

“Walk this Way” // Eph 5:1–20 // Love Incorruptible, 6

Least favorite weekend. Time change. Good to see many of you usually at the earlier service. My first act as czar will be to abolish it, or make it permanent, or at least make the change happen on Friday at 4 so we get out of work early. As it is now I lose an hour of sleep and have to spend the next 3 weeks finding random clocks and looking up on the internet how to change them.

But good to be in the house of God.

EPH 5: The title of the message this weekend is “**Walk this Way.**”

Apologies, of course, to RunDMC and Aerosmith for the **shameless 80’s throwback**—but first of all, I am a child of the 80’s, the undisputed cultural apex of music and movies and all things art; and, secondly, I believe that phrase **summarizes perfectly** what Paul is trying to say in Ephesians 5.

In Ephesians 5 he’s going to give us **3 specific ways that we should walk in light of who we are in Christ**—3 times in the chapter he says, “walk this way.”

Perhaps even **more importantly**, he’s going to show us where we can get the power to walk.

If someone’s legs are disabled, you can’t just show them videos of how to walk. You have to correct what is broken.

Works Consulted:

“Children of the Light,” Tim Keller

“What Is the Wise Thing to Do,” Andy Stanley

“How to Be Filled With the Holy Spirit,” James MacDonald

I got a call about a month ago that one of our staff pastors, Blair Graham, was at the Emergency Room. I said, “Why?” (He’s 35, healthy, with kids)> The voice on the other end said, “he broke his femur.” I said, “How?” It was quiet on the other end for a minute, “Skateboarding accident.”

Now, at that point, I don’t know exactly what to say. Breaking your femur is no joke. A grown man in his mid-30’s doing **skateboard stunts**—I’m just not sure what to do with that.

When I finally got Blair the phone I was like, “*So what did you do?*” “I was trying to show my kids how to do a 180-backside kick-flip at the top of a half-pipe.” (Pic)

Well, **if you know anything about Blair**, he shared Christ with every EMT, nurse and doctor at Duke Hospital, and wrote them all a thank-you note after it was over. (We’ll probably be able to start a campus at the femur ward at DH soon)

But for the moment, he’s not able to walk.

His problem, however, is not here (mind), it is here (leg). So, in order for the doctors to get him to place where he could walk again, they need to do more than just show him videos of how to walk; they had to correct his legs so he can walk. They’ve inserted a metal rod in his leg to help reshape it so he can walk again.

That’s **basically what Paul does in Ephesians 5**. He doesn’t just tell us how to walk; he points us to the place where we can find the *power* to walk again.

Which is why Paul starts his walking instructions in chapter 5 with the word “therefore.”

5:1 Therefore “Therefore” connects what Paul is about to say with what he has just finished saying.

And what has he **just finished saying**? He’s just spent several chapters explaining what God has done for us in Christ, what he has saved us from and who he has predestined us to be.

Therefore... **be imitators of God, as beloved children.**

- As beloved children (because you are a beloved child)
 - Not in order to become a beloved child, but because you have been made a beloved child.
 - **Most religions teach you** that if you keep the laws of God sufficiently, you will become a child of God. Christianity reverses that. It tells us that we were made a child by an act of God’s grace, as a gift, and now we should want to imitate him because we *love him*.
 - ****The older I get, the more often I look in the mirror and see Lynn Greear, my dad, looking back at me. It happens when I’m not thinking about it. I’ll look up and think, “Wow, that looks like my dad.”**
 - Or I’ll **overhear myself** and I sound like him **yelling into empty rooms**, “Is anyone in this room? Is anyone in this room? All the lights are on, so I assume someone is in this room.” Because that’s what my dad used to do.
 - So, the **older I get, the more I look like him** and sound like him, but that’s ok, because I love him and I always wanted to be like him anyway.
- **As children of God, we adore the beauty of God** and we want to become like him.
 - His nature, his character is deeply beautiful to us because by it he saved us.

- **The worst thing to do is to try to imitate God** when you don’t really love him or have his heart.
 - I remember *once really admiring how a certain guy treated everyone*. Whomever he was talking to always seemed like the most important person to him; it was obvious he really loved people, so interested in what was going on in their lives. So, I was like, “I want to be like that.” And so, I tried to imitate him; I tried to be enthusiastic about every person I met, tried to make them feel special, but after a while I realized... “I just don’t like people as much he does.” **More than I need to imitate his behavior, I need his heart!**
- **You have to start here.** Sermons that focus only on the “must do” of Christianity will wear you out... which is where **most sermons spend** all their time. Do this, do that. Around here we call them “**do-do** sermons.” We think they stink.

So, in light of what we’ve experienced in the gospel, he gives us...

3 ways to walk:

1. Walk in Love (vs. 1–2)

vs. 2 And walk in love, (in 2 ways) as Christ loved us* and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice* to God.

- *In the way that Christ loved you. **What comes to mind** there?
 - Unconditionally? Sacrificially? Always-forgiving? Never giving up?
- *: As an act of love to God, like an OT sacrifice. Loving other people is like offering a sacrifice to God.

The Christian has two inward compulsions to love. The FIRST is simply doing for others what Christ has done for us. Loving as we have been loved.

- **What would your life look like if this became the standard for how you related to people in your life?**
- **Let's just take one small area: forgiveness.** Those of you who are married: What would your marriage look like if regularly forgave your spouse the way Jesus forgave you?
 - I've told you before that several years into our marriage, Veronica and I were having a hard time because we were both focused on how the other one had hurt or disappointed us.
 - I responded to her based on what I thought she deserved (according to her treatment of me), and she responded to me based on what she thought I deserved (according to my treatment of her).
 - And one day a counselor told us that our problem was that neither of us was living like we believed the gospel. We were both acting like we were primarily righteous people who were being asked to forgive someone who had wronged us, rather than like sinners who had been forgiven of far more by God than we would ever be asked to forgive in each other.
 - He taught us a phrase that transformed our marriage: "First sinner, second sinned against." We had it reversed (I am mainly sinned against... of course I have sinned, too, but they have really wronged me.)

So, **the first compulsion is to** love someone like we have been loved.

- The SECOND compulsion, Paul says, is as an act love toward God. **Vs. 2** A fragrant offering.
 - **The one we're ultimately loving when we do these things is God.** It's like a sacrifice we make to him.
 - Here is why that is so important: Sometimes we feel like the person we're being asked to love is not worthy of our love. Amen? Maybe they don't even recognize what we are doing or appreciate it.

- I **don't mind loving** Veronica like Christ loved the church, but doggonit—I want her to recognize that and praise me for it to her friends and her mother!
 - But I'm not just being kind to me wife out of love for my wife; I'm being kind to her out of love for Jesus.
 - **Woman I knew said:** "*For so long I couldn't bring myself to forgive him,*" she said. "He didn't seem to realize how much he had hurt me, and he hadn't changed nearly as much as he should."
 - Then I realized, "*He may never be worthy of my forgiveness*, but Jesus is, so I'll do it 1st for him."
- What if you looked through whomever you were being asked to love, and saw Christ standing behind them—and you looked at whatever you were doing for them as first and foremost to him?

Or to **apply it in another** area:

- How would **your giving change** if you viewed it as a response to God for what he gave to you in the gospel?
 - Our giving should not be first and foremost about meeting a need, it should be a response to the gospel.
 - When I talk to you about giving, I often talk about the importance of giving our first and best.
 - God deserves our first and best, whether we make \$200 a month or \$200,000.
 - If you are a multi-millionaire, you might be able to write a \$500,000/check without blinking an eye and thereby become one of the biggest givers in the church, and you might be meeting a need, but you wouldn't be giving your first and best to God. For you, it would be an unworthy response to the gospel.
 - Same if you only make 200... give 40, not meeting a big need, but a sweet sacrifice to God.
 - Does that make sense? **In light of what God has given to you**, you should be giving the first and best of your resources back to him.

- The **best biblical illustration of all of this** is the *woman who comes in with a bottle full of expensive perfume to anoint Jesus' feet*. Everyone is taken aback because the perfume is really expensive and it seems like such a waste, but **Jesus was so moved** by it that he said that everywhere the gospel was preached from that point on this woman's story would be told, because it so perfectly represented the right response to the gospel—love toward Jesus.
 - Our acts of love toward others are ultimately for Jesus, even if they seem like they are being wasted on the person you are pouring them out on.
- **This is what is missing from many of your spiritual lives.** I know, I speak as one of you. You do a lot of right things for God, but not passionately in love with God.
 - Imagine a **single mom with one child** who pours out her life to see her son have a chance at a better life. She works two jobs, scrimps and saves to keep him clothed and fed; she teaches him honesty, hard work, and charity. and when he comes of age, she scrapes together her meager savings and puts him through college.
 - He graduates, gets a great job and never talks to her again. He sends her a Christmas/birthday card but doesn't answer her letters or phone calls.
 - **BUT he's good.** He tells the truth, he works hard, and he cares for the poor, just like she taught him. He thinks, "I'm doing what she wants, I became the man she wanted me to be—isn't that good enough?"¹
 - We would say, No! **It's not acceptable simply** to live a good life and ignore a relationship with the one person to whom you owe everything.
 - But this is **what many Christians do with God: they do right things for God** but are not **passionately in love w/ God**.

Because of the love God has shown for us in Christ we should walk in love.

2. Walk in light (vv. 3–14)

Go to vs 8 where he starts this... **8 Walk as children of light...10 and try to discern** what is pleasing to the Lord. **11** Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

God has brought light into your life, so shine that light into every area of your life.

- "Try to discern." There is the language of intentionality—discern what is pleasing to the Lord in various situations by shining the light of the gospel into them.
- **Sometimes after my wife** goes to bed I try to read, and it annoys her when I leave the bedside light on because it makes it hard for her to sleep. So being the awesome husband that I am, I bought one of those little headlight lamps you strap around your head. I look kind of dumb, admittedly—like a cave spelunker, but it keeps me from filling the room with ambient light. But here's the thing, the light will only illuminate what you are directly looking at. It's best when you she calls my name and I turn to her and it blinds her. So, you have to keep your focus really intensely on the words you are reading.

Paul is saying, "Point the light of the gospel into the various spheres of your life. Don't just go with the flow. THINK about them. Don't **assume your heart** will steer you correctly."

- I was so proud of my daughter the other day. I was asking her how she liked some Disney movie she saw with her friends, and she said, "It was great. Except for that stupid theme in every Disney movie that you should just follow your heart because your heart

¹ Adopted illustration from Tim Keller on Eph 5:1–20

knows best. We all know where that leads, right, Dad? Like Adam and Eve? Following their heart did not lead them to a good place.”

Don't follow your heart or instincts: think through your life with a gospel lens.

To **DO this takes effort**, because the current of the world is going so strongly in the other direction.

- In fact, Paul says, it's as hard as waking up: ¹⁴ “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”
 - Do you know hard it is to get up from a good sleep? **My wife is awesome** at this. The alarm goes off and she just bounds right out of bed.
 - **I hardly ever feel like getting up!** I sometimes have such big plans for my morning that are ruined by that little button on top of the clock called “SNOOZE.” “I don't need to go to the gym today...” SNOOZE. “God will forgive me if I don't a quiet time today.” “I can skip a day of work” SNOOZE. “I can always get another job.” SNOOZE.²
 - Getting up is hard...

Paul says, “Wake yourself up. The world is **sleeping in death!** Don't go with the flow!”

He highlights in these verses **a couple of specific areas** we should shine the light on (just examples).

- Go back to vs. 3, where he starts this section. The first, one sexual immorality. **3** But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. **Proper means “fitting,”** or, consistent with the walking in the light.
- Why is sexual immorality not “proper”?
 - **The world's attitude** toward sex is “*It's a physical desire, and it's not that much different from other desires.* When

you get hungry, you eat. When you desire sex, it's not that much different.”

- In the Bible, by contrast, shines a light on God's purposes for sex.
- Think of the imagery: when you walk in darkness, you have to go by feelings. (Trying to work through a dark room, feeling your way through with your toes as you bang your foot. Turn on the light, you can see that though this feels like a good path, it is not.
- In the same way, most people feel their way through these things. Does it feel right?
- God's word shines a light on it... Sex is **a profound union** between a man and woman—a mingling of souls, an act of love and commitment—in which a oneness of your bodies is to be accompanied by oneness in every other area.
 - **In sex, your bodies interlock... you literally become ONE PERSON physically. That is to be matched by oneness in every other area:** emotional, spiritual, financial...
- **When you have sex outside of marriage**, you are **taking physical oneness** from them **without giving** them the rest of yourself.
 - You say, “Oh, but I do love them...” I'm sure you do, but you **haven't given yourself to them in covenant** form, and you and I both know that you could still walk away at any point.
 - You say, “Well, we're just not in a place where we can get married right now.” **Then stop having sex.** Scripture is clear that God does not want you doing that until the covenant uniting you for life is in place.
- Having sex outside of the bonds of the covenant places you in darkness: **5** For you may be sure of this, that

² Part of this adapted from a Jim Gaffigan routine.

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.

- **If you are sleeping with your boyfriend or girlfriend, you have no inheritance** in the kingdom of God.
- And I know this is making some of you nervous right now, even feel a little awkward, because you are sitting next to someone you are living with or sleeping with and you're not married, but is **the Word of God not clear here?**
- (And maybe you haven't realized it until just now. Fine, now **you have information** you didn't previously have. Start living right today.)
- Ladies, if that guy knows Jesus at all, and he's going to be any kind of spiritual leader, he will heed this, and if not, he's in darkness and is just going to lead you and your future family into darkness, so get out of the relationship right now.
- (*Was that direct enough?*)
- **The second thing that Paul says should not even be named among us: covetousness** **3** But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. **Covetousness isn't proper.**
 - What is covetousness? **Greed.** Craving something that God has chosen to not give us at the time. Never being satisfied.
 - (By the way, *notice how balanced the Bible is.* Paul talks about sexual immorality and **all the conservatives** start nodding their heads. Then he shifts over to **greed and all the liberals** start shaking their heads. Like I often tell you, the Bible is an equal opportunity offender.)
 - **Show me a Christian who is actively fighting both of these** in his or her life and I'll show you someone who is probably a genuine believer and not just a product of their particular Christian culture.)

- **Why is covetousness** "not proper" for a believer?
 - **Because, Paul says, it is a form of "idolatry":** **5** 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.
 - An **idolater is someone who worships** something in the place of God.
 - Well, how does not being satisfied or always wanting more show you are an idolater?
 - **You worship** whatever you think is absolutely necessary to have a happy life. **God is supposed to be the only thing we need to be content** in life, and when we're dissatisfied with what we have, we are saying God is not enough.
 - **That is improper** in the same way it would be improper for me to talk all the time about how awesome another woman is. Imagine if every week I talked about someone else's wife... she's so helpful and beautiful. It must be awesome to be married to her... *but in the sovereignty of God I'm assigned to Veronica.* I accept my lot." You'd think, "Well, that Veronica is not much of a wife if J.D. is always wishing for another." It would dishonor her.
 - It **dishonors God when our** happiness is contingent on something besides him.
 - What **makes you dissatisfied?** What is the one thing you must have if you are going to be happy?
 - Certain **salary?**
 - To graduate from a **certain school?**
 - To have the **approval** of your friends?
 - To be **married?**
 - To be married to **someone else?**
 - Have **kids?**
 - To weigh 20 lbs. less?"

- We **shouldn't feel that way about anything** in our lives except God.
 - We might **want to make** another \$10,000 or want to be married or want to lose another 20 lbs, but our **soul should depend on nothing** for security and joy besides the presence of God.

In light of who God is, and what he's saved us from, we should walk in light...

Third way to walk: **15** Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

3. Walk in Wisdom (15–17)

Wisdom means learning to think correctly about those things not spelled out in Scripture.

A lot of life's big decisions are not spelled out directly in Scripture, like what job you take, or how you spend your money, or what you do with your time or what you watch on TV or who you hang out with.

Walking in wisdom means making decisions in those areas in ways that fit well with an **understanding** of what God is doing in the world.

I think that word "redeeming" is really important: **vs. 15–16** redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

- **The culture we live in is evil**, which means if we want to grow closer in our relationship with God, we've got to be intentional about it.
- *You can't **coast into closeness with God**. The days are evil, to grow with God takes intentionality.*

- Paul says that a **lot of things are "lawful"** for me as a Christian that are just not helpful; they don't **advance God's purposes** in my life.
 - **What you do with your time.** Watching TV all the time may not be morally wrong, but it's not helpful for growing spiritually and it might not be helping you grow at all.
 - **Certain relationships.** Maybe you have relationships that are not wrong, but are just not helping you grow spiritually.
 - *I say this all the time: **Friends are the future you.** You become like them.*

Or **here's another question:** In light of what we know about the world, how should we be spending our time? **REDEEMING**

- The church is on a rescue mission. Certain things may not be morally wrong but they are not wise in what we know about the world.
 - This is one of the reasons I went into ministry. There were a lot of career paths I could choose, but in light of what I knew about eternity, what was the best use of my time?
 - If you know that people around you are dying without Christ, what should you be doing with your time?
 - Is it right to play while people perish?
 - God had given me a gift to teach, so I decided to pursue that as a way of redeeming the time.
- **I'm not telling you that you should leave your career.** But are you leveraging it in ways that would be considered wise in light of the gospel?
 - Are you **using it to spread the gospel**? Leading Bible studies at it?
 - Going on **mission trips** instead of only vacations all the time?
 - Maybe he's **given you a job** that could be used as a platform for gospel-expansion in an unreached people group as part of our GCI.

- **If you know the ship you are on is going down**, what should your attitude be? Is it not **to make sure people know about the rescue boats**?
- WISDOM'S QUESTION: 1000 years from now, will I be glad I lived my life this way?

3 ways Paul tells us we will walk based on our identity in Christ:

walk in *love*, walk in *light*, walk in *wisdom*.

(Potholes)

Before we close this, let me show you a **couple of things Paul warns them about** that could trip them up. Since the theme of the chapter is walking, **you might call these potholes** in the Christian life:

Pothole 1: False assurances (vs. 6)

Right after warning us how seriously God takes it when we entertain sexual immorality or covetousness, Paul says: **6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.**

- **Empty words:** One of the oldest lies in the book is that God really doesn't take sin that seriously and that you can be Christian and not take it seriously, either.
 - In the church today you hear it in preaching that offers assurance of salvation without dealing with sin. Just “pray this prayer and accept Jesus,” or “get baptized” or “go to confession” and it's ok to maintain a few sins on the side as long as they are not that bad.
 - I want to tell you as clearly as I can—that is **not true**.
 - You **cannot claim Jesus as your Savior** until you surrender to him as Lord, and you **can't say you are surrendered to him** as Lord while you openly pursue those things that put him on the cross.
- So—you say you are a Christian, but is he the Lord of your life?

- I don't mean do you confess with your mouth that he is Lord, but does your *life* confess that he is Lord?
- Now, I'm not saying you can't be a Christian and still struggle with sin. There is a **difference in struggling with sinning** and practicing of sin.
 - Struggling with sin means falling back into things you've repented of—or turned your back on.
 - Practicing sin means you keep intentionally doing those things because you've never taken Jesus' Lordship that seriously.
- The **walk imagery is helpful** here. You can walk toward Jesus and still stumble in sin. But you get up and keep going that direction.
 - What you **can't do is say you belong** to Jesus and intentionally go the other direction in certain areas.
 - I struggle with indwelling sin constantly, but there is nothing in my heart about which I say, “**No, Jesus**. You can't have that. I'm going to do what I want in this area.”

Pothole 2. False Comforts (vv. 18–21)

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,

OK, class: **Why do you think Paul compares being drunk with wine** and being filled by the Spirit?

Because both are ways to deal with life's pressures and disappointments, but they do it in entirely different ways:

- **Alcohol is a depressant** that dulls your senses to reality. It makes you less aware of your surroundings.
- The Holy Spirit, by contrast, is a **stimulus that makes you more aware** of reality!
 - **Think of it this way:** You hear there is a group of 200 enemy soldiers coming straight for you just 10 miles away. How do

you have joy and confidence **WHEN YOU THINK** you're going to die? **One way is to get drunk on alcohol.**

- Another way is to do some reconnaissance and find out that there are a group of 2,000 friendly troops only one mile away from your location, and when they get there, they'll surround you and protect you.
- See? Two ways of overcome fear or stress—one by dulling your senses; the other by becoming more alert.

The Holy Spirit **helps you cope** with difficulty by opening your eyes more widely to the promise of the gospel.

- **Alcohol gets rid of worry** by making you forget; the Spirit gets rid of worry by helping you remember!
- **Alcohol gives you courage** by making you less aware of the dangers around you; the Spirit gives you courage by showing you how much larger God is than whatever you are afraid of.

So, Paul continues... 18 ...be filled with the Spirit,¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, Back to back because this is **how you get filled with the Spirit! – If fullness of the Spirit is a greater awareness of reality, that comes through singing the songs of redemption.**

- *Now first, what does that mean? **Address one another** with psalms and spiritual songs? You sing to each other constantly? “How are you.... Today?” That would be awkward.*
- Think of this song that Paul is talking about like a SOUNDTRACK, always **playing in the background** of your heart.
- Scripture should be the soundtrack that shapes how you see everything. It should always be **fresh in your mind** and **constantly dancing** around in your heart, and we should be helping one another with that.
 - When tragedy strikes, and they start to sing the song of despair, you can help them sing the song of hope.

- Or when you begin to sing the song of fear, they can counter it with the tune of “With God all things are possible.”
- When they sing the song of “I can't,” you can sing to them, “**You can do all things** through Christ who strengthens you.”
- When they sing the song of “hope is lost,” we counter that with a good chorus of “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

- **Which means** for you:

- Read it/Memorize it/Listen to it
- (nothing wrong with secular music but **Scripture songs** should flood our minds).
- Songs are sermons you can remember. I'll prove it: 1.5 years ago I did a series called “The Name.” Many said it was the best series I ever preached. Can you remember a single sermon? Yet if I say, “What a powerful name it is,” you can recite the next 3 lines.
- It's **why we come to corporate worship**: we are stirring up in each other faith in God says.
- It's **also why we should be in small groups**. We have to be close enough to each other to hear each other's heart-songs.
- **You can't hear the song someone is singing in their heart** until you are close to them.
- This command to “**address on another in spiritual songs**” is 1 of the 58 “one another” passages in the NT: love each other; pray for each other... admonish one another... here, “address one another in psalms and hymns...” And you can only do these things if you are around other Christians.

Listen, I have said this over and over in this series: A bunch of y'all have got to quit being a spectator at church. For the church to “work” in your life; it cannot be an event you attend, but a community you belong to.

- The blessings of church come not from the programming that emanates from the stage, but from the Spirit moving through the members.
- So join. Volunteer. Get in a small group. Go on a mission trip.
- Get your kids in student activities. If not, the **anthem of their hearts** will be set by Disney, or Bruno Mars or Drake. They need to have their heart songs written by Scripture!

Conclusion:

Well, **all of this comes out of the therefore.** Have you experienced the transforming power of gospel?

- If not, you can **receive it today.**
- If so, you need to **return again to it**, to have its wonders fill your heart so that you are compelled to walk in love, light and wisdom.

We're going to end our time by celebrating the **Lord's table** together. And there is something in it for believers and those who are not yet believers:

- **If you are a believer...** take and remember! Campus pastors will lead you in a moment.
- **If you're not yet a believer, it's not for you**, but the gift it points to *is* for you...

