

# How to Walk a Worthy Walk

## Day One: What is our calling?

*Have you ever taken a wrong turn or lost your way? How did you feel when you realized you weren't going the right direction? How did you get back on the right path?*

I'm sure we've all taken a wrong turn at some point in our lives. I once found myself at a crossroads, and I didn't know which way to go. I was on my way home from meeting with a group of ladies from church. The hostess lived in the middle of nowhere, and it was very late, well after dark. Somewhere along the way, I had taken a wrong turn. Of course, this was before the days of GPS and smart phones. My only choice was to call my husband and have him look up directions on our home computer.

I eventually found my way home. It can be a scary experience finding yourself on the wrong road and not knowing how to get from where you are to where you need to be. The same is true in our spiritual lives. Sometimes, we realize that we are not where we need to be in our walk with God. Sin and distraction can cause us to wander off the path. We may not always know how to get back on track, but we know something needs to change.

*Have you ever gotten off the right path in your walk with God? What caused you to wander off the path? Have you gotten back on track, or is this something you need to work on?*

*Read Ephesians 4:1. Who is the author of Ephesians? To whom was he writing?*

The book of Ephesians was written by the apostle Paul while a prisoner in Rome. He was writing to encourage the Christians in the church in Ephesus to stand firm in their faith. They were surrounded by magic, the occult, and idolatry. Although the Ephesian believers were faithful and loving (see Eph. 1:15), it would have been easy for them to get off the right path by giving in to the influence of the pagan culture surrounding them.

*In what ways have you found yourself being influenced by the culture surrounding you? How do you stand firm in your faith in the midst of temptation?*

*In Ephesians 4:1, what did Paul urge his readers to do?*

Paul urges his readers to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [they] have been called (ESV),” or to “live a life worthy of the calling [they] have received (NIV).” Like the Ephesians, we must walk worthy of our calling, but before we can do that, we must know what our calling is.

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*Read Ephesians 1:4-6. According to verse 4, what did God choose us to do or be? What does it mean to be holy and blameless?*

God chose *you* personally, before time ever began, and He chose you for a reason. He has a plan for your life—that you be holy and blameless before Him. The word “holy” refers to moral purity, or doing the right thing. The word “blameless” has to do with freedom from the guilt of sin, or not doing the wrong thing. This is not optional, but rather this is the purpose for which God has chosen us.

*Do you struggle more with being holy (doing the right thing) or with being blameless (not doing the wrong thing)? What are some specific areas of your life, or specific sins, that keep you from walking worthy of your calling?*

*Going back to Ephesians 1:4-6, what does verse 5 say that God predestined us for (predestined just means that He planned this for us beforehand)? What are the implications of being adopted into the family of God? How does that affect how we live our lives?*

We have been adopted as daughters of God. We should want to live in a way that pleases Him, just as a child wants to please her earthly father. We should also live in a way that reflects positively on God. We don't want to do anything bring shame to the family name.

*Read Romans 8:29. What does this verse say that we have been predestined to do? What does it mean to be conformed to the image of Christ? Does this happen automatically when we're saved?*

We have been called to be conformed to the image of Christ, a process that we call sanctification. There are three parts to sanctification:

1. Positional sanctification: This happens at the moment when we are saved. We are set apart from the world for God.
2. Progressive sanctification: This is a lifelong process through which we become more like Christ and less like the world.
3. Perfect sanctification: This happens when we reach heaven and will finally be made perfect.

To sum it up, to walk in a manner worthy of our calling means to live a holy, blameless life, one in which we are progressively becoming more like Christ. The big question is, how do we do that? We'll answer that question throughout the rest of the study.

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## Day Two: Put Off the Old

Some of you may remember a movie that came out many years ago called *The Princess Diaries*. The movie is about a plain, awkward teenage girl who suddenly finds out she's a princess. Although she already *is* a princess, she must learn how to *be* a princess. She has to learn how to walk properly, how to dress, how to do her hair. By the end of the movie, though, she's beautiful and confident, ready to take her place in the palace.

I see a parallel between this story and the Christian life. When we're saved, we are adopted into God's family and essentially become princesses, daughters of the King of Kings. However, we don't automatically know how to be princesses. Yesterday, we saw that, as daughters of the King, we are to walk worthy of our calling in Christ, which is to be holy and blameless before God. To do this, like the girl in the movie, we must change from who we are now to who we ought to be. As Christians, we're to become more like Christ.

*How have you changed since you first received the gift of salvation? What areas of your life do you still need to change in order to be more like Christ?*

We all have areas of our lives that we need to change. However, we may not always know how to do that. In Ephesians 4:17-24, Paul outlines a process by which we can change from who we are to who we ought to be.

*Read Ephesians 4:17-24. According to verses 22-24, what three things must we do?*

In these verses, Paul says we must put off the old, be renewed in our minds, and put on the new. We'll focus the first part, putting off the old, in today's study, then look at the other two steps in the upcoming days.

### Put Off the Old Way of Living

1. First, Paul describes our old way of living (Ephesians 4:17-19).

*How should we no longer walk? How does Paul describe this way of living? Why should believers not act this way?*

Paul writes in verse 17 that we should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk. He describes Gentiles as being darkened in their understanding, alienated from God, hardened in their hearts, callous, sensual, and greedy. Paul uses the word "Gentiles" here to refer to unbelievers. This is a picture of who we were without Christ. We are told to put off this kind of behavior because it does not reflect Christ.

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2. Next, Paul says we are to walk in the truth of Christ (Ephesians 4:20-21).

*Can unbelievers walk in the truth of Christ? What does it mean to walk in the truth?*

Paul assumes that his readers are believers, that they have heard and accepted the truth of Christ. When we are saved, we are changed. We have died to sin and are no longer slaves to it (see Romans 6:5-7 and 2 Corinthians 5:17). As believers, we also have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, or living inside of us, to help us to resist sin and live the way we are supposed to. Unbelievers are still slaves to sin and do not have the Spirit to help them resist temptation, so they cannot walk in God's truth. To walk in the truth means walking in obedience to God's Word. Like the Ephesians, we must learn Christ. We must know who He is if we are ever to become more like Him.

3. Paul then tells us to put off our old, former self.

*Why is it so important to put off our old way of living? How can we do that?*

As new creatures in Christ, our old sinful lifestyle should not characterize us anymore. Jesus says that our obedience is evidence of our love for Him (see John 14:15). According to James, we show others our faith by our works, but faith without works is dead (James 2:14-20). We do not earn salvation by working for God, but once we are saved, our love and gratitude cause us to want to joyfully serve Him. Therefore, it's important to put off our old way of life in order to be obedient to Christ and as evidence of our salvation.

How do we put off our old self? Here are a few suggestions:

- Identify what sinful behaviors or attitudes you need to put off. Some sins may be obvious to you, but others may be harder to recognize. Ask God to show you what areas He wants you to work on.
- Pull your sin out by the root. Once you identify a sin, try to determine what is the root cause of that sin. For example, the sin of gossip may actually be caused by envy or pride. You can't really deal with a sin unless you know what's causing it.
- Focus on the next right choice. If you think about never committing a certain sin again, it can be overwhelming. Instead, just focus making the right choice the next time you face that temptation. Over time, the more you make the right choice, the easier it will be the next time you are faced with that temptation.
- Plan ahead. You will face temptation, but if you're not prepared for it, you're a lot more likely to give in to it. Come up with a plan for what you'll do when faced with a given temptation.
- Rely on the help of the Spirit. On our own, we cannot resist temptation. However, we have the Spirit in us, and He will help us if we ask.

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## Day Three: Be Renewed in Your Mind

*Have you ever been deceived by someone? Why did you believe their lies? What made you finally realize the truth?*

In 1978, more than 900 members of a cult called the Peoples Temple died during a mass suicide/murder, under the leadership of Jim Jones, who drew people into his cult with promises of building a utopian society complete with racial and social equality. More recently, around 80 members of the Branch Davidians were killed in a fire after a siege by the FBI that lasted 51 days. The leader of this cult, David Koresh, convinced his followers that he was the Lamb referred to in Revelation 5, and that his task was to break the seven seals, thus beginning the Apocalypse.

How could people be so deceived as to die for such obvious lies? You may be thinking that you would never be so gullible as to be taken in by a cult like that. While you may be able to recognize and resist such clear deception, Satan usually operates in a much more subtle way. He mixes just enough truth with his lies that it actually sounds right, making his deception much harder to recognize.

Yesterday, we looked at the things we must do if we are to change from who we are to who we ought to be, focusing on the first step of putting off the old. The second step is to be renewed in your mind, which is essential if we are to be able to resist the lies of Satan.

*What does it mean to be renewed in your mind? Why do we need to renew our minds when we are saved?*

To renew your mind means that you begin to align your thoughts to the truths of God's Word. You think less like the world and more like Christ.

*What are some truths from Scripture that are important for us to understand as we battle sin?*

*Read Isaiah 42:8. What does this verse tell us about God?*

First, we must understand the truth about God. Often, we create an image of who God is based on our limited understanding, which may not bear much resemblance to the true God of Scripture. It's important to study God's Word so that we can know God for who He really is, not who we think He is or who we want Him to be. To do anything else is idolatry.

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*Read Jeremiah 17:9. What does this verse tell us about the condition of our hearts?*

Next, we must understand the truth about who we are. We must realize that our hearts are deceitful and cannot be trusted, which is another reason that we must renew our minds. Our thoughts and emotions were affected by the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden. We cannot trust ourselves to make the right decisions, and it's definitely not safe to do what feels right. We need God's truth to keep us on the right path.

*Read Psalm 51:3-5. What do these verses say about our sin?*

We must also understand the truth about sin. We must first admit that we do sin (v.3). Then we must realize that our sin is ultimately against God, although it may hurt other people (v.4a). All sin is rebellion against God, choosing to do what we want rather than what God wants. Because we sin against God, He is just and right in punishing us (v.4b). We are sinners from birth, because Adam's sin was passed down to us (v.5; see also Romans 5:12). We sin because we are sinners by nature; we don't become sinners once we sin.

These are just a few of the truths that we need to understand if we are to renew our minds, aligning our thoughts to the truth of God's Word. The better we understand these truths, the better able we'll be to recognize the lies that we're exposed to.

*What are some ways that we can align our thoughts to God's truth?*

We can learn the truth of God's Word in several ways. Here are just a few:

- Read and meditate on the Bible—It's important to be in the Word regularly. However, just reading it is not enough. We must study it and meditate on it, thinking about what we read throughout the day, letting it sink into our hearts.
- Listen to godly instruction—It's important to be part of a Bible-believing church, where the Word of God is preached and taught faithfully. There are also many other ways to hear the Word—podcasts, Bibles on CD, Bible study DVDs, sermons on TV or radio.
- Read sound literature—The Bible is the most important book you can read, but there are many other books available that explain the Word and are beneficial in helping us grow in our faith. Reading Christian living or theology books can be an excellent way to align our thoughts to God's Word.

A word of caution: We must practice discernment! Just because someone calls himself/herself a Christian doesn't mean that they teach sound doctrine. We must study the Bible so that we know the truth. Then we must evaluate anything we hear or read according to the truth of Scripture. If someone teaches something that differs from what the Bible says, we should stop listening or reading!

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## Day Four: Put on the New

Have you ever watched a makeover show? I've recently gotten hooked on watching reruns of a show called *What not to Wear*. The hosts of the show surprise unsuspecting people with a makeover and money to buy a whole new wardrobe. These people are nominated by friends and family because they dress like in a way that is sloppy, frumpy, or just inappropriate. There have been some episodes where, with a new hairstyle, makeup, and clothes, the people were unrecognizable by the end of the show when they returned home to show off their new looks to the ones who nominated them.

It's amazing how just putting on different clothes and a little makeup can change someone's appearance. This reminds me of our Christian walk. In the passage we've been studying, Ephesians 4:22-24, Paul uses the image of clothing to illustrate the process of sanctification. Before we're saved, we're dressed inappropriately in our old, sinful clothes. We must take off these sinful clothes and replace them with new righteous ones. We've already talked about taking off the old. Today we'll look at the importance of putting on the new.

*Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. What happens when we are in Christ? What does this have to do with putting on the new?*

There is one major difference between a makeover show and our Christian walk. On the makeover show, the person at the end of the show may look very different, but it is still the same person. However, when we become saved, we become totally new creatures. We are no longer the same person we were before. If that's true, then we shouldn't continue to walk as we did before we were saved. We must learn to walk in a way that is keeping with the new person we have become.

*Do you look different today than you did when you were saved? How have you become a new person in Christ?*

*Read Matthew 12:43-45. What happened when the unclean spirit returned to the person that it had left? How does that relate to our discussion about putting on the new?*

In this passage, an unclean spirit left a person, but couldn't find anyone else to possess. It returned to the person it had left. The person's heart was unoccupied, so the spirit returned to possess him, bringing along seven other spirits. This illustrates our need to replace our old sinful habits with something new. Otherwise, it's too easy to fall back into the old habits when tempted.

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*Have you ever tried to change a bad habit? Were you successful? What did you do to break the habit?*

*Look back at Ephesians 4:24. According to this verse, what does our new self look like?*

Paul says that the new self is created in the likeness or image of God, righteous and holy. Does that sound familiar? On day one, we discovered that our calling is to be holy and blameless before God, becoming more like Christ. By putting on the new, we are walking worthy of our calling.

*List some Christ-like characteristics that the Bible tells us we should display. (See Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 5:3-10; Colossians 3:12-14).*

How can we put on the new? Here are a few suggestions:

- As you identify what to put off, decide what you can put on in its place. For example, if you know you need to put off lying, then you can put on the truth in its place.
- Develop a game plan for how you can put on this new trait. It's helpful to come up with practical steps to help you. You may read books on the subject or ask someone to hold you accountable. It's often a matter of starting a new habit to replace an old one.
- Memorize Scripture that pertains to the new trait you are trying to put on. Scripture is powerful, and keeping it in your mind can help you as you try to develop a new habit.
- Pray for the Spirit to help you. Just as you can't put off the old through your own power, you also can't put on the new by yourself. In fact, many of the new traits we should develop are called Fruit of the Spirit, meaning the Spirit must develop these in us.



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## Day Five: Reflection and Prayer

*Read Psalm 139:23-24. Use it as a model to write a prayer, asking God to show you what areas of your life you need to change.*

*As you allow God to reveal to you what needs to change, use the following chart to help you record what sinful attitudes or behaviors you need to put off, as well as what you can put on in its place.*

Old sinful behavior or attitude	New righteous behavior or attitude
Example: Laziness	Hard work

*Choose one of the items you listed above to work on. Search the Scripture (or Google) to find a Bible verse or verses that you can memorize to help you put off the old and put on the new behavior.*

Example: Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread. (Proverbs 20:13)

*Write down three practical steps that you can take to stop doing the old and start doing the new.*

Example;

1. Make a daily to-do list so I know what needs to be done.
2. Do not turn on the computer until my chores are done.
3. Leave my phone on the kitchen counter so I'm not tempted to be on it.