

WALKING THE TALK_ The Premise

It seems that a recurring theme has been surfacing in my personal studies as well as in my preparation for classes I teach. It's has to do with the reminder that *"Talk is cheap."* Jesus puts it petty plainly in **Matthew 15** when He tells the religious right of His day that God sees them to be people who **"honor Him with their lips, but whose hearts are far from Him."** In **Matthew 23**, Jesus called these same people *"hypocrites"*_ saying that **"they didn't practice what they preached."** No big deal, right? I'm afraid that it is.

Today, we begin a mini-series I'm entitling **"Waking the Talk."** In this lesson we'll consider **The Premise** behind the theme, Next week, we'll look at **The Promise** connected to it and then on **April 26** we'll deal with **The Practice** or implementation. I'll also follow up each Sunday night during this time in our *"Care & Share Class"* with open discussion on the topic from the previous morning. Open your Bibles to **1st John chapter 1** as we read the apostle's instruction to believers to **"walk the talk."**

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Let's pause here a moment. John makes it clear that Jesus was **"the real deal."** He was truly God in the flesh. He wasn't a figment of the imagination. John saw Him, talked and walked with Him. He spent **3** years with Jesus up close and personal **24/7**. He ate and drank with Jesus; saw Him living and breathing. He heard Him teach; saw Him heal the sick and raise the dead. He watched Him feed multitudes with a few loaves and fish. He looked on in awe as Jesus walked on water and calmed storms. He'd felt the reassuring touch of Jesus' hand on his shoulder. He saw Jesus crucified and was there when He rose from the dead. He also actually touched the resurrected Lord. John knew Jesus **"practiced what He preached.":** He knew that Jesus had **"walked the talk."** Got it? Read on...

⁴ We write this to make (y)our joy complete. ⁵ This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives.

In this passage, as elsewhere in Scripture, **"walking"** is a metaphor for a **lifestyle**_ including our attitudes and actions, our convictions, our conversation and our choices. It is day to day activity. And **"fellowship"** here is more than attending a church potluck once in awhile. It's even more than taking communion once a week. It's more than coming to church on Sunday. It's living in a close and committed **relationship** with Jesus. It's being in touch with Him so much that our lives are fashioned and formed by the interaction. You see, John had fellowship with Jesus and it gave Him such great joy that he wanted for all those who profess Jesus to experience the reality of a life lived with Him. But, as he writes, if we claim to have fellowship with Him, there is an expectation that we will **"walk the talk."** Otherwise, we're just fooling ourselves...

2012 Gallop polls indicated **80%** of Americans believe in God. Yet our nation seems to be in rapid moral decline and decay. I've thought this is because many who "say" they believe in "god" see him as no more than an undefined higher power or impersonal deity who cares little to nothing about who they are or what they do. Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised if such marginal believers pay little attention to what we take for granted such as the **10 Commandments**, let alone the call to love God and their fellow man. But, those same polls indicate over **77%** of these folks claim to be Christians.

Why is it some who say they're Christ followers don't seem to actually follow Him? How can so many praise Jesus on Sunday, but live the rest of their days as if they don't know Him? Why don't their attitudes and actions match? Why don't more appear to be "**walking the talk?**" But once more, is this really such a big deal? We're saved by grace through faith, not by our own personal goodness. So, what difference does it make if we don't "**walk the talk**"...?

Returning to our text, John contrasts "**walking in the Light**" with "**walking in darkness.**" We have another metaphor here. "**Darkness**" stands for evil and ignorance and death_ a dark place apart from God, who is described as "**Light.**" Imagine a motivational speaker claiming he can show us how to become rich, but who is penniless; Or a representative for "**Weight Watchers**" or "**Nutri-systems**" or "**Jennie Craig**" who is obviously putting on weight. Who would believe their pitch?

Who will believe our testimony, if we claim to have found the answer in Jesus, but we stumble around as if we haven't a clue what life is all about? The world recognizes that those who claim to be Christians ought to be at least on some level like Him. Even if their picture of Jesus may be a bit foggy based more on what they've heard He's like than what they have learned about Him from the Scripture, they get the point that we should be "**walking the talk.**" Ever had someone respond to something you said or did that wasn't Christ-like with: "*I thought you were supposed to be a Christian.*" It occurred to me that **our walk is the music and our talk is the lyrics.** Our lives must accompany the message_ or no one will listen.

Over the past few weeks, we have concentrated on all that Jesus has done for us in His death, burial and resurrection, as well as our expectation that He is retuning one day to take us to a heavenly home. In **Titus 2:11-15** it says: "**The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live upright, self controlled and godly lives in this present age_ while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and savior Jesus Christ_ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people all His own, eager to do what is good.**" In other words, if we truly believe Jesus appeared as God in human form, laid down his life for us, rose again before ascending to the Father_ and that He will appear again at the end of time, **our convictions ought to profoundly influence all of our life.**

I was visiting one of our members in the hospital last week who's recovering after a severe stroke. When I heard she was having difficulty remembering her own children, I asked if she knew who I was. She said "*Course, I do.*" So, I asked if she knew my name. Her eyes revealed she was searching for the answer in the recesses of her mind. After a moment she said, "**Holy.**" I suppressed a chuckle, realizing she was probably speaking of my profession more than my character, and replied rather light heartedly, "*Well, thanks. I can't remember if anyone has ever called me that before.*" It was then the Spirit spoke to my heart. "**And why might that be Steve?**" For the apostle Peter writes in **1st Peter 1:15**: "**Just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do...**"

That's not so much about being perfect or even being religious. Our text makes it clear that **"walking in the light"** isn't living a sinless life_ but it is striving for the excellence of God, realizing our need to walk with Jesus every moment of every day. ***As a Christ follower, I should be set apart*** _ uniquely different from I was when I walked though this life without Jesus. That should be true for all who claim to have fellowship with Him.