

Apprentice



# WALKING THE WALK

A beginner's guide to the book of Ephesians

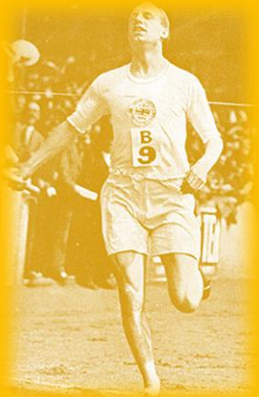


## Walking the Walk

*"You will know as much of God, and only as much of God, as you are willing to put into practice."*

Eric Liddell –

Olympic runner who featured in the film 'Chariots of Fire.'



*"Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."*

1 John 2 verse 6

If you want to learn how to swim, then at some stage you will need to get wet.

Just as it is impossible to learn how to swim by reading a teaching manual and from doing exercises by the water's edge, so it is with the Christian life, the only way to be a Christian is to live like Jesus and this means getting into the water with him.

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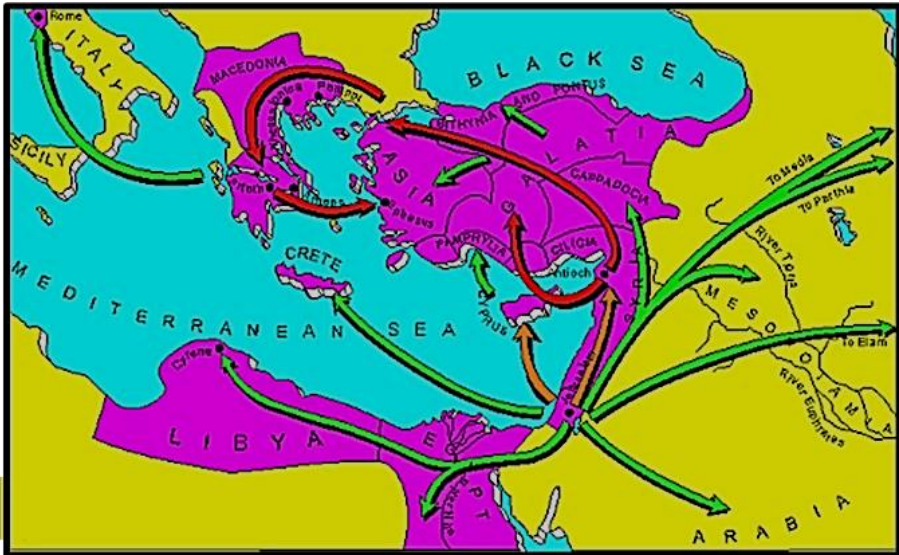
The first followers of Jesus were called people of 'The Way', in another words, they were known as people who practiced a particular way of living, just as much as for what they believed. Being a Christian isn't just about believing certain things about Jesus, it is about the way we live and what difference our faith makes to how we relate to others and to the world around us. It is about *walking the walk*.

*Walking the walk* is a lifelong commitment, but every journey begins with a few steps, so this study is designed to take you through one short book in the New Testament through a series of daily readings. You don't need to do a reading every day but try to look at the readings in the order they are given, to see what can be learnt about following Jesus today.



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## A bit of background



Jesus entrusted his message and ministry to a group of ordinary men and women who had spent time with him. These followers - a group of originally twelve men yet supplemented with a larger number of men and women which even included members of Jesus' own family, comprised the core of an infant group of followers in Jerusalem. Soon the group grew and new followers were added to their numbers daily, some of them even took Jesus' message as far as north Africa, Persia and even India, whereas others carried the message throughout the Roman Empire, which covered a large part of the Mediterranean basin and what is today known as the Middle East.

One of these new followers was an extraordinary individual who became prominent and well known within the group for his powerful teaching, wisdom and understanding along with his willingness to share the message ever further afield. His name was Saul of Tarsus. He had previously been an enemy of Jesus' followers and had travelled from Jerusalem to Damascus to carry out a persecution of those who followed Jesus. On the journey he met Jesus in a vision and was changed from

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becoming an enemy of Jesus, to probably the greatest advocate and teacher of what it means to follow Jesus. His name changed as well; from then onwards he was known as Paul. His story can be read in the book of Acts from chapter eight onwards and is recorded by his friend, Luke, who also wrote the gospel about Jesus.

A lot of the New Testament is either written by Paul or one of the other early Christian leaders or apostles, such as John or Peter. Paul had never personally met Jesus but his influence grew as he travelled widely with a number of companions, including Luke, who wrote the gospel, sharing the message and ministry of Jesus by either encouraging existing communities of followers or else planting new ones as he went along. He felt a sense of responsibility towards such groups and wrote pastoral letters to many of the communities explaining the significance of Jesus and the meaning of His death and resurrection. One of these groups was based at Ephesus, a large, important Roman port, as well as a centre for the worship of Artemis, a very popular fertility god. Paul's preaching and miracles caused quite a storm in Ephesus, threatening to put the silversmiths out of business because they made idols for the worship of Artemis. He spent over two years in Ephesus teaching people about Jesus and only left reluctantly. Ephesus eventually became a key centre for the Christian faith, planting Christian communities in nearby towns, one of which survives to this very day. Paul is attributed with writing a letter to the believers in Ephesus, encouraging and guiding them in how to live the Christian life. It is known as the letter to the *Ephesians*.



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## Understanding the letter

Reading one of Paul's letters to one of the communities of believers or churches that he knew is a bit like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. What has been preserved and written down is often Paul's response to a question or to a particular issue that the community was struggling with. Here in the letter to the Ephesians things are a bit different. There is a lot less specific reference to particular people and issues than in Paul's other letters. This letter is of a more general nature, with sweeping references to over-arching themes and less personal language. However, there is a common style with Paul beginning with an outpouring of excited enthusiasm about what God has done and an indication of what he is praying for the believers that he would have known so well in Ephesus.

His writings cover general themes about the significance of Jesus' life and how to understand His death and resurrection as well as practical teaching to particular groups of people, guidance about how to live and work together and spiritual encouragement in the face of opposition or doubt. Most of all Paul wants to see people grow in their faith - to become disciples of Jesus and 'imitators of God', living a life of love as displayed in Jesus (Chapter 5 verse 1), with Jesus living in them and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Chapter 4 verses 16-17).

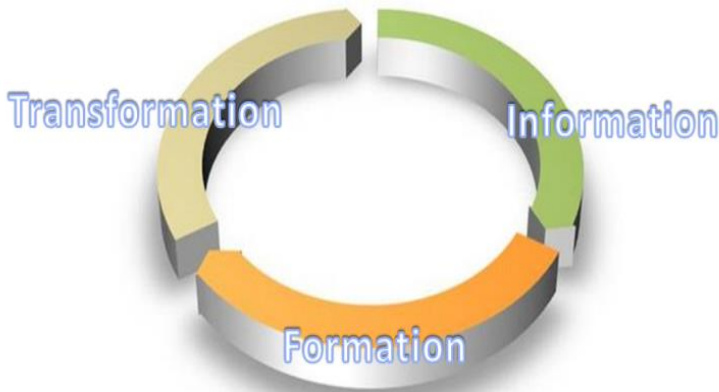
***"A disciple of Jesus is learning how to live their life as Jesus would live their life, if he were they."***

**Dallas Willard.**

**US Philosopher and Christian teacher.**

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Walking in the steps of Jesus involves learning to follow a pattern or rhythm of prayer, bible study and reflection each day. This informs our minds as we grow in knowledge, forms our character as we become more like Jesus and transforms our lifestyle as we engage more in what Jesus wants for His world



Information	Formation	Transformation
Christian MIND	Christian CHARACTER	Christian LIFESTYLE
Beliefs	Values	Practice
What passage tells us about God	What passage tells us about ourselves	What passage tells us about the world
How does this passage help us to see the world through the eyes of faith in Jesus?	How does this passage show me how to live more like Jesus?	How does this passage make a difference to the world around?
<i>Just <b>THINK</b></i>	<i>Just <b>BE</b></i>	<i>Just <b>Do</b></i>

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## What it tells us about God

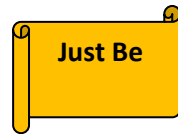
Jesus was remarkable in making the mystery of God's nature and activity simple and clear to people. He spoke about God with authority, rather than as a detached observer. He developed themes already found in the Bible and connected them with what God was now doing in and through his ministry. He also enabled people to see God differently, for instance as a Father and as the bringing of a new kind of Kingdom.



How does this passage help us to see the world through the eyes of faith in Jesus?

## What it tells us about ourselves

There is no point in believing something that doesn't make a difference to the way we live. Jesus criticized the religious leaders of his day for being false and not living by their own teaching. It is important to be shaped by the teachings and example of Jesus, displaying Christian character and values in our lives so that we come to see ourselves differently and follow in his way of life.



How does this passage show me how to live more like Jesus?

## What it tells us about the world

Jesus spoke about his coming into the world in order to save and transform it. He spoke about setting the oppressed free, opening the eyes of the blind and good news for the poor and vulnerable. His parables used imagery about change and transformation taking place as a result of his teaching and ministry. Following Jesus should make a difference to our lives and as a result to the lives of those around us.



How does this passage make a difference to the world around?



## Walking the Walk

### *Ephesians chapter 1 verses 1-14.*

**All the passages are taken from the New International Version of the Bible. Other translations or versions are available.**

*1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God's holy people in Ephesus the faithful in Christ Jesus:<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

*<sup>11</sup> In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

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### God has taken a step towards us

Paul begins his letter with a few formal greetings followed by a long description and explanation of what God has done for us in the person and ministry of Jesus. Jesus spoke a lot about the need for his death and resurrection, but less about their meaning, here Paul seeks to explain the eternal and spiritual significance of those events and how they create a new situation between God and humankind.

*There are countless ways from man to God, and therefore there are also countless ethics, but there is only one way from God to man, and that is the way of love in Christ, the way of the cross.*

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

Paul is excited about what has taken place in Christ and responds in praise and affirmation. He explains that we are richly blessed (v3) as a result of what Jesus has done. God has gone looking for us in Christ (v4), just as in Jesus' parable of the Lost Son where the Father anxiously seeks out his prodigal son (Luke 15 verse 20).

Paul uses the language of choosing and adoption, it is as if we matter so much to God that He has always had us on his mind, longing for us to see ourselves as His children (v5). Children born naturally to parents are a result of their parent's love and choice, but an adopted child could be considered as twice chosen, because the act of adoption involves not only the choice to conceive and commit, but also the decision to seek out. Therefore, we are twice chosen (v6). This generous love is described as God's glorious grace (v7).

Just  
think...

God has always had us on His mind and has gone looking for us. What does that tell you about God's nature? As a result, we now belong to God (v13) - we are deeply connected with Him. Our decision to believe and follow Jesus is a result not just of our own free choice, but as a result of God taking the initiative in Christ. The Holy Spirit is God is at work in our lives and this shows that we belong to Him (v14) - it seals the deal and confirms that we belong to Him.

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## We now stand in a new place

Knowing that God regards us as His adopted children is meaningless unless we respond to that love as His children. We need to walk in God's family way - living both as a child of God as well as a child of humankind. God chooses us to be holy and blameless (v4). This doesn't mean that God expects us to be perfect - we will always get things wrong and make mistakes - that is part of being human, but rather it means that God wants the best for us - to set our sights high, seeking to live like Jesus, who was holy and blameless.

In order to help us to live out this destiny as God's holy children, he has given us the spiritual tools for the task (v13-14). We are forgiven (v7) - we are not useless or hopeless cases - we don't need to strive for God's acceptance, neither do we need to feel guilt for our failings. He has also lavished gifts of understanding and wisdom on each of us (v8) - these aren't about cognitive intelligence or giftedness, but rather emotional intelligence and spiritual resourcefulness. It is about our capacity to live by faith - guided by our willingness to trust God and look to Him for our strength and knowledge. We can come to understand more about the world through the application of our own intelligence and gifts, but we can come to understand our eternal significance through the eyes of faith (v9). Through the gift of faith, we come to see ourselves as God sees us - chosen by Him (v11), known by Him (v4) and loved by Him (v6).



**Just Be**

Do you find it difficult to accept that God receives you like a good parent receives a child? Who do you find it hardest to forgive - other people or yourself?

One of the best ways to understand forgiveness is to practice forgiveness. THINK of someone who you need to forgive. ASK God to help you let go of the hurt and to see that person differently. SEEK God's strength to move on.

*Jesus Christ I  
admire and  
respect - but you  
Christians do not  
live like him.*

**Mahatma  
Gandhi**

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### We have a new purpose

There are many different ideas about what our purpose in life is. For some it is about success and achievement, for others it is about happiness and experience, for many it is about relationships or showing kindness and love. Our Christian understanding of our purpose doesn't disregard the importance of such things, but rather seeks to put God first, knowing that all these other things will then flow from that faith position (v12).

The Bible's stories often place the worship of God as the primary purpose for His creation. This doesn't mean that God is some kind of needy individual that constantly needs to be told how great He is in order to get by. On the contrary, God is complete in Himself yet seeks to be in relationship with us and that involves enjoying His company and delighting in who He is. Our purpose is to reflect the love of God among those around us as we receive His love, marvel at His nature and His works and to thank Him for His provision.

We are hard-wired to worship - worship is the giving of worth, honour and glory to someone or something outside of ourselves. If we don't worship God, then something else will fill that vacuum in our lives. To offer God praise and worship (v14) therefore completes us - once we acknowledge God as the source of all love (1 John 4 verses 7-12) then His love can flow from us out towards others and into the world.



Find a way to express what God means to you. You might want to write down a few descriptive words, compose a poem or a song, draw a picture or make something. Why not find a way to tell someone that you believe and see what happens next?

What can you do by way of offering worship to God today?

*I am a most noteworthy sinner, but I have cried out to the Lord for grace and mercy, and they have covered me completely. I have found the sweetest consolation since I made it my whole.*

**Christopher Columbus**

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### *Ephesians chapter 1 verses 15-23*

<sup>15</sup> For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, <sup>16</sup>I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup>I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup>and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength <sup>20</sup>he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

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## A prayer for others

Paul would often begin his letters to different Christian communities by giving thanks for what God was doing in the lives of those concerned and then praying for the continuation of that process. This is equivalent to a motivational team talk given prior to an important event. Paul is seeking to encourage those concerned and to resource them for what lies ahead.

Paul never prays for himself and never prays for material blessings, rather his prayers are directed towards the needs of others and for them to be granted not a way out of their difficulties, but a way through them. He prays that they might be spiritually equipped to know God better (v17), that they might grow in wisdom in order to understand what God has done for them in Jesus (v18) and be empowered (v19) with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (v20).

*I pray to be a good servant to God, a father, a husband, a son, a friend, a brother, an uncle, a good neighbour, a good leader to those who look up to me, a good follower to those who are serving God and doing the right thing.*

**Mark Wahlberg**  
Actor



Do you pray just about your own needs or about other people's needs? What do you ask for when you pray?

Sometimes it is good to ask God to change a situation and to bring something bad to an end, but sometimes it is better to pray for the strength, patience and wisdom to deal with the challenges that we or other people face.

In a time when his readers would be encouraged to praise and worship the Emperor and to be in awe of his power, Paul reminds the Ephesians that Christ rules supreme over all other authorities and powers (v21). He is greater than any political system, social order, or popular philosophy (v22) - He is also the head of the church which Paul describes as His body (v23), the hands and feet that seek to do His will.

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## Spiritual resources available for all

It is not easy being a follower of Jesus. We face many temptations and challenges. The Ephesians likewise faced many challenges - how to love each another (v15), how to continue in their faith (v17), how to remain hopeful and positive (v18) and how to deal with powerful influences that can take the place of God in our lives (v21). Paul reminds them that in Christ there are spiritual resources available to us all in order to meet these challenges.

He will write more about these resources later in his letter, but he prays for a spirit of wisdom and understanding for his readers (v17). Hundreds of years before, an ancient King of Israel had asked for the gift of wisdom in order that he might be a better leader for his people (1 Kings 3 verses 1-15). Spiritual wisdom is not about intelligence or giftedness, but rather it is something that each of us can acquire and develop over time. Our society venerates those who are clever or successful, but less those who are wise, gentle and thoughtful.

Paul also reminds the Ephesians that spiritual resources are very powerful, just as powerful as the power that raised Jesus from the dead (v19-20). The power of the resurrection is available to us. The power of new life and new beginnings can conquer all the inertia of our past and our enable us to face our needs and problems.

### Just Be

What is the greatest challenge to your walk with Jesus at this moment? How are you seeking to meet this challenge?

THINK about the power that raised Jesus to life again - how can such power help you to face your challenges? ASK God for a release of His power in your life to enable you to face those challenges.

*For though thou didst know  
the whole Bible by heart and  
the sayings of the  
philosophers, what doth it  
profit thee without the love of  
God?...Surely a humble  
husbandman that serveth  
God is better than a proud  
philosopher who, neglecting  
himself, labours to  
understand the movements of  
the heavens.*

**Thomas a Kempis**

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## Living a life of thanksgiving

*"I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers." v16*

Whatever his own circumstances and no matter what the situation he is addressing, Paul is always thankful.

Thankfulness and affirmation flow out of his writings, even when he has to challenge or even rebuke his hearers in other letters. He reminds another Christian community in Thessalonica to *"give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* (1 Thessalonians 5 v18).

We live in a world that encourages us to be restless and discontent in order to incentivize us to achieve and consume more. However, we need to cultivate the practice of thankfulness - learning to value and appreciate what we have (1 Timothy 6 v6) and being at peace in the present moment (Matthew 6 v34).

Thankfulness isn't just a matter of good manners or politeness, it is an attitude that we can choose to adopt and live by. Thankfulness flows from an appreciation that all good things come from God - He has blessed us in so many ways and given us so much to be grateful for. Being thankful is therefore a spiritual attribute - it arises out of our realisation that we are not alone and aimless in the Universe, but rather we are loved and significant. We can thank God for what He has given us in other people, for the beauty and wonder of His creation and for particular experiences of His blessing.



Is there someone in your work situation or among your friends and family who is an unsung hero? GO and tell them how much you appreciate what they do. Make or buy them some gift as an expression of your thankfulness. Perform an ACT of random kindness towards a stranger today - thank a street cleaner, parking warden or refuse collector for what they do.

*The man who forgets to be thankful has fallen asleep in life.*

**Robert Louis Stevenson**



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### *Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1-10*

<sup>1</sup>As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do

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## Our spiritual profile

Our culture is often absorbed by the idea of making over people's appearance, wardrobe or interior decorations, yet Paul is keen point out the fundamental changes that are available to everyone in Christ. What Jesus has achieved for us has affected our past, put us in a new present state and given us a hopeful future.

*God sees us with the eyes of a Father. He sees our defects, errors and blemishes. But He also sees our value.*

**Max Lucado**

Our past has been dealt with. We now stand in a new place before God (v1). We no longer need to strive for God's approval or to find our significance through worldly achievement (v2). Paul uses the language of life and death. This old way of living leads to spiritual death - we are switched off to God and to other people by living merely in order to please ourselves (v3). Paul calls this the way of the flesh or our sinful nature in contrast with the way of the spirit. Living this way causes us to reject God's way for us - we become objects of His wrath - this doesn't necessarily mean God is angry with us, but rather that we have chosen to live outside of His loving plan for our lives - so we place ourselves in enmity or opposition to all He wants us to be.

The good news is that life doesn't have to be like this. We have been made spiritually alive in Christ (v5) as a result of His great love for us (v4). It is as though we are resurrected with Jesus (v6). This is not because of our work, goodness or devotion (v9), but rather as a result of what Jesus has done (v8) - His death and resurrection mean that we are saved spiritually from being an enemy of God to being His child.

Our future is now bright. We are saved from the self-destructive tendencies of our nature to become the kind of people God wants us to

Just think...

be. We are described as His workmanship or work of art (v10) - we are God's craftsmanship, His beautiful exhibit of humanity - the work of His hands - not perfect but displaying His love and image. How do you think that God sees you? How does this compare with

what this passage tells us?

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## Living with ourselves

Dealing with our past can become all consuming. We are shaped by our personal history - our upbringing, environment and past experiences. These influences make us the people that we are and sometimes negative influences from our past can leave a destructive fingerprint upon the way we live our lives. In the same way, Paul talks about spiritual history leaving a negative mark or fingerprint upon our lives. Our spiritual history may have been marked by ignorance or antipathy towards God - living a life set apart from God's intended good plan for us (v2). Paul calls this spiritual death (v1) or death in our transgressions (v5). But Jesus' resurrection means that we are now made alive spiritually (v5) and raised (v6) to a new glorious future.

*We are products of our past, but we don't have to be prisoners of it.*

**Rick Warren**



How do you see your past life? What difference has following Jesus made in you? What sort of values or characteristics marked your life prior to following Jesus and how do they contrast with the values you now try to live by?

Sometimes there can be experiences from our personal history that can affect how we feel about ourselves - making us feel guilty or useless or stupid. Sometimes we can be aware of the hurt we may have caused other people from the things we have done in our past. Guilt and unforgiveness can cripple our lives, causing social, emotional and psychological problems.

- Write down something that you want to say SORRY for that you may not have ever dealt with in the past.
- Write down the name of someone you may have HURT.
- Write down the name of someone who may have HURT you.

Put this piece of paper on a table and ASK God to forgive you and to help you to forgive. Spend some time in SILENCE, receiving God's forgiveness. PRAY the Lord's Prayer and then destroy the piece of paper.

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## God's work of art

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." v10.

Sometimes it is hard to think of God taking delight in us - to think of a God who wears a smile and a look of approval, rather than a frown. This is often because we have grown up with an idea of God as an overbearing parent, who is impossible to please. However, we are told that although we cannot do anything to win God's approval (v8) we don't need to. We are accepted by God because of what Jesus had done (v4-5), rather than on the basis of our own goodness (v9).

We are described as God's handiwork; some translations use the phrase 'God's work of art'. We might not think of ourselves as a work of art, but God does - we are His finest work, the end point of His creative purposes, His best plan in terms of bringing healing, reconciliation and new, resurrection life to His creation.

We have a divine destiny to show God to the world - to be a resurrection influence - to pass on His creative, healing and loving purposes - to be His handiwork - reflecting His nature and purpose.

Knowing what Jesus has done for us, should spur us in action, rather than make us smug or indifferent to the needs of the world. We are accepted or saved by God in order 'to do good works' (v10). What ONE thing would you like to change about the world around you? How can you make a contribution in some small way, to bringing about such change?



*Every act of love, gratitude, and kindness; every work of art or music inspired by the love of God and delight in the beauty of his creation; every minute spent teaching a severely handicapped child to read or to walk; every act of care and nurture, of comfort and support, for one's fellow human beings.. every deed that spreads the gospel, builds up the church, embraces and embodies holiness rather than corruption,. All of this will find its way, through the resurrecting power of God, into the new creation that God will one day make."*

**Tom Wright**

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### *Ephesians chapter 2 verses 11-22*

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— <sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

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### Open to everyone

Paul's ministry was mostly among the Gentiles i.e. non-Jews, yet he was always keen to stress the Jewish origins of the faith. For the Jews belonging was really important, they had sought to define themselves as an ethnically and religiously pure community, seeking to avoid both marrying out of their community as well as worshipping foreign gods. Their identity as God's special or chosen people was part of their own self-understanding and belonging to that community was marked in infancy by circumcision - a physical act which had a spiritual meaning.

*Since many of you do not belong to the Catholic Church and others are non-believers, from the bottom of my heart I give this silent blessing to each and one of you, respecting the conscience of each every one of you but knowing that each one of you is a child of God.*

**Pope Francis**

As Jesus and most of His early followers were all Jewish, their identity was shaped by a sense of belonging to this special community, defined through a worship of one God and following the Jewish Law which required circumcision and various food and moral laws to be followed. Paul is a proud Jew yet realises that Jesus died for everyone and calls all people to follow Him, including non-Jews. The good news is that outsiders are now included in God's new community - belonging is marked by faith in Jesus alone (v13). Most of the Ephesians were Gentiles (v11) and would have been considered excluded (v12) from the faith of the Jews, but now those barriers are down (v14), there is no need to follow the Jewish Law (v15) in order to be accepted by God. Jesus' death on the cross creates a new community (v15), because He died for us all. His message is for those who already have faith in God - *those who are near*, as well as those discovering God's love for the first time - *those far away* (v17). Now both are received by God through faith (v18) and reconciliation is possible (v19).

Just  
think...

Do you feel like an outsider or part of God's family or community? How can faith be a way of bringing people together rather than forcing them apart? How can faith build bridges between communities whilst respecting different views?

# Walking the Walk



## Barriers are broken down

The revolutionary message from this passage is that God's community has a totally inclusive invitation based on faith in Jesus. Everyone can belong to the community of Jesus' followers because the barriers that normally exclude are broken down. Previously non-Jews would have been regarded as foreigners and aliens but now they are regarded as fellow citizens and members of God's family (v19).

The foundation of God's family or household are built upon the ministry of the prophets and apostles of the early Christian community (v20) with the ministry of Jesus as the cornerstone. Paul describes the previously excluded believers in Ephesus as part of a spiritual temple (v21), inhabited by His very presence (v22).

A temple was both a location for religious activity but also a place that points beyond the everyday and ordinary to a greater, more powerful reality. The Ephesians are likened to a holy building (v21) that could both inspire worship and point to the reality of God at work in the world (v22). Followers of Jesus are meant to be signposts or adverts, pointing those who do not yet follow Jesus to the reality of His presence, inspiring curiosity and modeling faithfulness.



What are the barriers that prevent many people from following Jesus today? What barriers do you face that prevent you from feeling a sense of belonging to Jesus? How are those barriers being broken down in your life at the moment?

Although barriers to belonging are now removed, there is still a challenge to following Jesus. In His day Jesus called people to follow, yet not everyone responded and many turned away. We are called to belong to Jesus, but that involves a willingness to follow in His way - the way of the cross (Luke 9 verses 23) - faith is a life changing conscious decision. Have you truly made this decision to follow?

*It makes a difference,  
doesn't it, whether  
we fence ourselves in,  
or whether we are  
fenced out by the  
barriers of others?*

**E. M. Forster**

from: 'A Room with  
a View'

# Walking the Walk



## A power struggle

Often in the Bible there is power struggle taking place. This is normally between the worship of God and the worship of other things - false gods, money or political power. Today the struggles are very similar, although they often present themselves more subtly in terms of the values and beliefs that we choose to live by.

Paul was ever aware of this struggle. He had been a persecutor of the Church - many early believers had perished because their faith was seen as a threat to political or religious power, ultimately Paul himself would be imprisoned and later killed because of His decision to follow Jesus. Today many followers of Jesus face the choice of renouncing their faith or being persecuted, fined, imprisoned or even killed.

The word temple (v21) had a particular association for the Ephesians and brought to mind the power struggle they were facing. Temples were not just cultural curiosities, but centres of power and influence. Ephesus was home to the Temple of Artemis or Diana, regarded as one of the seven ancient wonders of the world. Not only was the temple huge and spectacular, but it drew thousands of worshippers and created an important economy among craftsmen making objects of worship for the many visitors and making the name of Artemis well known throughout the Roman world. The new believers in Ephesus were likewise a centre for the transforming power and influence of Jesus (v21-22).



Followers of Jesus have exerted a huge influence on the development of our culture, shaping the rule of law, establishing seats of learning, founding hospitals, providing relief for the poor and campaigning against injustice. How can the teachings and values of Jesus continue to exert an influence on the world today? How can a follower of Jesus live in a way that is counter cultural to the values of our modern world?

*In the excitement over the unfolding of his scientific and technical powers, modern man has built a system of production that ravished nature, and a type of society that mutilates man.*

**E. F. Schumacher**



# Walking the Walk



## *Ephesians chapter 3 verses 1-13*

<sup>1</sup> For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

<sup>2</sup> Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. <sup>4</sup> In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. <sup>6</sup> This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

<sup>7</sup> I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. <sup>10</sup> His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, <sup>11</sup> according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup> In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. <sup>13</sup> I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

## Walking the Walk



### The mystery is revealed

Here the letter re-starts (v1), presumably after finishing the first draft, Paul re-caps his message to the Ephesians by going over familiar ground (v3) whilst developing new themes. He returns to his previous message about what has been achieved in Christ. God has stepped onto the stage of human history in the person and ministry of Jesus - finally the mystery is revealed - all the filters are removed and we finally get an insight into the true character and purposes of God, as Paul explains elsewhere, Jesus is the visible likeness of the invisible God (Colossians 1 verse 15).

Although God will always remain mysterious to us, we can at least see His full nature and perceive His divine purposes in what Jesus has done and said. There has been an unfolding of God's purposes and a developing disclosure of His nature through the created order and especially through His relationship with his chosen people, seen in the history of Israel in the Old Testament (v5). Through that developing narrative - sometimes referred to as 'salvation history,' God has gradually disclosed His purpose to reach out to all people - including the Gentiles (v6). God is no longer a national or exclusive God for the Jews, but rather He extends His saving purposes towards us all (v9).

This truth has cosmic significance, since in Christ we understand that God is seeking to reach out to all of creation in order to bring healing and reconciliation (v10). The mystery is revealed, the God of the Universe is seeking relationship with His creation.



Just  
think...

Here we see God's heart revealed - reconciling Jews with Gentiles - outsiders with insiders - those close with those far away. What does this tell us about the message of the gospel? How can this message be made plain to everyone (v9) so that people can understand it better?

*It's a mystery. That's the first thing that interests me about the idea of God. If there is one, it's mysterious and powerful and awesome to even consider the concept, and you have to take it seriously.*

**Stephen King**

## Walking the Walk



### No cause for discouragement

There are many things that cause us to be discouraged. Life's problems can get on top of us and we are exposed to so much information about the suffering and struggles of others, it is can become difficult to remain positive and upbeat. Paul seeks to encourage his readers by ensuring they are not ignorance about what God has done in Christ and the significance of such an understanding, but he also wants them to people shaped by freedom and confidence (v12) despite his own personal struggles (v13).

*In spite of everything  
I shall rise again: I will  
take up my pencil,  
which I have forsaken  
in my great  
discouragement, and  
I will go on with my  
drawing*

**Vincent van Gogh**

With all the people of God who have gone before us, we are heirs of the promises of God (v6). Any inheritance is an undeserved gift, hopefully given out of love which can give us reason to feel more secure about our future. Therefore, we should feel encouraged. In another letter to the believers in Rome, Paul said 'if God is for us, who can be against us?' (Romans 8 verse 31).

#### Just Be

Such good news should not only encourage us but should also make us into more positive people, able to encourage and affirm others. Paul was accompanied on his travels by Joseph who was given the name 'Barnabas' which means 'Son of Encouragement' (Acts 4 verse 36) - he was obviously a great help to Paul. We all need encouragers, people who pick us up when we are down and see the positive side of a given situation. Are you a positive or a negative person? How can you give encouragement to others? How can you receive encouragement from others and act upon it?

Paul reminds his hearers that the church (v10) or the community of followers of Jesus has been entrusted with this great message about what Jesus has done. This should not make us arrogant but rather cause us to share what we have received. In a world of so much discouragement, we have a message of hope to share.

# Walking the Walk



## Good news to share

Paul was very clear about his role and purpose, he was called to preach the good news of Jesus to the Gentiles (v8). Paul was very good at this, although people still fell asleep in his sermons (Acts 20 verses 7-12) whilst others found him hard to understand (2 Peter 2 verse 16). Yet his passion remained undimmed, to share what he had received among those who hadn't heard.

*I will always try to share my faith with any person who is willing to listen. When I feel a wall go up, we can talk about something else... and I will pray for you.*

**Gaynor Gloria**

We can confuse a personal faith with a private one. We don't feel embarrassed to share our personal opinions so neither should we feel apologetic about sharing our personal faith. A personal faith is for public consumption, a private one tends not to be. Receiving good news and doing nothing about it, is selfish and contradictory, the more we receive of the love of God, the more we will want to share it.

God has searched us out in the person and ministry of Jesus and is active reaching out to people in the world today. We are called to participate in this activity, to be caught up in reaching out to others in love. We live in a world that is critical of those who force their religious views upon others, but the good news of Jesus is a gift to be received in faith, it cannot be imposed by force upon the unwilling. Being heirs of a great gift or promise (v6) should make a difference to how we live our lives. Hopefully being blessed in such a way makes us want to pass that blessing on to others. For Paul this meant sharing the good news of Jesus with others (v7).

Is sharing the good news something that only special gifted people like



Paul can do or is this something that we all can do? How is the good news of Jesus seen in your life? In what ways are you seeking to 'make plain to everyone' (v9) how Jesus has worked in your life? ASK God for an

opportunity to talk to someone about Jesus today, then when it happens, just do it!

## Walking the Walk



### *Ephesians chapter 3 verses 14-21*

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

# Walking the Walk



## A pattern for prayer

Paul has already prayed for the Ephesians, giving thanks for what God was doing in their lives and asking God to grant them the wisdom to understand more about their spiritual riches in Christ. He now moves on to pray for their spiritual growth and maturity (v19), that they might come to inhabit the love of God (v18) and be empowered to live the life of faith (v17).

*Prayer is an act of love: words are not needed. Even if sickness distracts from thoughts, all that is needed is the will to love.*

**St Teresa of Avila**

The concept of the Trinity is quite hard to explain and understand. This is because it is a revealed understanding that slowly emerged as a result of men and women discovering God as a Father who creates, a Son who proclaims God's word and a Spirit who accomplishes God's work in the world. This passage contains one of the very few Trinitarian prayers in the Bible. Paul kneels before the Father (v14-15) in an act of submissive reverence, praying for the spiritual tools that the Spirit sends (v16) to equip believers so that Jesus will dwell in their hearts through faith (v17). The prayer therefore reveals a Father who sends, a Holy Spirit who equips and a Son who dwells in our lives.

Just think...

There must have been all sorts of problems and issues to pray about for the Ephesians but Paul focuses upon praying for their spiritual growth so that they might be equipped to face the challenges ahead. Paul prays for the spiritual tools to deal with the challenges that life throws at us.

We sometimes think of knowledge as something that we can only acquire through study or experience, but here knowledge is a gift (v19), a kind of spiritual wisdom that comes from discovering who we are as a result of how God sees us. For instance, knowing that we are loved as a child of God and given access to huge spiritual resources (v20) comes only through faith, rather than our own understanding.

# Walking the Walk



## Food for the journey

Paul does not assume that his readers have already reached maturity in their faith, or that they are already living by faith in Jesus. His prayer for them is that 'Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith' (v17). This is the spiritual path on which we set out, our final destination or goal is that we 'might be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God' (v19). This is the best thing that we can we can pray for each other. It is not a destination that we will ever arrive at fully, we are leaky vessels and need to be constantly filled by the love of Christ.

*An efficient busy life, which keeps us occupied without being hurried and keeps our attention entirely on interesting outer things, is probably more potentially destructive of spiritual growth than debauchery or alcohol or hard drugs.*

**Morton Kelsey**

The love of Christ is not some warm, gooey feeling or a transcendent spiritual experience that suddenly overwhelms us. Like the love of another person, it has to be willingly received and worked at. Paul talks about 'being rooted and established' in such love (v17). Experiencing this love is a decision of our will - we chose to be shaped by such love, constantly asking to be filled by it, to respond to others out of it and to draw upon it daily to form us as people. This involves exploring the dimensions of such love (v18) so that we are defined as people of love because God is love.



Who do you think most difficult to love? Why is that so? Is your natural reaction to provocation, love or something else? Have you ever experienced a sense of love coming to you from Christ?

ASK Jesus each day for His love to shape and to change you.

ASK for the love of Jesus to help you to love others better or to show the love that you already have for those people.

ASK for the love of Jesus when you are hurt and tempted to react with anger, pride, jealousy or intolerance.

# Walking the Walk



## Tapping a new power source

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." v20

Having more power is an attractive proposition - power to make things faster, louder and more effective - power to gain more control - power to give us more choice, yet a different kind of power is available to those who follow Jesus - a transformational spiritual power. Paul likened this power to the power that raised Jesus from the dead (chapter one verses 19-20), here he describes it as a power that transcends our imagination and expectation (v20). The disciple John said that this power at work in us is greater than the power at work in the world (1 John 4 verse 4).

*I am not interested in power for power's sake, but I'm interested in power that is moral, that is right and that is good.*

**Martin Luther King Jr**

In a world of great need it is easy to feel crushed, we can feel powerless to affect change and it can feel futile to pray for change. However, God has enormous power to bring about change. Moral and spiritual power can be hugely effective in bringing about social and political change, such as with the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement in the US and the overthrow of apartheid in South Africa. Although there is still scope for further progress in these areas, nevertheless, the power of prayer, the power of persuasion and the power of peaceful protest cannot be underestimated. In recent years, followers of Jesus have pioneered campaigns to cancel Third World debt and implement the Millennium Development Goals. These have had enormous impact, transforming the lives of some of the world's poorest people. Further campaigns against trafficking, FGM and in support of fair trade continue to change hearts and minds, whilst bringing about real change.



What can YOU do to be a change maker? How can you use the transforming power of Christ to bring about social change? FIND OUT about the campaigning work of: Christian Aid, Tearfund, Cafod and A Rocha (or other similar groups).



## Walking the Walk



### *Ephesians chapter 4 verses 1-16*

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people. \*

<sup>9</sup> (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) <sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

\* Psalm 68 verse 18.

# Walking the Walk



## Unity and diversity

In this passage the themes of living in unity (verses 1-6 and 13) and accommodating diversity (verses 6-12) are addressed among the followers of Jesus. Embracing unity and diversity leads to maturity in the faith (verses 14-16). Unity is not something we can manufacture, it already exists, it comes from the Holy Spirit of God (v3). As there is unity within God - one God, united in purpose and nature, so there is also diversity in God - three persons or faces or characters - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The unity and diversity of those who follow Jesus is likewise patterned upon God - united in faith, character and purpose (verses 4-6), yet differentiated by task and gift (verses 11-12).

*For Christians, who believe they are created in the image of God, it is the Godhead, diversity in unity and the three-in-oneness of God, which we and all creation reflect*

**Desmond Tutu**

Followers of Jesus possess a common unity arising from the same work of the Holy Spirit among them, causing them to not only seek God but also to seek community with each other (v4). Not only are they called to worship the same, one God, but to also practice a common initiation ritual, namely baptism (verse 5). Baptism is important to followers of Jesus because it symbolises the death and resurrection of Jesus as a pattern for faith and belonging (1 Peter 3 verse 21).

Unity does not mean sameness; therefore, a diversity of role or ministry is seen among the followers of Jesus. Paul describes this as the proportion of Christ's grace that each of us has been given (verse 7). This grace expresses itself in different ministries (verse 11) that operate within the community of followers. Each of these ministries has a different task to perform in serving the community and ministering the good news of Jesus to a needy world.

Just  
think...

What is the difference between unity and uniformity, diversity and division? How can we foster unity among followers of Jesus whilst still celebrating our differences?

# Walking the Walk



## Maturity in the faith

Once again Paul longs to see his hearers growing in maturity so that they will be equipped to deal with all the pressures and temptations that surround them (v14-15). The idea of maturity is often seen as the product of experience, but Paul speaks about a different kind of maturity that arises out of the practice of particular spiritual virtues such as humility and gentleness, patience and forbearance (v2).

*We learned about gratitude and humility - that so many people had a hand in our success, from the teachers who inspired us to the janitors who kept our school clean... and we were taught to value everyone's contribution and treat everyone with respect.*

**Michelle Obama**

It is difficult to make ourselves humbler or patient - seeking to be a master of humility is just as ridiculous as asking God to make us immediately patient. These virtues need to be grown in our lives, but they don't automatically develop over time as the result of advancing years. They develop as a result of speaking the truth in love (v15). They are by-products of a life totally surrendered to Jesus, what Paul calls 'living a life worthy of the calling you received' (v1)

We cannot make ourselves good, but we can decide that we want to live a life of goodness. Surrendering ourselves to Jesus - learning more about him and daily asking Him to shape our lives, demonstrates that we have made the decision to orientate our lives around His love and goodness.

### Just Be

THINK of the day just gone and the one ahead. Consider the qualities of **humility, gentleness, patience** and **forbearance**. What opportunities did you have to demonstrate one or more of those qualities? How did you respond? What held you back from showing such qualities in your life? What happened as a result of showing such qualities?

Pray for an opportunity to demonstrate one or more of those qualities in the day ahead.

# Walking the Walk



## One body; different ministries

We all have God given gifts with which we are called to serve God (v8). We tend to think of gifts are extraordinary talents, but this is not the understanding we are given in the Bible. Elsewhere Paul writes in more details about the gifts we are given to serve (Romans 12 verses 6-8; 1 Corinthians 12 verses 1-11). These gifts are described as spiritual - i.e. God given in order that we might help each other and achieve our God given potential (v12).

Our gifts are expressed through the ministry we exercise. Such ministries are not just for the experts or professionals, but rather for us all, enabling each of us to exercise a particular ministry (v11). These ministries are given special descriptions such as apostles (those given the task of starting, planting or pioneering new ventures in faith), prophets (those who listen to God in order to challenge the faith community and wider world with the need to change), evangelists (those who share the good news of Jesus and call others to follow), pastors (those who serve the needs of Jesus' followers) and teachers (those who teach the message and practice the way of Jesus).



These ministries are given in order to serve the community of Jesus' followers - the church. Some people feel that apostles and prophets were only needed in the very earliest churches, whereas others see such roles more broadly and feel that the pioneering or entrepreneurial ministry of apostles along with the campaigning or challenging ministry of prophets is needed now more than ever. Certainly, the need for people to support others (pastors), share the good news (evangelists) and teach the faith (teachers) remains as great as ever.

Which of these ministries are you most naturally drawn towards and why? How can YOU exercise such a ministry today?

*The music is the message, the message is the music. So that's my little ministry that the Big Man upstairs gave to me - a little ministry called love and happiness*

**Al Green**



### *Ephesians chapter 4 verses 17-32*

<sup>17</sup> So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup> Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

<sup>20</sup> That, however, is not the way of life you learned <sup>21</sup> when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

<sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

<sup>25</sup> Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. <sup>26</sup> “In your anger do not sin” Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

# Walking the Walk



## Putting on the new self

Paul is writing to a Gentile group of new followers of Jesus - they are far from the finished article. There are many practices and habits hanging over from their former ways that fall short of the way of living that God wants them to follow. Paul refers to their former way of life as futile (v17) and dark (v18) which caused the hardening of their hearts that separated them from God (v18). This former condition was the result of them 'giving themselves over' (v19) to self-indulgence (v19) and insensitivity rather than living for God.

*Of all virtues and dignities of the mind, goodness is the greatest, being the character of the Deity; and without it, man is a busy, mischievous, wretched thing.*

**Francis Bacon**

Paul has a lot to say about this former way of life - and all of it uncomplimentary. It is impure (v19), corrupt and deceitful (v22) and ultimately false (v25). Such a way of life leads to impure sensuality and greed (v19), anger (v25), stealing (v28), unwholesome talk (v29), bitterness, infighting and every form of malice (v31). The good news is that such a way of life lies in the past, what Paul calls the 'old self' (v22) now we are called to put on a 'new self' (v24) located in our life with Christ - a life marked by righteousness and holiness (v24).

Just think...

The old way of living without God that the Ephesians previously followed might feel overwhelming, yet even such a past is redeemable - no matter what we have done or where we have come from, we can become new and start afresh. This is the promise of the resurrection of Jesus. There is nothing that cannot be forgiven and no person who is beyond the reach of God's healing, restoring love. All of us are capable of becoming the person that God wants us to be and that often we want ourselves to be (v24).

The pathway to self-improvement does not lie with our own efforts, but with orientating our life around what God wants for each of us. How does this make you feel?

# Walking the Walk



## A new attitude

Following Jesus should make a difference to our lives. In this passage we see the contrast between the old self shaped by a self-seeking attitude (v22) and the new self-shaped by God's character (v24). Paul urges the Ephesians to no longer live as they used to (v17) reminding them that this is not the way that they have been taught (v20). He implores them to put off falsehood (v25), to avoid being led into sin (v26), to deny the Devil a foothold in their lives (v27) and not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God (v30).

The best way to get rid of the old is to practice the new. So, Paul encourages us to locate our lives around a different set of attitudes - such as learning a new way of life (v20), listening to the truth that is in Jesus (v21), getting rid of destructive behaviour (v31) and practising kindness, compassion and forgiveness (v32).

*The best cure for sea sickness, is to sit under a tree.*

**Spike Milligan**



What is the ONE thing in your life that needs to change in order for you to put off the old self?

IMAGINE that this ONE THING is a person and give them a name. Sit down and write a LETTER to this ONE thing that you want to change. Address the problem directly to that person who has come into your life. Tell them about the problems they are causing you and the consequences of those problems. They tell them that it is time for them to leave. Explain that you don't want to see them anymore and that from now on you will be spending more time with your new friend. Describe what that new friend is like (see verse 31) and why it is better for you to spend more time with them instead. Sign and date the letter.

Keep this letter somewhere safe and return to it in times of need.

# Walking the Walk



## A new direction

"... doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need." (v28)

The call to put off the OLD SELF is concerned with leaving behind a life orientated around selfish gain and self-seeking purpose in favour of a NEW SELF orientated around serving others and seeking God's purposes. Those who have been involved in illegal or selfish gain are to learn how to use their time and talents more constructively in order to serve a higher purpose (v28).

If God's purpose is to embrace mankind in order to bring healing, reconciliation and faith in Christ, then the direction of our lives will be fulfilled when we orientate our lives accordingly. 'Doing something useful' (v28) is about aligning our lives with God's saving and creative purposes.



Below is a list of 5 ways in which we can align our lives with God's purposes:

- To proclaim the good news of Jesus through words and deeds
- To teach, encourage and nurture other followers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures in society
- To strive to safeguard, sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Which ONE way do you feel drawn towards in terms of how best your passions and gifts orientate you to serve God's purposes?

*It's not about you.*

*The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfilment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It is far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose.*

**Rich Warren**



## Walking the Walk



### *Ephesians chapter 5 verses 1-20*

<sup>1</sup> Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup> and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

<sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partners with them.

<sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. <sup>14</sup> This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

<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. <sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

# Walking the Walk



## A change of mind

To follow Jesus involves a complete change of mind. This is the essence of the word 'repent' that Jesus used when calling people to follow Him (Mark 1 verse 15). To change our mind does not mean obliterating our free will, nor committing intellectual suicide, but rather to surrender our mind to be renewed by God (Romans 12 verse 2). So Paul reminds the Ephesians to be wise not unwise (v15) and to live in the light of the Lord (v8).

*For beautiful eyes,  
look for the good in  
others; for beautiful  
lips, speak only words  
of kindness; and for  
poise, walk with the  
knowledge that you  
are never alone*

**Audrey Hepburn**

God's wisdom is about being open to the illuminating influence of Jesus (v13). Living by the light illuminates the folly of dark actions and habits that can lead us away from God (v11). Likewise, the wisdom of God exposes foolish and destructive ways (v17). Foolishness is about living outside of what God wants for each of us (v18). We are given examples of foolish or dark actions - these are sexual immorality, greed and foolish talk (v3-4). Such things are improper for God's people (v3), not part of living according to God's Kingdom (v5) and we will be accountable for them before God (v6).

Immorality is often linked with idolatry in the Bible. Chasing after the false gods of power, money or sexual conquest are seen as alternative altars in opposition to the worship of God. If we are not seeking after the things of God or living by God's values, then other things quickly fill that vacuum. We are hard-wired to worship - to give honour and value to things outside of ourselves. If we do not give worth (a definition of worship) to God, then something else becomes our God.

What do you see as the gods of the world we live in today? What is placed on the central shrine of our society? How is the worship of such alternative gods expressed?

# Walking the Walk



## Not this, but that

Often Paul writes in such a way as to contrast one way with another. The way of folly and wisdom, dark and light with the way of the flesh - the way of the Spirit - the way of the world and the way of the Kingdom. Here he contrasts the way of obscenity, foolish or coarse talk with the way of speaking out of a sense of thankfulness (v4) and the way of immorality, impurity and greed with the way of the Kingdom (v5) marked by goodness, righteousness and truth (v9). We are to avoid one and aspire to the other (v11).

*It is a grand mistake to think of being great without goodness and I pronounce it as certain that there was never a truly great man that was not at the same time truly virtuous.*

**Benjamin Franklin**

Money, sex and power are key drivers of our human nature, yet Jesus has come not to destroy or deny our humanity but to redeem it - to realign those drives so that they bring blessing to others as well as to ourselves. Therefore, money should not become our god, but rather we should share it around, ensuring that we meet the needs of others (Acts 4 verses 32-35.) rather than serving our own selfish gain. Our sex lives should be expressed in mutual, faithful relationships rather than in immediate or exploitive gratification (1 Corinthians 7 verses 1-5). Likewise, we should channel the power of our tongue to bring edification and encouragement, rather than abuse, gossip or vain self-glory (James 5 verses 5-6).

### Just Be

Paul wants to encourage the surrender of appetites/drives to God (v18). Consider ONE example of an appetite/drive that you struggle with. Write in the table how that struggle is displayed in your life (*Not this*) and then how it can be surrendered to God (*but that*).

<b>Appetite/drive</b>	<b>Not this</b>	<b>... but that</b>
Money		
Sex		
Power		

# Walking the Walk



## Counter cultural

*"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness,  
but rather expose them." (v11)*

It is easy to go along with the flow in terms of never questioning the values and assumptions that shape the culture in which we live. Sometimes these values correspond to those of Jesus' teaching but sometimes they reflect self-interest, ambition, cynicism and materialism. In addition, a social consensus about the value of human life, the importance of community for human flourishing, responsibility towards the poor and the need for faithfulness in human relationships can emerge that is very different to the teachings of Jesus.

*Anyway, no drug, not even alcohol, causes the fundamental ills of society. If we're looking for the source of our troubles, we shouldn't test people for drugs, we should test them for stupidity, ignorance, greed and love of power*

**P. J. O'Rourke**

The idea of 'fruitless deeds of darkness' will mean something different in every age and in every human situation. Paul had great respect for the economic and political liberties that the Roman world conferred upon its citizens, yet many early followers of Jesus found that their beliefs and values in sharp contrast to the world around. Often they faced the choice between swearing allegiance to Caesar in order to fit in with Roman society or else honouring Christ as the only true authority over them. Many refused and paid with their lives as a result.



What are the sharp choices that followers of Jesus face today? On what issues and in what ways do the values and beliefs of wider society clash with the values and beliefs associated with following Jesus?

How can you expose the assumptions and values that underpin wider society when those assumptions and values are very different to those of Jesus? Is it right to speak out or should you remain silent?

## Walking the Walk



### *Ephesians chapter 5 verses 21*

<sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— <sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh” <sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

### *Ephesians chapter 6 verses 1 - 9*

<sup>6</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> “Honour your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— <sup>3</sup> “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” <sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. <sup>6</sup> Obey them not only to

## Walking the Walk

win their favour when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. <sup>7</sup> Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, <sup>8</sup> because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. <sup>9</sup> And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with him.



# Walking the Walk



## Special relationships

Paul turns his attention to the special emotional, social and economic relationships that affect us all. Relationships between husbands and wives (verses 22-33), relationships in families (chapter 6 verses 1-4) and relationships between slaves and masters (chapter 6 verses 5-9).

*If civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships - the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together, in the word at peace.*

**Franklin Roosevelt**

Biblical language can be problematic. Some people believe that the strong language about 'submitting' (v22) and 'headship' (v23) should be read directly out of the Bible and into a contemporary context whilst others believe that it suggests Paul was a women-hater and apologist for slavery and so cannot be taken seriously. Neither of these positions is helpful. Paul lived in a culture where it was assumed that the man would always occupy a position of power over his wife, family and servants. However, Paul is using the language of that culture to describe something very different, namely the connection between personal relationships and the relationship of Christ to his followers – the church (v23).

Christ's headship of the church is based on the power of His example - sacrificing Himself for them (v25), guiding them through His word (v26) and loving them as His own body (v28). Likewise, the language about obeying (v1) and honouring (v2) between children and parents belongs to the idea of giving respect found in the Ten Commandments (v2-3). Many early followers of Jesus were slaves and so Paul refers to the respect paid to serving Christ as a model for such slaves to offer respect (v7) to their frequently non-believing masters (v5). In the same way followers of Jesus who have slaves should show the respects that Jesus does (v9).

Just  
think...

What would you say to someone who claimed that we now live in a very different world to that of the Bible, and therefore we cannot use its language and values to understand modern social relationships?

# Walking the Walk



## Role models and responsibilities

Relationships often go wrong - marriages fracture, families argue and tear each other apart and working relationships are prone to bullying, corruption and exploitation. Followers of Jesus are not immune from such problems. Being a follower of Jesus is not about joining a club for perfect people. Our relationships are riddled with human frailty; they provide the context for the interplay of forces of authority and power that can lead to abuse and hurt. What we find in this passage is not a mandate for the abuse of such power, with husbands imposing submission upon their wives or parents demanding obedience from their children and masters imposing authority over slaves. Instead what emerges is an alternative structure of authority modelled by the self-giving of Jesus.

The headship of Christ (v23) over His followers is one of loving, example (v25) in which He wants the very best for His followers (v27). This headship establishes a mystical, spiritual connection between Christ and His followers in which we

find our true selves in Him and He is at work in us (v32). Mutual love and respect follow (v33). This is the kind of relationship that we aspire to as sexual beings - modelling Christ to each and offering, self-giving love.

*It is relationships that cause both businesses and churches to crumble. When someone said to me recently, 'I want to get into Christian ministry because I'm fed up with office politics' it took me a week to stop laughing.*

**Rob Parsons**

Lawyer – Christian family charity worker

### Just Be

In a male dominated, hierarchical society, the mutual responsibilities that Paul advocates for husbands towards their wives, parents towards their children and masters towards their slaves is quite revolutionary and counter-cultural. Mutuality is always encouraged. Each party has a responsibility to the other party.

What ONE word best summarises how to work out such mutuality in these relationships? How can this be worked out in your personal relationships, in your home and in your place of work?



# Walking the Walk



## As if serving the Lord

In the Roman world many households had domestic servants or slaves and many of the early followers of Jesus were drawn from among this community, although we also know that there were rich and powerful followers who undoubtedly would have kept their own slaves. Many centuries' later followers of Jesus would be at the forefront of the movement to abolish slavery and release slaves, but during this period slavery was a social and economic reality that had to be addressed.

*Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it.*

**Steve Jobs**

Paul's message about slaves obeying their masters (v5) and serving wholeheartedly as if for the Lord (v7), appears to be socially conservative, but Paul's hope is that the slaves might display the likeness of Christ in their attitude towards their work, thereby witnessing to the power of the gospel. The power of example, modelling the role of a servant (*the word used for 'slave' is the same as the word for 'servant'*) has huge transformative power. The early followers of Jesus were mostly drawn from the poor and marginalised it wasn't until nearly three centuries later when the power structures changed after Rome embraced the Church.

Our work can be regarded as part of our ministry - i.e. as the offering of our gifts, time and strength in the service of a greater good. Paul encourages enthusiasm rather than resentment (v7) to underpin the attitude of slaves.



Many of us feel unhappy in our work, yet even in oppressive work situations, our work can serve a higher purpose, helping others and giving witness to Christ. How can you see your work in such a way? What needs to change to help you find a greater sense of purpose in your work? What sort of power can we exercise through the way we conduct ourselves at work?

## Walking the Walk



### *Ephesians chapter 6 verses 10-24*

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

<sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. <sup>19</sup> Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

<sup>21</sup> Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. <sup>22</sup> I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

<sup>23</sup> Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

# Walking the Walk



## Standing against the enemy

Following Jesus is a struggle, sometimes we can feel like we are in a battle against forces of evil and negativity that seek to undermine our faith and hope (v12). Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is that they might be able to stand firm against false ideas (chapter 4 verse 14) in order to be renewed spiritually (chapter 4 verses 23-24) - that they might be able to control their behaviour and speech (chapter 5 verses 3-4) demonstrating goodness, righteousness and truth (chapter 5 verse 9) in a corrupt world.

In these struggles spiritual equipment or weapons are required so that we can stand firm (v10-11). Some are defensive to help us to stand against temptation, false ideas about God and ourselves, doubts and fears; some are offensive, enabling us to grow and move on in our walk with Jesus.

The battle we face is not a physical one. Too often people have used faith and religion to demonise particular groups and impose certain ideas by force. The battle we fight is not about flesh and blood (v12) but rather the moral, emotional or spiritual struggle of ideas, values and motivations. The weapons are drawn from the world of a Roman soldier, but the concept goes back to when Old Testament prophets saw the struggle of Israel as a moral and spiritual battle for survival (Isaiah 59 verses 15-18).

Just  
think...

Truth is foundational, enfolding all the spiritual struggles (v14), righteousness (v14) or right behaviour (chapter 4 verse 24) is wrapped around us not allowing any room for evil to penetrate. Followers of Jesus are united under Christ (chapter 4 verse 3), yet that unity is threatened by division and all that distracts us from sharing the good news with everyone (v15). Faith protects us from the attacks of our enemy (v16) - it is a constant theme in Paul's letter. Two weapons are received as a gift: Salvation is about knowing where we stand with God and the sword of the Spirit (v17) is about applying God's word to the challenges we face.

*You have enemies? Good.  
That means you've stood  
up for something,  
sometime in your life.*

**Winston Churchill**

# Walking the Walk



## A fighter or a quitter?

Paul recognises that we are in a spiritual battle, yet his emphasis is upon the mighty power (v10) and resources (v11) that God gives us to deal with the forces that oppose us (v12).

The forum for these spiritual battles is our internal life - our thoughts, words, attitudes and motivations that shape the people we are. The armour that God provides seeks to form us as people in the likeness of Christ - 'be strong in the Lord' (v10). We apply God's armour and weapons through our prayer life (verses 18-20), seeking to support one another (v18), whilst holding onto the truth we have received in Jesus (v19) and discovering our inner, spiritual strength (v20).

*The real enemies of our life are the 'oughts' and the 'ifs.' They pull us backward into the unalterable past and forward into the unpredictable future. But real life takes place in the here and now.*

**Henri Nouwen**

### Just Be

Christians have applied the armour of God through particular prayers. St Patrick used a prayer to describe the all-encompassing presence of Christ as a breastplate (see: St Patrick's Breastplate). Here is another prayer to help you apply the armour and weapons of God:

**Helmet of salvation** - keep my mind and eyes focussed on you Lord, let me see all of life through your loving eyes.

**Breastplate of righteousness** - Lord filter out all that enters my life with your goodness - make me always seek your right path.

**Belt of truth** - let me always love the truth that sets me free - wrap Yourself around me and keep me from lies and error.

**Feet shod with the gospel of peace** - everywhere I walk, may I bring peace, Lord guide my way and let me announce your good news.

**Shield of faith** - let my faith come from you, Lord for you are faithful - when doubt come and fears undermine, enfold me in your presence.

**Sword of the Spirit** - lead me and guide me that I might be effective in all I do for You - let Your word accomplish its work through me.

# Walking the Walk



## On God's side

*Walking the walk* is a lifelong process. It requires strength, understanding and courage, yet in daily turning to Christ we can find all these things. In Jesus we know that God has stepped onto the human stage, our response of faith and trust means that we find our existence in Him - we are literally on His side.

However, we need to constantly check ourselves out - we cannot assume that we are always *walking the walk* with Him, unless we are seeking His will for our lives and His resources to shape us in His likeness.

A popular Christian hymn asks: "*Will you use the faith you've found to re-shape the world around, through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?*" Being found in God and seeking to orientate our lives so that we are on God's side means that we will increasingly see the world through God's eyes - His concerns become our concerns - His priorities, our priorities - His ways become our ways. As Paul says in another of his letters - '*our life is now hidden with Christ in God*' (Colossians 3 verse three).

Being on God's side requires focus. The description of the spiritual armour and weapons is not a casual dress code, but a call to action - it is a serious business with a serious intent. We do battle spiritually not just for our own benefit but on behalf of Jesus' Kingdom - our struggle has a wider reference (v12). We are enlisted onto God's side to shed light and dispel darkness. The way we live our lives makes an impact on the world around and living for Jesus can bring about positive change to that world.



'*Your Kingdom come, your will be done*'. The prayer that Jesus taught us shows that our actions on His behalf have a spiritual impact - we can take ground for His Kingdom. How can an activity that you are involved with be seen as re-shaping the world around in the likeness of Jesus? What areas of spiritual darkness do you see that can be pushed back by the good news of Jesus? How can you fight against evil without demonising others?

*My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side*

**Abraham Lincoln**

# Walking the Walk

## Acknowledgements

All Bible references are from the New International Version of the Bible

## Quotations

All quotations are taken from Brainy Quotes at: [www.brainyquote.com](http://www.brainyquote.com)

