

“Go Where?!!”

Welcome back to Walking with Purpose! I'm so glad you've joined us on this journey ...exploring our life's mission of making fellow disciples of Jesus Christ! Dick Staub is the author of an excellent book entitled, *“Please Pass the Salt: What We Can Learn from Jesus About Engaging Our World.”* In it, he describes this experience that he had. He said:

"Many years ago I attended a birthday party for my homosexual friend and co-worker, Julian. Sixty gay men and four 'straight' women had gathered to celebrate in a high-rise penthouse with a dramatic sweeping view. Greeting me warmly, Julian exuberantly kissed me on both cheeks. I took a deep breath and ventured into a scene that was *well* outside my comfort zone". He then said: "I chuckled quietly, asking myself a familiar question: ***‘What in the world am I doing here?’***"

He went on to say: "Actually, I knew *exactly* why I was there. I had prayed with some friends about this occasion just a few hours earlier. I've always thought of events like Julian's party as 'wedding feast of Cana' situations. As so often happens when I follow Jesus into the world, opportunities appear. Because I listened as the partygoers told me about their life journeys, by 2:00 a.m. five of them were gathered with me in a corner talking about spiritual things."

As we saw in this story, we are Christ's ambassadors! *He is making His appeal through us!* Walking in obedience is an adventure, that's for sure! Are you ready?



Fellowship

1. Have you ever echoed the words: "What in the world am I doing ***here?***"
2. Have you ever been *intimidated* to share your faith? Describe your experience.



Discipleship

Paul Powell once said “Many churches today remind me of a laboring crew trying to gather in a harvest while they sit in the tool shed. They go to the tool shed every Sunday and they study bigger and better methods of agriculture, sharpen their hoes, grease their tractors...and then get up and go home. Then they come back *that night*, study bigger and better methods of agriculture, sharpen their hoes and grease their tractors and go home again. They come back *Wednesday* night, and again study bigger and better methods of agriculture, sharpen their hoes, grease their tractors, and get up and go home. They do this week in and week out, year in and year out...and nobody ever goes out into the fields to gather in the harvest.”

What a sad commentary, and totally contrary to how we see Jesus living *His* life! Turn with me to Matthew chapter 9, as we read together verses 9 through 13.

“As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. ‘Follow me,’ he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and ‘sinners’ came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and “sinners”?’ On hearing this, Jesus said, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”’”

Oh, I’m so glad Jesus cares for sinners, aren’t you? I’m so grateful that He *sought* me and didn’t wait for me to get “*good enough*” to come to Him! I never would have! We can love only because He *first* loved us! We were dead in our trespasses and sins...and He rescued us! Now, what comes to mind when you think of the word “dead”? Smelly, worthless, unable to help themselves, without self-motivation, and unappealing are a few that come to *my* mind...and “dead in sin” makes it even worse. Sin offends us, *and* God! Yet that didn’t stop God from sending the best He had and seeking out just those kinds of people. And He asks us to do the same.

There is something wrong in our society when people are leaving the church to find God. But if that's true, we can't wait for them to come to us; we need to go to **them!** People should be able to look at the way we live and begin to understand what the gospel is about. Jesus wants us to see that the neighbor next door or the person sitting next to us on a plane or in a classroom is not an **interruption** to our schedule. They **are scheduled** by divine appointment. Jesus wants us to see their needs, their loneliness, their longings, and their desperation...and reach out in His name, as He would if He were here.

Your cry to God of, "You want me to go where? And do WHAT?" may include things that make you uncomfortable. Maybe you'll experience the judgment of others as you "eat with tax collector and sinners". We may spot you having coffee with a prostitute or, **gasp**, with a pastor from *another denomination*, as you talk and pray about how to join forces in reaching out. Do you have what it takes to walk as Jesus walked...even if it means raised eyebrows behind your back?

Maybe He'll lead you to the bedside of someone in extreme pain; to share your testimony even though it brings up unpleasant memories...or something else that makes **you** very uncomfortable. Beethoven was a man not known for social grace. Because of his deafness, he found conversation difficult and humiliating. Yet when he heard of the death of a friend's son, Beethoven hurried to the house, overcome with grief. He had no words of comfort to offer, but he found a piano in the room. For the next half hour, he played that piano, pouring out his emotions in the most eloquent way he could. When he finished playing, he simply left. The friend later remarked that no one else's visit had meant so much. You see, you don't always need to know the exact words to say.

Where is God sending you? To the slums...or next door? To drive the neighbor's kids to school when mom is sick? To help with the dishes and laundry when the husband is in bed with a bad back? When you **live your faith** through Christ-like actions, you *are earning the right to be heard*. God uses those relationship builders to open doors to peoples' hearts. Then, the next time there's a special activity at your church and you invite the neighbor...the soil has been tilled and his heart softened. Or maybe yours will be the first name that comes to the mind of the social outcast, when life seems unbearable. Then again, maybe you, *personally*, will never see the results. But the next Christian who lives out their faith will carry on the work God began through you!

I heard recently of a business owner who, as a "seeker", had employed scores of Christians in his company. He watched them like a hawk. "You know," he said, "I was naturally drawn to God by observing Christian workers who were conscientious, kind, thorough and aggressive on the job. But I'll tell you what **really** impressed me. One day

a guy who I knew to be a brand new Christian asked if he could see me after work. I agreed to meet with him, but later in the day I started to worry that this young religious zealot might be coming to try to “convert” me, too!”

“I was surprised when he came in my office with his head hanging low and said to me, ‘Sir, I’ll only take a few minutes, but I’m here to ask your forgiveness. Over the years I’ve worked for you, I’ve done what a lot of other employees do, like borrowing a few company products here and there. Besides taking some extra supplies, I’ve abused telephone privileges...and I’ve cheated the time clock now and then. But I became a Christian a few months ago and *it’s real*. In obedience to God, I want to make amends to you and the company for the wrongs I’ve done. So could we figure out a way to do that? If you have to fire me for what I’ve done, I’ll understand. I deserve it. Or, if you want to reduce my pay, reduce it however you think is appropriate. I can work overtime too; I just want to make things right with God and between us.’”

Well they worked things out, and the business owner said that this conversation made a *deeper spiritual impact on him* than anything else ever had! It was the single most impressive demonstration of *true Christianity* he had ever witnessed.

I’ve always wanted to be a doctor...but unfortunately, could never make it through Biology! Yet God has called *each one of us* to have a part in leading others to *true* and *lasting* healing found in the Great Physician! He just requires obedience, not a high I.Q. And let me tell you, nothing is more exciting than making a real difference...not just with peoples’ bodies but with their *eternal souls*! Walk and work along side Him...to witness His incredible healing power!



Ministry

3. Read Luke 4:18-19. What commands do we see Jesus fulfilling in these verses?

What kinds of bondage do you find people in?

4. Read Matthew 28:19, 20. What limits does God set on places we should not go?

What are your specific commands? How can you fulfill them in your life situation?

5. Do you feel the Holy Spirit assigning you a mission you feel neither willing nor qualified to fulfill?



Evangelism

6. Talk about the spiritually “sick” you have been praying for and sharing your testimony with. Has God opened doors of opportunity? Have you walked through them?
7. If anyone in your group hasn’t had the opportunity to share their testimony, do so now.



Worship

8. Read Psalm 98 as you rejoice in His right hand and holy arm, that is working salvation for Him!
9. Pray for each other as you walk in obedience to God this week...*wherever* that may lead!