



Do you know that if you were to count the number of steps you will take through your life, on average you will travel about 115,000 miles in a lifetime? That is like walking around the world about 4 times! The question is, of course, will you use your steps wisely? This morning I want you to consider this question. *If the distance across the average room is 20 feet (about 20 steps) and you knew that by walking across that room you could change a person's forever, would you do it?*

Let me tell you where this idea came from. A while ago, a fairly well-known Christian pastor/author was having lunch in the Southern States. There were people from various races, ages, professions and religions. During a chat around the table, a large African-American man, whose name was clearly Muslim, turned to him and said, "I love your books." The Pastor almost looked behind himself to see who the man was talking to and asked, "Are you talking to me?" Grinning, the man smiled and said, "Let's talk later."

They met later and the man told a fantastic story. He said he had been a Muslim most of his life and being a Muslim in the Southern States, working in a business had been hard, leaving him often feeling uncomfortable. When he had to go to cocktail parties and similar events he felt like a fish out of water. He would go to those events late, graciously accept a drink, but not drink it, and would inevitably wind up standing alone, stuck against a wall or isolated in a corner. He would stay long enough to make his business contacts and then after staying as long as social etiquette required he would discretely slip out.

Then he added, "One night, I was at one party that was full of several small circles of people chatting, none of which I was included, suddenly a man in one of those groups noticed me standing all alone. He slipped out from his group and walked across the room stuck out his hand and introduced himself to me. We talked about our profession, sports, family and business and eventually the conversation came around to the issue of faith and I told him I was a Muslim. He told me he was a Christ follower and he knew little about Muslim faith so I told him we could meet some time over coffee and I would tell him more about it and why I had dedicated my life to it."

So they meet a number of times for coffee and it wasn't long until, despite their different beliefs, a friendship began to develop. For months, they kept meeting and talking about life, just being friends. Then one day, due to some things he was going through, this man said, "I felt totally compelled to pray to my friend's God. I knelt beside my bed, told God everything I was feeling and in the end I gave my life to Jesus Christ." Then he added, "In the space of about a week, that single decision had changed everything in my life." His decision has impacted his family and now, a while later he was a leader in his church and had come across this pastor/author's book. He concluded with a single line, "It happened all because one man made a walk across a room." Think about that. 20 steps; a walk across the room, changed a man's life and his eternity.

If you think about it, that is what Jesus did. He, who had been wrapped in glory, was waited upon by angels, arose and walked across the cosmos in order to stretch out His hand in friendship to mankind, to you and me.

Since I read that story and checked it out with the pastor to whom the story had been told, two questions have been rattling around in my head: (i) What if redirecting a person's forever was as simple as walking across the room? (ii) What if my primary call

is NOT to take responsibility to lead that person to find faith in Christ but instead is to simply be a friend, to care for those God brings into my life and let God be responsible for drawing them toward himself?

Grab your Bibles and turn to Luke 10:27-37. The story setting is one that those listening to Jesus would have quickly related to. It was only 15 miles from Jerusalem and was a dangerous road where thieves often robbed and killed travelers. In the story we just read, Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment is. He says in verse 27 it is, *“To love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbour as yourself.”*

The first non-negotiable is that all of us need to have a personal relationship with God. That is what we tried to teach all September – December. We want to encourage each other to grow in our walk with God and experience with God. Christmas is all about Jesus coming so that He would become ‘Emmanuel,’ which means, ‘God with us.’ But if we read this text correctly, Jesus was saying that, right next to having a relationship with God is having relationships with those around us, our neighbours. Don’t miss this; Jesus almost expresses these two relationships (with God and with our neighbours) in one breath. I say that because I have been brought up to believe that on a scale of importance, having a relationship with God counts for 90%, 8% may count toward friendship with those in the church I attend and maybe, on a good day, my relationship with my neighbour weighs in with a 2% value. There is no question that Jesus clearly taught that #1 importance is having a personal relationship with God (that was the reason why Jesus came into our world) but from this passage don’t miss that our relationship with our neighbour is of huge importance to Jesus as well. It is not enough that we know Jesus but that knowledge needs to be lived out in the lives of those God place in our lives.

That means that we need to ask, *“Who is my Neighbour?”* From this passage I think it is fair to say that your neighbour and my neighbour are those whom God gives us significant contact with; people He places nearest to us. In short, our neighbours are those people whose lives significantly intersect with our lives.

## **I. Strategically Placed**

Let’s view what we said last week. Acts 1:8 says that as believers God expects that our lives will have a similar affect to a rock being thrown into a pond. There should be a rippling effect that flows from our lives that touches our Jerusalem (our Neighbours), our Judea (our Community), our Samaria (our City and our World.) The amazing thing to me is that as you read this verse it ends with a promise; because of Jesus’ power in us; we can actually make a difference in all of these areas.

So today let’s talk about walking across the road and caring for our neighbours. Our neighbours are those people whose lives significantly intersect with our lives. In the story, the neighbour was the Good Samaritan. Why? Even though the preacher saw the need as he looked at this poor bleeding man in the ditch and even though the Seminary professor walked across the road and took note of the predicament, only the Samaritan got involved with the man in need. He was the only one who became a neighbour to the man (using Jesus’ definition) because he became significantly involved in the man’s life, he became his friend. Honestly, that happened because of two factors: (i) due to a chance meeting on the road (I would argue by the design of God) and (ii) because he made a decision to become involved in the life of this man.

About this time of year, 8 years ago, Kathy and I came up to Calgary for a weekend to discover with you if we and you, as a congregation, felt that God wanted us to serve Him together. After God said yes in your hearts and ours, we then had to start looking for a house. We came from Edmonton where the house value was between \$70,000 - 90,000 higher and so we left our first few days of house shopping very discouraged. About a month later, Kathy came down by herself and with a friend/realtor named Claire and spent a number of hard and discouraging days looking at houses. It seemed that the ones in our price range needed too much work and the ones we really liked were beyond our ability to purchase them.

Finally, first thing one morning, Kathy turned to Claire and said, "We started out saying that we believed that God had the exact house we needed but we haven't prayed about it together." So as they pulled up in front of the next house, they stopped and asked God to do a miracle and show them where He wanted Kathy and I to be. They chose that house because a number of weeks before it had dropped by \$20,000 and while it was a little out of our price range she wanted to look at it. She walked in the door (remember they had just been praying in front of that house) and it was not only what we needed, it had a lot of those things we had dreamed we may someday have. Actually, it had just been dropped by another \$20,000 due to it being one of those month long spring snow periods. We love our house.

NOW here is the question: Was it by chance/luck that we found the house or did God have something to do with it? That leads to a second question: Did the neighbours that came with the house become a part of our lives by chance or by the design of God? If they came by the design of God do we have a responsibility to care for them, be their friend and let Jesus be seen through us to them?

But it is not that simple is it? For example, one of our neighbours has a hot tub that sits just a few feet from our Bedroom window. We are on our second bathroom fan because we need to keep it going all night long so that the noise from their hot tub doesn't keep us awake. That is where the placement of God meets the need to choose to be a friend to those people whose lives significantly intersect with our lives because of God's call on our life.

When I study scripture, I see that God has a hand in Joseph and Mary moving to Egypt. In Acts 16:1, Paul does not go to Asia but instead goes to Philippi where a jailer became a believer and became Paul's friend also had God written all over it. I see the Good Samaritan being in the right place at the right time for the man on the side of the road. I read scriptures like Revelation 3:7 where Jesus says to a church at Philippi, "I have opened a great door of opportunity before you that no one can shut (but you.)" I find people like Moses, Ruth, Elijah and Gideon being people at right place at the right time in history and I have to admit that I keep seeing the hand of God overseeing things that we often see as just chance. I also see in every example I have just mentioned, especially with the Samaritan in the story that we need to make a choice on how we will respond in the situations that God places us in.

So here is the question. Where you are working, going to school, the house/apartment you are living in, do you see that God has had a hand in you being there? If that is true, then doesn't it make sense that those neighbours you have (guys in the dorm or in the next apartment or in your work group at the hospital, electrical shop, school staff room, sociology class those people you seem to be easy friends with at the gym or those parents in your kids soccer team) they could be people that God may want you and me to choose to treat as neighbours, people God has called you to

love. God is asking you to walk across the room to be a friend. Take a few ordinary steps that could have extraordinary results in their lives.

## **II. Separately Called**

Here is the issue: you and I run into many people throughout our day. They vary from our neighbour we talk to as we carry out the trash on garbage day, to the person we seem always have fun talking to at the dry cleaners to those colleges at work that we seem to spend our lives with. How do you know when and how to invest your time and who God is calling you to walk across the room to so you can speak into their lives or just be a friend when they need one?

Let's go back to the story in Luke. Look at Luke 10:33. Literally, the words used here say that he was touched to his gut. Somehow, on a deep internal level, the situation that the person on the side of the road was going through moved him to the depth of his heart. Somehow, he felt an inner tug to reach out and help this person who had been hurt even though others thought it wasn't worth their while to get involved.

I came across an important statement the other day that might explain it. *It is Life's greatest moments evolve from simple acts of cooperation with God's mysterious promptings.* Let me give you a couple examples.

A number of years ago when I was working as a blaster on the strip mine, at about 10:30 in the morning the siren went off at work calling us all back to the shop. We found out that one of guys we worked with had backed his truck over the burn where they were dumping rock and the truck had fallen 400 feet killing the driver. Because we had a blast tied in our blast crew couldn't go home. That afternoon, I felt pulled by God to share my faith with another man, named Doug, on the crew while we waited to shoot off our blast. We never talked about it again. 15 years later I found out that Doug had moved to Hinton, started attending a church there and became a Christian. What part I played, I don't know but I do know that I had felt a mysterious prompting on that day that I couldn't shake and to this day I know it was one of those important moments in time. I can also say that I felt called to just sit and talk with one of my older neighbours. I never shared my faith but I felt called to often sit on his porch as he had his evening smoke (because he is a great guy). The result was that as I look back those chats and they are probably why he asked me to do his wife's memorial service in their front living room this spring. I had a chance to care for a friend and speak about Jesus. I also know that I am nudged every time it snows to shovel a different neighbour's walk. Why? I don't know but I will do it because I feel I am supposed to.

As God allows you to see that you are placed in the midst of neighbours and friends choose to be the neighbour God wants you to be. Remember to listen for God nudging His whisper. *Life's greatest moments evolve from simple acts of cooperation with God's mysterious promptings.*

## **III. Set Aside for Friendship**

When I study Jesus' life, I find that He lived out what He believed. We find Him constantly calling different people a friend and then meeting a need in their life, speaking a word of comfort or encouragement and basically just being their friend. If you turn to Mark 12:30, you see Jesus in a different situation making a similar statement. His call to you and I is to give all of ourselves, body, soul and spirit, to loving God. Then He adds that same second line we read in Luke 12:27. The real test of true

faith is that you love those people whose lives significantly intersect with your lives, those He calls your neighbours. Let me make three quick but important applications:

**1. We are called to love our neighbour with no strings attached.**

Now, I hope you know that I believe everyone needs to have Jesus as part of their lives. But if you look at Jesus' command for loving your neighbour and the story of the Good Samaritan, you will see that God asks us to love our neighbour with no strings attached. This passage has the Samaritan involved in 6 different actions in the wounded man's life. He saw him, took pity on him, he bandaged his wounds, he transported him on his donkey, he took him to an Inn and he paid for his care. In every case, he did it because he cared for the man not because he wanted the man to give him anything he needed. Jesus doesn't say love them so that they will become believers. He says to love them. We have all heard preachers say, develop friendships so that you have the right to share your faith. To a point that is true. To be honest to me that sounds like spiritual manipulation. Jesus says here, love your neighbours, get involved in their lives, become a friend. Why? The answer is simple. It is because He loves them, cares about them and their situation. I believe part of the reason he moved you next door or across the hall at work is so that you can be His hands, His heart and His agent through which He can care for them. As you do that, in many cases, they will see Jesus. But understand that His first desire is to care for them. He is their Father as He is your Father; they just haven't gotten to know him yet. That is why He calls us to love them with no strings attached.

One of my good hunting buddies has been a friend for 20 years. I have walked with him through 2 divorces and 2 farms. I have been stuck in mud, snow, and rivers with him and my kids call him Uncle. I have shared my faith with him but he is my friend not a spiritual work project. We are called to love because He first loved us and wants us to love our Neighbours for Him.

**2. Bring Christ Wherever You Go.**

We will talk more about this in a couple weeks time. But let's be honest, some of the guys you work with in the shop, the ladies you meet across the board room table or the soccer field aren't always easy to love. Yet sometimes you hear God nudging you be Christ to them. Treat them with a respect that they may be unable to give you. That is why the verse is worded in such a way that we need to choose to love our neighbour. At times it takes all our strength to love those we have to work with or live next to. But you never know how God can use your obedience to Him.

I still remember unloading a truck of bags of 50 lbs. of explosive and being so angry at one of my co-workers that I threw a 50lb. bag of explosives at him with such vigour that I knocked him out of the truck. The Lord had to do some work in my life concerning that neighbour. As I listen to God's whisper, it was interesting how God made that man a friend. I actually ended up standing up for him at his wedding. For those 'tough' neighbours ask God to help you bring Christ with you as you attempt to be the neighbour God calls you to be.

**3. Look for those times where God wants you to walk across the room.**

Remember the question we asked as we began: *If you knew that by walking across that room you could change a person's forever, would you do it?*

Remember the comment the Muslim man made. He said his life was changed and, "It happened all because one man made a walk across a room."

Luke 10:30, *"In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead."*

This week look for:

1. Where God has strategically placed you? Who are those He has called you to love as your neighbours?
2. Listen for how God will separately call you. As you do, you can cooperate where He needs you to make a difference.
3. Understand that you have been set aside for Friendship. Jesus wants you to care for your neighbours on His behalf and only He knows how that will impact their lives and yours.

For information about Brentview Baptist Church and its ministries,  
Please contact the church office at:  
3512 Charleswood Dr NW, Calgary, AB T2L 2C3  
Phone: 403-284-4691 Fax: 403-284-0132 email: [mail@brentviewbaptist.com](mailto:mail@brentviewbaptist.com)  
Website: [www.brentviewbaptist.com](http://www.brentviewbaptist.com)