

Walking the Walk

Seven questions that will help us live a better life #1

Intro: I love to read and study Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In Ephesians Paul explores some wonderful themes. He shows us that the plan of salvation began in the mind of God in eternity past and reaches into eternity future. He shows us that God purposed in Christ to bring into existence a group of people, who by God's power working in them would be a display of His manifold wisdom. He tells that people would look at us and glorify God. But how is all of that to be accomplished?

The answer is by how we as Christians "walk." Seven times in the book of Ephesians Paul talks about walking the walk. Each of these exhortations points to an important dimension to our lifestyle as Christians. Each of these exhortations can prompt a question that will help us live a better life.

In our lesson today let's think about "Seven questions that will help us live a better life."

Question #1 (Let us ask ourselves)--Is there a real difference between me and the worldly people around me?

My question is prompted by the "walk the walk" statement Paul makes in Ephesians 2:1-2.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." (Ephesians 2:1-3)

In this passage Paul describes the "former walk" of the believer. He describes them as people who "walked according to the course of this world." And then he describes that course:

They were people who followed the path marked out by Satan.

They were people who had a spirit or attitude of disobedience toward God.

They were people who followed their own desires of flesh and mind.

Consequently, they were children of wrath, that is, children doomed to God's eternal destruction.

This description of the former "walk" of a believer suggests the kind of change that ought to have taken place when we were saved. Did we make that change?

So we need to ask ourselves this question: "Is there a real difference between me and the worldly people around me?" Or to put it another way, "Has there been a real change in the way of live now as opposed to the way I used to live before becoming a Christian?"

Do I speak like worldly people speak?

Do I dress like worldly people dress?
Am I entertained by the things that worldly people are entertained by?
Do I have a higher morals and values?
Do I have a different set of goals?

One indication that we are “walking the walk” is that we can see, and others can see, a noticeable difference in our lifestyle from the typical worldly person. Can they? If not, identify those areas where worldliness still remains and start working on removing it.

Question #2--Are my decisions informed by my own selfish desires or made out of sensitivity to God's revelation?

This question is prompted by Paul’s exhortation from Eph. 4:17-19:
This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. (Ephesians 4:17-19)

Paul urges Christian to “no longer walk as Gentiles walk” and then describes that walk:

“In the futility of their mind”—based on their own thinking leading to futility or vanity.

“Darkened in understanding”—without the light of God’s truth.

“with hardness of heart”—with an insensitive conscience.

“resulting in sensuality and greed”—manifesting itself in sexual immorality.

In contrast here’s how Paul describes the Christian’s life:

But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Ephesians 4:20-24)

The Christian life:

Is lived in the meaningful purpose of God's revelation.

Is based on knowing the truth in Christ as it is revealed in the example of Jesus.

Results in a renewal in the image of God.

Manifests itself in a “new self”.

Which way would describe our walk? Do we walk as pagans or do we walk as educated Christians?

Question #3--Do I radiate God's love in all that I do?

This question is prompted by Paul’s walk the walk exhortation in Eph. 5:1-2:

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Ephesians 5:1-2)

Paul urges Christians to “walk in love.”

The Christian walks in love because he has been loved by God—“as beloved children.” He models His behavior after the heavenly Father who loved him.

The Christian walks in love because he has been loved by Jesus Christ, indicated by His death on the cross.

His death was a gracious offering for our sin.

His love was a sacrifice as a fragrant aroma, i.e. like the whole burnt offering of the OT, totally given to God.

Paul applies the message of living with love by contrasting it with what is often confused as love, i.e. “lust”.

But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. (Ephesians 5:3-4)

The media often confuses the two. Lust is never love. Look at some expressions: fornication, impurity, sexual greed, filthiness, silly talk, coarse jesting. From the most repulsive to the seemingly harmless sensual remark, all is condemned and none of it is love!

And so Paul’s exhortation to walk in love calls upon us to evaluate every action and think about what motivates our behavior. Is it the love that God and Christ has bestowed upon us and which is flowing through us to others?

Conclusion: Paul will go on to talk about other aspects of the Christian’s walk, which we’ll consider in our next lesson. But certainly these three questions will enable us to live a better life