

Sermon: Sunday, April 22, 2007

PRAY

I am so excited about this short study we are beginning.

I have heard such great things about it from other churches who have done it.

It gives you easy ways to participate in the most important thing in the world.

The process of someone coming to know their value and worth to God and find the peace and abundant life that He offers them.

Remember this question from last week.

PPP Do you really believe that everyone else would absolutely love what you are experiencing?

Your answer to this question reveals a lot... and it is foundational to embracing this idea of Walking Across the Room.

Hey walking across the room can be scary...

No doubt... and there is a spiritual dimension to it...
we have a spiritual enemy a force that is opposed to this.

Man we have felt it big time in the office lately as we are gearing up to really impact out community with the wonderful message about God who loves them so much.

You see the enemy would rather have you focussing on self....
and your problems and the problems with your church....
than thinking about how to reach and touch others with God's love.
But living like this is living in darkness...

PPP STICKMAN WITH BALLOONS AND ARROWS TO - ME MINE ME ME FRUSTRATION
ANGER

Satan loves it when we have an inward focus...
because an inward self focus...
destroys any potential to reach out....
And ruins your own life.

The thing is when you are focusing on self...
your life is not that good...
secular counsellors.... will even tell you this.

.....For a Christian... with a selfish focus things will not be that great and you won't be experiencing God's blessing in your life.....

And the answer to that question up on PPP will not a resounding yes...

PPP (overlay on previous)

Do you really believe that everyone else would absolutely love what you are experiencing?

"Well what I have as a Christian really isn't that great... I am not that happy and I am pretty negative..."

This all comes from an unhealthy focus on SELF....

which predominantly leads to negative thinking...

Misery loves company so often people who are negative gather together and feed off each other.

Hey this is Jesus theology 101....

the blessing comes..... when you die to self and maintain a positive outward focus.

As you become more other focussed and seek that positive outer attitude you are naturally drawn to others who think the same... and you feed off each other...

All I can do is proclaim this spiritual truth..... over and over....

and try to live it.... AND CALL YOU TO IT...

As you walk through life time and again you will come across people who are not surrendered.... and not interested in dying to self...

even people who think they are Christians...

You see.... I just said this...

PPP "For a Christian with a self focus... things will not be that great and you won't be experiencing God's blessing in your life."

Now oddly enough..... no one... gasped when I said...

that..... a Christian with a self focus...

PPP "For a Christian with a self focus... things will not be that great and you won't be experiencing God's blessing in your life."

no one said.... HUUUHNNN...

We have accepted this.....

That it is actually possible to be a Christian.... with a self focus...

How utterly ridiculous...

How completely absurd...

(JUST LOOK AROUND FOR A WHILE....)

If you have a self focus...

You better rethink whether or not you are really following Jesus.

This applies to all of us... myself included!

Friends... a man came up to Jesus and asked what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life... Jesus said.... keep the commandments...

Now this guy was keeping all the commandments... as a matter of fact he had always kept them...

So Jesus said.... "Okay you're doing pretty good... Now go sell everything you have and give it to the poor... And that law abiding man.... went away sad...

He..... had a self-focus....

He wanted to keep his treasure... for HIMSELF.

Hey this is why the path to spiritual growth involves generous radical crazy giving... that begins with giving a tithe.... 10 percent back to God's work. That is just one step along the way... toward radical giving... It breaks you free..... from.. Stuff... It breaks the hold that stuff has on you.

Here is a truthful statement.....

I have yet to meet someone who is committed to this kind of radical regular giving who says... "I am so unhappy..."

NO EXCEPTIONS FRIENDS... NONE... ABSOLUTELY NONE.... people who give in radical regular ways are very happy people.

but of those who do not commit to radical regular giving....

there is this deep unhappiness within.... There is no peace...

The Spirit brings conviction and curse not joy and blessing.

It is because SELF..... is still in control.... and deep down YOU KNOW IT...

Hey remember that wee little man Zacchaeus... up in a Sycamore tree... the tax collector... what did he do in response to Jesus call...

to die to self... .. he said this...

PPP "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Radical giving.... this was way beyond what the amounts prescribed by the law where... A tithe.... You see a tithe that is just the beginning...

Do you know what Jesus said back to Zacchaeus... when he heard Zacchaeus say this?

PPP "Today salvation has come to this house"

Jesus

Living for God.... is all about dying to self... and letting go...
not focussing on your own money or problems or stuff...

It is the path to health.... actually it is the only path to health... and contentment...
This song really puts these ideas to words... sing them... sing them from your heart...
as a prayer...

Let the Lord hear you... and let Him sense your heart.

PPP WORSHIP SONGS

ALL TO YOU

LET IT RISE

PPP "Walk Across the Room" pic... & title

As I started to work on this message God's Spirit took me in this direction. Because
my friends... we need to get this down before we can... effectively give The greatest
Single Gift.

PPP

Serving God does make us very rich, if we are satisfied with what we have. We
brought nothing into the world, so we can take nothing out. But, if we have food and
clothes, we will be satisfied with that. Those who want to become rich bring
temptation to themselves and are caught in a trap. They want many foolish and
harmful things that ruin and destroy people. The love of money causes all kinds of
evil. Some people have left the faith, because they wanted to get more money, but
they have caused themselves much sorrow.

But you, man of God, run away from all those things. Instead, live in the right
way, serve God, have faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of
faith, grabbing hold of the life that continues forever. You were called to have that
life when you confessed the good confession before many witnesses.

(NCV) 1Tim 6:6-12

When we are too busy being focussed on self and stuff and money and being negative
we really have no time or desire to walk across the room. And we really don't have
much to offer anyway.

Okay let's say that you are "living it" ...

PPP "Living it" web site pic

You are surrendered and dying to self.... that you are working hard at breaking free
from TIMEJAMMIN and getting your priorities straight... grabbing hold of our core

values...

PPP 1. PUTTING GOD FIRST

putting God first... speaks for itself... full surrender to God

PPP 2. PUTTING OTHERS BEFORE SELF

putting others before self... it is our second core value...

a self focus is just not Christlike....

Where did this idea of Christianity come from where believers go around putting themselves first.... That is just heretical. We are so quick to jump on little theology issues these days... call people heretical... as we walk around personally putting self first.. A walking talking living breathing heretic.

PPP 3. GROW EVERYDAY

and growing everyday.... Being teachable... Being disciplined and mentored.... having an inner three... working on your spiritual disciplines...

So let's say you're living it....! What should that lead to?

Well for one thing it brings about a positive answer to this question...

PPP Do you really believe that everyone else would absolutely love what you are experiencing?

YES.... It is an awesome way of life...

I can't explain it... but it does.... a surrendered life of giving makes you happy. I love this next passage....

In it Paul asks several rhetorical questions.

It's kind of like this one that we have been looking at.....

PPP Phil 2

Does your life in Christ give you strength? Does his love comfort you? Do we share together in the spirit? Do you have mercy and kindness?

PPP HIGHLIGHT THE FOLLOWING - Strength,

PPP comfort,

PPP fellowship,

PPP mercy,

PPP kindness...

sounds like a pretty good life..... Hey this is life in....
look at the words...

PPP LIFE IN CHRIST

This is what Life in Christ is to be like... Is that your experience...?

Hey this question Paul asks is just like the one we have been asking.

PPP (add to previous)

Do you really believe that everyone else would absolutely love what you are experiencing?

Now if you are.... experiencing this then Paul says...

PPP (get rid of previous question and add)

If so, make me very happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and having one mind and purpose.

One mind... One purpose... same thoughts.... same love...

Cool.... Man..... my experience of church lately is so far from this....

Many minds... many purposes... Many thoughts...

What one mind should we have...?

PPP ONE MIND -

Whose mind should we have...

(ANYONE)

PPP ONE MIND - JESUS

Okay..... Good....

Now what is the one purpose..... we are to share?

PPP ONE PURPOSE -

(PAUSE LET HANG WAIT)

This isn't rocket science... Anyone?

PPP ONE PURPOSE - RESCUE PEOPLE

Our purpose.... to rescue people by going and sharing the wonderful news of just how much God loves them...
and how He demonstrated it.... through Jesus.

If rescuing people living in darkness is our one purpose what else does that imply.

We need to raise up... "Fully devoted followers" who are "living it".

Part of the Great Commission that Jesus gives includes this...

PPP

Meanwhile, the eleven disciples were on their way to Galilee, headed for the mountain Jesus had set for their reunion.

The moment they saw him they worshiped him. Some, though, held back, not sure about worship, about risking themselves totally.

Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge:

"God authorized and commanded me to commission you:

Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age." Matt 28:16-20 The Message

We want to take people who do not know God personally....

people who do not know about His Word or His Spirit or the life He promises them...
and walk them through transformation.....

so that they become fully devoted..... and go out and..... WHAT?

PPP

REACH MORE PEOPLE....

Actually that not quite right is it....

We want them to go out and..... Rescue people.

PPP cross out reach and put "RESCUE"

You see the fact is that part of the peace and joy and abundant life that God promises... comes from dying to self and being involved in this very process.

The process of someone coming to know their value and worth to God and find the peace and abundant life that He offers them. There is nothing like it... It keeps your eyes off yourself.... you are giving the greatest gift.

When you get so far removed from this you lose you joy... the Spirit within and around you is not singing for JOY....

Hey... What do rescuers look like... - What do fully devoted followers - people who actually go out there and reach out to people who are living in darkness... look like?

You guys tell me.... What are people who do this..... like...

You know the people in our church who are inviting people out to church and over for dinner asking people to share their story or problems with them... what do they look like...

They are positive people full of the Fruit of Spirit love joy peace patience kindness.. And strangely enough they are other focussed.

PPP reverse of the first guy... this time all THEM all other focussed "How are they?" "What can I do?" LOVE JOY PEACE PATIENCE... etc.

Remember this guy... quite a difference eh....

PPP selfish guy (FROM EARLIER)

Let's get back to the fully devoted follower...

PPP back to giving guy

Okay how do you get the fruit...?

The only path that I know that leads to developing fully devoted followers that look like this..... is DISCIPLESHIP...

Exact same one that Jesus used...

Jesus discipleship program took three years.... of full time study.

Discipleship involves discipline and sacrifices... and time...

one must be fully surrendered to be a disciple... of Jesus...

Discipleship and growing in grace and truth.... it involves training...

and it involves putting on habits... habits that have been proven to result in people growing in maturity and becoming fully devoted followers...

Now a church can choose any spiritual growth process.... but it must have one...

Willow Creek has there own... remember the five G's from years back.... GRACE
GROWTH GROUPS GIVING.... and GIFTS

There are so many different ways to disciple and train people...

but the one's that work all have in something in common friends...

They have teeth... they have accountability... they raise a standard...

it is just like growth in any area of life... school... exercise... eating habits... work....

now it is hard because with this process because you add a spiritual dimension there is an enemy who wants to keep you from growing...

Growing to be fully devoted doesn't just happen... it is not just.... say a prayer and you are done... Hey we every single one of us are all messed up with baggage and pain... and we need to be transformed in our hearts and minds...

This takes time and it takes humility and surrender and death to self...

Because to grow you need to be teachable and to be teachable you need to hear the tough things... and receive them...

Things about you that need to change.

Pride gets in the way of this and so often the process shuts down people are just to afraid to speak to you.

Our growth process tries to get people to a point where this kind of openness is possible....

We purposely chose one growth process that 100,000's of people have gone through.... it works...

No question about it.. It works... And works well...

The Purpose Driven Church and The Purpose Driven Life.

There are other processes this might not be the one for you....

but for all who embrace it..... it brings fruit and life transformation.

The original people that started this work choose this model...

About 10 years ago they said read the book before you come... Jeff.... this is what we are doing. You don't like it... that's okay..... but don't come...

Hey..... we do the same thing at our membership course....

we present the model and our vision.... and we say hey if you are not just radically crazy about following this path for growth don't join...

Please find the right church for you.

We are all about reaching unreached people and training them...

We are all about growth....

We are all about raising a high standard....

We are all about the people out there...

You see we believe that the process itself nurtures and equips those inside... The small groups... the workshops... Mentors coaches accountability partners the inner three....

In our course you come face to face with this...

PPP DIAMOND GROWTH PROCESS

And you sign a commitment covenant... that says you want to work through this... and grow...

Let me ask you... where are you at with this...

Have you lost the vision...?
Do you no longer believe in this?

If so... that is a serious problem for you and for our church.

Being at a place... a church... where the paid staff and the Elders and the ML's are all pushing striving toward these goals....
Which you haven't embraced....
That is not healthy for anyone involved.

Hey we are going this way.... leadership is united.... we need for everyone to rally around the vision... the potential is amazing....

If you are seeking something else..
We love you.... but if God has called you to a different vision....
a different kind of growth process then you need to seek it out....
and you have our blessing.

Cause here we are... we have arrived...
I am so excited it has been a long hard haul....

And a bunch of us.... at CMS are getting ready to walk across the room..

We have been following a vision laid out for Spiritual maturity that has worked in 100,000's of people lives... It is the Purpose Driven Life...

We started with the 101 course for membership and we ran the Alpha series churchwide.

Then we held the 201 course Helpful Habits and ran The Purpose Driven Life series... churchwide.

We just finished running the first 301 course GETTING IN SHAPE and we ran The Life You've Always Wanted series last year.

Now as we look forward to the run of 401 GROWING THE TEAM in the fall... we are going to run... "Just Walk Across the Room" churchwide. Which prepares us for our push into our community.

This brings us full circle in the Diamond... and starts the process over...

We have the workbooks now.

We have run the courses and we will continue to refine them but we have the basic spiritual growth process in place and functioning.

It was hard getting everybody to find the place where they are currently growing at.

And now as new people come in... we are ready to train them up.

We knew it would take time to get here...

But now as we reach new people we can walk them through the Spiritual growth process that we ourselves have gone through.

This has been the vision of this church since Nov 1997 when I was first called. And it still is. It hasn't changed.

It is our heartbeat.... because it prepares and equips fully devoted followers who are selflessly reaching others in this community... and living a joy-filled peace filled fulfilled life.

We are all called to take part in walking across the room... no matter where we are at in the growth process.... fact is.... this is not easy... look at the text we read earlier...

I included a few more verses of this passage..... than are normally read...

PPP

Meanwhile, the eleven disciples were on their way to Galilee, headed for the mountain Jesus had set for their reunion.

The moment they saw him they worshiped him. Some, though, held back, not sure about worship, about risking themselves totally.

Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge:

"God authorized and commanded me to commission you:

Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age." Matt 28:16-20 The Message

Look at he the red...

"The moment they saw him they worshiped him. Some, though, held back, not sure about worship, about risking themselves totally."

Hey these are the 11 disciples... the ones with all the training...

Three years with Jesus.... spirit baptism... miracles... healings.... wisdom...

teachings... raising Lazarus... prophecies... crucifixion.... resurrection.... and they still aren't sure....

Are you still not sure maybe.... it is time to ask yourself...
WHAT YOU REALLY BELIEVE....

PPP INDY & THE LAST CRUSADE (WHAT YOU REALLY BELIEVE)

What do you really believe?
Are you ready to take the walk across the room?

Walking Across the Room will demand five things:

PPP WALKING ACROSS THE ROOM

1. You need to enter into the unknown.

You need to move beyond your circle of comfort....
Whenever you go a party a get together a special event right away you will scan around for a circle of comfort.

You seek out a area of comfort... a few people you know... someone you like...
Walking across the room involves stepping out beyond this area... and saying Hi...
You need to trust that God will be with you...

In the movie Indy is about to take a walk across the room to try and save His Father.
A couple of guys have already died trying to take this walk... fortunately your walk will not involve the risk of death.,..

Okay second thing this walk involves...

PPPVIDEO INDY - THE PENITENT MAN

PPP WALKING ACROSS THE ROOM

1. You need to enter into the unknown.
2. You need to go humbly

Don't go across the room and be a know it all... go humbly...
be open... you don't know it all... hey show an interest in the other persons beliefs...
and life...

When you take that walk and you are starting a conversation for the first time...
picture yourself kneeling....

First big mistake and the reason we have so much fear is that we think we have to go

in and defend or proclaim Christianity.... UNNNGHH WRONG.

We are going to learn so much about reaching out...

Hey maybe God wants you to meet a person who is a strict Islamic fundamentalist... they are a negative 10 with God...

or a gay person who really has issues with the Christian God... and the judgement they have felt from Christians...

All you are to do is to move them from a negative 10 to a negative 9.

Someone else will later move them from a negative 9 to a negative 7.

PPPVIDEO INDY - GOD'S WORD & NAME

When you walk across the room you need to know and trust God's Word and Name.

He is who He is... He is with you... trust this and walk humbly.. Be confident....

PPP (add to previous)

3. Know and trust God's Word and Name;

Now the third thing you need to do before you take that first step is to believe....

PPPVIDEO INDY - YOU MUST BELIEVE

PPP (add to previous)

4. Have faith;

As you go realize that this is all real and that God will be there for you a path is already laid out.

Now one final thing and we will talk about this more. Actually we will spend a whole Sunday on it.

As we you need to learn to listen for and discern God's leading.

PPP (add to previous)

5. Hear and follow the Spirit

How do you do this?

It is not that hard... I think a lot of the time we just stop listening and believing that God leads us by His Spirit. We get too busy and too self-focussed.

You know it is the brand new believers that seem to be able to hear best. Get around them and learn from them. I learn so much from these fresh new followers as they follow the inner promptings of the Spirit.

In Christ God walked across the cosmos. He sent His Son.

Jesus was in heaven with angels ministering to

Him. He had His feet up and everything was good and then God said I want you to get up and take a walk...
a walk across the cosmos

PPP [Hubble Pic of cosmos \(eye of God\)](#)

and He did...

He did it because He is crazy about us He is passionate about us.
He loves you.
He wants a better life for you.

A better eternity for you... and a better life for you and He sets an example for us.

"Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus."

We are devoting an entire month to this idea... Of walking across the room. It will not be the kind of evangelism you think. It will be something that you all can participate in and find great joy as you take part in the process of sharing the Greatest Gift you could ever give with others.

We want to help you be able to hear and discern the Spirit's prompting and take action.

and step out and walk across the room.

With confidence...

As you do this you will become more like Jesus.

I want you to take a moment and think about how you came to Christ...

For the vast majority this was probably the scenario....

You were walking down the street and God took a brick and dropped it on your head... and on the brick it said... You need me... follow me....

That's not how it happened did it?
Although sometimes God does some pretty cool interventions.

No some Bible tooting evangelical came up proclaimed the four spiritual laws to you spoke about judgement... and you feel on your knees...

Probably not... maybe for someone here... sometimes it happens this way....

I can tell you how it happened for most of you.

Someone who loved you stepped out of their comfort zone... and gave themselves to you. They weren't thinking all about themselves... They knew what you desperately needed... and they stepped out. They prayed and loved and were kind and earned your trust and maybe even the tough things... For the most part they listened to you... really listened and they cared.

And quite possibly it wasn't just one person but a whole bunch of people over a period of time.... just walking across the room and listening and caring.

And strange.... but that was enough... wasn't it... Not so many deep theological debates... or Bible verses... just plain old LOVE. Maybe it was a parent a sibling a friend a youth sponsor..... Have you ever told them how grateful you are...

Here's your take home...

Who was it that walked across the room for you?
Who is walking across the room to you right now?

How about writing them a letter or making a phone call or taking them to lunch and telling them what it has meant to you since then...

Maybe many more have been touched through you... and the people you have touched.... because you started walking across the room. They would love to hear that.

We so want this whole reaching out thing to be impersonal... people in the third world... people in far away places...

Just pictures... send money... write checks...

but it isn't....

This needs to come home... for us...

God has special encounters for us each and every day right here in Huntsville.... how many are we missing.

Four practical objectives for this series:

1. Become comfortable with excusing ourselves from our circles of comfort.

Being real comfortable with moving beyond your circle of comfort as lead. This leads into our second objective.

2. To discern and be aware of those God has put around you.

I have already talked about this but to really be plugged into the leading of the Spirit within. There is nothing like it when you walk through the day following His lead. It is so freeing.

3. Get our hearts in tune and in rhythm with God.

This is just to re-establish and embrace God's heart for reaching and touching and transforming people. It is His number one priority. Sometimes we lose sight of that.

4. Learn ways of starting things off.

Just to discover some practical ways you can actually initiate relationships. You will see this so clearly as you read and talk about the book. There are so many simple things you can do that are not scary or threatening to you or the person God calls you to reach out to. Rome wasn't built in a day... people are won to faith through a process.... relax God is involved just do your little part.

Okay now three spiritual goals for this series.

Three Spiritual goals:

1. Grow in our relationship with God.
2. Grow in our relationship with each other.
3. Grow in our own spiritual maturity.

Hey those are strongly tied to our core values.... and as you walk across the room and share your experiences growth will take place in each of these areas.

Friends there is nothing better than this. Last week I shared how I lost sight and was overcome by negativity. I have come to realize that the only thing that feeds me and inspires me and fires me up is being involved in this process daily...

Now let me forewarn you... as you think read the book and go to group and come to the messages and think more and more about this throughout the day.... you may find yourselves stopping and thinking and looking at someone and your inner voice is saying...

"Am I supposed to stop and talk to them?"

"Am I missing a divine encounter?"

That's good... That's real good cause at one point you will actually start to sense answers... that's the Spirit within...

Am I supposed to talk to them..... YES...!!!

Am I missing a divine appointment... "No... just pray... pray for them right now... another day we will stop... we have an appointment with them coming up."

Hey if you are not sure... "You could just go up and say.... I think I am supposed to talk to you.... How are you doing."

Actually it might be better to just go up and say HI. Great weather eh... Or maybe it is to begin with just a nod... I love travelling in the states cause most guys as you walk by like at a gas station they will nod. It's kind of like a.. "I'm cool..... you cool..?" and you nod back and you're saying "You know it" and you both walk by feeling different... more comfortable... I like it...

Okay here is your homework to say HI and strike up a conversation... with someone you don't know... or with someone you just know a bit.... Now let me pray for you.... cause some of you are squirming and you are going to need God's help...

PRAY: Think about someone God has been wanting you to build a relationship with... God... Move us out of our circles of comfort.