

Gathering Question:

Do people naturally know what it means to live a good, moral ethical life? Is goodness intrinsic? Explain your answer.

The Bible uses the image, “walk in the light” to describe the Christian life. Think of some other images to describe the Christian life that might describe it even better than, walk in the light. What does “walk in the light” mean?

Walking in Love and Light

Just imagine a person in your church that claims to be a Christian. His testimony sounds legitimate and he has a long history of involvement in the church. However, it is common knowledge that his life is permeated by a number of glaring, long-term sins. One person could claim that if this man were truly a follower of Christ, he would turn away from those sins. Another might say that we all struggle with various sins and that this man’s failings just happen to be more visible than most. Which person is correct? We know that after we are saved, we will continue to sin, even when we don’t want to continue to do so, but at the same time God calls us to a new life, and he also calls us to put off those old sins.

This is a part of the practical outworking of the gospel in our lives. The old ways are gone and we are new people, but sometimes we have trouble getting the old man to lie down. Not only has God redeemed us, but he has also sent his Spirit to live in our lives and he has called us together in on Body, the church. In unity and love, we are to live to the glory of God. We are to become like him.

So much of Paul’s discussion in this passage centers around how conformity to Christ contrasts with conformity to the world. The Ephesian believers lived in a pagan city of spiritual darkness, surrounded by immorality, ungodliness, and decadence. Almost all of the members of that church had been saved out of that background. They needed to be reminded about what it means to live in the light.

To imitate God means to mimic or copy his characteristics. Just as Jesus made the Father known while he was on earth by demonstrating how he responds to certain situations, so also we are called to imitate the right responses in our own lives. We are to be like him. We are to be made over into the image of Christ. Peter said it well, he left us an example that we should “follow in his steps.” (I Peter 2:21)

History records that Alexander the Great once discovered a coward in his army, a soldier who happened to be named Alexander. The legendary leader confronted the man and with a thunderous voice exclaimed, "Renounce your cowardice or renounce your name!" The implication is clear. We who bear the name "Christian" need to reflect on the character of Jesus Christ. As God's dearly loved child, we need to determine some specific ways we can begin to imitate our Father.

Read and Reflect:

Ephesians 5:1-14; Galatians 5:16-26

Reflect:

1. What does it mean to you personally to be an imitator of God?
2. Paul spells out ways in which the Christian's walk of love contrasts with the counterfeit ideas of love found in the world. What are some of these contrasting ideas or actions? Describe some places in the gospels where Jesus contrasts the believer's walk with the world.
3. What terms are used for "light/darkness" in the passage in Galatians? Does this change your understanding of the believer's walk at all? Explain.
4. What one thing about your Christian walk would God have you change today? How will you try to make that change in your life?