

Walking Together
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Ephesians 4:1-10

- A peaceful stroll; driving in Atlanta traffic; or floating down a lazy river. How do those metaphors apply to the first part of Ephesians four?
- The Christian life should be like a peaceful stroll down a country lane.
- I can read your mind. *“Get real; being a follower of Christ is no ‘walk in the park!’”* Don’t get ahead of Paul and me. I said it SHOULD be like that.
- Sadly, our experience shows that often Christians walking together as the “body of Christ” (the church) can be more like driving in Atlanta traffic!
- If we practice what Paul urges in these verses, going through life with other followers of Christ can be more like a “lazy river” at a waterpark.
- Now, are you totally confused by metaphor overload? Be patient!
- Jesus told His church, ³⁴ So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” John 13:34–35 (NLT)

Big Idea: Christ-followers as a group (the church) are to live in love, unity, and peace. That kind of love and unity only comes when each individual believer is interacting with other believers in a manner that’s worthy of Jesus’ calling. That can only happen through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Let’s unpack the first six verses of Ephesians four. Paul writes:

4 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

- Verse one sets up this whole passage. Let's "camp" there a moment.
- Again we see that word "therefore." Paul has spent the first half of his letter outlining the doctrine of who Jesus is and what He has done for His followers. Now with the word "therefore" Paul connects the train cars to the engine. The train of how to live as a follower of Jesus follows the engine of Christ in the center of every believer's life.
- **What do you see in verse one? How does Paul make it clear his message is all about Jesus? Based on this verse, to whom was Paul writing? What is he passionately urging Christians to do?**
- In scripture the word "walk" is a metaphor for how we live our lives.
- Psalm 1:1, Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked...
- Micah 6:8 (ESV) ...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
- Scripture says, Enoch walked with God and Noah walked with God.
- Imagine you are walking with someone down a country lane.
What happens during that stroll? Describe it?
- One writer, *"You are in close proximity. You talk, laugh, listen, and share your hearts. Your attention is focused on this person to the exclusion of almost everything else. You notice the beauty around you or an occasional distraction, but only to point it out to your companion. You share it together. You are in harmony, and you both enjoy the peaceful camaraderie."*
- *"He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own."*
- Swindoll writes of Paul's metaphor, *"Walk. It almost sounds manageable, doesn't it? Just put one foot in front of the other. Small ones if you have to, big ones if you can. Just walk. Walk in the right direction, walk in the right way, and walk with the power of the Spirit . . . but walk."*ⁱⁱ
- In this verse the worthy walk Paul describes is not a solitary stroll but walking through life with our brothers and sisters in Christ as a family.

- The point: When we are living life with other followers of Christ we are to do so in a manner worthy of Him.
- Let's see what that "worthy walk" looks like.

² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- Humility - The actual word is "lowliness." Swindoll: *"The same word is used in Philippians 2:3: "With humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves. "Quite simply, for the Christian it means putting Christ first, others second, and self last."*ⁱⁱⁱ
- Gentleness or meekness – **How would you describe gentleness in living with others? Does it mean being a 'doormat' for people?**
- Wiersbe: *"Meekness is not weakness. It is power under control. Jesus Christ was "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29), yet He drove the money changers from the temple. In the Greek language, this word was used for a soothing medicine, a colt that had been broken, and a soft wind. In each case you have power, but that power is under control."*^{iv}
- Patience or longsuffering – The Greek word: "long tempered." We describe someone as have a "short fuse" or "long fuse."
- **When is the only time someone's patience is on display?**
- Bearing with one another or forbearing/tolerance means making allowance for others. You know that person at church that drives you nuts or that Christian neighbor who is really weird and even offensive to you?
- Do you give them a pass or wish you could give them a punch?
- Swindoll: *"Patience predisposes us to endure all kinds of circumstances; tolerance helps us endure all kinds of people."*^v
- Here's my Atlanta traffic metaphor. **Based on how most people drive in this town, what does their driving say about what they think about themselves versus others?**
- Sadly some Christians treat other Christians with the same lack of humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance as some Atlanta drivers.

- Ever been in a group of Christians where some were focused on getting what they wanted and you better not get in the way? “I’m not slowing down to let you get in front of me!”
- Not much humility, gentleness, patience, or tolerance.
- These four qualities seem to build on each other. Humility leads to gentleness, which leads to patience, which leads to tolerance.
- How can we practice that? The last two words of verse two: “in love.”
- Jesus said it, Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” John 13:34–35 (NLT)
- I can’t be humble, patient, gentle, or tolerant apart from the (agape) love of Christ in my heart through his Holy Spirit.
- That’s why in verse three Paul instructs us to be “*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*” Another translation: “*united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.*”^{vi}
- **If all believers are indwelt with the same Holy Spirit why do we fight?**
- Here is where my “lazy river” metaphor comes in. Ever been to a hotel or water park where there is a lazy river? **How does it work? What happens if I decide I don’t want to go in the direction of the stream? What happens if I want to get ahead of everyone else? What if I decide to stop in the water and sit? What should everyone do for it to be a pleasant experience?**
- In my “lazy river” example, think of the stream as the Holy Spirit. If we are all yielding to the direction and current we can all float together in peace.
- If, on the other hand, I’m paddling against the Spirit, there will be chaos.
- Some people go slower and I need to slow down for them. Some get turned around in their float and I need to give them room.
- All need to make way for each other as we float in the same direction.
- **If fighting Christians all claim to be listening to the Holy Spirit how can I tell who IS and who ISN’T really plugged into the Spirit?**

- Why should the church of Jesus Christ be all about unity and peace?

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

- Followers of Christ are a family and it should be a loving family not like a domestic dispute on an episode of LIVE PD.
- We serve the same Father. We were saved by the same Lord and Master. We have the same Spirit living in us. We share the same baptism and practice the same faith. We have the same hope of eternal life.
- Therefore, we are to be one body of believers in unity and peace.
- In verses seven through ten Paul reminded them again that all this comes from our salvation through the “grace [that] was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” Salvation is a free gift bought by Christ’s sacrifice and given to us by His loving generosity.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- When I was eighteen years old, in the midst of some church “strife” where I saw Christians being nasty to my Dad (their pastor) I came to the conclusion that church people were some of the meanest people I knew.
- For several years that was my mantra.
- While it was true to some degree, it was really a “cop out” for a young man looking for an excuse to stay away from church.
- In reality, most believers were and are the BEST people I’ve ever known.
- How about the Christians we interact with, is it more like Atlanta traffic or a nice relaxing stream? How am I contributing to the condition of the group?
- Though Paul is speaking to followers of Christ as a group, He was really challenging each individual believer to “walk worthy” of our calling.

- If we stood up in front of a group of feuding Christians and told them to act this way, the two sides of the feud would point at each other and say, “That’s right, you need to straighten up!”
- Maintaining unity and peace in a group of believers is everyone’s job.
- Is it hard? You bet! Do some believers get on my last nerve? Yep! That’s why I can’t be patient and tolerant of others in my own strength. By the way, how do I know that I’m not that irritating person to someone?
- Since I’ve quoted Chuck Swindoll several times, I’ll close with his challenge to us: *“Are you a gossip? Do you spread rumors? Do you sow discord within the family of God? Do you ignore the major truths that unite you with other believers and instead focus on the minor issues that divide you? Do you quickly lose patience with others? Do you only give to others when you know you’ll get something in return? Do you hold grudges? Harbor bitterness? Foster resentment? If you find yourself guilty of any of these charges, ask yourself, “Why do I do these things?” Where did you learn this? You didn’t learn it from Christ.”*^{vii}

ⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/walk-with-God.html>

ⁱⁱ Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 230). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid*

^{iv} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 35). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^v Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 231). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

^{vi} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Eph 4:3). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{vii} Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 235). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.