

Writing Sample #4 - Public Speaking

Walk to Emmaus Fourth Day Talk

When asked to give my fourth day talk, I agreed...reluctantly as I'm sure many do. I say reluctantly because of my initial thoughts, "What am I going to say?" "Will what I have to convey be of any significance to anyone there?" "I don't have any exceptional before/after experiences to share."

It's a little intimidating. I've been attending these gatherings well before my walk and I've heard many testimonials from a wide range of folks that went on... "The Walk" and how it changed their outlooks, actions and even their lives.

"The Walk" was a most powerful 72 hour journey that forever instilled in me feelings of belonging, brotherhood and acceptance. A time where I learned, laughed and cried. But what was it about for me, really? What did I come away with and what do I plan to do?

I didn't come away with a lightning strike moment, a revelatory flash of insight, a single defining moment that would forever change or otherwise alter the course of my life. No, for me it was not life changing... It was a soul cleansing.

My time in Glen Rose can be summed up like this: it's like a traveler going from place to place on an airplane. Wherever he goes, his bags go with him. When he lands, he makes his way to baggage claim. After what seems like an eternity, here come the bags - being spit out on the carousel one by one like candies from an old time Pez dispenser. No matter where his travels take him, the bags always show up. And, in the off chance they get lost, the airlines make sure the bags eventually show up. Well, my sins were like those bags. Every where I went, there I was...baggage in hand. I felt like it was an invisible burden I carried wherever I went. I wasn't able to forge ahead in my life or minister to others because I couldn't get all the junk in my trunk through the doorway of opportunity that God put in front of me. Because of the time invested on my walk, I've come to realize that I can abandon those burdens at the baggage claim and leave the airport with no forwarding address. Now I'm free to "walk" through any door, "walk" on any path, "walk" on any road and "walk" to any place God wants me to go! I can serve without the guilt of sin, I can speak without being in slavery and I can have peace without persecution. I am a new creation! I have been made clean!

I could be free from my bags, free from my past and move forward to be the person God has called me to be. It was like the feeling I got when I was standing on the hilltop under the large cross in Glen Rose. I could see from horizon to horizon. It felt like being a bird with no boundaries. Free to soar wherever the wild wind turned.

So, now that I have obtained this new freedom of spirit, what does the fourth day look like for me? Is it a list of to-do's that I mark off, one at a time? Is it a running total of people I've won to the cause of Christ? Well, for me, the fourth day is not a time or a place...it's more of a state of mind.

The cause or case for Christ should not just be measured in the number of committees I'm on, boards reported to or how many tasks I can say, "yes" to. It should more importantly be measured by...heart. It is by the acts of my heart, not by my "busy-ness" of self that I will be judged. So then, what can I do? What I can do, can be summed up in the words of Peter the apostle in Acts 3:6, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have, I give to you."

And that means what, exactly?

I'll share something with you. What I have in Christ, no mountain of money could ever buy. What do I have that's worth sharing? That which was given to me - the heart of Christ. Mark 9:41 says, "Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward." I tell you what, I want to give that water to as many people as I can.

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Writing Sample #4 - Public Speaking (cont)

One of the ways I currently accomplish this, is by preparing the Communion elements and schedule volunteers to serve at my church. Many times when needing help at the last minute, I have been seen lurking at church, just on the other side of doors or around corners, scanning the savannah of the sanctuary to eye my unsuspecting prey. When it's least expected, I pounce at precisely the opportune moment and address my quarry, "Would you mind volunteering as a Communion server this morning?" I would do what I could to coax or beg rather than do it myself. Why was that? Because, I felt unworthy and unclean.

Since my walk, I still prefer to have other people do the serving. But since I have abandoned my bags, I know that I am a clean vessel and can come before the throne and serve the elements with no guilt or shame.

These next words have a special meaning to me, "...whatever you do to the least of these..." Who actually qualifies as the "least of these?" Is it the poor, the incarcerated and the sick? The answer is, yes. But I think it also and, more keenly, can refer to the poor in spirit. It is anyone who is having a bad day, feels alone, has been treated unfairly and feels abandoned. It is anyone who has ever cried out, "Why is this happening?" It is my coworker. It is the cashier at the grocery store. It is the waiter at my table. It is my neighbor and could even be my pastor.

In my fourth day, I would like to be a light to those I encounter, a Johnny Appleseed of sorts. I am not comfortable with being the evangelizer or someone who brings in the harvest. What I can do, is call someone by name who wears a name tag. I can smile at someone and try to recognize them as a person. When someone is addressed by their name, value is bestowed on them. I like the value I get from being called "son." A son of the one who adopted me into his family and gave me worth. If I can do a mustard seed's worth of that in someone else's life, then I've continued in my fourth day.

Many of the little things we do in daily life seem so insignificant and don't seem to matter. Take for example the mother who fixed the lunch of the fish and barley loaves for her son. That lowly meal was turned into an incomprehensible bounty that fed five thousand. Did she ever think that her small effort would matter that much in the kingdom of God? It's the small things done for one another and strangers that add value to the soul and the kingdom. This is my call, my "state of mind" for my fourth day...love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and also, 'Love your neighbor as yourself. Practically speaking: it is to smile; to be kind; to take initiative and to be faithful in the little things. While a mole hill is not impressive in and of itself, if I pile the dirt from enough mole hills together, I've made a mountain. The goal is not for me to do a great thing, but to do everyday things greatly for God.

The fourth day is kind of like the Twilight Zone for me...This journey leads to the complicated tip of relationships: we're on a walk through the land of the different, the bizarre, the unexplainable...Go as far as you like on this road. Its limits are only those of that we put on ourselves. Ladies and Gentlemen, we're walking on the wondrous road to Emmaus. Next stop....The Fourth Day."