

Leading by Faith

Session #1: Walking with God

Welcome – Welcome to Leading by Faith. We are so glad you are here and so thankful that you signed up for this course.

- We are embarking on several months together...meeting about every other week with a break in December.
- I think it is going to be a wonderful experience of learning and fellowship.

And I believe this moment is an historic one. I don't want to be melodramatic, and I am not an overly dramatic person.

- It's just my sense that we are in one of those uniquely important seasons in this church's life.
- Uniquely important for people to step in commitment to the church and step up into leadership for the church.

So, I'm glad you are here.

- You have the opportunity to be part of that season.
- Glad to be here for such a time as this with you. Welcome!

Purpose – You know me as a pastor here, but I also serve as an adjunct faculty member for Western Seminary.

- It's about one day per month on Zoom.
- Obviously, not as much work as my FT job here.

Although Western is in Portland, OR, it's the seminary for the group of churches with whom we are affiliated.

We aren't in a denomination. We are in the Venture Church Network.

- Cedarville University in OH is the university with which we have historic affiliation,
- and Western Seminary is our seminary.

I teach the three courses in the leadership year of their master's level online cohort program.

- (1) Growing in Character & Spiritual Disciplines, (2) Theology & Practice of Team Leadership, and (3) Theology & Practice of Pastoring People & Ministries.
- What you are going to experience is all that material distilled into a digestible lay level course for our church.

I have designed this course to equip LFCC members,

- both men and women,
- with the life, doctrine, and skills needed,
- for Godly, effective and faithful leadership—
- in our homes, our church, our workplaces, and the world.

It is so important and timely for us because Living Faith has experienced significant fragmentation of its leadership core over the past 5 years,

- such that we need to be intentional about reconstituting a committed leadership core group particularly in the next 5 years.
- Think about these **Forces of Fragmentation**. They are Covid, the loss of our Senior Staff, and the life transitions of our strongest demographic – the boomer generation.

Covid – In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic was a profoundly fragmenting force across all of society, not just the church.

- The entire worldwide church was affected, and each church was entirely affected.
- Every aspect of life was fragmented, and every aspect of church life was affected, not just leadership.
- Almost everyone reevaluated their lives in all kinds of ways as a result of it.

In the case of Living Faith, I wasn't here, but clearly Covid had a disjointing effect on the leadership core.

- Prior to Covid, like many churches, our church's elders, pastors and staff were united around common mission, vision, long term relationships, established values and culture, and more.
- Covid disrupted much of that.

What was the mission & vision for a gathering organization if we aren't gathering?

- Some people thought, don't we value gathering more than following health protocols? And they left the church to attend churches that opened sooner.
- Some staff left to pursue other jobs since there was significant uncertainty to what the church would be when we got through the long tunnel of the pandemic.
- Some people in leadership & spouses got very ill, so much so that it marked them for life.
- The virus created more opportunity for conflict and that resulted in more fragmented relationships.

We need to be intentional about reconstituting a committed leadership core group particularly in the next 5 years because Covid fragmented ours. That's #1. Second...

Loss of the Senior Staff – In 2023, I did arrive mid-year, but we lost the entire senior staff, all three of our pastors, two to retirement and one to a TBI from which he is still trying to recover.

- Now, pastors come, and pastors go, and churches still exist and even grow through those transitions.
- It's not uncommon for people to have many pastors during the time that they belong to one church.
- There are people here who have been here since they were kids, and they have known many pastors.

We want to honor the role and office of pastor, but we shouldn't elevate its importance too high.

- God doesn't need specific people to accomplish the work of his church.
- He is no respecter of persons, and he is committed to Living Faith way more than any human is.

That said, he does work through pastors, and a leadership core is invariably connected and cohesive in some ways through the pastoral leadership.

- The senior pastor's teaching and leadership,
- All the pastor's ministries and relationships,
- These have a uniting impact on the church.

So, to lose two pastors who both served more than a decade, and have them move out of state to retire, created a vacuum.

- Sure, I filled the vacuum, but I am not them.
- And all of those people attached to their teaching, leadership, ministry and relationship, went through a re-evaluation process regarding their leadership commitment to the church.

That's totally normal, and it's fragmenting to the core of the church,

- such that we now need to reconstitute the core around new pastors, refreshed mission & new vision, new preaching ministry, new ministries, etc.
- Covid was a cause, #1. #2, so was the loss of the entire senior staff, and third was the...

Life Transitions of the Boomer Generation – The Boomer Generation refers to people born from 1946 to 1964, named because of the baby boom that happened at the end of WWII.

- Those people are now between 61-79 years old.
- How many of those people are in the room?

When I was interviewing for this role, I noticed how many boomers we have here,

- and even that the church building design and feel was boomerish, which is not a word, but you get what I'm saying.
- It was indeed the largest demographic in our church membership and attendance.

I also noticed a smaller group of Generation X people here which is 1965 to 1980, now 45 to 60 years old,

- and to some degree millennials, 1981 to 1996, 29 to 44 years old now.
- That gap was caused in some measure by Living Faith planting Center Point Church, as we sent out a lot of Gen Xers and older millennials, and the church drew a lot of those people too.

We celebrate that, by the way.

- So grateful to the Lord for that church.
- I'm simply pointing out the reality of the effect of planting it.

Living Faith has been strong in boomers and weaker in Gen X, and to some degree millennials.

- Now, what is happening to boomers right now?
- A whole lot! And most of it has a fragmenting impact on the leadership core of the church.

Boomers are retiring.

- Now, when some people retire, they get more involved and more committed to the church, for sure.
- But others pull away from commitment as they rearrange their lives to a new reality of being untethered to work.
- So, there's a shifting of newly committed people and newly uncommitted people, which causes a need to reconstitute.

Boomers are moving, which is often related to retirement.

- Some are moving off the island to different states.
- Others are downsizing and moving far enough away on the island that they are changing churches.
- That just happened with a former Elder here. We lose leaders every year to moves.

Boomers are caring for aging parents.

- Many have lost one or both parents, but some are caring for them in their declining years.
- That is a big challenge, that requires time and energy, which reduces the time and energy they can give to other things, one being the church.

Boomers are becoming grandparents.

- Gen Xers are too, as we have two grandchildren, and they change your priorities.
- Some boomers have commitments to their grandkids who live locally, and those commitments reduce their commitment to church.
- Some boomers have grandchildren living out of state, and they spend time visiting them, especially on the weekends. That time reduces their commitment to leading in the church.

These are all powerful fragmenting forces aren't they?...this stage of life of being 61-79.

- Retiring, moving, aging parents, grandchildren,
- And obviously, the most challenging being...

Boomers are beginning to have health issues and die.

- The average age of death in this area of the world is 80, meaning half of the population dies before that.
- The boomer generation is 61-79, so half of them are in that stage of physical decline and death.
- Dying certainly fragments your participation in church leadership, but so does health decline.
- A couple men have declined becoming Elders since I have been here due to health challenges.

These forces of fragmentation—Covid, the loss of the entire senior staff, and the life transitions of our strongest demographic, the boomer generation—

- are why it is so important and timely for us, to be intentional about reconstituting a committed leadership core group particularly in the next 5 years.
- It is what is driving our vision for leadership.

Vision – Our vision is to train 500 leaders who will lead by faith as the committed core group of the church, preparing Living Faith with the strength and integrity needed to be a faithful Gospel witness on Long Island to the end of the 21st century and beyond.

- You may be here for other reasons, but that is why we want you here, and why we are grateful you are here.
- This is an invitation to join God in what he is building to make an impact for his kingdom in the generations to come – to be part of the committed core leadership group of this church.

Now, some of you may be thinking, “Invited to join the committed core leadership group of the church?”

- I’ve been here for decades and have already been a part of the committed core leadership group of the church.
- You just got here 2 years ago buddy boy!” 😊

Well, the vision isn’t about leaving the leaders who have been here out or dismissing all their hard work up until this point.

- It’s about reconstituting the core group with current leaders’ commitment, experience, and history,
- Reconstituting it around new pastoral staff and a new vision.
- That’s why we are doing this course and the vision for it.

Course Overview – The course content is described in the overview with the dates shown.

- I’m going to briefly explain the content of each one of these and after I do,
- you are going to spend 10 minutes at your table, introducing yourself, and telling your table mates which topic you are most looking forward to.
- You can only pick one.

I’m telling you that now, especially for the reflective types at the table to get mentally prepared for that discussion.

Here are the topics we will be studying

- **Sept 14 – Walking with God**
- **Sept 28 – Understanding Our Purpose**
- **Oct 12 – Knowing Yourself**
- **Oct 26 – Growing in Virtue**
- **Nov 9 – Battling Temptation & Sin**
- **Nov 23 – Managing Yourself & Your Household**
- **Jan 11 – Believing in the Church**
- **Jan 25 – Cultivating a Shepherd's Heart**
- **Feb 1 – *Leadership Community Gathering***
- **Feb 15 – Embracing Christian Liberty**
- **Mar 1 – Resolving Conflict**
- **Mar 15 – Leading Groups & Teams**
- **Mar 29 – Living as a Gospel Person**

Walking with God is the topic this evening.

- I'm going to provide you the biblical background for that concept,
- A description of it, rather than a precise definition,
- How to do it, and an assignment to do it more than you have been in the next two weeks.

Understanding Our Purpose will be about human purpose.

- In some ways, the main point of your life is to walk with God.
- But the Lord has also made it clear in the Bible why he created human beings.

That session will show you how he designed you for good, not for evil.

- How he wants you to explore the good of this world, form what you find for the greater good, fill your world with good, multiply the good & enjoy the good you experience.
- And he wants you to become a good person like he is good.
- You will find a richer overall purpose for your life in this, and God may indeed direct you specifically to what he wants you to do as your purpose.

Knowing Yourself will be an exercise in self-discovery.

- With personal reflection, group discussion, and some self-assessments, we will all spend some time getting to know ourselves better.
- It's more important to get to know God than yourself but knowing yourself is vital.
- You will identify your personality, interests, family, past, pains & trauma, faith, gifts & talents, work motivations, leadership style, character and even besetting sins.

Growing in Virtue will be focused on the specific character qualities of Jesus and how you can become more like him through Gospel truths and faith practices.

- I have 12 virtues of Christ that I define & describe.
- And I have 12 Gospel truths & 12 faith practices that I connect to those so that you can pursue all of them or one of them

Battling Temptation & Sin is part of growing in virtue, but it needs its own session.

- You won't be put on the spot to publicly announce all your sin struggles.
- Rather, we will equip you with strategies to fight the temptations you have to desire, say and do evil things, and to do your best to kill sin in your life.

Managing Yourself & Your Household is a practical session that we may all already be doing well, but certainly it is good for all of us to improve on.

- Leadership and management are not the same.
- Good managers aren't necessarily good leaders, but good leaders have to be able to manage.

First, and foremost, their own selves and their own lives. And secondly, their households if they have a spouse or a family.

- Doing that well is a prerequisite for leading in the church,
- And should always be monitored while someone is leading so that they and the church can maintain spiritual health in both ways.

Those sessions will get us to the end of the year, and we will start 2026 with Believing in the Church.

- Believing in Jesus is more important of course, but we should all also believe in the church.
- We will define the church and see how important God thinks the church is. It's his bride, and he is the groom. So, obviously very important.

There's plenty of church bashing that goes on in this world.

- While there are certainly times for valid critiques of churches, I find it unfortunate when people bash churches for illegitimate or even minor reasons.
- God has been so gracious to us. We should be gracious to others, especially his people.
- And we should believe in what he is doing in and through the local church.

Cultivating a Shepherd's Heart follows that session by looking at what it means to be a good shepherd.

- Jesus was the best. We will study him of course. But also, some of the Apostles.
- You don't have to be an Elder or a Pastor to shepherd people. And the Bible describes good shepherds so that we can have that shepherding heart.

Leadership Community Gathering isn't in here and it isn't a class.

- The purpose of Leadership Community gather is to gather everyone in leadership positions at our church once per year for vision, encouragement, information, equipping and fellowship.
- Even if you aren't currently in a leadership position, you are invited to it as a result of being registered for this class. We want you there.
- And it will be a slight break from this experience.

We will come back to talk about Embracing Christian Liberty.

- This topic is so important to the health of relationships and leaderships in churches.
- We identify the essential doctrine, church practices, lifestyle choices and approach to society. We have to have unity on those to be unified.
- Then we identify the non-essentials. And we must honor one another's liberty in those to be unified.
- Finally, for the essentials and non-essentials that we can't seem to agree on, we treat each other with grace.

That session may actually cause some conflict around your table, and so we will follow it up with Resolving Conflict.

- You can't be a leader if you are someone who is always creating conflict with other people, for sure,
- But even more than that, you can't be a good leader unless you know how to resolve conflicts you are having,
- And help others resolve conflicts that they are having.

Peace is a big deal to God.

- Jesus died to bring peace between God and humanity,
- And to spread peace amongst humanity.
- Leaders of God's people have to be men and women of peace who are catalysts for more peace.

Then, we will spend some time on Leading Groups & Teams.

- There is a theology of team, rooted in the nature of God.
- Also displayed in creation, in Moses, Jesus, the church, etc.

Then, finally, we will end with how to live life as a Gospel person.

- What does it mean to live a good news life?
- What does it look like? How can we do it?

Which topic are you most looking forward to learning about?

Okay, let's take 10 minutes at your table.

- Introducing yourself,
- and telling your table mates which topic you are most looking forward to and why. You can only pick one!

Furthermore, have someone keep a tally of the topics picked so that we can discover your table's #1 choice among the 6-8 people around you.

- If there's a tie in the tally, flip a coin to see the winner.
- And I will ask each table to say which topic won among table when we are done.

Ask each table to announce their winner and why.

- *Tally them up and announce the overall winner.*
- *Pray to commit them all to the Lord.*

For these all-teaching sessions, here are some ground rules.

- Feel free to get up and use the bathroom if you need to do so.
- Likewise, if you need food or water. Those aren't disruptions for me.

Please don't raise your hand and ask questions while I am speaking.

- I have scheduled these 90-minute sessions tightly.
- With over 100 people, it's too hard to field questions from the group.

That said, I know you will have questions, and I want to answer them.

- The best way to do that is to write them down when they come to your mind.
- Email me. And I will respond or may even bring the question to the group for discussion or address it in the next session, as we will review the last session when we begin each one.

When we discuss questions at tables, please do not dominate the discussion.

- Very unhelpful if you do. Good leaders don't monopolize group time. Good leaders are good listeners.
- If you have 10 minutes to discuss, and there are 8 of you, your input is about a minute long.
- Be disciplined or learn to be.

Please also stick to the topic for discussion.

- No doubt other topics will come to your mind but save those for fellowship time before and after,
- or even set up a time outside of this to talk with others at your table.
- Okay, let's get started with our 1st topic – walking w/God.

Walking With God

Walking with God: Biblical Background

The idea of walking with God originates in the Bible. I'm going to give you seven references to it so that it is grounded in the Scriptures and marked in your soul by God's Word.

- 1. The Garden of Eden** – The first experience of human beings walking with God is found in the creation of the first human beings: Adam & Eve. It seems God created us to be in relationship with him, to walk with him. We get that idea from Genesis 3:8 which reads:

⁸And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

Genesis 3:8 (ESV)

The cool of the day is likely a reference to the time of the evening breeze which would have occurred in a mountainside garden like Eden.

- The narrative doesn't explicitly say that Adam & Eve walked with God, but it does depict God as present and moving through the Garden, suggesting fellowship and regular presence.
- Walking could be an anthropomorphism, a way to describe the indescribable God in human terms that we can understand.

Or it is a theophany, a visible appearance of the invisible God in a form that could interact audibly & spatially with humans.

- Either way, it is the first occurrence of this idea of us walking with God,
- Namely that it is his intention to walk with us. 2nd,

2. Enoch – The great, great, great, great grandson of Adam, Enoch walked with God. This is the second occurrence of the idea, and an important one with new context.

Humanity rebelled against God, and two lineages were created.

- Those people in the line of Seth who walked with God,
- And those in the line of Cain who walked away from God.

The Bible makes that a binary distinction between two types of people.

- You either walk with God, or you don't.
- And Enoch did it so well on Earth, God took him to Heaven. Look at Genesis 5:24:

**²⁴Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.
Genesis 5:24 (ESV)**

Enoch was in the line of humanity that walked with God, and the Bible emphasizes him as a prime example of it with the reward of it.

- That walking with God results in beating death itself.
- That's one of the many benefits. Third...

3. Noah – One of the most famous OT men from the line of Seth. He walked with God too. And we see two more benefits to walking with God in his life. Look at Genesis 6:9:

⁹Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

Genesis 6:9 (ESV)

Noah walked with God.

- That's why he was declared to be in the right with God.
- And that's why he wasn't to blame for the evil of his generation. He wasn't responsible for all the wickedness on the Earth during his time.

In fact, he was the only one left from the line of Seth.

- During Noah's time, everyone else but him walked away from God.
- He was alone in it. Thus, the flood and judgment.

After the flood, the Bible describes two lines of people again:

- Shem who walked with God, and those like him.
- Canaan who walked away from God, and those like him.

Over time, the majority of humanity went the way of Canaan,

- Which resulted in God judging the world at Babel by confusing human language.
- Then, he called a man whose family had walked away from God.

4. Abraham – Abraham was not walking with God, nor was his father or his father's family. But the Lord chose him and called him out to walk with him. Look at Genesis 17:1:

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ²that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."

Genesis 17:1-2 (ESV)

God commanded Abraham to walk with him,

- and promised that if he did, he would make a covenant with him,
- which included the blessing of family and many descendants.

We know from the Scriptures that Abraham did walk with God, and God blessed him in more ways than family.

- Through him he created the nation of Israel,
- And commanded that entire people to walk with him, promising blessing if they did and curses if they didn't.

The 5th example in the Bible about walking with God is one of Israel's prophets...

5. Micah – Micah was one of the minor prophets and there's a book in the Bible by his name. One of the main points of his ministry was to remind God's people, and all people that God designed human life to be a walk with him:

⁸He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8 (ESV)

God's commands are to do the right thing in society, to be devoted to generosity with others, and to walk with him without being arrogant about that.

The 6th example may be the most important or tied with the 7th. It's:

6. Jesus – Jesus is God in the flesh. He is the demonstration of God's commitment to walk with us, and the embodiment of God's call for us to walk with him.

Though there's no explicit statement in the Bible, "Walk with Jesus," that seems to be much of what his ministry was.

- He walked with sinners and called sinners to walk with him.
- That started with his disciples who became Apostles. Look at John 1:43 as a prime example.

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."

John 1:43 (ESV)

God became man in Jesus Christ to overcome all the obstacles that existed – sin, death, and Hell itself – so that humanity could once again walk with God.

- That the experience of Eden would not only be true again, but it would be even better than that.
- Perhaps the most important biblical background, Jesus, #6. 7th, and lastly on this section, probably tied with 6 since they are one...

7. The Holy Spirit – The Holy Spirit isn't an "it," but a "he," the third person of the Trinity. When Jesus ascended to Heaven to sit on the throne of the universe, he and the Father sent the Spirit to give us new life.

The Spirit is the one who dwells in us and has caused us to be born again by faith.

- And the Bible indicates that we are to walk with the Spirit.
- We came alive spiritually by the Spirit, and now our life is a life of walking with him. Look at Galatians 5:25:

**²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.
Galatians 5:25 (ESV)**

Keeping in step is being in alignment with, walking with.

- If you and I were to walk from here out to the parking lot, keeping in step is walking together.
- That's what God wants for all of your life with him.
- That's the Biblical background for walking with God: Eden, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Micah, Jesus, & the Holy Spirit.

Walking with God: A Description

Given that background, how do we define it?

- What is walking with God practically speaking?
- What was Adam & Eve doing with God in that way in the Garden?

What was Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Micah doing?

- We know that the Apostles were literally walking with God in person.
- They spent about three years with Jesus' day in and day out.

But Jesus isn't here. The Holy Spirit is.

So, what is walking with God like now?

- Different in some ways than before Jesus.
- Different for certain than Jesus being here. What is it?

Rather than a definition, I think it is preferable to describe it in its many facets.

- So, I have 7 characteristics of Walking with God for you tonight.
- First, #1, it's:

1. A Way of Life – In the Scriptures, the phrase “walking with God” is an idiom for a way of life following God. To walk is not just about when you get up on your feet and put one foot in front of the other. It's about living your life generally speaking.

For example, in the OT in Psalm 1, there is a comparison between the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked, and it begins with a reference to walking. Look at v.1:

¹Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,

Psalm 1:1 (ESV)

Walking in the counsel is not merely walking with someone while they are speaking to you, it is living in light of a person's understanding and advice about how to live. Look at how the Psalm ends, v.6:

⁶for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1:6 (ESV)

The way. That's a reference to their way of life.

- Walking is a metaphor to describe a way of life.
- Interestingly enough, in Acts 9:2, 19:9, 22:4, 24:14, 24:22, Christianity is described with that phrase, "The Way," because it is a way of life, a walk with God.
- That's #1. #2, it's:

2. A Gospel Walk – It's centered on, motivated by and guided by the good news about Jesus. That he is the Lord – the Christ, the King, the Son of God.

That he is putting the whole world right re: sin.

- He is righting every wrong done by you and to you,
- Everything wrong within you,
- And everything wrong with the world.

He is the only Savior of sinners:

- His atoning death is the only sufficient payment for the penalty of sin.
- His resurrection life is the only complete victory over the power of sin.
- His glorious return is the only possible way to eliminate the presence of sin.

And he is saving sinners by grace through faith.

- He saves us through backward looking faith to the Cross,
- Upward looking faith to the throne—the tomb is empty—and
- Forward looking faith to his return.

Walking with God means living a good news life.

- A life centered on the Gospel,
- Motivated and guided by the Gospel,
- That's #2, third, it's:

3. A Faith Walk – Faith is the fourth part of the Gospel message, but it's worth emphasizing because of the way the Bible emphasizes it.

Practically speaking, we can't see God.

- God is invisible. Jesus isn't on Earth anymore.
- So, we need faith to be able to walk with God.

Biblically speaking, the Scriptures clearly states that walking with God is a life of faith, not just a decision of faith long ago. Look at Romans 1:17:

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Romans 1:17 (ESV)

The Lord knows the way of the righteous.

- It's the way of faith. From faith for faith, living by faith.
- Walking with God is a walk of faith. That's #3. 4th, it's:

4. A Holy Spirit Walk – Obviously, it's a walk with Father, Son and Spirit. God is one. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of Jesus. All true. But, it's good to emphasize God's manifest presence here and now in this era is the Spirit.

And the Bible describes the Christian life, walking with God, with several preposition when it comes to the Spirit:

- John 14:17 – Walk WITH the Spirit.
- Galatians 5:16 – Walk BY the Spirit.
- Romans 8:4 – Walk ACCORDING TO the Spirit.
- Galatians 5:18 – Walk AFTER the Spirit (Rom 8:1 in the KJV)
- Galatians 5:25 in the KJV – Walk IN the Spirit

To walk with God is to walk with the Holy Spirit, to live with him as he dwells in your heart. That's #4. 5th, it's:

5. An Indicative & Imperative Walk – Sorry to use grammar on you here, but this is vitally important.

An indicative is “you are this, that or the other thing,” while an imperative is “you go do this, that or the other thing.”

- Indicative describes what is actual, real and presented as a fact.
- Imperative is a command, instruction, or requested which demands action.

Romans 8 contains both indicative and imperative. We don't have time to dive deep into that passage tonight, but here is the summary.

As a Christian, you ARE living by the Spirit.

- That's actual, real, fact. Indicative.
- God did that to you by grace through faith. It happened.

Therefore, since that's true, walk by the Spirit.

- That's the command, instruction, that which demands action. Imperative.
- God's calling to do in view of what is already true.

I have found this to be an incredibly encouraging truth in the Bible.

God has accomplished something in you and done something to you that provides all that you need to follow his commands.

- He has given you the Spirit and tells you to walk in the Spirit.
- To live in light of the truth of your new identity, to be in your life who you really are in him.
- That's #5. Indicative & Imperative. 6th, it's:

6. A Group Walk – Walking with God is a personal experience, but it should never be a private one. Other people are walking with God too.

You know...Most of the use of the word “you” in the Scriptures is in the plural not in the singular. In other words...

- It's most often, “you all,” not “you & only you.”
- For example, Galatians 5:16 is...“you all” walk by the Spirit and “you all” will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

That's an important observation in our individualized culture.

- Yes, you as an individual are walking with God.
- Also, other individuals are walking with God too.
- Thus, we are all walking with God.

Very important because we can be myopic and biased and overly subjective.

- We must pursue walking with God no matter who around is or isn't, and at the same time,
- Recognize, other people who walk with God help us walk with God well.

It's a group walk. It's why it's so important to belong to a local church. That's #6. 7th and lastly on this part...

7. A Transforming Walk – It results in major change, and in change for the better in terms of an eternal perspective. Not constant change all the time, but significant and profound and the best kinds of change.

Walking with God will change your circumstances.

- Sometimes your life conditions will get better in a worldly sense and sometimes they will get worse.
- Sometimes easier life occurrences. Sometimes harder life occurrences.

You would definitely be in different circumstances if you didn't walk with God. That's the point.

- I would have been dead, homeless or in jail.
- So, for me it's all better circumstances, but we should acknowledge that life circumstances got worse for the Apostle Paul after he started walking with God.

Ultimately, Our worst life is now.

- Our best life is beyond death forevermore.
- And the best circumstances from that eternal perspective is to walk with God and embrace whatever circumstances that brings.

Walking with God changes your relationships.

- Some relationships will get much, much better.
- Others may get more challenging.

Walking with God changes your vocation.

- It affects what you do for a job.
- It affects how you operate in your job.

Walking with God is transformative in all kinds of ways, but the most important way is within you.

- Walking with God changes your soul.
- Your depravity decreases, and your virtue increases.

You bask in the love of a Father who would adopt a rebel like you into his own family, and it makes you want to love others as he has loved you.

- You experience the deep and lasting peace of being forgiven, being made right with God, and it makes you want to be right with others, to forgive as he has forgiven you.
- You know the joy of being pardoned – there is therefore no condemnation for everyone in Christ because of his atoning work on the Cross, and you rejoice daily that you can live without shame and regrets and fear of death and hell.
- You experience the hope of eternal life, that death has no sting, that it is gain for you, and you want to tell others that they can have this same hope.

Walking with God makes you more like God in the virtuous sense.

- Not completely of course.
- Just a taste of his virtue, but it's genuine, real change.

Walking with God is a Gospel, Faith, Holy Spirit, Indicative & Imperative, Group, Transformative Way of Life.

- 7 descriptions for you, which I guess make up a definition.
- Okay, let's spend 10 minutes at our tables discussing this question.

Discussion: How has walking with God changed you or your life?

- All of us could talk a long time, but if you had to sum it up or pick one thing that comes to your mind and say it in 60 seconds or less what would it be?
- God changed _____ about me or my life.
- Ready, set, go!

Okay, hate to cut off the fellowship, and feel free to continue that after 7:30 PM or make a time with people around you to hang out to talk about these topics. Our last bit tonight is some practical direction on how to walk with God, and a very simple assignment.

Walking with God: A How-To

How do you do this Gospel, Faith, Holy Spirit, Indicative & Imperative, Group, Transformative Way of Life? Well, simply thinking about how you do any relationship is helpful.

You thankfully recognize God's presence, humbly listen to his voice, eagerly learn about him & his way of life, candidly share your mind & heart with him, and trust him enough to confess, repent and obey.

- I think that's 5 practical actions you can take.
- Perhaps there's more to it, but this is a good framework for it. #1...

1. Thankfully recognize his presence. Be grateful he is here, there, and everywhere. He is good in every way. The best. There's no downside for you Christian that you can't get away from God. So, give thanks always that he is with you and for you. Look at Colossians 2:6-7:

⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:6-7 (ESV)

Wake up every day. Tell God good morning.

- And be thankful in your heart for who he is and what he has done.
- Abound in it. Overflow with it. Be a fountain.

All day long, whatever you experience, "God, thank you for:"

- My spouse, my kids, my family.
- My pillow, my bed, my house.
- My job, my retirement, my food, my relationships, my life.
- ETC.

Everything good in your world is from him.

- Everything evil is not. So, thank him for everything.
- But most of all thank him for him. That he, a holy God, would walk with you, a sinner.
- Thankfully recognize his presence. #1, #2:

2. Humbly listen to his voice – God speaks through his Word, the Bible, and he also speaks to our hearts in ways that don't ever contradict his Word in letter or in spirit.

Hearing from him, then, requires reading at least something from the Bible every day, the more you know, the more you hear,

- as well not drowning your mind with all kinds of other voices throughout the day.
- Be aware that he is here, and be ready to hear from him in your heart.

When you do read, and you do hear from him, listen, and listen humbly.

- He is God. You're just a human.
- He knows way more than you and way better than you. That's #2, 3rd practical step...

3. Eagerly learn about him and his way of life – I think that's a bit different than humbly listening to his voice. It's more in-depth study of the Bible. Like we are doing here, or you would do in a Life Group, or you can do on your own, or even through a school.

You know, when you are in a relationship with someone, you are thankful for the presence, you listen to their voice, but you also learn about them, don't you?

- What is the person like? What are their likes and dislikes? Etc.
- That's true with God too, and because he is God, you also learn about the life he prescribes as your creator and master and King.

That's a lifelong endeavor, even eternity long.

- We will never stop learning about God and his way of life,
- Because he is infinitely more in every way than us. That's #3, 4th practical action...

4. Candidly share your mind & heart with him – Now, some people get tripped up on this point, thinking, “God already knows what I am thinking or feeling, why should I share it with him in prayer?”

Well, because you are in relationship with him.

- You're not a subject in his scientific study like he is coldly observing you from a distance with all knowledge about you and gloating in his omniscience.
- Knew that was going to happen, knew he would desire that, knew she would say that. Etc.
- You didn't need to tell me that. I knew that.

No. He made you for relationship with him and others.

- Relationships involve knowledge, but its much more than that.
- It's shared experience.

Don't let our inability to understand his infinitude stop us from doing that which we were created to do.

- Relationship means you relate to him, which means you interact.
- You share your mind and heart with him and do it candidly.

Don't be fake with God. Be real.

- Tell him what is actually and fully going on inside your mind and your heart.
- He is a big God. He can take it. He can process it.
- He can deal with it and still love you with an everlasting love. That's #4. 5th and finally in every way tonight...

5. Trust him enough to confess, repent and obey –

Confession is an act of faith. That I am relying on God to forgive me when I find that I have done something wrong.

Repentance is an act of faith. That I am relying on God's goodness, that his way of life is better than the way of life I am turning away from.

And obedience is an act of faith. That I am relying on God's power to help me follow him in whatever he is telling me to do.

When you find yourself in need of confession, you feel the conviction, that was wrong what I said, wanted, did, tell him and say sorry. Trust him enough that he will wash you clean.

When you find yourself needing to turn away from something that has too much of a hold on you, that can happen with Candy Crush, doesn't have to be something wicked. When that happens, tell him and trust him enough to believe that breaking free from that grip is best.

When you find yourself needing to do something you know God wants you to do. Tell him you will do it! Trust him enough to obey. That's #5.

Practical steps to walking with God...thankfully recognize God's presence, humbly listen to his voice, eagerly learn about him & his way of life, candidly share your mind & heart with him, and trust him enough to confess, repent and obey.

Walking with God: Assignment

- Okay, here's your 1st assignment!
- Take a minute to write down how you are going to walk with God more regularly or deeply in the next two weeks.
- How are you going to be more thankful in his presence each day?
- When are you going to spend devoted time listening to his voice in his Word? What time of day? Where? How long? What Scripture? Are there other voices that you need to turn down the volume or turn off completely?

You are learning about him & his way of life here and at church. So, you don't need to write that down. But...

- When are you going to spend dedicated time sharing your mind & heart with him in prayer? The same time, place, length you are listening to his Word?
- Ask him every day for the next two weeks...is there a sin for me to confess? Is there an idol in my life to repent from? Is there a command you want me to obey?

That's your assignment these two weeks.

- Walk with God more regularly and deeply.
- Make it your top priority and your life will change. You will change. Let's pray.