

Comfort Zone Visitation (excerpt)

INSIDE WALKING

FLEXIBILITY and FOCUS.

Those are two important key words in Prayer Walking. Obeying our Great Commission in Matthew 28, in any form, requires we adapt our methods (not message) while keeping our eyes squarely in focus on our message and mission. Each day of our lives gives us personal evidence how deeply our sight of the goal and its challenges prepare us for victory.

-1 From Sign to Shed

Prayer Walking can be adapted to your local needs in many ways. Though Prayer Walking is most often in street and sidewalk locations, it can also be very effective inside homes and churches. The following you'll soon see is referred to as our "inside/outside" prayer walk.

I'm still trying to fathom the precious unique time we had prayer walking not long ago in Greenfield. 'Course God promises to bless us like that, doesn't He?

Two of the many key points of prayer walking I've learned are:

1. You have to get out of your comfort zone. Now, your comfort zone might be walls or ritual, but God will lovingly show you if you ask.
2. We pray far more effectively for things we can see and touch. In Greenfield it's often dysfunctional families and the deep growl of a child's empty belly. (Yes, even in nearby Greenfield).

This week our minister led us to prayer walk inside and outside our church. Little did we realize a depth to this Prayer Walking, of which we had no inkling of, a month ago.

Our little Greenfield church worships in a building with a past that is far short of the gleaming beacon of God's truth, compassion, and unity that we'd be proud of. House cleaning, in God's spiritual house, doesn't only mean dusting and running the vacuum. It takes soul-cleaning in a way that sometimes only prayer walking can do.

During our wrap-up time that never-to-be-forgotten Sunday, one person said they felt called of God to really help at Greenfield. A couple others began talking about regular chili suppers served up with lots of love and listening. I think the title was "Chili, Chips, 'n Chat".

Another said they felt God was giving us just one more chance to live truly "Christ-Like".

If I may, I want to share with you what happened in that room-by-room prayer walk by each of us, that has changed my heart (and my own selfish plans) so that I can be one of God's tools to brighten our neighborhood's Soul's Safe Harbor.

-2 Files, Fragments, 'n Foyer

"What'll happen next? This Prayer Walking is new to me, but it's fun," I silently told myself. We began our church inside/outside prayer walk that never-to-be-forgotten Sunday.

Our small Greenfield group crowded into the church office with the gas furnace in the corner faithfully cycled on and off as needed. We each in turn spoke to God with our whole hearts about our desire to learn how to help Him make our precious church grow into a bright lighthouse of His power

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and peace.

Touching the file cabinet containing records of long-ago members and visitors, we got a sense they were calling out to us. See, that's what Prayer Walking does to you. When you see and touch a harvest of souls the Lord puts before you, a prayer connection is created that reaches farther in your own soul, like never before.

It's times like this I'm reminded of the Lord's unusual questions in Mark 8:19+. He kept asking about the leftover fragments. There in that small seldom-used Greenfield church office my heart asked about the leftover souls this church has cast away over the years. Can we find them? Will the Lord on judgment day set their faces before us and ask, "I loved them with my life. Why didn't you?" Wow. Some parts of this Prayer Walking sure takes me out of my comfort zone.

We walk out into the church foyer being very careful not to talk and break our focus. Now is no time for idle verbiage.

Each of our prayer walkers visualized hoped-for visitors coming through the church front door; maybe stressed, frightened, hungry, with needs that would stagger our minds. Out loud, in turn each of us reverently asked God for a spirit that would joyfully answer the visitor's heart question, "Will you love and listen to me, 'Just as I Am'?" Whether my shoes are muddy and missing laces or my hair messy, will you still count my soul worth the harvest?"

Prayer Walking reminds our hearts that just passing out bulletins with a handshake hardly scratches the surface of a Godly church welcome. All throughout the service a part of our thoughts should be prayer for that soul that has just honored us by walking into our foyer.

If you're not sure what God's plan is for you, start with His leftovers...

-3 One Size Fits All

And then it happened! No sooner had our little group entered our beloved Greenfield sanctuary on our inside/outside prayer walk than one of us said, "I'm gonna walk while I pray." It turned out that several of us did just that. With my eyes closed I could hear the audible prayer sounds circling the pews like God's people circling Jericho just before God's promised victory.

It certainly wasn't within my comfort zone. Mom taught me that when someone is praying you stand still out of respect. With my cane resting against my knee, I tested the padding in the front pew, till it was my turn. Several times I heard petitions for God to bind the evil spirits in and around this place; those brought in by past attendees with disgruntled attitudes wanting harm and discord to this Greenfield lighthouse of God's peace and provision. There were certainly lingerings of Satan's influences and ugly accusations.

Whatever our thoughts about those sanctuary moments that special Sunday, it was crystal clear we meant business for God in 'cleaning house' by the power of Calvary's Blood. Want to know how to send Satan packin' pronto? The Greenfield Prayer Walkers will show you.

I was about to ask myself, what I would give up to have even just one unsaved soul sitting beside me really learning about Heaven's love in no nonsense terms. What would I give up see that troubled heart go forward grab pastor and not let go till the sin account was settled in their heart forever?

As I rose to pray (and walk a little) I spied something very small and plain. It stretched from one wall to the other, except for a couple steps. While the altar in your church may be padded and

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fancy, ours is about as plain as you can get. It's just the right height that a small child can pray and be prayed with, possibly about a home place always full of bickering and a refrigerator about as empty as his belly.

You could probably call our altar a 'one-size-fits-all' in that it's a perfect height for me to kneel and commit my energy and goals to Him, beginning with bone-deep prayer walking. See, I'm learning that Prayer Walking works only with a full consistent commitment.

-4 Pie-anner 'n Pulpit

We got one! Bet you don't! Actually you can learn about them by Prayer Walking, maybe on a rainy or cold day, or handy-capped folks that join in the 'joy parade'.

Our pie-anner looks a lot like some old pianos and keyboards. You know, with a seat full of spirit liftin' songs that make you tap your toes. In a prayer walk you can touch that pie-anner bench praying for it to be used to its fullest before the soon return of our Lord.

I envision on our pie-anner bench a little girl sitting next to a silver-haired person with fingers moving like lightning that angels would have trouble keeping up with. My prayer walk shows the little girl turning the pages with as much conviction as those lightning fingers. The pie-anner player reminds all who are watching, we are to be discipling in all things... NOW THAT's a page turner!

Boy! I love this Prayer Walking; whether it's 'inside/outside' or 'daytime down the street'!

I find it interesting our Greenfield church pulpit is only inches from the altar rail. That's good for several reasons. With your prayer walking team, touch the church pulpit asking God to always purify the words spoke at its center. Inside/Outside Prayer Walking is directed toward visitors and their spiritual growth in these troubled times. But Greenfield (and probably you to) see the pastor's courage, leadership, spirituality (can I say fire?), and downright burden. A burden for those that God allows him to speak to, is for-certain bedrock to the growth of our congregation.

It's important that we see ourselves united; consistently holding up the pastor's arms in the terrible war he certainly has with Satan. Satan works hard on you and I. With little girl logic we can certainly assume that Satan works double hard on our pastor.

Now a question. How healthy will my congregation be, if my pastor is no more dedicated than I often am?

I was about to explode till I could tell others about our Prayer Walking and Pi-anner bench. Again I'm reminded of the two keys to power Prayer Walking; (1) stay focused as you walk, and (2) be flexible as God shows you how to best implement your PW harvest field journey.

-5 War an' Peas

Wars can be settled by Prayer Walking... really! At least some of them in my life; maybe even in your life too.

For years I've had a war between verses in my heart. One verse argues, "If you don't work, you don't eat." Living and worshiping in low income neighborhoods I've grown a strong distaste for people that repeatedly want free food almost with cold expectation. If you think you'll get a sincere thank you in word or deed, you're dreaming.

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My mind easily went to ugly food pantry experiences in other churches, which were not managed with fervent prayer for God's leading.

Our small Greenfield Prayer Walking team quietly entered the dining/activity room. We touched and stared at the tables, sink, and stove asking God to show us how to use these things with the food in the cupboard for His Kingdom.

The Inside/Outside Prayer Walking on that never-forgotten Sunday gave me a deeper attitude for Paul's quotation of the Old Testament guideline for our enemy. It simply says, "Feed him." We're not to just feed the children, or feed a hungry neighbor. My prayer walking that day reminded me the food on our shelves and table are more of God's gifts to us; those peas 'n potatoes are actually His property, not mine.

The guideline goes on to explain the result of me feeding my enemy with God's food. It will heap coals of fire upon his head. (I'm not sure, but I think this refers to a ritual of a repentant person carrying a tray of hot coals on his head.)

As our economy worsens and unemployment increases, our church will be faced even more so with growing hunger for food and thirst for answers to prayers of "Why me God?"

How will I share God's gifts He has handed to me... potatoes, peas, and prayer walking?

It really fascinates me; this prayer walking process. We're enabled to better pray for our harvest field we see before us, as we walk. But I wind up seeing a whole lot of searching and meditating to be done within myself.

(Verses to be referenced: 2nd Thes. 3:10, Prov. 25:21, Rom 12:20.)

-6 Our Missionary Garden

It's out of the ordinary, for sure; this Prayer Walking. Maybe that's what adds to getting my blood pumping to a faster drummer; you don't know exactly how the Lord is going to lead and bless your efforts, or even his timetable.

The first day job mankind had was tending a garden. It makes you feel important to know you've planted a seed and then watch as God makes it grow, getting stronger each day. As you learn first hand the joy of Prayer Walking, take the path through a garden; a missionary garden.

We at Greenfield have what some might call a missionary garden. We plant the seeds with prayer to grow missionaries in each of the rooms. Missionary gardens go far beyond the usual carrots, onions, potatoes and tomatoes. Our garden harvest is composed of Squirmers, Primaries, Juniors, Tweens, and Teens.

What an awesome responsibility to prayer walk through each garden patch with walls, and visualize the children studying the verses and pictures on the walls. We touch the teacher's chair and ask God to keep the teacher strong and true to his/her call. So crucial is our prayer walking through each patch, I ask myself why I can't get to church a bit earlier and prayer walk each patch with walls every Sunday; Heaven knows it'll pay rich dividends in our harvest.

One of Missionary Garden patches is quite unique; the Squirmers. Their every waking moment is filled with arms and legs waving and squirming with energy that wants to get used to grow bigger and stronger. I challenge my prayer walking moments to put inside me the Great Commission energy that's just itching to get out and share without fear, the news of all of God's goodness even just for me.

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One of the prayer walking things you're allowed to do at Greenfield is to sing unto the Lord. I think my gruff voice sounds better in one of the garden patches. But a caution is in order here. You may find others of your prayer walking team will start singing along with you. 'Course, singing among missionary seeds have a way of drawing Heaven's sunshine, even in the hearts of little ones who'll start missionary gardens everywhere there are hearts who hunger for God's goodness.

-7 Ain't Got No Horns!

Before we get to the parade, we need to stop in the shed. Prayer Walking at Greenfield includes all the rooms 'n sheds... well, almost all.

Our prayer team walked around our shed which is actually a finished two car garage, with microwave sitting beside the barbecue, and lots of tables and chairs. Now maybe your church shed isn't very important in the Great Commission to you. But see, here in Greenfield we know of folks that wouldn't be caught dead in church; any church. Well, for folks and families that aren't fancy we've got just the place. We're so thankful for God's provisions. Our altar rail is one-size-fits-all and so is our church and shed.

Boy, I sure told God I'm hankering to get some youth in that shed with some old junk computers to tear apart while putting together God's peace plan that exactly fits young troubled hearts. WOW! This on-site (on sight) praying is really revvin' my gospel motor! Give it a try... you'll never be the same; opening your heart to God sitting on a lawnmower.

Now for this, you almost need to visualize with one eye closed.

Our Inside/Outside Prayer Walking that never-to-be-forgotten Sunday ended with a parade of sorts. Picture a 'meaning-business' prayer team outside walking around a church building in broad daylight. A couple were singing softly while others were praying. Me? I walked and prayed just like I was following Joshua and God's Treasure Chest (ark). My fingers dragged along every foot of the block wall like a child tracing a passing fence. Isn't it interesting that God gives us times to obey, to be quiet and watch Him grant blessings, and other times to blow a jubilee horn praising Him?

I'm sure that parade of God's people didn't know what God was going to do to those Jericho walls, but they were outside their comfort zone armed with a victory promise and Heaven's guarantee to seal the deal.

We had no horns for our parade and yes we were outside our comfort zone, at Greenfield. Oh how I'd have loved to be looking over the shoulder of the next door neighbors as they wondered what our little church was doing.

Go like you believe Jesus is returning tomorrow...

I'll leave you with two Prayer Walking guarantees straight from the breath of God:

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Ps 126:5,6.