



**KING'S
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EDINBURGH

A People Who Walk

Ephesians 4:1

2018 is a going to be a glorious year for God's Church and God's people because God has promised great things in His Word and He does not change. How should we approach the year if all this is the case? What one word could summarise how we should live? In *Ephesians 4:1*, Paul chooses the word "walk", and it's used hundreds of times in the Bible to describe the life of faith.

What is it about walking that makes it such a helpful word for us to understand God's intentions?

1. Walking is something that all of us are expected to do every day.
2. Walking isn't particularly spectacular, it's just literally one step at a time.
3. Walking implies progress, and even pilgrimage. Also obedience (*Leviticus 18:3-4*).
4. Walking can be done in partnership (*Amos 3:3*) and we have a God who loves to be with us! To walk with God is a privilege of belonging to Him (*Genesis 3:8, Deuteronomy 23:14, Revelation 2:1*). Old hymn: "And he walks with me and he talks with me / And he tells me I am his own / And the joy we share as we tarry there / None other has ever known."

Characteristics of Christian walking

1. It's following Jesus.

"Follow me" (Matthew 4:18-20) is a geographical and an ethical statement: we're to go where He leads us, and live how He tells us to. Our walking with Him is therefore responsive and not at all self-determined. God's love language is obedience (2 John 6). You can't walk two paths, you must decide.

2. Newness comes from Jesus.

Jesus makes the lame walk, and this can be spiritually true for all of us. None of us can follow Jesus in our strength, you can't even start without His miraculous power (Ezekiel 36:27). Baptism is the moment this can happen, as *Romans 6:4* explains.

Christians need to make sure that we have opportunities to receive the strength we need daily from God. They're usually known as spiritual disciplines, and Richard Foster's book *Celebration of Discipline* is a classic explanation of them and encouragement in how to practice them – just adding one new practice could give you fresh grace to walk.

Almost always when it comes to accessing God's power it's a case of choosing between something that will help us walk and something that won't: *"I made this my business, not only at the appointed times of prayer but all the time; every hour, every minute, even in the height of my work, I drove from my mind everything that interrupted my thoughts of God."* (Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*)

(Full text of the entry in Charles Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening* the night before the Brexit referendum is available **here** (<http://www.lukesblog.org/2016/06/a-victorian-preacher-comments-on-brexit.html>)).

3. It's different to the world around us.

Jesus takes us in a direction that most people aren't going in (*Ephesians 2:1-2 and 2:10, Ephesians 4:17*). It's actually more profound than simply walking in opposite directions: we're following someone who walked on water and invites us to join Him! Paul summarises it perfectly in 2 Corinthians 5:7 *"We walk by faith not by sight."*

So walking by faith means trusting that life is better with less money because you give generously to church and others. Walking by faith means having less free time because you're committed to Sunday gatherings and midweek small group, knowing that they'll do you more good – and that you're called to do good to others there. Walking by faith means living with less respect from your peers and colleagues

because you told them about Jesus and you live by a different moral code. Few of these things, or other choices we face, seem to make sense, unless you're walking by faith rather than sight.

4. We don't walk alone.

Ephesians 4:1-3 talks about humility (not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less), gentleness (strength under control, using your abilities to bless others rather than improve your own life), patience and bearing with one another (because walking in a crowd is often harder than hiking by yourself), and being "*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit*" (finding everything you can to celebrate about being with others on this walk).

Walking may be everyday and unspectacular but it is a privilege to walk with the God who loves to walk with us. God made us to be people who move, through time and through space. This is because He made us to be His children and His friends, His colleagues and companions. Christians are pilgrims: walking with God and each other by faith to a destination that is getting closer every day.

Questions:

- What did you find most helpful about walking as a metaphor for the Christian life?
- Does walking seem too slow for you at present, or too fast?
- What helps keep you conscious of the fact that you're meant to be walking with Him all the time?
- What specific action could you do that will help you receive more of God's power for you to keep walking?
- If we walk by faith and not by sight, which decisions are you currently facing that could most prove this in your life?
- Take an opportunity to "*eagerly maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" by celebrating the blessings each other brings to your group.



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