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Big Idea: Walking with God means walking with one another.

I. Introduction.

A. I don't like to be in a hurry.

1. My dream day would most certainly include a slow morning—a cup of coffee, some good conversation, time to read, time to pray, and nice slow walk through the neighborhood. I like a good, slow pace.
2. And when it comes to my slow walking, it seems that my pace bothers some people, mostly my wife. “Your legs are twice as long as mine. Let’s pick up the pace, old man!”
3. And my daughter makes fun of me because she says I drive too slow. She’s right. I do. Just this week she said, “Dad, you drive like you walk.”
4. I’m not exactly sure why, but I kind of enjoy just putting around. Maybe it’s because my mind is always racing around all the time...with ideas, strategies, build the next thing, tasks that need to get done. So, when I can, I like to slow...it...down.

B. Berry Quote

1. I recently read a quote from Wendell Berry, a master story teller who throws insightful cultural commentary into his work.
2. Reflecting on the pace of life from a small-town resident, the character says, “People on an airplane going 500 miles an hour are in still in a hurry. They want to get there just a little faster.”
3. hmm.
4. You can travel 500 miles an hour and still be in a hurry. That’s real.

C. Walking

1. Walking is the most regular and consistent form of transportation throughout human history. A noticeably one of the slowest forms of transportation.
2. The Christian life is like a long walk.
3. You know this...Jesus walked with His disciples.
 - a. Ordinary days, ordinary moments, shared again and again.
 - b. For three years, Jesus walked his disciples, giving them near constant personal attention. He did not disciple them primarily through events or programs, but by being with them.
4. That kind of presence, that kind of relationship is why I think the language of “walking together” is so helpful for thinking about the Christian life.
5. We are in a series, **Covenant Together**, where we are working through our promises to one another expressed in our Church Covenant. These are habits to help us to think

well about what it means to be a faithful church member.

a. First, we devote ourselves to Jesus daily.

b. Secondly, we gather together regularly.

c. Today, we promise to walk with one another.

7. So, this morning, I want us to slow things down to a walking pace for a few minutes...

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D. Covenant

1. First, let's read this promise of commitment we make...

Walk together in love as brothers and sisters—a family of sinners saved by grace. We delight in each other and bear each other's burdens; we encourage frequently, admonish gently, and receive correction humbly. We value honesty and openness with each other, resisting the temptation to hide our weaknesses and sins, so that we may experience grace together. (Rom 12:10, 15; Heb 3:13; Gal 6:1–2; Eph 4:15, 29–31; Js 5:16; 1 John 1:6–10)

2. The point seems clear; our Christian actions are often connected the Christian community. [say that again]

3. Yes gathering together for worship is really important. But it is entirely possible to gather regularly and not be deeply connected to the lives of those people you are sitting next too.

4. In our fast-paced lives, it would be really for us to fly [at 500mph] and be in such a hurry that we fly past each other.

5. “Busy” makes it really hard to fulfill our promise...When you are in a hurry, it's hard to walk together in love.

6. That's why we make this promise to God and to one another. We want something more and better for our lives.

E. 1 John 1:5–10

1. In our passage today, John uses the “walk” language to describe how the gospel establishes and sustains our relationship with God and with one another.
2. So, let's *walk* through this passage and let it frame our practice of life together in this church.

II. Biblical Support – 1 John 1:5-10

John gives us two very simple but very powerful images: light and darkness.

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A. Light and Darkness

1. God is light, and walking with God means walking in the light. John says in verse 5, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”
 - a. God doesn't simply live in the light. God is light. Everything about God is true, righteous, pure, and holy. There is no darkness in him.
 - b. And because God is light, those who belong to him are called to walk in the light.
 - c. Notice the language. John doesn't simply say that Christians believe the right things or say the right things. He says they walk.
 - d. Our faith is not merely something we affirm. It is the way we live.
2. Sin, on the other hand, is darkness. Walking in darkness is the opposite of walking with God.
 - a. If God is light, sin is darkness.
 - b. To walk in darkness is to live in a way that is fundamentally out of step with who God is and what God has revealed to be true.
 - c. John exposes the contradiction in verse 6: “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”
 - d. You cannot claim to be walking with God while deliberately walking away from God.
 - e. Sin is *always* a barrier to fellowship with God because there is no fellowship between light and darkness.
3. John is confronting people who were claiming something their lives did not support.
 - a. Apparently, there were people in the early churches who were saying, in effect, “We have fellowship with God,” while their lives demonstrated no concern for holiness.
 - b. Some of this false teaching grew out of ideas that would later become known as Gnosticism. The basic worldview was that there was a sharp distinction between the spiritual and the physical. The spiritual was good; the physical was inferior or even evil.
 - c. Every generation has its own version of a worldview that tries to separate faith from faithfulness.
 - d. The names change. The arguments change. The culture changes.
 - e. But the temptation remains the same: “I can have fellowship with God without actually having to walk with God.”

f. John says, “NO, this cannot be!” If we say we have fellowship with God, we must walk in the light.

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B. The Result of Walking with God: Fellowship with One Another

1. So, we might expect verse 7 to follow the same logic, “If we walk in the light, we have fellowship with God.” And that is certainly true, but that’s not what the text says. Look at verse 7 again...

2. John takes it one step further: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.”

[Think about that.]

a. We might expect John to say that walking in the light results in fellowship with God. Instead, he emphasizes fellowship with one another.

b. Why? Because our fellowship with one another is rooted in our fellowship with God.

3. Look back in verse 3 [read: “that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship *with us*; and indeed our fellowship is *with the Father* and *with his Son Jesus Christ*.”]

a. You cannot genuinely walk in the light and remain committed to walking alone. The Christian life is not an individual journey where I simply have my relationship with Jesus and you have yours.

b. We walk together. And when we walk in the light, we experience the kind of fellowship that God intends for his people.

4. Walking in the light also means *continually* being cleansed from sin.

a. Verse 7: “And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

b. *This is one of the most remarkable realities of the Christian life.*

c. Notice that John doesn't say that the blood of Jesus cleansed us only in the past tense, as though Christ's work was merely something that happened when we first became Christians.

d. He says that the blood of Jesus cleanses us. The verb tense here connotes an ongoing reality to Christ's work in our lives.

e. The blood of Jesus is sufficient for every sin, every failure, every place where we stumble as we walk.

f. And let's not move too quickly through this...let's break it down.

1) God is light.

2) We are walking in the light so we too have fellowship with God and with one another.

3) Sin is darkness.

4) We are sinners and so if we are trying to walk in light and then we sin, what happens? Light and darkness cannot exist together.

5) Therefore, the first time you sin, the fellowship breaks down completely.

6) Unless...you have a means by which your darkness is expelled. And not just a one-time expelling (when you are saved).

7) You need a continual cleansing, one that will cleanse you every time so that you can remain in fellowship with God and one another.

g. This is an incredible reality: We walk in the light, we confess our sin, and the blood of Jesus continually cleanses us.

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h. We don't walk together because we're perfect. We walk together because we have the same Savior who continually cleanses imperfect people. [say that again...slowly]

C. Story of the Hidden, Priceless Painting.

1. A few years ago, an incredible discovery was made in northern France.
2. An elderly woman was downsizing, so she hired an auction company to come through her home and to sell the things she no longer needed.
3. And hanging in her kitchen was a little painting. It was tiny, only about 8 x 10 inches. For years, it had hung above a hotplate in her kitchen.
4. She thought it was an old religious painting. Just a picture of Jesus being mocked by a crowd. She had no reason to think it was particularly valuable. Just something that had been there for years.
5. But one of the auctioneers noticed it and thought it might be worth having an expert take a closer look.
6. So, they tested it. And they discovered something remarkable. The little painting hanging above this woman's hotplate was

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an authentic Cimabue painting called Christ Mocked, painted around 1280.

8. The woman had been living with a masterpiece in her kitchen and she didn't know it.
9. The painting was eventually sold at auction for \$26.6 million.
10. **Punch:** Think about that. For years, she had walked past a \$26 million treasure hanging on her kitchen wall. Because she didn't recognize its value, she didn't appreciate its beauty.

D. Gospel Gold

1. And I wonder if sometimes we can do something similar. We have heard "Jesus forgives my sin" so many times that we forget how astonishing that is. We can have the gospel so close to us that we stop seeing how extraordinary it really is.

**SELL
IT!**

2. But John is reminding us of what we have. He's like that auctioneer... "Do you know what you got right here?"
 - a. The Son of God has given himself for sinners!
 - b. His blood cleanses us from sin! Every day!
 - c. The forgiveness we so desperately need is not something we have search for!

3. The gospel is the treasure we need. We walk in the light. We confess our sin. And the blood of Jesus continually cleanses us.
4. Therefore, we get to walk with Jesus and other believers!
5. Don't wander past that Gospel Gold as if it's a worthless religious relic.

E. New Testament Support

1. And this is not only an idea that John draws out. The New Testament is filled with references that connect our personal Christian faith in action with one another.
 - a. I am going to throw up the other Scripture references cited in this Covenant Promise.
 - b. In each reference, you will see the action that we are called to [circled] and also the communal nature of that command [underlined].

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2. **Romans 12:10, 15** – Love **one another** with brotherly affection. Outdo **one another** in showing honor...Rejoice with **those** who rejoice, weep with **those** who weep.
3. **Hebrews 3:13** – But exhort **one another** every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of **you** [*plural*] may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
4. **Galatians 6:1–2** – **Brothers**, if **anyone** is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear **one another's** burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

5. **Ephesians 4:15, 29–31** – Rather, speaking the truth in love, **we** are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths [speak], but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to **those** who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

6. **James 5:16** – Therefore, confess your sins to **one another** and pray for **one another**, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

III. Practical Application for Walking with One Another

After establishing the biblical precedent, let me offer a few applications to walking together... each application is directly from the Covenant Promise.

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A. First, We delight in each other...

1. I like that... “yeah, I love you and I would do anything for you, but I actually *like* you.”
2. As I read the gospels, I don’t get the sense that Jesus was continually annoyed or frustrated with his disciples. Of course, they were boneheads and needed correction.
3. But Jesus loved them, and I would say that he even liked them. Do you remember what he says about his disciples in John 15? “No longer do I call you servants, but I call you _____.” Incredible.

4. When you walk into this church, do you get the sense that the people in here actually like each other?

a. We can shake hands, attend a Bible Study together, sing in the choir together, but still not actually enjoy one another.

b. In the name of reverence, we can make church stuffy and overly formal to keep from becoming too close.

c. Does our covenant say, “*I promise to barely acknowledge your presence, to be short, cold and distant.*” Hmmm. That ain’t quite right.

d. I promise to delight in you...

5. **Back to Jesus and his disciples.** In the three years together, they walked a lot of miles, but they ate plenty of meals, went at least one wedding and many festivals, spent some time down at the lake and up in the mountains...together. On those dusty roads, what do you think they talked about? Around the dinner table, was it just a serene conversation at every moment? My bet is that Jesus was dancing at that wedding. And when they went down to the lake, I bet they really enjoyed fishing together. Unfortunately, I think we imagine Jesus as stiff and serious. Now don’t get me wrong, his work was very

serious, but I also think Jesus was a fun guy...they guy that people would delight in and also feel his delight.

6. Action Item: Do something with someone that expresses your friendship. Go play pickleball, go on a bike ride, a night hike, grab some coffee, sit at the library and catch up, eat a meal, play a boardgame, etc.

Do something that doesn't seem overly spiritual and watch what happens. See what kind of conversations you start having...it will be real and gospel.

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B. Secondly, We encourage frequently, admonish gently, and receive correction humbly.

1. We encourage frequently...I have spent years in student ministry, walking with teenagers, parents, and young men and women who are preparing for ministry.

a. I rarely sit down with someone who feels like they are crushing it in life...like knocking it out of the park in every aspect of life.

b. Our *students* are growing up in a world that constantly tells them they will never measure up—"You're not good enough." "You're not pretty enough." "You're not smart enough." "You don't belong here." The voices are relentless and the negativity never stops.

c. Our *young adults* feel behind in life and have huge questions about the future. Uncertainty abounds.

d. *Parents with Littles*, well, they are just trying to get their heads above water.

e. *Parents with Olders* are barely hanging on.

f. Our *Older Saints* are concerned about their adult children and grandchildren.

g. On the whole, I would say that most people feel like they are failing at something. That they should be doing better or more.

2. All that to say, I don't think you can encourage enough. Seriously.

A kind word. A thoughtful prayer. A simple text message. A handwritten note. A pep-talk phone call. A face-to-face honest conversation.

a. *You matter.*

b. *You are doing a good job.*

c. *You're not behind.*

d. *You're not alone.*

c. *Keep going, don't quit.*

3. Yes, we need to admonish each other. But we got to do that gently.

b. We just read in Ephesians 4:29 where Paul calls believers to speak in ways that build up and give grace. I love this word picture. Our words are powerful enough to build someone up! That kind of speech is essential among the people of God.

4. While correction has its place, encouragement and affirmation are essential for strengthening a believers' confidence and perseverance. So, encourage, Encourage, ENCOURAGE!

5. As church members here, we are promising to build a culture of encourage! When everything around us seems to want to tear down, let's make this place, by God's grace,

a source of life.

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C. Lastly, We value honesty and openness with each other, resisting the temptation to hide our weaknesses and sins, so that we may experience grace together.

1. Back to 1 John 1. Verse 9 is so good. When we confess our sins, there is life. Forgiveness. Cleansing.
2. Confessing is life giving. To the Lord and to one another.
3. But our default setting might be to shrink back.
 - a. "I'm good...I've got this."
 - b. "I like being around you people, but I don't want to tell anybody who I really am."
 - c. "If they knew who I really was or what I have done, they wouldn't delight in me or want to be around me."
4. Opening yourself up to another person is risky business. Walking alongside someone in Christian fellowship means acknowledging your need and acknowledging your brokenness.
5. What you should know about this church...we are NOT a bunch of people who have it all together. Yeah, we all come to church looking good, but we all know the truth.
 - a. Every one of us has their issues. No one has it all together.
 - b. This room is filled with people carrying things nobody else can see. Addiction. Depression. Broken Marriages. Private Sin. Deep Grief. Financial Pressure. Fear About Future.
6. Here's the thing...you don't have to hide or pretend. We know. We all know that you're struggling...you know why? Cause we are in the same boat.
 - a. We know...But we still LOVE you. With all of your failures and flaws. We love you. And we like you!
 - b. God meets us in our struggles. He loves us. He doesn't abandon us in our struggle and our despair. He meets us smack dab in the middle of it.
 - c. You don't have to pretend or fake it.
 - d. And we are going to walk with God in the light...we are going where He goes...and if God's not going to abandon you in your struggle, neither are we!
7. When we pull away, we remove ourselves from the very thing that God might be wanting to use to bring life and renewal.
8. And it could be potentially a scheme of the devil... to isolate us.

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9. What's the best way to stay stuck in sin? Isolate. Hide it. Fake it.

10. I love this Tim Keller quote: "To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, that's a lot like being loved by God."

IV. Conclusion

A. Baby Steps

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1. Here's the cool thing about walking. We are moving.
2. We aren't looking for a speed walker [I'm definitely not]...let's just take it slow and steady.
3. Baby steps are still steps. So let's take some baby steps toward confession and encouraging and delighting.
4. Let's just make sure we walking together toward something big and amazing...towards a God that loves you.
5. Let's walk toward Christlikeness...toward godliness. Let's try that on and see how it feels.
6. Let's walk together because none of us become like Jesus alone.