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 Title: Walk like a ... Christian
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Slide 1

Spot the Difference. It was a game that I used play when I was sitting in a doctors surgery. There you are waiting for the doctor to come and on the table in front of you are a whole stack of women's magazines. And they always had a spot the difference in them. Two pictures that looked the same but there were a couple of small differences. The question was could you find the difference between the two pictures?

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This morning I want us to do something similar. I want us to think about two people that are very similar – similar age, similar background, similar personality type but one is a Christian and the other isn't. Will we be able to spot the difference? What difference does the Christian life really make to you and me in everyday life?

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For the apostle Paul in the book of Ephesians will tell us, no according to 4:17 he will insist on it in the Lord, that there must be a difference. And it will all come down to the Christian's walk. For in this passage four times, Paul will talk about our walk. Unfortunately the NIV translation doesn't make it very clear because the Greek word for "walk" is sometimes translated walk and sometimes "live". Which is not a bad translation as what Paul is saying today will effect not just the way we physically walk but the whole way we actually live. But the idea behind Paul's words is that there should be a distinctive Christian walk.

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So Paul says in

4:17 ¹⁷ So I tell you this & insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer **walk** as the Gentiles do

5:2 As dearly loved children ² **walk** in the way of love,

5:8 Live (**walk**) as children of light

5:15 Be very careful, then, how you live (**walk**) —not as unwise but as wise,

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Many years ago the Bangles might have encouraged us to walk like ... an Egyptian. Here Paul is calling us to walk like ... a Christian. Let's see what he means because he starts our passage telling us to

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1. Walk Differently (4:17-32)

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer **live (walk) as the Gentiles do**, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God *Slide 7* because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

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A Christian no longer walks as the Gentiles, as the non-Christian does because he no longer thinks the way that the non-Christian thinks. For there is a futility about a non-Christian's thinking and a darkness in their understanding. And that ignorance leads to a hardening of their hearts and that in turn leads to a life that is separated from God and a walk that

indulges their sensuality, their impurity and their greed.

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The lights are out, Paul is saying. Their hearts are hard so of course they will live a life that pleases themselves rather than God. But the Christian walk is to be completely different.

20" That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self"

In the Christian mind we now know Christ. We have been taught the truth about Jesus. The Christian will then no longer have their thinking corrupted by deceitful desires, they will be enlightened by a renewing of their minds and given a whole new attitude to life. So the start of a truly Christian walk starts with our thinking. It starts with what we put into our heads, our brains, our intellect.

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Author, Casey Treat once said *"The greatest battles are in the mind."* Henry Ford, the inventor of the motor car also said *"Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason why so few engage in it."* So friends watch your thinking. Watch what you look at on TV, or listen to on the radio or follow on the internet, evaluate them in comparison to what God says is important, to what the Bible says is truth. Spend time pondering God's thoughts after him. Meditate deeply on Jesus and His Word.

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So when people are playing Spot the Difference with us, one thing that should be different about us Christians is our thinking. For that thinking in turn will effect what we wear.

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22" You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness".

Paul's point is if God has now made you one of his people, then change and dress like one of God's people. Dress in a way that fits your new identity. For just as a fireman dresses like this. Slide 13 A policewoman dresses like this. Slide 14 And a minister dresses like this. Slide 15 Sorry he now dresses like this. Slide 16 So a godly person, a follower of Jesus will take off his old clothes and put on his new clothes. Before he was dead so he can now get rid of his grave clothes and because he is now alive he can put on his grace clothes.

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How does that work in practise? Well Pauls says we should no longer be involved in any sort of falsehood, in lying, in deception, in leading others up the garden path. We shouldn't allow our anger to stay for too long, and there are certain things that shouldn't provoke our anger in the first place. We shouldn't get things dishonestly by stealing or cheating or deceiving or hiding things. Instead we should have our clothing made out of righteousness and holiness, out of truthfulness and contentment and generosity.

If clothes maketh the man, then the things that are wrapped around us Christians should be honesty, truth, generosity and trustworthiness. So I wonder can others see these qualities in you and I? Are they sufficiently there for us to stand out from the rest of the crowd? Are we known for our truthfulness, for our generosity, for our control over our anger and our

emotions? Paul says as we play spot the difference, this is an important thing to look at.

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The Christian walk encompasses our thinking, our clothes and our talk. Before we were Christians, we were involved in talk that was unwholesome, stuff that was bitter and twisted came out of our lips that slandered others, there were rude words and course jokes, we gossiped and showed an unforgiving nature to others. And when we did this we grieved God's Holy Spirit, we made God's Spirit unhappy. He wept so to speak because our words fell so short of the standard God hoped for.

But now our talk needs to build up not tear down. It needs to praise God, not grieve His Spirit. It is to spring forth kindness & compassion, forgiveness and grace. You see our words are one way that can set us apart from others. I know that over the years on the soccer pitch I have had more opportunities to talk to others about Jesus because people asked why I didn't swear than probably for any other reason. For when we fail to pass on gossip, when we don't involve ourselves in groups that are complaining or whinging or knocking others, we stand out from others. We show the world that we are not going to stoop to their level.

You can spot the Christian by the way they think, by what qualities they are clothed in and by how they talk. For these things will show others whether we are walking in step with God or not. For in this way we are copying God's ways, we are learning from Christ's walk and we will not be grieving God's Holy Spirit. So Paul is saying to us today walk differently and

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2. Walk Lovingly (5:1-7)

¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Walk in the way of love. But let's remember what Biblical love really is. It is not some nice, gentle feeling or something that just sounds good when we talk about it but biblical love is costly and it involves real, personal sacrifice. For love is modelled on the way that Christ loves us and gave himself up in death in order to save his people. So our love is Christ shaped rather than culture shaped. It's not about what is in it for me. It is about how I build up the body of Christ. It's about how I please the God who set me the example of love.

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So what does that sort of love look like? *³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*

True love is shown in a lack of sexual immorality. It's funny because today anything goes as long as you love the person. But here Paul is telling us that I won't follow my sexual desires outside of marriage because I do love that person. Sex is like a fire, wonderful when it is in the fireplace but destructive if it is let loose in the bush. So walking in the way of love will mean that I want what is best for the other not what I think is best for me & my lusts.

But walking lovingly is not just about sex it's about purity and it's about not being greedy. Greed. Christians don't talk about that as much as we talk about sex do we? But here it is given equal billing. But I haven't seen us Christians jumping up and down over greed in the

same way we have jumped up and down about the redefinition of marriage. Why? Because we buy the latest mobile phones, cars, houses, TV's in about the same quantity that our non-Christian neighbours do. But greed is just as dangerous. And instead of being greedy for more, Christians should be content with what they got.

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As English preacher Richard Coekin puts it, Sexual *“immorality does not spice up marriages but like acid, dissolves away trust; impurity is not harmless fun but like a sewer, will foul up our friendships, and greed is not a good way to make progress for like rust, it corrodes the inner soul of a man until he is utterly selfish.”* This is **not** how a Christian should walk. In fact people who live like that will not receive God's kingdom but His awful wrath. Instead we should be walking lovely, differently and

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3. **Walk Lightly (5:8-14)** Or at least in the light.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live (or walk) as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

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Walking in the dark is completely different from walking in the hard, clear light of day. At night we walk cautiously, carefully, even secretly. A lifestyle of darkness is one which is shameful and needs to be hidden. It involves sexual immorality, involves greed, foolish talk, false worship, emptiness. It is **in the darkness** that diseases grow. **In the darkness** plants die. As Christians we will not grow in the dark, we will die. So we should instead walk in the light.

For a lifestyle of light abounds in goodness and righteousness, in thanksgiving and God's blessings. It has nothing to hide and is happy to be seen by all. In fact the light of your life will affect others. Paul says your lifestyle will show up, it will expose the dark deeds around you. Actually the differences between you & others will become glaringly obvious. And this will not be because you are the light but because Jesus is the light of your life.

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Donald Barnhouse put it this way. *“When Christ was in the world he was like the shining sun. When the sun sets, the moon comes up. The moon is the picture of believers, the church. The Church shines, but not with its own light. It shines with reflected light. At times the Church has been a full moon dazzling the world with an almost daytime light... At other times the Church has only been a thumbnail moon, and in those days very little light shone on the earth”.*

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So as we play spot the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian we can see who is walking in the light and who is still walking in darkness. Christians then walk in the light, lovingly and different to the Gentiles and lastly we

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4. **Walk Wisely (5:15-20)**

¹⁵“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit”

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We will walk wisely when we are not drunk with wine but instead filled by the Holy Spirit. For many are controlled by the pleasures of this world by wine, alcohol, drugs, lust, money, career, fashion, technology or fear. When filled with these things they lose control like a drunk person. I read recently one person saying that when we use our mobile phone too much we become intoxicated! That's the same idea. For all these things affects our thinking and our actions. But God Himself should be the one who affects our thinking. He should be the one who is in control of all of our lives.

For whereas drink is a depressant, God's Holy Spirit is a stimulant. Alcohol reduces our self control, our thinking, our understanding, our judgement, our balance whereas the Holy Spirit is the opposite, it stimulates us to think like God, love like God, know and act on God's will. One dehumanises us, the other makes us more human, more like Jesus. One hurts the relationships around us, the other grows relationships of love with God and others.

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And the results of a person who is filled with the Spirit? ¹⁹" *Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns & songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,* ²⁰ *always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*". The Spirit gives us a life of scripture, a life of song and a life of thankfulness. And boy if that is on our lips 24/7 it will be easy to spot the difference between us and others.

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So how do we get this filling of the Spirit? Let me point out a couple of points about this expression. It is a command, be filled with the Spirit, it is not a suggestion, it is something we all should be desiring. It is a plural command, it is for all of us. There are not two tiered levels of Christians, those who are filled & those who are empty, it is for the whole Church.

It is a passive command. It actually means "Let the Holy Spirit fill you"! There is no ritual, no formula, no physical baptism involved. We must open ourselves up to the work of God. And in the corresponding passage in Colossians we see that we open ourselves up to the Spirit as we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. The Word and the Spirit always work together. Being filled with the Spirit is like being filled with the word. And it a continuous command. We are to keep being spirit filled. We are to keep drinking and drinking of God's Holy Spirit.

Actually it is this filling of the Holy Spirit that will enable us to walk as wise people. It is the light of the Son that will help you to walk in the light. It is the love of the Godhead that will enable you to walk in love. And so when Father, Son and Holy Spirit are a part of your walk you will walk differently to the non-Christians around you.

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You see that is why I think Paul uses the word walk in this passage. Because when you walk you need two legs working together as a team. And so as we have seen in this passage the Christian walk involves us and it involves God. We have to get cracking but God has already prepared the way. We strive for obedience in order to do what God has already willed us to do. We put on the new clothes, the new nature but God is the one who has made those clothes already for us. We live a life of love but it is the Spirit of God whose fruit in our lives produces the love that we need.

You see the difference between the non Christian and the Christian is Christ. Without Christ you and I are foolish in our thinking, darkened in our understanding and that means we will

have our own selfish desires at the centre of our lives. That means we will live a life of love of self. That means we will be going through our lives without the light of Christ. It means that we will be drunk with our own plans and selfishness rather than filled with Christ's Holy Spirit. As a non Christian there is NO CHRIST in our lives.

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But for the Christian CHRIST is front and centre in everything. He has changed our thinking, he has clothed us with his righteousness, he has cleaned up our mouths, he has had made us want to share with others the spoils of our work, he has given us love and light and filled us with the Holy Spirit so that we are full to overflowing with God Himself.

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The difference between the Christian and the non Christian is CHRIST. As St Patrick so beautifully put in the 5th century *"Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in the quiet, Christ in the danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger."*

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Friends the difference is Christ. But it is even more than that. Because God now looks at us and he doesn't see our righteousness, they were like filthy rags anyway, he sees Christ's righteousness. So for the non-Christian they are still lost in their sins and so their sins still weigh heavily on their body and their walk. That's why they walk like an Egyptian or an Australian or Caliphathumpian. But when God looks at us he sees Christ, he sees his righteousness, his light, his spirit. And it is Christ who bit by bit will make us like himself.

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The illustration I like to use is that of how cameras used to work with film & processing & a dark room. The camera would capture the moment, permanently setting it in the film but it was only when the film was processed in the darkroom that the picture slowly emerged.

In the same way God has made us alive and raised us with Christ. We now have every spiritual blessing in him. That picture has now been taken of us and you and like perfect in it. But it is the day by day walking with God that it is developed. It is the daily taking off the old self and putting on the new self that real change in our lives takes place. It is the filling of the Spirit and of Christ that the disregarding of our own desires that shapes our character and helps us develop our distinctive walk. Our Christian walk.

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A man returning from a journey overseas bought his wife a matchbox that would glow in the dark. After giving it to her she turned out the light but the matchbox could not be seen. Both thought that they had been cheated. But then the wife noticed some French words on the box and asked a friend to translate them. The inscription said *"if you want me to shine in the night, keep in the light."*

In the same way if you want to shine in the night of this world, we need to spend time with Jesus, who is the light of the world and so over time he burns his presence into our lives, changing us little by little into men and women whose lives are shaped by His. And whose lives are different to those, radically different to those who don't have Christ.

And that is the only way to walk like a CHRISTIAN, Slide 36 For then we will be
Walking on SONshine Slide 37 so each day we just keep walking! Slide 38

Instructions for Christian Living

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”^[d]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. **5** ¹ Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. ⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.^[e] ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them.

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. ¹⁴ This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.