

Rock Us: Walking in the Hope of Jesus (1/23/19)

The ability to walk is a very important aspect of being human. Walking upright on two legs, sets humans apart from other mammals. But walking can get us into trouble if we're not careful about where we're walking e.g. think about the girl that fell into the fountain at the Berkshire Mall a few years back when she was concentrating on her phone.). The same thing is true in life, where we walk matters. Because walking leads us into different circumstances, different people, places & things. These circumstances, people, places & things may be a blessing or may be a curse. No matter what, you get to them by walking. So walking matters, *it matters a lot*.

Over the last few weeks, we've heard some amazing testimonies from the ladies of the Hoving Home (HH) & from the men of Teen Challenge (TC). All of the HH & TC people formerly walked the very dark path of hopelessness, away from God and towards the people, places, things & circumstances that led them down into lives of personal self-destruction. But what their testimonies show us is that there is absolutely hope for the hopeless. That hope, above all else in the universe, is found in Jesus Christ – author of life, Savior of the World, the source of truth, freedom & new/eternal life. I think about Stephanie, the Hoving Home's choir leader. About a year ago, she would have been considered a hopeless case- a drug-addicted sex-worker. She had even given up hope on herself. But God knew and He provided a place of healing, healthiness & hope to her. Now, Stephanie is a new creation in Christ. Or Heath from Teen Challenge who told us last week that he's burned so many bridges with his family due to drug addiction. But now God is restoring Heath's body, mind and even his formerly strained family relationships.

We praise Jesus for the incredible gift of restoration, new life & hope that He's given to these people. This transformation is incredibly important. But it's not the end of the story, it's not the end of the hope. Besides the hope of knowing God's Word, His Truth, His Promises, now all of the HH & TC people have **changed their walk**, now they are **walking with Jesus**.

Accepting Jesus as Lord & Savior can be a simple surrender prayer, but it's more to that: it's a daily choice to seek direction, guidance and hope in Him in Every thought, word, decision and action. It is a daily decision **to walk with Jesus** and to choose Him and His right way over everything else. When we **walk with Jesus**, following His Word & His Spirit, our hope is renewed each day. Furthermore, our hope is strengthened as we see the results & blessings of walking with Jesus. That renewed hope helps us to continue walking on that path with Jesus, which leads to more hope & blessings. This kind of Christ-centered life is a positive feedback loop for hope & blessings.

The alternative is to say, "Thanks for the momentary help Jesus, but I got this now. So I'm gonna walk my own road now." Basically, it's saying "I don't need Jesus, I don't need God. I can make my own way, my own hope." But when we make our own path (or join the superhighway of society's ways, trends, beliefs & morals), we are walking away from God. The result is more trouble, more chaos, more confusion, and much less blessing & hope. The Hoving Home ladies, the Teen Challenge men and many of us here have walked those wide roads of hopeless self-deception & destruction. Why would it be any different for you????

Jesus talked about this: "*The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. (Mt 7:13b)*. Jesus also said, "*I am the Way, the Truth & the Life... (Jn 14:6a)*. For a life of God's blessing & hope, we need to walk in way of Jesus every day of our life.

Last week, we talked about how God gives us hope through His Word, the Holy Bible. We gave out a lot of Bibles. Hopefully, you've started to read them & get God's Words of hope into you. But it's more than just having a Bible & reading it. We have to live out God's Word, we need to follow God's word & walk in it. If we're gonna "*talk the talk*", we need to "**walk the walk**." (see **James 1:22**).

That's the key point tonight. You see, many people say "I know Jesus" or "I believe in Jesus", but then they don't follow Him or walk according to His Word. If we aren't walking with Jesus, the ultimate Way, the ultimate Truth, the ultimate Life, then we are walking in some other "less good" way. In fact, anything than Jesus' way is imperfect. So if Jesus really is the only right Way, then all other ways are wrong ways to go. If Jesus really is the Truth & the source of all truth, then any other way is not the truth (i.e. a lie), If Jesus is the way of pure, blessed, holy and eternal Life, then walking in any other way is a way that leads to some other kind of life (i.e., impure, cursed and unholy, resulting in eternal death). By walking in any other road of life other than that of Jesus, people actually bring trouble, despair, curses and hopelessness into their own lives! Folks, I'm speaking the truth; it's really that stark my friends.

But truly walking with Jesus, step by step, moment by moment, day by day truly brings hope. And walking with Jesus isn't hard, it's actually much easier in the long run (see **Mt 11:28-30**). I imagine that these words of Jesus really ring true and are a great comfort for the HH & TC people coming out of a life of drug addiction. Jesus is now carrying their burdens & helping them walk through life.

So I ask you tonight: do you want hope? Do you want the hope of God in all areas your life? If so, then **walk in the Hope of Jesus**. He lays it out for you here in the Bible. Check out **Psalms 1** or **Proverbs 3:5-6** or **Psalms 37**. God's hope through Jesus is absolutely available to you. You simply have to choose to walk in it & then start walking with Jesus. It's that simple.

BIBLE VERSES

Mt 7:13b [Jesus said], "...The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way."

Jn 14:6a Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life..."

Mt 11:28-30 "Come to Me all of you who are tired & have heavy loads & I will give you rest. Accept My teachings & learn from Me, because I am gentle & humble in spirit & you will find rest for your lives. The burden that I ask you to accept is easy; the load I give you to carry is light."

James 1:22 But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We talked a lot about walking tonight. What's the farthest you've ever walked? What's the coolest place you've ever walked to?
2. Read Mt 7:13b. The HH & TC folks used to walk paths that led them away from God & into a personal hell. What did Jesus mean when He described the gate & road to destruction/ as "broad" & "wide"? How does this terrible path work to lead people into hell?
3. Have you ever walked a path in life that led you down a path of trouble? Please tell us more about that experience.
- 4a. Read Jn 14:6a. The HH & TC folks now have amazing new life & hope because they're walking with Jesus. Why is Jesus "The Way"? What's that mean for us & why is this so incredibly important?
- 4b. How has Jesus proven Himself to be "the Way" to walk in your life? How has walking with Jesus helped you out of trouble & given you hope?
5. Read James 1:22. This is God's version of "*If you talk the talk, you gotta walk the walk*." How are you doing at *walking the walk* with Jesus?
6. Read Jesus' words in Mt 11:28-30. Do you need more hope in life? If so, walking with Jesus is the answer. Let's actively put God's Word into an action plan in life so that we can walk with Jesus. Let's discuss ways to improve our walk with Jesus.

BONUS: Take a look at Psalm 1, Psalm 37 and/or Proverbs 3:5-6 and discuss the stark differences of walking with God or walking another path.