

## Developing a Habit of Walking

When the pandemic hit and so much of what we normally did had to be put on hold, including in-person worship at the church, my wife, Joy, and I began walking. We had walked in the past, but now when there wasn't much else we could do, we made it a regular practice to walk. We walked around town every day as the weather permitted. And this walking became a habit.

I continued walking with Joy, but began doing even more walking on my own. And weeks went by, months went by, and I continued walking. It feels good to walk. It is relaxing. There is a slow, steady pace; there is the healthy benefit of exercise. I began to lose weight. One day on my walk, I thought to myself, I could run. I had not run for years. The walking had helped me



lose weight and become more fit, so now running was possible once again. And I began the habit of running regularly.

And I got more fit, and I lost more weight. And when the weather turned colder outside, I took to exercising inside. What began as a habit of walking, resulted in a changed lifestyle of exercise which even inspired a healthier diet.



So I find it most compelling when I read that Paul commands us to walk.

In the later chapters of Ephesians, Paul is urging Christians to live in a way that is consistent with their new identity in Christ. And as he does so, time and again he uses the metaphor of walking. In other places Paul uses the metaphors of running and standing, but in these chapters of Ephesians he keeps coming back to walking. And he keeps using the present tense in the Greek, which indicates on-going and repeated action.

Walking is a metaphor for living, your translation may or may not have the literal word "walk", but here are some places where Paul commands us to walk. "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called..." (4:1), "You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds..." (4:17), "Walk in love, as Christ love us..." (5:2), "Walk as children of light..." (5:8), and "Walk, not as unwise but as wise..." (5:15).

The slow, steady nature of walking implies a consistent, on-going, steady progress. In other words, Paul is urging his readers to adopt habits that lead to spiritual health. Walking may be good for your physical health. Walking through life in ways that are responsive to God's call will be good for the health of your soul.

Paul is urging us to adopt habits of spiritual health that are consistent with our new God-given identity in Christ. On the cross, Christ has destroyed the walls that divide us as human beings one from another, and He has reconciled us to God. Now we must live into that unity. We must not continue old habits that lead us down dark paths away from God. We must walk in His light, hand-in-hand with one another, discovering the "joy in the journey". As the Psalmist says, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people dwell together in unity." (Ps 133:1)



## Day 29, Monday

Preparation: Take a moment to settle your spirit and calm your inner self. You have come into God's presence. God is light – Jesus is the "Light of the world". Take a moment to visualize the light of God shining upon you, flooding your soul, lighting the deep inner reaches of your heart. Then ask God to speak to you today, and to give your "ears to hear" what He has for you.

Introduction: Paul has expounded the theology which says that God has created something entirely new: God's New Society: a unified people in Christ. Now he urges his readers to avoid partnering with people who participate in the old way of living -- not to avoid the people altogether, but to avoid joining them in their practices. The images he uses to describe the contrast between the old way of living verses the new are darkness and light.

Reading: Ephesians 5:1-7 **Avoid Walking in the Company of Darkness**

1. Paul draws the reader's attention to Jesus. How did Jesus "walk"? What does that mean specifically?
2. How is Jesus' love and His sacrifice related?
3. What does Paul urge his readers not to participate in? Make a list.
4. Why does he urge them to avoid such practices?
5. Verse 5 has a difficult statement that is easily misunderstood. What is the difference between someone who practices one of the sins mentioned, verses the way Paul

describes those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God in this verse? Hint: What does it mean to call someone idolator? What is the focus of the “worship” of their lives?

6. What does Paul say Christians are to do instead? How are you doing at adopting habits and a lifestyle that looks like Jesus?

Close in prayer asking God to reveal to you habits that you should adopt in your life.

## **Day 30, Tuesday**

Preparation: How did you sleep? While you were sleeping what was going on in the world? The idea of sleeping is applied to our lives in a metaphorical way in the Scriptures. Jesus rebuked the disciples for sleeping in the Garden of Gethsemane. He calls us to be awake to His Presence and the spiritual realities around us. Pray today for the Lord to wake up your spirit to be alert to His Presence with you now and throughout the day today.

Introduction: The images of light and darkness continue in this section. We tend to sleep when it is dark. Paul seems to be quoting from an ancient hymn at the end of today’s reading. It speaks of sleeping and waking up. Note what is commanded in verse 14.

Reading: Ephesians 5:7-14 **Walking in the Light**

1. What is it like to be in total darkness? Have you ever been in total darkness? How did it, how would it, make you feel?
2. Why are the deeds of the “old way” described as darkness?
3. What do you think Paul means when he says that we are now “children of the light”?
4. How might sleeping be a good metaphor for those who are practicing the deeds of darkness?
5. What people do you see around you, what people do you know, who are asleep to the Light as if they are dead to God and the goodness of His ways?
6. Are there ways you might be “asleep” to the Presence of God and the works of God? How might you need to wake up?

As you close in prayer, ask God to show you how to obey the command of verse 14.

## **Day 31, Wednesday**

Preparation: Come empty to God today. Pray about the things that are weighing on your mind today. Visualize taking each one of them out of your heart and handing each over to God. Then ask His Spirit to fill you. Visualize the living waters of the Spirit filling those places in your heart, filling you up to the brim and then overflowing. Ask God to fill you with His Presence in this time.

Introduction: Paul uses the image of walking again. He is eager to underscore the importance of adopting habits in our lives that help us live life, awake, alive to the Presence of God. The Presence of God comes to us in the Holy Spirit and Paul speaks about be filled with the Holy Spirit in this passage. This seems to indicate not so much whether one has received the Holy

Spirit or not, but how full one is of the Spirit – how much the Spirit has a hold on the person's life.

**Reading:** Ephesians 5:15-21 **Walking as One Who is Filled With the Spirit**

1. Paul says we can walk wisely or unwisely. How does he describe each?
2. Is Paul forbidding alcohol consumption? What is his point?
3. *Instead of filling ourselves up to brim with wine, we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. There are several participial clauses in verses 19-21. One way to understand the grammar of these verses is that each participial clause is a way that we are filled with the Spirit.*  
What four practices are mentioned?
4. How are these evident or not evident in your life? How would you rate yourself on each?

As you close, ask God to help you make these four practices habits in your life that will lead to you be a person who is full of the Spirit.

**Day 32, Thursday**

**Preparation:** As you enter God's Presence today, spend some time acknowledging Him as your Lord. Ask Him to help you love Him with your all, and to love your neighbor as yourself. Thank Him for how His love has been shown to you in Jesus Christ's death on the cross. Ask Him to ground you in that love.

**Introduction:** This passage can sound strange in our modern culture. Some have misused it to subjugate women to an inferior role. Not only is Paul speaking equally challenging words to men as well as women, he is also elevating the status of women in a culture in which wives were considered the property of their husbands. This passage properly begins in verse 21 despite where some Bibles mark the heading for a new section. Such headings are not in the Biblical texts but have been added by the translators.

**Reading:** Ephesians 5:21-33 **Christian Marriage**

1. There is no verb in verse 22. The main verb is in verse 21. What is being commanded in verse 21? To whom is it being commanded?
2. Are wives then the only ones being commanded to submit? How does this understanding provide context to understand what Paul is saying to wives?
3. How are husbands to love their wives? What submission might be involved in loving their wives in that way? What did Jesus submit Himself to?
4. How might the love and mutual submission to one another of a Christian husband and wife represent Christ and the church to the world? Can you think of a way that a Christian husband and wife are the Body of Christ, are the church?
5. Why might respect be important?
6. How are you with submission? We are all called to submit to one another in the body of Christ in verse 21.

As you close in prayer, ask God to show you if there are people in your life today to whom you need to submit.

## Day 33, Friday

Preparation: Begin today by remembering that you are coming into the Presence of your Heavenly Father. Pray the Lord's Prayer as you seek to crawl into the lap of your loving Father in heaven.

Introduction: Mutual love and submission in the Holy Spirit extends to all relationships, including parents and children. Note that the submission is not intended to be one-way but mutual. It is easy to lose this balance. There are examples of parents who either "lord it over" their children, or who make their children like a "god" in sacrificing and submitting everything for them. Look for the balance in these verses as you read them today. Children are to submit to their parents, but parents submit their own wants for the sake of the children too.

Reading: Ephesians 6:1-4 **Christian Families**

1. What does Paul indicate mutual submission in the Body of Christ is to look like in the family?
2. How are children to submit?
3. How are parents, or at least fathers, to submit?
4. What is the promise attached to the commandment to "Honor your father and mother"?
5. For some people this is very difficult. Human parents are far from perfect and some have been downright abusive and evil in how they treated their children. Others have had loving and supportive parents. What is your relationship with your parents, or if they are no longer living what was it like?
6. Regardless of whether they are living or dead, whether they were good parents or bad, how could you honor your father and mother today?
7. What is the specific charge to fathers? What would this look like?

Close praying for families where children are still living at home, perhaps your own family. Ask God to send the transforming Presence of the Holy Spirit into those parents and children leading them to live a life of love and mutual submission with one another.

## Day 34, Saturday/Sunday

Preparation: Paul calls himself a "servant" of Christ in several places in the New Testament. Can you do the same? What does it mean to you to serve Him as your Lord? If you are so willing, submit your life to God now and ask your Master to speak to you in this time.

Introduction: Slavery is a terrible atrocity. It has played a horrific role in America and in our global society. There has been slavery in the world throughout the times the Bible was written. There is slavery in our world still today. Much of our view of slavery has been influenced in modern times by the atrocities committed in America. This passage speaks to the context in which it was written. Some slaves in the Roman empire functioned more like indentured servants, a lower class who sold themselves into slavery for economic reasons. Unlike the horrors of modern-day slavery, indentured servants had a choice in the matter.

Even in this form slavery dehumanizes people and therefore is affront to God who created all persons in His image. The approach we adopt here is not to condone slavery, but to hear Paul's radical exhortations to *both* servants *and* masters. We will extend the application to all those in positions under the authority of others, as well as to those in positions of authority over others. This could be applied to a boss and a worker, for example.

Reading: Ephesians 6:5-9 **Mutual Submission between Servants and Masters**

1. Does Paul say that slavery is a good thing in these verses? How might he simply be addressing the situation in the society as it is in his time?
2. If one is in a subservient role or under the authority of another in some way, what is Paul advocating?
3. What does Paul say to the "masters", that is to those in position of authority over others? How might this be a radical injunction for those living in the First Century?
4. Consider your life. Who is in authority over you in some way? How can you love and submit to them as though to the Lord?
5. Who do you lead or have authority over in some way? How can you love and submit to them as if they were Jesus Himself?

As you close ask God to help you live a life of love, just as Jesus did.