

How does a baby learn to walk? Do they read a 500 page textbook on the art of walking, take a ten-week walking class, or watch an online, video-based walking course? Of course not! They learn by example and by practice. Paul, in our text talks about walking in a manner worthy of our calling, in other words, walking in faith. As we consider his words of instruction, we seek to function as God's faith walkin' people.

I. How, then, do we walk as faith walkin' people? 1. We do so by practicing humility. As Paul begins his list of instruction, he starts with humility. When a baby is learning to walk, they don't know how before they learn. We, on the other hand, already know how. Our challenge is to do what we know, to put humility into practice. Jesus provides the perfect example. In the book of Philippians, Paul tells us that Jesus humbled Himself by taking on the very nature of a servant. There's our key word - servant. To practice humility is to function as a servant, to be one who offers to serve whenever the opportunity is available.

2. We live as faith walkin' people by demonstrating gentleness. Paul writes, "with all humility and gentleness." What's the opposite of gentleness? Arrogant, boastful, proud. As faith walking people, God says, "Offer gentleness in your words and actions; speak with a gentle voice; act with gentle actions." Our kids are good teachers because they know the difference and the impact each have on them. Whether kids or adults, faith walking people offer kindness even where kindness isn't expected. They offer calming words instead of words that create unrest. Where people operate with gentleness, there you find peace and harmony at work.

3. We live as faith walkin' people by displaying patience. "Humility, gentleness, and patience." If all those were occurring in your work place every day, would you look forward to going to work? Patience is a choice. We choose to practice patience, to be slow to react, and slow to overreact. Patience says, "I will listen. I will hear them out. I will think carefully and then, I will respond in a way that builds up, not tears down, in a way that demonstrates honor and value, not a way that diminishes the value of others. I will be eager to understand and slow to object. Until I am as patient as Christ is toward me, I will continue as a student in His classroom."

4. We live as faith walking people by choosing to function in Christian love. Isn't that a given, an automatic? It should be, but we all know it isn't. Christian love is a choice and only those who make the right choice eagerly offer Christian love. We may know all the "Love is..." statements from I Corinthians 13, but God waits to see those statements in action. As we know, our world isn't a loving place. So, it's easy for us to act as the world around us acts. But God wants and expects more from us. To us, He says, "I loved you so much that I died in your place. Now, follow My example. Love each other as I love you. It's the only way to be My faith walkin' people."

5. We live as faith walking people by accepting diversity. Paul says, "bearing with one another in love." Now, "Bearing with" doesn't mean that we merely find a way to put up with certain people. "Bearing with" is the act of accepting diversity. Before we think our way is the only way, Paul's words encourage us to listen, to consider the ideas of others, and to look for ways to incorporate those ideas into our own

thinking so that the end result is a working solution to the problem at hand. As we listen, as we understand the viewpoint of others, we realize that my way and the highway isn't the way God's Church operates.

6. As we live by faith, we commit ourselves to unity. Paul emphasizes the importance of unity as he says, "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit." How many churches could Paul have created if people hadn't been eager to walk in unity? How many churches today thrive without unity? Without unity of the Spirit, without united effort, the church stumbles. Paul knew the value of unity. That's why he encourages unity. The song says, "United we stand; divided we fall." Maybe those words aren't in our hymnbooks, but they are truth nevertheless. When we are united, we can do amazing things, things we never dreamed could happen.

7. We live as faith walking people by promoting peace. "Eager to maintain unity in the bond of peace." In Matthew, Jesus Himself says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Ever known someone who likes to stir the pot, who always has a differing opinion just because they can? When we're focused on and promoting peace, we do all we can to work toward peace. Paul's terminology is useful as he uses the phrase "Bond of peace." When you glue or bond two pieces of wood together, they function as a unit. As we bond ourselves together for the sake of God's church, we function as a cohesive unit whose ultimate goal is to grow the church.

8. We live as faith walking people by clinging to our faith. "One Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all." In simple terms, that's our statement of faith and we must hold on to that faith. Our world is a tough place to live and it's getting tougher every year. To survive, we must keep the faith. We must be those who say, "Here I stand. I can do no other so help me God." If we don't stand, the next generation won't either and if no one stands on the truth, there will soon be no truth and nothing to stand on. Popular or not, we cling to our faith, to one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all.

9. We live as faith walkin' people by remaining people on the move. Paul writes, "I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling." His point? Don't sit and wait for someone else. Don't stand around thinking it's someone else's job. Do your part. When each of us is doing our part, all the parts come together to make the whole. Today, in this church, God needs you and you and me. He needs us to volunteer to serve, to offer our assistance, to ask, "What can I do to help?" and to be people on the move. When we're in movement mode, movement happens and God's church grows. Then, we recognize that every step that promotes growth is a great thing.

10. Like those babies learning to walk, we learn best by example and by practicing. As we follow the example of our Lord and move for Him, we will hear Him say of us, "Thanks for being one of My faith walkin' people." Amen.