaly, underwater creatures and taking them to market for a few shekels (or whatever currency you are paid in). It's a perfectly acceptable occupation. But there's another option! You can become fishers of men and women ... concerning yourself primarily not with material rewards but with destinies!" But why? I mean, what's Jesus' end game here? Why is He so convinced that living the Grander Vision really is the better option? Because, friends, this is the way His kingdom gets built. Jesus was saying to all of His followers—both then and now, "Please understand how important your priorities are. The stakes are way too high for you to put anything but people in your top spot. The way you treat people will serve either as a magnet that draws them to God ... or a deterrent to them ever coming to know him."

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 because 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 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. Let me read a brief quote from *Just Walk Across the Room* that I think sums up this idea well. Here's what it says: "You don't have to be any more talented, any richer, any slimmer,

any smarter, any more or less of anything to partner with God. All you have to be is willing to be used by him in everyday ways.” And when those of us who name the name of Christ start pulling our own weight, letting our lights shine in a way that lets the people around us know they matter, then the Holy Spirit touches people’s lives in our world! But that’s not all. Why is Jesus so convinced we should live the Grander Vision? Not only because this is the way the kingdom gets built, but also because this is the way our souls get satisfied. When you and I take up residence in this vibrant, otherworldly life called the Grander Vision, we will never want to go back to floating on the smooth, silent, serene surface of the ocean again. We won’t get as excited about netting a few paltry perch as we once did. We won’t put all of our energy into trying to get richer or getting more material possessions. Why? Because these things will no longer scratch the soul-level itch we feel. Jesus knew that if you and I would build a lifestyle around accepting people, getting to know people, caring for people, serving people, listening to people, embracing people, befriending people, exposing people to spiritual things ... prioritizing people, we would never crave our old ways again. It is as simple as that.

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** (running-time 1:05)

## **Observation 2: The Focus Is on Potential**

### **PPT Slide 11/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 teenaged boys whose first response to his commands was less than enthusiastic. 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!” I think their insinuation was, “Hey, who do you think you are? We’re the experts here! We were the ones slugging it out all night at sea, working for all we are worth to net a few fish. We were the ones slaving away while you were sleeping ... you know, counting sheep, creating sheep, whatever it is you do! And now you want us to listen to you about catching fish?!” By anyone’s standards, these guys weren’t contending for any Disciple of the Year awards just yet. 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 Bill 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

Aren’t you glad Christ did this with you? I know I am.

You and I looked at our before-and-afters last week ... I wonder, how bad was your “before”? What was it that Christ looked past in your world in order to accept you and embrace you and enfold you in grace? I guarantee He looked past something in all of us, myself included.

All of us as Christians have a metaphorical sign over us ‘work in progress’ or ‘God at work’! As a teenager I had a bad temper that at times needed attention. For some time I excused myself that it was normal –none of us are perfect. It was only in a difficult situation

when I was nineteen that I seriously asked God to change me. I was in a situation where someone was winding me up about the faith and I wanted to ‘fight the good fight’ in the wrong way. An SOS silent cry to God for help enabled me to ask for strength for anger management –which He answered. More recently a challenge has come over making time for people –not the big appointments, but those little chance encounters or brief work meetings where it would be so easy to avoid personal conversation and focus on a task in hand. It may be a thirty second or a minute exchange or a little longer, but making the time for people to show interest in them and their circumstances. Over a year these little investments in other people will add up. Who knows how God may use these brief conversations for good? Stop for a moment today and ask the Lord what do you want me to be working on next in my life with Your help? Help me to be more sensitive to the guidance of Your Holy Spirit.

A good example of creative witnessing is seen in Luke 5:27-32: *After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. Follow me, Jesus said to him,<sup>28</sup> and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.<sup>29</sup> Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.<sup>30</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?<sup>31</sup> Jesus answered them: It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.<sup>32</sup> I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* On the surface Matthew (also called Levi) was a most unlikely convert. He was a collaborator with the occupying power. If they left at the end of the week to go home for good people like Matthew would have been unlikely to make it past the weekend! Yet Jesus, the homeless rabbi did not see the wealthy tax collector with his substantial home and healthy bank balance; or care about his political views; instead Jesus saw the potential in this tax-collector to be a witness for Him. He chose the Grander Vision instead of a lesser one of what this man might be? How do we view the people God allows to cross our paths on a regular basis? Can you picture Jesus walking up to Matthew’s office desk and asking him to walk 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. It would be a revolutionary change for young 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 it meant to follow Jesus. I’m definitely going to live the Grander Vision, he probably thought ... now I just wish I could figure out what that means! Do you relate to that observation?

### **The Exhortation: Start Small ... but Start!**

#### **PPT Slide 12/Exhortation: Start small, but start!**

Like Matthew, you may be enthusiastic about starting to live 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! Maybe as a new (or older) Christian you are thinking: I don’t know all the theology of evangelism or of anything else for that matter! Where do I start in living for Jesus? How can my friends meet with Jesus- they are unlikely to show up at a special meeting? He came up

with an extraordinary idea ‘party-evangelism’! having a good time and inviting Jesus and a few other disciples to his home to meet his friends and work colleagues! He had always enjoyed organising parties –could Jesus use that gift? Of course! Some of you may be breathing a sigh of relief. An approach to evangelism that involves partying? For the first time in this entire four-week series, you finally have some hope! Matthew had a plan to organise a party where he could allow his old tax-collecting colleagues to mix with his new friends—the Christian ones—and just see what would happen. 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 thought. What if a couple of interesting conversations get started ... maybe about what happened to their crazy friend 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! Matthew could have been utterly consumed by his own transformation just after he chose to follow Christ. He could have ditched his old friends and instead associated only with his new ones in a new ‘Circle of Comfort’. Thank God Matthew made a different choice: He chose to prioritize people outside the family of God above all that ... people who need an ounce of acceptance, a little Christian friendship, a taste of grace. Matthew also chose to see the potential in his tax-collecting friends ... the same way Jesus had miraculously spotted potential in him. If you or I had been a disciple of Jesus at that time would we have given Matthew half a chance of ever coming to faith in Christ? It is very doubtful. It would certainly have made the front page of the *Capernaum Evening Telegraph*. There was much that this new Christian had to learn, but he knew that God had saved him for a purpose ... a purpose that included more than his own salvation. A purpose that included being salt and light in his world; A purpose that centred around living out a grander vision ... by making people his priority and their potential his focus. A purpose that included being committed to the task of taking walks across rooms ... because people were the only thing he’d be taking with him to heaven one day.

### **PPT Slide 13 ‘Temporary’**

[An illustration from Bill Hybel’s experience] “Temporary Temporary Temporary, there is only one thing in this room that is not temporary,” the speaker continued. “There is only one thing that you can take with you into the next world.” He called someone up to join him on the stage, and he placed a blue sticker on her lapel. “When you get to the end of your life and take in your last breath,” he said, “what do you want your life to have been about?” And in that moment, Bill’s heart pounded as one thought dominated all others in his mind. It really is all about people, he thought. He continued on in his thoughts: No earthly commodity is going to make it from this world into the next. Not land, not homes, not bank accounts, not titles, not achievements. Only people; Jesus Christ taught that every human being would be resurrected to spend an eternity in community with God in heaven or in isolation from God in hell. And because Jesus understood these eternal realities and believed them to the core of his being, he focused his attention on the only entity that would extend into the next reality: people. I don’t know what the final assessment on my earthly life will be once I am gone, Bill continued. But I know this much: my quest while I am here is to seek people out and point them toward faith in God. I’ve tried enough approaches in my five decades of living to know that to invest yourself in anything other than people is to settle for pursuit of a Lesser Vision—that ugly, ensnaring trap of the temporal.”

## Conclusion

The invitation has been extended. Will you opt into Grander Vision Living, or will you settle for your lesser visions? Back to the imaginary vacations we all took earlier, I really don't think Christ came, ministered, even died, for the sake of giving us a calm, tranquil, at-ease life. A "smooth, silent, serene" float-along existence on the water's surface;

The way I understand things, He came to bring abundance ... redemption ... transformation ... to anyone who would accept his way of living. He came to bring not tranquillity, but utter upheaval to the world! It's a beautiful upheaval to those of us who have been transformed by grace, but it's an upheaval nevertheless, isn't it? After what Jesus has done for us – and we have grasped it – then we will be willing to walk across rooms... in order to share this beautiful upheaval with people who don't yet have the hope of heaven. Who don't yet have the assurance of God's love here on earth; 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 group of fishermen; The One who saw a passionate follower in the booth of a wretched tax collector; The One who saw limitless spiritual opportunities in something as fun as a party! Maybe like Matthew you might just think of setting up a party or even more than one between now and the end of the year? A party in which a majority of people have not yet come to faith in Jesus, together with a few who do. Keep it simple and informal –maybe a special occasion might lend itself to such an event. Someone mentioned in the midweek study that they had set up a neighbourhood barbeque in their part of the street where they lived. Almost all the neighbours turned up and it has now become an annual event. A Matthew style party where no agenda is set and God the Holy Spirit is allowed to do whatever He wants to do? May God help us to have a creative imagination and in faith take that walk...and come back and tell us the stories of what has happened as a result of your adoption of a grander vision for God, Amen.

