

Walking As Jesus Did

We are in a section of John where you remember he is trying to encourage people whose faith is being undermined. One of the ways it's being undermined is by a group of people who claim to walk with Jesus but who really don't. One of the questions that might be raised is "How do you measure whether someone is really walking with Jesus or isn't? How do you tell the real deal from the false deal?" Part of it is what John is writing here in 1 John, Chapter 2. This is the way John puts it in verse 3:

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. ⁴The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: ⁶Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

⁷Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. ⁸Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

⁹Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. ¹⁰Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. ¹¹But whoever who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he's going, because the darkness has blinded him.

¹²I write to you, dear children,
because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

¹³I write to you, fathers,
because you have known him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one.

¹⁴I write to you, dear children,
because you have known the Father.

I write to you, fathers,
because you have known him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.

Let's pray for a moment.

Lord, how powerfully these words must have swept through the early churches, Christians who were confused, trying to figure out what's the real deal. "Do we believe these false teachers and Gnostics who keep telling us they have a better way? What do we do with our sin, God? We've already learned that if we claim we have no sin we lie and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sin you are faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and cleanse us of all unrighteousness. And now you're calling us to walk as you did."

It's the real measure, isn't it? The real measure is that we walk as Jesus did. I pray today, you'll help us to understand, God, what that looks like and what it really means. This is what you want for all of us. Not just a few. We'll thank you, God, for what you'll show us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*, has become a Christmas classic. It is seen by who knows how many people still every year who have it on DVD and even go to local theaters at times who bring back the old versions to see. It's a great film. It stars Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed, but there's another story behind that many don't know. In that movie there is a druggist who plays a significant role. His part was played by the British born actor H.B. Warner, but that is not his most famous role.

In fact, his most famous role occurred 19 years earlier in 1927 when he played in Cecil B. DeMille's silent film, *King of Kings*. You see, H.B. Warner was to play the role of Jesus, and Cecil B. DeMille was concerned that any behavior by the lead actor deemed inconsistent with the image of Christ would result in negative publicity for the film.

As a result, DeMille enforced strict measures to ensure that Warner kept up a good Jesus image or what DeMille thought would be a good representation of Jesus. Both Warner and his co-star Dorothy Cumming, who played Mary the mother of Jesus, had to sign agreements that barred them for five years from appearing in film roles that might compromise their "holy screen images," their contract said.

During the filming, Warner was driven to the set with blinds drawn. He wore a black veil. DeMille separated Warner from the other cast members even forcing him to eat alone every day. Warner couldn't play cards, go to a ball game, ride in a convertible, or go swimming. Unfortunately, the regimen of rules and regulations didn't make Warner more holy. Instead all the pressure to be more Christ-like without having any of the power of Christ within him drove Warner over the edge. During the production of *King of Kings*, rather than act more like Jesus, Warner merely relapsed into his addiction to alcohol.

You can't force somebody to walk like Jesus did. In fact, walking as Jesus did cannot be accomplished purely by human effort. The only one who can walk as Jesus did is Jesus. If we are to live our lives more like him, then we must live it with him in us and living through us - a fully human life lived out in the power of God. That is the life that God is calling each of us to live when he says that we must walk as Jesus did.

John's letter to those first century Christians was written to fill their lives with the certainty and assurance of a life lived out with Jesus. False teachers and Gnostic heresies were undermining people's faith and confidence in the salvation that can come from Christ alone. John writes this letter to expose the false teaching and to remind them with certainty of Christ's identity as the God-man, the true Savior of the world. At

the end of this section he addresses the church in its entirety. The “Dear children. . . fathers . . . young men,” many believed that was a designation of John's address to the whole church at large. He tells them in verse 12:

I write to you, dear children,
because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

He's calling him to the certainty of remembering these things.

¹³I write to you, fathers,
because you have known him who is from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
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¹⁴I write to you, dear children,
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I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.

He writes with certainty. He says, “I invite all of you, dear children, fathers, young men, everyone in the church, to remind you of the reality of sins forgiven, your trust in the one who is the eternal God, your Father whose word lives in you, and by whose power you have overcome the evil one. Do not be deceived,” he's saying, “by these many voices who are trying to lead you astray. You know what you've believed, and you've seen what Jesus has done. So don't let these false teachers and clever arguments lead you away from him who is the truth. Don't follow them. Follow Jesus. Let the life he lives in you be your assurance of a faith well placed. They don't walk like Jesus did because they don't have Jesus in them, but you do. So we live a life of certainty when we walk as Jesus did.”

How did Jesus walk and live out his humanity? John highlights two powerful ways here. First, he did it by the way he loved God, and he did it by the way he loved God's people. We walk as Jesus did when we love God as Jesus did. This is the way John put it in 1 John 2, verse 3:

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. ⁴The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: ⁶Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

I've shared with you before about a young man I met after speaking at a chapel service at an area Christian high school. He approached me afterwards and was obviously emotional. His eyes were still moist from crying. When I asked how I could help him he

said, "Oh, there's nothing wrong. I just want you to know I love Jesus so much I wish I could give him a hug." I'll never forget him looking at me saying that.

I said, "Would you like to give Jesus a hug today and show him how much you love him?"

"I would."

I said, "Then listen carefully to what Jesus said. **'If you love me, keep my commands.'** Young man, you listen to whatever Jesus tells you, you know his word inside and out, and you do whatever he says, and you'll be showing Jesus that you love him."

You see, that's the way Jesus showed love for the Father, he obeyed him. John said, "Our love for God is completed by our obedience to God." In verse 3:

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. ⁴The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: ⁶Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

"We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands."

That word "know" is the knowledge of understanding, a certainty. "I know that I've come to know him because I see myself obeying his commands."

"We know that we know him when we love like he loved and obey like he obeyed," is what John is saying.

Everywhere Jesus went he told people that the most important thing was to love God. Do you remember in Matthew 22 quoting from the book of Deuteronomy? Verse 34:

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question --

Can you imagine anybody coming to test God on his word? This is pretty amazing.

³⁶"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷Jesus replied: "**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**" ³⁸**This is the first and greatest commandment.** ³⁹**And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."** ⁴⁰**All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.**"

Jesus told his disciples that to love God was to obey his commands. In the upper room, in John 14, verse 15 Jesus told them:

"If you love me, you will obey what I command."

Jesus learned in his humanity what was involved in this obedience by the things he suffered. Jesus lived fully human in this life. He showed us what was involved in living a completely human life the way God designed it. That's why it says in Hebrews 5, verse 7:

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

Jesus lived a fully human life and experienced all the trials and temptations that we face. He learned obedience and what was involved in this obedience. When we obey God out of love for God we walk as Jesus did because that's how Jesus walked.

In fact, his ultimate act of love was seen in his ultimate act of obedience, going on the cross to die for our sins, which is why the apostle Paul, when writing later to the church at Rome, said in Romans 5, verse 17:

For if, by the trespass of the one man (that's Adam), death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

¹⁸Consequently, just as a result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

Look at this:

¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Obedience even to death on a cross, which is why Jesus told the disciples in the upper room at the Last Supper in John 15, verse 10:

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

The joy of knowing that Christ really lives in us because we're loving God the way Jesus loved God, and we're walking in obedience as Jesus walked in obedience. Jesus' humanity became the measuring stick of all moral behavior and love for God. John said, "When you see a life of obedience flowing from you, you know Jesus is living in you. You know that you have come to know him if you obey his commands."

In fact, John said, "Love for God and obedience to God are so inseparable that if anyone claims to know Jesus but doesn't obey God's commands, they are a liar."

1 John 2, verse 4:

The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But when you do obey, your love for God is seen. Verse 5:

But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him.

That phrase "God's love" is the phrase "Love for God." So when you obey, your "love for God" is truly made complete, perfected, finished, brought to its intended end that you will be loving God as he has always intended. You will be loving God the way Jesus loved God.

John knew this life could not be produced by human effort, but he was saying that if we could walk as Jesus did, we could walk as Jesus walked. We would learn to obey as Jesus obeyed. Some people, like the false teachers and Gnostics, were calling this kind of obedience "foolish" or "legalistic." "You don't really need to pay attention to all that," they would say. "You're going way over the top. You're taking this way too serious."

Remember, we don't earn God's love by obedience. We obey because God's love is already in us, and we love him. The Gnostics forgot that.

David Jackman, pastor and one of Great Brittan's most popular Bible teachers, once wrote:

Actions speak louder than words. We mean by that, that they are a closer indication of the real person, a better window into the soul. Words are comparatively cheap; they can easily deceive. Whatever he may claim, the person who disobeyed God does not actually and truly know God as God. If he did, he would bow unquestioningly to God's authority, wisdom, and power. He would say, 'God knows best, and that's the way I want to go.' In fact, every time we refuse to obey God we accept the slander against his character which lies at the root of all temptation. We're saying that we know better than God, and that simply means that we do not actually know God well enough. For truly to know God is to love him, and truly to love him is to obey him. There can be no substitute for this.

He went on to say:

We need to be on our guard against self-deception in this, because we can all so easily be deluded, especially if we are relying on the subjective evidence of our feelings rather than the objective truth of God's word.

The young couple who told me that they were living together although unmarried because they had prayed about it and felt God was saying it was all right for them, were flatly contradicting the fact that God had already said in Scripture that it was not all right. Either they did not know God, or they did not love him enough to obey him.

Warren Wiersbe, in his commentary of 1 John, put it like this:

Obedience to God's Word is proof of our love for him. There are three motives for obedience: We can obey because we have to, because we need to, or because we want to.

A slave obeys because he has to. If he doesn't obey, he'll be punished. An employee obeys because he needs to. He may not enjoy his work, but he does enjoy getting his paycheck. He needs to obey because he has a family to feed and clothe. But a Christian is to obey his Heavenly Father because he wants to. For the relationship between him and God is one of love.

John told these Christians, "Don't be deceived. The false teachers claim to know Jesus, but they're liars. They don't love God, and they don't obey him, but you can and you do. That's the certainty that you can know that Jesus is living in you. You're walking as Jesus did."

Not only by loving God, but we walk as Jesus did when we love God's people as Jesus did. Here's the way John put it in verse 7:

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. ⁸Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

⁹Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. ¹⁰Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. ¹¹But whoever who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he's going, because the darkness has blinded him.

Some time ago I came across this story -- I think I shared it a couple years ago -- Dave Stone, in a message called "A Reason for Self Denial," was telling about a piece he came across in a magazine written by Robert Roberts who writes about a fourth grade class in which the teacher introduced a game called "The Balloon Stomp."

A balloon was tied to every child's ankle, and the object of the game was to pop everybody else's balloon while protecting your own. The last person with an intact balloon would win the game. The concept was, "If I win, then you lose."

The nine year olds entered in the spirit of things vigorously. When the battle was over in a matter of seconds, only one balloon was still inflated and, of course, its owner was the most disliked kid in the room. He had stomped all the other balloons.

A second class came later that day and was asked to play the same game. Only this time the class was filled with developmentally disabled children. The balloon stomp proceeded quite differently. When the instructions were given, exactly as they were the first time, it seemed the only idea they grasped was that the balloons were supposed to

be popped. But instead of fighting each other off, the children got the idea that they were supposed to help one another pop balloons. They formed a kind of balloon stomp co-op.

One little girl knelt down, held her little balloon carefully in place like the holder for a field goal kicker. When a little boy came along, he kept stomping until it went flat. Then finally he knelt down and held his balloon for her to stomp it flat. On and on it went. All the children helping one another in the great stomp, and when the very last balloon was popped everybody cheered and everybody won.

People, there's nothing wrong with a little friendly competition at times. But Christians are never to see each other as the competition or to see another Christian as an enemy. You and I share a lot more with our brothers and sisters than you can imagine. Do you realize today, I am closer to some of you whom I've never met than I am to my own brother who doesn't know Jesus because you and I share a common blood and a common Savior and a common purpose. We have one in the same Father, and you and I are going to be together forever.

Relationships on earth, no matter how much we love and care for people, if they don't know Jesus that relationship is temporary. But the relationships we have with fellow Christians is eternal.

When it comes to the people of God, God wants his kids to act like developmentally disabled kids at a balloon stomp, completely other-minded, walking together, showing love. That's what Jesus did. That's why loving God's children is at the heart of walking as Jesus did. That's why he said in verse 7:

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself.

⁸Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

⁹Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.

¹⁰Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. ¹¹But whoever who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he's going, because the darkness has blinded him.

John says, "It's not a new command, and yet it is a new command. It's an old command you've had from the beginning. 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.' This is not new. It's the same command you've had from the beginning," John said. "But it is new, a new command in this: Now

that command is being lived out in a person, Jesus Christ, and now it must be lived out in you. I'm writing you a new command. Its truth is seen in him and you." Which is why Jesus said the night of the last supper in John 15, verse 9:

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

You know, God's kids don't always get along, but Jesus is relating many times we don't see the answers to our prayers because we're not willing to work it out with our brothers and sisters. Paul reminded Titus that loving each other is not the "norm," but when Jesus comes to live in you there is a change. Paul told Titus in Chapter 3, verse 3:

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

We didn't used to live like this. The fact that you are related in the human race is not enough, but now that you are related in Christ, it must be. This law of love which John speaks is the highest form of love. It's the word "agape," the unconditional love of God. It's not the love of feeling, many times. We often don't feel love for others, especially if they don't feel it for us. But agape is a verb; it is rooted in action. It is a choice we make to respond to others as Jesus responded out of a deep love for God and out of God's deep love for them. When you see this love lived out in you, it's evidence that the darkness you once lived in is passing and the true light is shining. Verse 7:

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. ⁸Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

The truth is seen in him and you. When you live like this, there's nothing in you or in this command to make you stumble. Verse 9:

⁹Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.

¹⁰Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.

The word “stumble” is literally the word “a baited trap.” In fact, it came to mean “the part of the trap in which the bait was put.” It came to be a term in the New Testament to mean “anything or anyone who became a hindrance to God's work or who made them or others fall away from following Jesus.”

People who love others like Jesus did won't stumble because they love not hate. They're not walking in the dark; they're walking in the light. That's why it says in verse 11:

But whoever who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he's going, because the darkness has blinded him.

Hate is seen in the refusal to deny ourselves at times and put others first and work out the stuff with the brothers and sisters that has to be worked out. Forgive as we've been forgiven.

David Jackman once said, “The real enemy of love is self love, and when you see love for the brothers and sisters who at times aren't easy to love, you'll be assured that you know Jesus because he's living in you and loving as he loved.”

Erin Bunting had a piece online at a website called Curia.com a couple of years ago. She was telling a story. The article began like this:

Blueberry Pomegranate, 100% juice, all natural. There was also a picture of a ripe pomegranate spilling its exotic, glistening seeds into mounds of fat, perfect blueberries. Then I read the ingredients list: "Filtered water, pear juice concentrate, apple juice concentrate, grape juice concentrate."

I asked, “Where is the blueberry? Where is the pomegranate?” Finally, I found them fifth and seventh on a list of nine ingredients after mysteriously unspecified "natural flavors."

By law, food ingredients are listed in descending order of weight. That means the product contains the greatest proportion of the first ingredient on the list and successively less of those farther down. So, according to this list, the jug in my hand held mostly water and other juices with just enough blueberry and pomegranate for flavor and color.

In the bottom corner of the front label in small, easy-to-miss type were the tell-tale words, "Flavored juice blend with other natural ingredients." The enticing pictures and clever labeling were decoys to sell a diluted, blueberry-pomegranate flavored product convincingly disguised to look like something it wasn't. So I put the juice back on the shelf.

I left the store empty-handed and wondering, "What if I had an ingredients list printed on me? Would Jesus be the main ingredient? If not, how far down the list would he be? Would my label accurately represent my contents? Or would I falsely project a misleading outward appearance that cleverly masked diluted ingredients? My packaging may be convincing at times. I may look and sound like the real thing. But what if someone came to me looking for Jesus beneath my Christian label and found something else, something Jesus-flavored but not Jesus-filled?"

People often know whether or not they are the real deal. More importantly, Jesus knows. People who don't see evidence of Jesus in their lives have a hard time living a life of certainty and can be easily led astray. What's worse is they can easily lead others astray, and they can give many, many people the wrong idea of what it really means to walk with Jesus.

John said, "We can know if we've come to know him. If, like Jesus, we love God and show it by keeping his commands." None of us get that perfect, but God knows whether or not we're really trying to follow and obey his word if, like Jesus, we love others and show it by how we treat and seek their good even ahead of our own, forgiving, working things out.

John would later write in 1 John 3, verse 21:

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

1 John 2, verse 3:

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.⁴ The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:⁶ Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Lord, there's no escaping this. It's an impossible human standard that can only be lived out by someone who has Christ living in them, and even then we don't get it right all the time. But there is absolutely no room to claim that we're a Christian, to claim that we're

in Jesus, and yet we do not obey your commands, we do not repent when we are living in disobedience. We can't claim to be living in Jesus if we're carrying around hatred and discord for God's children.

So Lord, you have to help us with this, you have to help us, you have to do it, you have to live it in us, and you have to live it through us. The only one who ever walked as Jesus did is you. Now, you want to live and walk that life in us.

God, as we sing this song, don't let these words roll off our lips without penetrating our hearts. We sang this earlier, and now we're singing it to you. Receive it, God. We pray it in Jesus' name, Amen.