

EPHESIANS WEEK #10 - SJLC  
**WALKING AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT**  
Ephesians 5:1-20

**PATTI**

I don't know if you've noticed, but there's a whole lot of WALKING going on in our every day lives.

We get out of bed and walk to the kitchen.  
We walk outside to get in the car.  
Walk in the grocery store,  
Walk in our workplace, if we're going there these days,

Once a week we walk around our yards to cut the grass,  
and around our neighborhoods for the sake of the dog  
or our own physical health.

Experts encourage us to get in 10,000 steps a day,  
which is why people have Fitbit trackers and i-watches to  
help them count all those steps.

But here in Ephesians, Paul is concerned, not so much  
with the QUANTITY OF OUR STEPS, but with the  
QUALITY OF OUR STEPS...

specifically with HOW believers walk through life,  
and through each moment that adds up to a life.

Paul introduced thi walking metaphor back in chapter  
2 verse 1 where he reminds us that we "once walked in trespasses and sins."  
But in 2:11, he says, **having been made alive together with Christ and saved by  
grace, we have become "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good**

works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Then in the practical application section of the letter in chapter 4, he exhorts us to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called” (v. 1) and to “no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of our minds.” (v. 11)

### **JEFF**

This metaphor of walking carries through the entire book of Ephesians.

And the passage before us breaks down into three sections where Paul is admonishing believers...

**to walk in LOVE (v. 1-2)**

**to walk in LIGHT (v. 8-14)**

**to walk in WISDOM (v. 15-20).**

Our walk begins with what God in Christ has done for us, because we have nothing to offer the Lord except our need.

In Baptism, He sealed you with the Holy Spirit and marked you the cross of Christ.

In Baptism, God set you apart as His precious child.

Our walk of faith begins at the font as we are united with the Lord and all that he has done for us through his death and resurrection...

and set apart from a world

that does not acknowledge Jesus or believe in him.

So the question becomes, how do we learn to live this life?

V. 1 – Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children... (NIV).  
 Therefore be imitators of God... (ESV).

In fact, the Greek word *mimetai* here literally means “to mimic”.

The truth is that in our world everybody is mimicking someone. From clothing to hairstyles to business models, it seems that a few innovators set the trends, and then everyone else follows.

But Paul wants us to know that the greatest influence in the history of planet Earth, and the most original – is Jesus. And ultimately, His is the life that is alone worth copying.

## **PATTI**

Remember the phrase, “What would Jesus do?”

It is attributed as arising from the 1896 book by John Sheldon entitled, “In His Steps.”

In this novel, which was eventually translated into 21 languages, Rev. Henry Maxwell encounters a **homeless man** who challenges the pastor to take seriously the imitation of Christ.

The homeless man explains his difficulty understanding why so many Christians ignore the poor:

He said, "I heard some people singing at a church

the other night... and I kept wondering... what they meant by it.

It seems to me there's an awful lot of trouble in the world that somehow wouldn't exist if all the people who sing such songs went and lived them out."

This leads to many of the novel's characters asking, "What would Jesus do?" when faced with decisions of some importance. The effect was that the characters took more seriously the teachings and example of Jesus.

## Might that help us, too?

Quotes like “He’s a chip off the old block;” or “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” bear witness to the fact that children often share the physical characteristics and personality traits of their parents.

In a similar way, it’s been routinely observed that married couples, even if they begin with great dissimilarity, gradually become much alike. Likeness is the natural product of love, and so if we truly love God, we will grow more and more like Him...

In large part, BECAUSE WE DON’T WANT TO MISREPRESENT HIM!

You can’t copy a document without carefully reproducing each word exactly. Think how carefully an artist must look at a landscape in order to represent it on a canvas. She must paint every blade of grass, every tree, the details of the mountains and streams accurately.

In the Gospels, Jesus demonstrates the love of God for those whom society has cast aside.

A traitorous tax collector named Matthew.

An unclean Samaritan woman at the well.

A demon possessed man.

An unclean leper.

The list of people to whom Jesus demonstrated the love of God is endless. And it includes us, as he goes to the cross to take upon himself our sin and the sin of the whole world.

**JEFF**

As believers we re-present Jesus to the world every day, everywhere we go. And the family trait that Paul highlights here, the first trait that people should see is LOVE.

It is by this love that the world will know that we are his disciples... when we accurately reflect his image and character. The copy may be blurred, but it IS a copy.

V. 3-7 present a list of things that should never be copied by believers. Sexual immorality, impurity, and greed are the three categories here.

And people who persist in such behaviors, according to v. 5, have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. Why?

Well, here's Paul's second point. It's because they are revealing themselves to be **children of darkness** rather than **children of light**. They are children who are imitating the devil rather than their father in heaven.

By their persistent, willful sin, they are effectively forfeiting their eternal inheritance.

So poisonous and deadly are these vices that Paul says in v. 12 that they are not even to be named among us! What he has in mind is the kind of **gossip mongering** that delights in the spread of the details about other people's sins in order to avoid facing up to our own.

This is not becoming of saints, a word that Paul loves to use to refer to those who believe. The words, **saints**, simply means "**holy ones.**"

And if that's who we are, then the filthiness, crude joking, and foolish talk that Paul mentions in v. 4 could not be more out of place in our lives.

## **PATTI**

Instead, Paul says thanksgiving should be the mark of a Christian. And isn't that a challenge some days? When people talk about you, what do they say is the great preoccupation of your life?

What is the default setting of your heart?

Is it gratitude or grumbling?

Is it gratitude or gossip?

Is it gratitude or unwholesome talk?

Even as I ask those questions, I'm convicted about the gap between where I often am and where I need to be with regard to my own heart.

Alexander the Great once had a soldier in his army whose name was Alexander, but when the battle was raging, he cried out in fear.

Alexander the Great said to him, "How can you bear the name of Alexander? Drop your cowardice, or drop your name."

To be children of light is to be children of God, because in him there is no darkness at all.

**BUT HOW CAN WE ACCOMPLISH THIS?**

We can't, can we?

God has made us His children by our baptism into Christ Jesus.

And he's given us a new nature.

So imitating him simply means **putting off our old nature, and putting on the new nature**, as we talked about last week.

Imitating Jesus means **walking away** from things that are not good for us:  
**walking away** from empty words that would deceive and lead us astray.

Imitating Jesus means **walking away** from things that are not life-giving, things that undermine our faith and trust in the Lord.

## **JEFF**

The word for this turning to the Lord and walking away from sin is REPENTANCE.

Repentance is so important that the first thing we do when we gather for worship is confess our sins and turn to the one who walked the way of the cross for us.

But whenever we try to forsake sin or break a habit **something will take that place** of that sin or habit. Consider the alcoholic who decides to get sober. They put down the bottle and attend AA meetings.

For years, they don't take a drink, but anger has taken the place of alcohol, and now that person is essentially a dry drunk who hurts the people around them.

Though they have forsaken a particularly destructive sin, they continue to live in darkness, because an equally destructive sin has taken its place.

And this pattern is true for all kinds of sin... all kinds of unwanted habits and behaviors.

The next section show us how to overcome this pattern or tendency by **walking in wisdom**.

**v. 15-17**

<sup>15</sup>Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Wisdom is urgent. The days are evil; judgment's coming. Time is short. Instead of foolishness, understand God's will.

**PATTI**

How we do all that is explained in v. **18 to 21**.

<sup>18</sup>Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Whatever fills our lives, whatever preoccupies our best thoughts and efforts - will ultimately control our emotions and our behavior.

The alcoholic we mentioned earlier who gave up booze became controlled with anger because there was **a vacuum in his life waiting to be filled**.

*"Be filled and keep on being filled with the Spirit, then, Paul says.*

The language suggests a continuous action -

The whole Christian life is to be an unceasing experience of the Spirit inhabiting and empowering our lives.

And then he tells us how that happens. He says that it takes place as all of God's people minister God's Word to one another, **addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

When we hear that language of, "be filled with the Spirit," we tend to look for some spectacular, dramatic experience. We think that's what it means.

Here, Paul says NO.

The means God will use to continually supply the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit in your life will not always be some sudden, spectacular, dramatic experience.

It will happen, instead, as God's people gather week after week to sing words of praise to the living God.

You are filled with the Spirit when you hear one another adoring Christ, confessing your sin, seeking grace, and giving thanks. As we hear each other sing, we're encouraged and strengthened and the Word of God is made to dwell in us richly

And the Spirit of Christ is ministered to us by means of His Word and Sacraments.

After a long section of sharp, pointed exhortation where Paul is pressing down hard on our sin, he then turns and says,

"Be filled with the Spirit." And the way to be filled with the Spirit is to be together with the people of God to sing the Lord's songs and give Him glory.

In the ordinary, normal routine of worship, the Lord Himself has promised to guard your soul

against the onslaught of worldliness and temptation,  
so that you may learn

to walk in love, imitating Jesus;

to walk in light, not even naming those

scandalous things let alone practicing them, and

to walk in wisdom, worshiping the Lord and being filled

over and over again with the power of His Holy Spirit. Let's pray...

**PRAYER:**

Father, we confess that we are prone to wander and prone to leave the God we love. Thank you for your Word that searches our hearts and for your Spirit who fills them. We bring our now sin to Jesus, the Light of the World, asking Him to cleanse us and shine on us, so that we may live for you alone. In his name we pray. Amen.