

# Walk Properly

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please do take a seat and grab a Bible, whether you bought it with you or there's one near you. We're going to open it to Ephesians chapter 5.

We're nearing the end of our series, Church, the Manifold Wisdom of God. We spent the first three chapters looking at rich doctrine and now we're applying it to the nitty gritty of life and looking at our duty as Christians to live it out.

So if you've got a Bible, please turn to Ephesians 5 and we're going to read the first 21 verses. Paul writes this, Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among saints.

Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is covetous, that is an idolater, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

[ 1 : 31 ] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not partner with them.

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light. For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secrets.

But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

Look carefully then how you walk. Not as unwise, but as wise. Making the best use of time, because the days are evil.

[ 2 : 41 ] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery. But be filled with the Spirit.

Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody to the Lord with all your hearts. Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. If we're going to understand this passage, we're going to need God's help.

So let's invite him, by his Spirit, to illuminate it for us. Let's pray. Father God, your word is a lamp to our feet.

And a light to our path. And Lord, as we've sung, how we're prone to wander. How we're prone to get into difficulty. How we're prone to stumble in many ways.

[ 3 : 41 ] So Lord, would you send your Spirit to illuminate this passage. That it might be that light that we need. To guide us on the path. That we're all walking.

With the destination being your Son, the Lord Jesus. Father, help us and be with us. In his holy and perfect name. Amen. Amen. I wonder who enjoys hill walking.

Who enjoys or has enjoyed hill walking in the past? Feel a walkers club coming on. It's true, isn't it, that hill walking is a great pursuit.

What do you need to go hill walking? What kind of equipment do you need? I'll start you off. Legs are helpful. What else? Boots.

Water. Waterproofs in Scotland. Lawrence, you're right. A map, says Neil. Thane. Socks.

[ 4 : 56 ] We'll just say clothes in general or else it might take a while. A compass. Very wise from Sarah. Anything else? A staff.

Good. In case you find some sheep on the way. Fitness. Good, Derek. You need a hill to go hill walking.

That is Peruvian wisdom personified right there. You might need a survival bag. You might need some ropes.

You might need a sleeping bag. But you have to say Scotland is an amazing place for hill walking. 282 Monroe's.

Huge expanses of wilderness, rugged scenery, breathtaking vistas, amazing wildlife. Scotland is a great place to go hill walking.

[ 5 : 58 ] Hill walking is a great pursuit. But. Hill walking can be dangerous. Every year hill walkers in Scotland are lost.

I'm sure we've seen even this week. There's a guy called David Bennett. He went missing in Glencoe. And they found his body yesterday.

That hill walking can be very dangerous. Can fall off a cliff. Can stumble down a precipice.

Can slide down a ravine. Can get into trouble high up in the mountains where. There's no one there really to help. Dehydration.

Exposure. Hill walking is a great pursuit. But it is dangerous. Dangerous. You've got to walk properly.

[ 7 : 02 ] Or there's real danger. You've got to have the right stuff. There's no point going out in your flip flops. There's no point heading to that wee hill over there and hoping that it'll be alright.

That actually hill walking can be properly dangerous. I remember being on top of Ben Nevis. About this time three years ago when the weather closed in.

And it was terrifying. You didn't know which way was home. Can be incredibly scary and incredibly dangerous.

As we were reading Ephesians 5. Ephesians 5.1-20. Paul had an awful lot to say about walking. Comes up time and time again.

Paul uses lots of language to talk about the Christian life. Sometimes he's talking about running a race. Sometimes he's talking about competing. But in Ephesians particularly he's talking about our Christian life as a walk.

[ 8 : 09 ] As a walk with the Lord Jesus towards the Lord Jesus. He's picked this up a lot of times. Ephesians 4.1. Ephesians 4.17.

Now this I say and testify in the Lord. That you must no longer walk as the Gentiles did. Even in our passage it came up three times.

Chapter 5 verse 2. And walk in love as Christ loved us. Ephesians 5 verse 8. At one time you were darkness but now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light. And then 5 verse 15. Look carefully then how you walk. Not as unwise but as wise.

And so Paul is talking about our Christian life like being on a hill walk. And he says as you walk with your group, your family. Through the Christian life you'll see some wonderful things.

[ 9 : 17 ] You'll see some wonderful views. The unity in the church. You'll see people growing and maturing in Christ. You'll see people growing in holiness. You'll see people using their gifts to benefit and build up the church.

He says you'll hear the word being taught and driving the church forward. As you walk through the Christian life you'll see some wonderful things. But he's also said as you walk through the Christian life there's some real pitfalls.

There's some real potential dangers that unless we walk carefully. We'll fall down and get into great difficulty. From what Graham was telling us last week.

Unforgiveness and bitterness. Stealing and reverting back to what we once were. Using words damagingly. Adopting unhelpful attitudes and actions.

Walking is great fun but there are real dangers. There are such things as precipices. Out there for us to fall down. Now in 5.1-21 Paul is going to spell out.

[ 10 : 35 ] The pitfalls. The clear and present dangers. For the Christian. On their walk. Chapter 4.1-16 was about growing together.

Last week with Graham was about dressing appropriately. And this week is about walking properly. Walk properly. Paul is saying there's real precipices we can fall down.

There's real paths that we can wander down to really unhelpful places. There's crumbling cliff edges ready for us to go off. And he writes this in 1st century Ephesus.

And 1st century Ephesus is dominated by the cult of Artemis. And the cult of Artemis is a fertility cult. A cult where you could worship the goddess with your glance.

In ecstasy without engaging your mind. It was a place where cult prostitution was rife. A place where anything went.

[ 11 : 41 ] And could be described as worship. And you have to say it's less ritualized. But Edinburgh in the 21st century is not a million miles away.

If you were out on Princess Street last night. You'd have seen an awful lot of people engaged in. What in essence is the fertility cult of the day.

Finding someone to go home with for the night. Still sensuality. Still sexualization on every billboard and street corner magazine.

Still self-indulgence. This idea that anything will in the end be alright. And so Paul's pertinent warning to the Ephesians in chapter 5.

Is also a clear and potent message for us. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount says there's two roads. One's very narrow and few find it and walk along it.

[ 12 : 43 ] And the other's very broad. It's absolutely chock full of people. But the end is not a destination you want to go to because it's called destruction.

Paul is teaching us how to navigate the narrow roads. We need to hear this if we're going to walk properly and avoid perilous danger.

But before we get into the nitty gritty let's hone on verse 2. Because this is the bedrock for everything. And walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Here's the point. That Paul is telling us the only reason we're on this journey is because of the Lord Jesus.

We're not behaving like this in order to be acceptable to God. We're walking like this out of thankfulness and worship. Because in Jesus we're already acceptable to him.

[ 13 : 45 ] Why is that? Because we were sinful. We were running away. We had all sorts of filth that separated us from God. We had no hope.

We were absolutely helpless. And we were going in the wrong direction getting further away. And yet Paul here writes what the gospel is.

That the Lord Jesus God himself incarnate loved us. Came to earth. Lived the perfect life we failed to live. And gave himself for us.

That we might have the hope of walking with God again. Paul here in these verses is not giving us a checklist to go through to make sure we get a high enough mark so God will accept us.

He's saying as those already accepted by God live like this. As those already in communion walking with God. This is how you're to walk.

[ 14 : 46 ] So let's be clear before we even set out on this road. That it starts with this message. Christ loved us and gave himself for us.

If you're not on that path. Then don't continue down this road until you've got on that path through the Lord Jesus. It's that simple. You can't cut in later.

Jesus is the thin gate getting onto that thin path. You can't get on that thin path without walking and trusting the Lord Jesus.

The walk starts with Jesus. And it's lived in a thankful worship to Jesus. So let's get stuck in. First point is this walk in purity.

Walk in purity. Verse 1. Therefore be imitators of God. This is the only place in the whole Bible where we're told to imitate God. Told to imitate lots of other people.

[ 15 : 51 ] We're told to imitate the Lord Jesus. This is the only place in all of scripture where these words imitate God are used. And Paul's got a very specific Old Testament reference in mind.

The one that's the repeated refrain. Be holy as I am holy. This is what you're to emulate. You can't imitate God in his omniscience, his omnipotence.

But you can imitate him in his holiness. And that is what Paul is driving at now. And what follows is the starkest warning written by Paul to Christians.

And it's focused on one very specific area of life. It is a very severe warning against sexual immorality. Look at verse 3.

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among the saints. That word covetousness is the word lust.

[ 16 : 53 ] Sexual immorality, impurity of a sexual nature and lust. This word sexual immorality, the word porneia, covers absolutely everything.

From a lingering glance lustfully at a lady. All the way to sexual immorality of every kind. The only legitimate sexual intimacy warranted by the Bible is that within marriage between one man and one woman.

We can debate semantics, genetics, hermeneutics. But the story from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22 is that. And everything else is a twist.

And let's be clear. If we start to do that with scripture, sexuality is not our biggest problem. The clear and present teaching of the Bible is that sexual intimacy outside of marriage is completely wrong in whatever form.

But notice, he says, it's not just engaging in it, but it's even talking about it. Let there be no filthiness, nor foolish talk, nor crude joking which are out of place.

[ 18 : 10 ] It's a very severe warning, isn't it? Don't do it, but don't even talk about it. Don't let it be the subject of your conversation.

Then comes the consequences, verse 5. No inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Verse 6. For these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. No inheritance and real holy wrath from God for engaging in these kinds of things.

Sexual immorality and even talking about it. That stark, that clear, sexual immorality both acted out, thought about and talked about is completely incompatible with the Christian life.

Totally incongruent with our walk with Jesus. And as I was looking at this last week and this week, the temptation is to water it down.

[ 19 : 21 ] But you can't because it is that clear. Paul in Ephesians 4 has given one verse about stealing, one verse about unforgiveness and one verse about lying.

And here he gives us five verses about sexual immorality. That seems a little disproportionate, doesn't it? But I'm pretty sure this is the precipice that most of us are in the greatest danger of going off.

This is the area of our walk where there is the most precarious, clear and present danger. Where the road is narrowest, the cliffs are steepest and the footing is the least secure.

You don't have to be a Christian for very long before the scandals of the newspaper hits. And you see the people that have shipwrecked their ministry through engaging in extramarital affairs.

Through cheating. Through becoming addicted to all kinds of filth. It is this area where we're most tempted to play with sin and stray from Christ.

[ 20 : 38 ] To do it and even to talk about it. The locker room bragging. The office banter. The wandering eye. The straying Google search.

The late night channel surfing. The over friendly relationship with the work colleague. The racy novel in all of its shades. The lurid TV series.

The unwholesome film. The gossip magazine. And you read it and you're undone by it. To even think about it.

Talk about it. Or engage in it. And we're so tempted to buy in and swallow what's going on in the world.

Worldliness is anything that makes sin look normal and holiness look weird. And this area is where it seems that the Bible calls for us to be the weirdest imaginable.

[ 21 : 40 ] We're tempted aren't we to take an average of what we see. And to draw a line slightly on the conservative side and say that's where I am. But the Bible, Paul here says none of it.

Zero tolerance when it comes to this kind of stuff. Talk about it. Think about it. Do it. Never. We think what harm can it do.

Everyone else is doing it. Don't want to be seen as a Victorian prude. And yet Paul says there's very dire consequences. No inheritance. And real wrath.

Paul's answer is that compromising and wandering in this direction is inherently dangerous. You're gambling eternal things by giving in to temporal yearnings.

But you're putting others in danger as well. Let no one deceive you, he says, verse 6, with empty words. If you're engaged in this kind of stuff in the church, then people look at your life and say, well, they're doing it.

[ 22 : 51 ] It must be all right. When you're in a walking party and someone goes on a dangerous diversion, always called a shortcut, it puts everyone in danger.

So let's be clear, it's not just you that you're harming, but it's all of us as a church. So verse 7, he says, do not partner with them.

This isn't a call to isolationism. It's a call to not be indulging in what they're indulging in. It's not engaging in this kind of stuff.

It's not saying move to some rural part of Scotland and live as a hermit in some kind of hermetically sealed hermitage. It's saying have great relationships with people outside the church.

When it comes to this stuff, don't engage. Don't partner with them. Don't partner with them.

[ 24 : 20 ] But now you are light. This language is all over Ephesians. You were dead in your trespasses and sins, but now you are made alive in Christ.

Remember, he says, later on in chapter 2, you were separated from Christ. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near. You were far away. You're now brought near.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but now a fellow citizens. He said in verse four, no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

Now you've learned Christ. Take off the old self, put on now the new self. You were darkness, but now you're light.

As those made light in the Lord, don't crawl back. Don't crawl back into the filthiness that you once walked along.

[ 25 : 26 ] Walking in the light is to bear fruit of the light, which is good, right and true. It is discerning the will of the Lord and living to please the Lord. Walking in the light, verse nine, is to bear fruit.

Walking in the darkness, verse 11, is to be unfruitful. It is about being who we now are, not reverting back to who we used to be.

There's a stark contrast, isn't there, between light and darkness. I don't think there's a bigger contrast in the world. Your eye can perceive one candle 30 miles away.

Because there's such a contrast between light and darkness. That's what Paul is calling these Christians to, to live a contrasting life.

To live a life of light against the dark backdrop that is the world these Ephesians are living in. I find cyclists in Edinburgh the most curious breed.

[ 26 : 29 ] Like they've actually got a death wish. So I drive home from here in the winter along Lothian Road. And there's a guy without a helmet on. Cycling one-handed, writing a text message, swerving across all three lanes.

And then I get into Holyrood Park, which is pitch black. And I meet the guy on a black bicycle, wearing dark jeans and black hoodie with no lights and no helmets.

And I nearly run him over and what comes out of his mouth is stark. And a good cyclist tries to stand out, don't they?

Tries to stand out from everything else. You see them wearing a luminous lycra. Sometimes you wish it wasn't quite so tight fitting. They've got lights.

They've got wheels. They've got spokey-dokies. They've got reflectors. Everything's flashing. If you're ever behind Ian Naismith going up the Braid Hills, it is like a disco on wheels.

[ 27 : 35 ] There is a stark contrast and that's what Paul's talking about. In your life, live out a stark contrast to the world around you.

Live as light against a dark society. Expose the darkness by walking as light. I don't think exposing in this sense means going around tutting and chastising people.

I think it means to live differently and through your good life. Show the futility of the ways in which they're walking. Stand out. Walk as light.

Live differently. Look weird for Jesus' sake. Do you know, if Christianity became illegal tomorrow in Scotland, would there be a knock at your door because everyone would go, oh, you want to round up the Christians?

There's one. Or would you live and be under the radar? It's a reality for many people in our world. We live in quite a safe bubble.

[ 28 : 50 ] Is there discernible difference between you and the others in your office, peer group, neighbourhood, friendship group? There should be. Not because we're better.

Not because we've got it all worked out. But because we were darkness, but now we're light. Because of grace, there's been a transformation.

Walk as light shine out. Last thing he says about walking. Verse 15. Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise.

Verse 17. Don't be foolish, but understand the will of the Lord. Don't be ignorant and futile about how to live. He says live as wise and wisdom comes from this word.

Passages like this that tell us how to navigate in a dangerous, precarious world that's got precipices everywhere. Live differently and do it by living according to this word, as informed.

[ 30 : 00 ] Our understanding of how to live comes by living in accordance with this word. That we need to be diligent disciples of scripture. Because the world is complicated.

And if we're going to be shining lights for the Lord Jesus in a dark world, this has got to be where the wisdom is coming from.

Means we're going to strive to be Psalm 1 people. Blessed is the man who walks, not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law he meditates day and night. He's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in season and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does he prospers. And he prospers because he avoids precipices. Verse 18 is an example of what this looks like.

[ 31 : 04 ] Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. It's another great contrast. What's the epitome of foolishness?

Well it's to get drunk and be involved in debauchery and wake up in the morning thinking how foolish have I been? What's the opposite to that? Being filled with the Spirit. And being informed by God about how to live wisely in the world.

The complete opposite of foolishness. To be sober minded and full of the Spirit. Filled with the Spirit is where wisdom overflows from.

It helps us address one another and speak to one another. How? Well verse 19 in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody to the Lord with all your hearts.

That's wisdom. That's how we together are going to live wisely. By doing that. The corollary to Ephesians is the book of Colossians.

[ 32 : 14 ] And in 3.16 he says this. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. Singing songs and hymns and spiritual songs. It seems that there is a like for like.

That to be filled with the Spirit. And letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly. Can be superimposed onto one another. Being filled with the Spirit is not some supernatural.

Abnormal Christian experience. It is the normal reality of walking in step with the Spirit. As we follow the Lord Jesus. This idea of filling is the language of sailing.

Which would have been a good day for it yesterday. You've been going quite fast I think. That idea of your sails billowing out. Building up speed.

And following closely after the Lord Jesus. Paul says walk properly. Avoid danger. Don't slide into a precipice.

[ 33 : 19 ] Walk in purity. Walk as contrasting light. And walk in revealed wisdom. And here's the danger. We hear a message like this. And we feel convicted.

And we think. Oh dear. I need to go from here. And pull my socks up. I need to filter my URL. I need to not engage that conversation. And it's all about our efforts.

I need to try harder. Work harder. Do better. That though is moralism. And not the gospel. To go away thinking that.

That would be to totally miss the point. Because you'll leave here with fresh resolve. And it will fade. By the time you've had dessert. The end of verse 14 is the solution.

It's a quote from an early Christian hymn. It says. Awake, oh sleeper. And arise from the dead. And Christ will shine on you. Here's the solution.

[ 34 : 21 ] When we're struggling in these areas. It's to wake up to who we really are. That the reason we wander down unhelpful ways. Is because we're sleepwalking.

We're not paying close enough attention. To who we are. To who Christ is. And what he's called us to do. Our bad behavior comes from false identity.

And our real identity is in the Lord Jesus. Our problem is that we've fallen asleep to who we are. We're sleepwalking into danger. We're dozing off the end of the cliff.

The solution therefore is not first and foremost your efforts. It is a fresh realization of who you are in Christ. What he's done for you and following after him.

It's time to wake up and smell the coffee, Paul says. To wake up to who you are. Time to stop sleeping in sin. Wake up. And let Christ shine his revealing light on you.

[ 35 : 26 ] Reviving, renewing and reorientating your life. A couple of minutes we'll be taking communion. That's a great time. That is a great time to deal with all the stuff.

That God has been putting his finger on. And to say no. I'm waking up from that. And I'm asking Christ, would you shine on me? Would you shine so I can walk with you?

That in Jesus I'm able to walk with you again. Because I was running away. And now let me do that properly. Let me walk properly. The truth is here not to crush us.

But to drive us to Christ. Wake up, O sleeper. Arise from the dead. And Christ will shine on you. Imagine. You're out hill walking in Ben Nevis. Glen Nevis, let's say. It's a bit hilly Ben Nevis. And you're miles away from the car.

[ 36 : 39 ] And the weather closes in. And there's snow and ice. And a blizzard and gales. The temperatures plummet. You can't see your hand in front of your face. And your only hope is to dig in.

You're forced to stop. You dig in. And you try to survive. And you lie there all night shivering. Worried.

Anxious. Am I going to survive? One o'clock comes. Ten past one comes. Twenty past one comes. Not going to make it.

So dark. And I'm so cold. Hands are frostbitten. Can't feel my feet. And at eleven minutes past five in the morning.

The sun breaks through. And those first rays hit the tent. And with frostbitten hands clawing like this. You open the zip and you crawl out.

[ 37 : 42 ] And you experience the reviving rays of a warm sun. And you smile. And you're overjoyed.

And you've made it. You're alive. And the sun is shining on you. For many of us. As we've heard this.

We feel like we've lived. Too much time shivering in a dark cold tent. And what Paul. What God. What the Lord Jesus is saying through his spirit is.

Open the tent. Awake oh sleeper. Rise from the dead. And the healing. Warming. Bathing. Restoring. Rays. Of Christ. Who is intrinsically light. Will shine on you. Let's pray.

[ 38 : 44 ] Whoever says they abide in Jesus. Ought to walk. In the same way in which Jesus walks. Father as we've studied your word.

As you've spoken. Open. To us through it. Father we're so conscious that we need your help. For those that are wandering Lord.

Bring them back. For those that are dabbling in sin Lord. Would you convict them. For those of us that are shivering. And cold.

Would you bring us into the glorious. Rays of your son Jesus. Father we don't want to leave here. Having been challenged.

We want to leave here. Having been changed. So Lord where we're struggling. Help. Where we're wandering. Bring us back. Where we've compromised Lord.

[ 39 : 41 ] Challenge us afresh. That we would be those that are fully awake. Who are living as those that have been saved from death. And those that are living each and every day.

Basking in the glorious gracious rays of Jesus Christ. Our Lord. Our saviour. And your son. Father help us and be with us we pray. As we continue in this service.

Amen.