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WALKING AS JESUS WALKED

See WalkingAsJesus.com for video resources specific to this week's study.

GETTING STARTED

Max Lucado begins his excellent book *Just Like Jesus* with this powerful challenge:
What if, for one day, Jesus were to become you?

What if, for twenty-four hours, Jesus wakes up in your bed, walks in your shoes, lives in your house, assumes your schedule? Your boss becomes his boss, your mother becomes his mother, your pains become his pains? With one exception, nothing about your life changes. Your health doesn't change. Your circumstances don't change. Your schedule isn't altered. Your problems aren't solved. Only one change occurs.

What if, for one day and one night, Jesus lives your life with his heart? Your heart gets the day off, and your life is led by the heart of Christ. His priorities govern your actions. His passions drive your decisions. His love directs your behavior.¹

What would you be like?

Max goes on to talk about the "heart" of Jesus that can be ours—a heart of forgiveness, compassion, purity, worship, and hope. This is a valuable exercise, for it gives us an opportunity to reflect on how our lives might change if we truly allow Jesus to renew our heart and mind. It takes seriously the challenge of Philippians 2:5, that we should "have the same mindset [i.e., 'heart'] as Christ Jesus."

But is it enough to *think* like Jesus? The New Century Version (ncv) translates Philippians 2:5 a little differently. There Paul commands his readers to “think *and act* like Christ Jesus.” In other words, Paul’s command is not just that we learn to think like Jesus but also that we learn to behave like Jesus. What a challenge!

Great as it is, this challenge is at the heart of this study. We want to look not just at the heart of Jesus but also at His habits, commitments, and behaviors. We want to probe deep and ask the difficult why and how questions about Jesus’ actions: How did He nurture His relationship with the Father? Why did He pray? How did He learn obedience? Why was the Holy Spirit so critical in His walk?

In this study, we will seek to answer these questions by taking a close and focused look at Christ’s life. We will spend the majority of our time, though not all of it, in the Gospels, since the Gospel writers in particular sought to portray for the rest of us how Jesus lived His life. But the challenge to think and act like Jesus is not only found in the Gospels. In 1 John 2:6 we find the challenge of Philippians 2:5 stated in a different way. This is the verse from which the title of our study is taken.

Open your Bible, take a close look at 1 John 2:6, and copy it below. Highlight what you feel are the two or three most important words.

What words did you choose? Why?

This study is designed to help us discover not only *what* Jesus did, but also *how* Jesus did what He did. We want to pause long enough to evaluate what Jesus may have been thinking when He behaved in certain ways. As we examine why Jesus acted the way He did, we will be looking for a pattern—a pattern we can follow in order to faithfully think and act as He did.

My prayer is that you'll catch a fresh glimpse of the biblical Jesus in the coming weeks. As you go through this study, I encourage you to evaluate any stereotypes you may have of the Jesus who lived two thousand years ago. Hold them up to the light of Scripture and see if the images match up. My prayer is that you will find the Jesus who is alive today and still calls us to follow Him. Jesus is alive, relevant, and challenging. He always gives us new insights and He challenges many of our basic life assumptions. He desires for us to continually increase in our love and understanding of Him. May this study help you gain a deeper respect for the real Jesus of the Scriptures . . . and be ever eager to always "walk as Jesus walked."

What it does not mean

Before we begin, it will be helpful to discuss what the command in 1 John 2:6 to "walk as Jesus walked" does and does not mean.

As much as I hate to admit it, 1 John 2:6 does not mean that we are to move to Israel and walk where Jesus literally walked. I love Israel and have often longed to walk the famous "Jesus Path," the path mapped out for tourists there. The Jesus Path lets you walk *where* Jesus walked. But it doesn't help you walk *as* Jesus walked.

Walking as Jesus walked also does not mean that we are to buy a robe and some good leather sandals, grow our hair long, and walk from town to town. While this might make a good movie (or at least provide entertainment for our neighbors), it does not fulfill the command of 1 John 2:6.

What it does mean

How then, in the 21st century, are we to obey this command? What does it look like to walk as Jesus walked?

The word translated "walk" in this passage is the Greek word *peripateo*. It is used in the New Testament to mean "following, making progress, regulating one's life, or conducting oneself" after the pattern of another person. To walk like Jesus, then, means that we are to emulate the pattern of living that Jesus modeled for us.

What is your initial impression of what this means to walk as Jesus walked? Describe it as clearly as you can below:

FOR DEEPER REFLECTION

Look closely at the context of 1 John 2:1–10. Read it aloud. What do you think was on John's mind when he commanded us to walk as Jesus walked?

In what ways do you think it's possible to walk as Jesus walked?

In what areas do you think it's impossible to walk as Jesus walked?

The Message of Jesus DAY 1

As I have studied the life of Christ over the last thirty-five years, I have concluded that there are at least three approaches to the subject. The first approach is to study His message. What did He say? What did He mean? The people who heard Jesus' message recognized that He came with a new teaching, and He delivered it with unparalleled authority (Mark 1:27).

Moreover, Jesus articulated His message in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings. He delivered sermons, spoke in parables, and used illustrations from daily life. As a result, His message was both simple and profound at the same time. His message of the good news of the kingdom was radical in its impact and scope. It touched every area of life. It was filled with hope and expectation. It challenged the basic worldviews—both Jewish and Roman—of His day. A person could spend his or her entire life (and eternity!) studying Christ's message and probably never fully grasp all that He had to say.

Over the next couple of days, we'll look at two other approaches to the study of Jesus' life. Today, we'll start our investigation by looking at His message.

Look up these verses and write down what they tell us about the everyday message Jesus communicated:

Matthew 4:17

Matthew 6:19

I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.

—H. G. Wells

Matthew 6:31–33

Matthew 9:12–13

Matthew 10:37–39

Mark 10:45

Luke 5:12–13

How did those closest to Jesus respond to His message?

Matthew 7:28–29

Matthew 13:54–56

FOR DEEPER REFLECTION

Identify some of the key themes in Jesus' teaching. What seems to come up again and again?

What is missing from Jesus' teaching that you expected to find there? That is, what doesn't He talk about?

How would you summarize the message of Jesus?