

## I. Introduction

- A. Yes, today is the big reveal of our theme for 2024 here at Pathway. It's a good day to be here.
- B. Over these last months, I've been praying and asking God to give us something that will really mean something powerful for our community, for our church, and for you.
- C. Let me set up our theme with Scripture, and then we'll get right into it:
  - 1. *"So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus."* (Matthew 14:29)
- D. The disciples are on a boat, out at sea. Early morning, they see the last thing they expect... they see a man walking to them on the water. The disciples freak out. "It's a ghost! It's a ghost!" they say (Matt 14:26).
- E. But it's Jesus, and he says, "Don't worry, guys. It's me, Jesus!"
  - 1. And there he is, walking on water to them.
  - 2. And Peter says—Peter, my favorite disciple, the one who has a problem with impulse control—Peter says, Lord if it is You, command me to come to you on the water. And Jesus says, "Come."
- F. That's when you get this verse.
- G. Blustery winds, choppy seas, moonless night, no flashlights.
- H. What did it feel like to step out of that boat?
- I. His friends look at him like he's crazy. Peter hitches up his cloak. One leg goes overboard. His foot touches the icy waters. The water pushes back. Whoa! This is awesome!
- J. He tests it; it holds his weight. Peter lifts out his other leg and plants his second foot on *aqua firma*. Imagine the rise and fall of the waves, the howling winds. He's not walking on some glassy pond... there's a storm at sea! Rising and falling and tilting and swirling. What a wild ride! Peter walked on water!

## II. The Series

- A. Okay, so here's the series for the year: GIANT STEPS
- B. I think God has something better for us than we are currently experiencing. He wants us to step into that.
- C. That is going to be a giant step.
  - 1. There are things in our lives that have been holding us back. We've been held in a kind of prison, a trap. God wants us to step out of all that.
  - 2. There are blessings and resources and privileges and honors that he has given us. God wants us to step into all of that.
  - 3. There is a mission and purpose that goes high above and beyond anything we can ask or thing. God wants us to step up to those things.
- D. A year from now, I don't want us to be in the same mud we are stuck in today. I don't want any of us to still be having the same struggles, the same addictions, the same complacency, the same sin patterns that we have today.
- E. In other words, get unstuck and get moving.
- F. When Peter stepped out of that boat, that was life-defining for him.
- G. He was the only one with the guts to do it.
- H. Peter was active. The other disciples were passive. They sat in their boat like armchair quarterbacks... sportscasters analyzing Peter's game from their Lazyboy recliners.
  - 1. "Well, Thomas, I think he looks a little shaky there..."
  - 2. "I agree, Bartholomew. Too much weight on his back foot..."
  - 3. They could analyze Peter. They could criticize Peter. They could make fun of Peter.
  - 4. But none of them could ever say that they walked on water.
  - 5. Because none of them took the giant step out of the safety of the boat.
    - a) None of them ever tested the limits of what God could do.
    - b) None of them ever risked their necks on the God they *said* was faithful, but really didn't know for sure.
  - 6. When Jesus, standing on that sea, said, "Come," only one man went.
  - 7. Giant Steps.
- I. The picture I have in my mind is Jesus saying, "Come," and four thousand people at Pathway Church getting up and taking a Giant Step out of the boat.
- J. I am believing God for that, for you.

## III. Giant Steps

- A. So over the course of this year, I'm going to be preaching on Giant Steps that you can take.
- B. Let me get specific. Giant steps you can take for what?
- C. I will be teaching and preaching on the steps you can take so that FUTURE YOU can experience John 10:10.
- D. What's in John 10:10, you ask?
- E. John 10:10 reports these words of Jesus:
  - 1. *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10)
- F. I am preaching on GIANT STEPS so that FUTURE YOU can literally experience the promise of John 10:10.
- G. Which is the promise of THE ABUNDANT LIFE.
- H. Would anybody here like to live The Abundant Life? Would anybody here like FUTURE YOU to experience The Abundant Life that Jesus talked about? Do you want that?
- I. I do. My hand is up.
- J. I want The Abundant Life, the God-blessed Life, the kind of prosperity inside and out that Jesus literally promised.
- K. I am going to assume that you want that too, at least somewhere deep inside.

- L. So that's the promise and the purpose of Giant Steps.
- M. Let's keep going.
- N. You will notice that John 10:10 has 3 parts.
  - 1. In the first part, Jesus talks about a thief that comes to steal, kill, and destroy.
    - a) Over the course of this year, I'm going to talk about that thief. When I talk about that thief, the sermon is going to be called:
    - b) **STEP OUT.**
  - 2. In the second part, Jesus says I have come that they may have life.
    - a) Being a possessor of that life. When I talk about being a possessor of that life, the sermon is going to be called:
    - b) **STEP INTO.**
  - 3. Then, in the third part, Jesus talks about having that life more abundantly.
    - a) When I talk about having that life more abundantly, the sermon is going to be called:
    - b) **STEP UP.**
- O. So, Step Out, Step Into, Step Up. Three kinds of messages this year.
- P. So that's the set up for the year. So let's keep going.
- IV. Let's Go Deeper
  - A. What does it mean to step out, step into, and step up?
    - 1. **STEP OUT... of a flesh dominated wilderness.**
    - 2. **STEP INTO... spirit-led wholeness.**
    - 3. **STEP UP... to a transcendent mission.**
- V. Now, let's go even deeper:
  - A. **STEP OUT...**
    - 1. **"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy."**
    - 2. Who is this thief?
      - a) **YOUR PAST:** For so many of us, the thief is something bad that happened to us in our past. This is the painful and sad reality of the world. Trauma. Abuse. Loss. Abandonment. Suffering. Victimhood. Something defining happened at a time when you were most vulnerable, and it has robbed you of life and joy for decades. It's not your fault. It's time to step out of that prison.
        - (1) This is one of the biggest reasons that a series like this has been on my heart. Just hearing so many stories of a brutal childhood and a traumatized past.
        - (2) It's like there's a black hole that's opened in our hearts, from the past, and so much of our present and future gets sucked into it.
        - (3) For many, the traumas of your past are the thief that steals, kills, and destroys.
        - (4) So how does that play out?
      - b) That plays out in **SPIRITUAL WARFARE**, because the devil is an opportunist. He finds a wound and rubs it raw. He makes you think that being broke and addicted and broken is normal.
      - c) It plays out in your own dark side, which the Bible calls the **FLESH**. This is your Inner Bully, Inner Brat, Inner Victim, and Inner Thug. Your Inner Control Freak, Con Artist, Perfectionist and Pervert.
      - d) That messed up past can also play out in **HYPER-MORALITY** also known as **LEGALISM**. For you, the thief is a kind of religion that loads you with hyper-biblical rules, smothers you with guilt and shame, and traps you into frustrating cycles of performance. Jesus was actually looking **LEGALISTS** in the eyes when he talked about this thief.
      - e) For a lot of people, your messed up past has convinced you there is no God, so you've been shoved into **SECULARISM**. This robs you of a supernatural worldview, it erases eternal values, laughs at living for heavenly reward, and flattens you into a space-time-matter-energy existence with every bit of transcendent beauty squeezed out of it.
      - f) Ultimately, the thief is your **BROKENNESS**. It is your addiction, dysfunction, depression, and despair. The thief is your self-harming tendencies, and all those times you've come to the end of your rope and decided that life's hardly worth living.
        - (1) The thief is every wet blanket the powers of darkness throw over your emotions.
        - (2) Jesus has huge compassion for you. God has a special place in his heart for your wounded spirit.
    - 3. So, over this coming season, I will be preaching specifically to give you God's Wisdom on how to...
    - 4. **STEP OUT of...**
      - a) **Self-Deception**
      - b) **Self-Harm (Cutting, Body Dysphoria, etc.)**
      - c) **Substance Abuse, Gambling**
      - d) **Porn**
      - e) **Cohabitation**
      - f) **An Affair, Pre-marital Sex**
      - g) **Fearfulness**
      - h) **Anxiety**
      - i) **Condemnation, Guilt, Shame**
      - j) **Anger Issues**
      - k) **A Traumatic Past**

**1) Gender Dysphoria, SSA, Sexual Brokenness**

5. Along with those messages, any ministries or groups or resources that our church can provide, we will point you to, and invite you into. We want to see massive healing and deliverance from the power of that thief, who is nothing but a liar.
6. Wouldn't stepping out of these things be a giant step in the right direction for a whole lot of people?
7. Because, I'm telling you that if you're in that boat, it's sinking. It's better to go with Jesus out onto the water, than hunker down in a boat that's going down.
8. Step Out.

**B. STEP INTO...****1. I have come that they might have life...**

2. The thief comes to steal, Jesus comes to give.
3. The thief comes so that the thief can have. Jesus comes so that you can have.
4. The thing you can have is life.
5. At a wedding, when people raise a cup and toast the bride and groom, the English speaking world says, "Cheers." Italians and languages like that says, "Salute."
6. In Hebrew, they say, "L'chaim" which means, "To life!" "Chaim" means life. It means real life. The good life. The life worth living.
7. When Jesus talks about you having life, that's what he means. That's his offer.
8. He came for this. He taught for this. He died on the cross for this. He rose again for this. He offers this.
9. Not a life of frustration. Not a life of regrets. Not a life of despair.
10. But a life of wholeness, satisfaction, love, peace, and joy.
11. So these are the GIANT STEP sermons I'll be preaching this year about how to STEP INTO the life Jesus came to give you.

**12. STEP INTO...**

- a) **Attachment & Bonding**
- b) **Healing**
- c) **Therapy, Community, Groups**
- d) **Shedding Negative Labels**
- e) **Claiming Life-Giving Labels**
- f) **Meaningful Singleness and Dating**
- g) **A Healthy Marriage**
- h) **Working Out, Losing Weight**
- i) **Daily Devotions**
- j) **Rededication To Christ**
- k) **Repentance, Consecration**
- l) **Taking Dominion**
13. Same deal here: Any ministries or groups or resources that our church can provide, we will point you to, and invite you into. We're trying to coordinate everything.
14. Now, stay with me, because I want to make an important point, and then I'll give some of how this is going to work.
15. Look at these two lists side by side.
16. Because this is the seduction that we have to understand and deal with.
  - a) **List One: Step OUT sermon list**
  - b) **List Two: Step IN sermon list**
17. Question: If you are in your 20s, which way of life is more exciting, list 1 or list 2?
18. Answer: List 1 feels exciting. Actually, List 2 feels boring. It's very conventional, very old-fashioned, and very square. There's the struggle right there. The devil's got our culture brainwashed into thinking all the cool people are doing list one.
19. Now, a different question. Which list will load a person's life with regrets, list 1 or list 2?
20. List 1. All the regrets of life are there. List one is death. List two is life. Step out of list 1, step into list 2. Welcome to Pathway.
21. I want you to know that we've already made the decision that we are not going to publish the schedule of when we'll preach on what.
22. I just don't want you picking and choosing. Don't skip church, and you won't miss anything. Besides, every single message—even if you're not struggling with that thing—is going to give you the kind of wisdom that you need to not only put power and grace into your own life, but it will help you know what to say to your own children, or grandchildren, or friends, when they struggle with this stuff, and they want to know why you don't go there.
23. So, we're not going to advertise the schedule.
24. Also, based on some conversations with our leadership team, I'm going to weave together messages from these two lists, step out of this, and step into that.
25. So, we'll see how that goes. We're figuring it out as we go.
26. Sound like a plan?
27. Do you think God can use this? Do you think we might be making some big differences in people's lives?
28. Great.
29. Actually, we haven't gotten to the really good stuff yet.

## C. STEP UP...

## 1. "...and that they may have it more abundantly."

2. Most of us expect way too little from God.
3. Words cannot adequately describe the possibilities of our lives if we put them in the hands of Jesus. Your potential for your life is exceedingly abundantly more than you could ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).
4. Jesus came so you could enjoy fullness of life in this age, and an even fuller life in the age to come.
5. On the day you were saved, God had a picture of you in mind, of what you could become if you keep faith with him and walk with Jesus day by day. That picture is glorious. In that picture, your life matters. Your life makes a huge difference for time and eternity.
6. And the main difference is that other people will be in heaven because of your influence.
  - a) *"Those who are wise [a Giant Steps person] shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness [help people get saved] Like the stars forever and ever [everlasting reward]."* (Daniel 12:3)
  - b) *"After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you!"* (1 Thessalonians 2:19)
    - (1) Christian, Jesus calls you to take the stand as his witness, to give evidence to his salvation and grace.
    - (2) He calls you his ambassador to represent him here, in this alien world.
7. That is your purpose. You are here for more than yourself, and for more than your family. Your influence is designed to transcend space and time and to make a difference for eternity.

## 8. STEP UP...

- a) **Having a Testimony to Give**
  - b) **Baptism**
  - c) **Generous Giving**
  - d) **Church Partnership**
  - e) **Entrepreneurship**
  - f) **Prosperity, Financial Freedom**
  - g) **Workplace Influence**
  - h) **Leading**
  - i) **Being A Bible Teacher**
  - j) **Serving Christ and the Gospel**
  - k) **Writing That Book, Launching That [ ]**
  - l) **Full-time Christian Ministry**
  - m) **Becoming a Missionary**
  9. People need Jesus. Our friends and family are more open to spiritual discussions than ever before. Somehow, we need to bring the love of God into the world.
  10. A Christian walking with Christ is on the adventure of a lifetime. We are not meant to live safe, cocooned, boring, bland lives. We are meant to be rebels against the heartbreaking culture and the web of lies spun around us by the powers of darkness. That means we will be stretched in all the best ways. We will go beyond what we think are limitations. And we will discover that God has made us far more powerful, more capable, and more heroic than we ever knew before.
- D. One of my heroes of the faith—his name was C.T. Studd—wrote this:
1. "Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven, without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Let us see to it that the devil will hold a thanksgiving service in hell, when he gets the news of our departure from the field of battle." — C.T. Studd

## VI. Conclusion

- A. Nine years ago, I visited a friend in a hospital room. I knew him as a rough guy, a gruff guy, with a heart of gold. That night in the hospital, he was in really bad shape. He didn't know, and the doctors didn't know if he was going to make it.
- B. Normally, we joked around a lot, but not on that night. He was very serious. We got around to where he stood with God. I told him about Jesus. I shared with him about the Cross, about the forgiveness of sin, and about life with God forever.
- C. I asked him if he wanted to receive Jesus.
- D. And right then and there, he did. He prayed to receive Jesus. Out loud, It was powerful.
- E. Well, he made it out of the hospital, and went on with his life. He didn't go to church, but over the years, we've kept in touch. Here and there, we'd bump into each other and chat. That night in the hospital was 9 years ago.
- F. Today, I'm sad to say, was his memorial service. He made it to 59 years old. I miss him already.
- G. I didn't know it, but his daughter told me he's been watching me preach online. That he's been telling his friends in Florida that they should watch too. I never knew that.
- H. But today, I got to tell his daughter something too. I got to tell his daughter, his sons, his family, and his friends that 9 years ago, in a dark, quiet hospital room, their father and friend prayed to receive Jesus as his personal Savior and Lord. And because of that, I have every confidence that on two days before Christmas, he stepped into heaven so that some day I will see him again, up there.
- I. The feeling that I had, being able to deliver that news, I am convinced has to be way better than walking on water.
- J. Personally, I'll take that trade any day.
- K. So, I just want to ask you, are you up for some Giant Steps? Great. Don't skip church... you don't want to miss some giant stuff that God is about to do.