

Does Your Walk Match Your Talk?

Matthew 7:24-29
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To be successful in almost anything, you need commitment and sweat equity.

When we sign up to be a part of an athletic team as children or teenagers, we discover there are demands we must meet. Not only do children and teenagers discover demands, but so do parents.

Sometimes it seems parents must put in as much time and sweat equity as their children, taking them to practice, watching them practice, picking them up, sitting through their games, washing their uniforms, and paying for it all.

When our boys were on the Moss Farms Diving Team, we would go to diving competitions around the state and across the country. Even after John stopped, diving, it didn't reduce our time we had to commit to the program as parents.

We would sit for hours to watch Ryan make about 18 dives that would take just a few seconds each. We did this for over ten years.

We have empathy for all sports parents and grandparents, especially all of you wrestling and swimming parents and siblings.

Once I figured that Ryan had done about 200,000 dives in his career to have a chance at competing for a championship in college and a chance at going to the Olympics.

Good athletes believe in hard work. Most will tell you that you they believe in taking care of their bodies through proper diet and rest, a detailed exercise regimen, and excellent mental preparation before competitions.

However, not all athletes live by what they tell you they believe. Some take shortcuts and use performance enhancing drugs. Others never measure up to their potential because they are not disciplined.

Some might tell you they believe that their studies are just as important as their sport, or that their walk with the Lord is more important than their sport, but their actions will always tell you the real story.

An adult might say that he's not married to his work, or that involvement in the local church is important, or that we should be teaching more about moral issues in our homes, but his or her actions tell the real story.

That day when Jesus was teaching on a hillside in Galilee, he was looking for a few disciples who were willing to do more than just be pretenders, he wanted people to match their walk with their talk.

A lot of us still like to be pretenders, don't we?

If you don't believe me, come hand out candy with us at Halloween at our Trunk or Treat location by the road on Washington Street, or better yet, stop by Crawford Long Pharmacy and see who is filling medicine bottles that day.

It could be the Incredible Hulk. It might be Jack Sparrow. It might be Popeye the Sailor Man but it certainly will not be Fred Gurley.

In his sermon, Jesus pointed out that there were pretenders among them.

This wasn't dress up day, though. These people were putting on an act every day. Jesus called them stage actors, or hypocrites.

He said God would not reward them for their praying, fasting, or giving because it was all an act, done to draw attention to themselves to make people think they were closer to God than they really were.

As Jesus concludes his teachings, he wants the people to be on guard for those that are less than genuine when it comes to matters of faith. Jesus said that some people will talk a good game, but they are not the real deal.

Jesus didn't want the people to be taken in by these actors just because they spoke well or looked sharp or had a good resume.

Jesus wanted people to look deeper. The question he wanted them to ask was whether a person's walk matched his or her talk.

Jesus put it this way: "Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."

Last December a Judicial nominee for a judgeship on the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, one of the nation's most important courts, appeared before the Federal Election Commission for a confirmation hearing.

They discovered that this nominee had never tried a case in court, civil, criminal, state, or federal. When he was questioned by friendly Republican Congressmen, he could not answer basic questions about courtroom procedures.

The Federal Election Commission recognized that they were trying to pick grapes from a thorn bush. He was not confirmed to this lifetime appointment.

(<https://www.npr.org/2017/12/15/571060681/video-shows-trump-judicial-nominee-unable-to-answer-basic-questions-of-law>)

Jesus tells us that we are going to have a confirmation hearing. All of us are going to come before Jesus and Jesus will either confirm or deny our entrance into the kingdom of heaven based on whether we have done the will of the Father who is in heaven.

The fact that you graduated from law school does not mean you get appointed to a judgeship, and Jesus said just because you said, "Lord, Lord, or did some things in the name of Jesus, you will not get to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus is looking for some evidence that what we say is backed up by what we do.

Does our walk match our talk?

After meeting Jesus, Zacchaeus said, "Look, Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay it back four times the amount."

Jesus said, "Today, salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:8-9 NIV).

Remember, evidence of a changed life does not in any way mean that we have done away with grace or that we are earning our salvation. Our debt to God is too great to repay.

This is more in line with the theology of Jesus' brother who wrote in the book of James that our faith without works is dead.

From Jesus' perspective, if we truly believe something, then there must be some action attached to it.

I always like the story of the man on the tightrope. "Who believes I can walk across the ravine?" he asks. Hands go up.

"Who believes I can push a wheelbarrow across the ravine?" he asks. Many hands go up.

"Who believes I can push a wheelbarrow across the ravine with someone in it?" he asks.

With much more excitement their hands go up because they want to see that.

"Then I should not have any problem getting a volunteer to get in the wheelbarrow," says the tightrope walker.

Ah, but isn't that where the rubber meets the road?

“Do you believe in God?”

Yes.

“Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?”

Yes.

“Do you believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and has the power to change lives?”

Yes.

Then you shouldn't have any problems allowing Jesus to change your life and live out the commandments he has instructed us to live by.

We shouldn't, but we do.

Too often we see Jesus' commandments as something like a buffet. We choose enough to live on, but we leave our least favorite ones alone. In fact, some of them are so despised, we'd skip a meal to avoid them.

Instead, they all should be followed and lived out.

Jesus said they should be put into practice. It's one thing to know the Golden Rule; it's a different matter to put it into practice.

It's one thing to pray to be forgiven; it's a different matter to forgive someone else.

It's one thing to know we shouldn't worry; it's another thing not to worry.

It's one thing to love those who love us; it's another thing to love our enemies.

It's one thing to carry a person's burden one mile because he demanded it; it's another thing to carry it two miles because you obeyed Jesus.

It's one thing to be insulted or wounded; it's another thing not to take revenge.

It's one thing to work hard to have nice things in this world; it's another thing to be generous and store up treasure in heaven.

Jesus said when we practice what he has taught us it is like a wise man who has built a house on the rock.

When rains come, the streams rise, and the winds blow and beat against the house, the house will not fall because it has been built on a rock-solid foundation.

But Jesus said that if we do not put his words into practice, then we are foolish. We are like a man who builds his house on the sand. When the rains come, the streams rise, and the winds blow, the house will crumble and fall.

The rains are coming. The streams are going to rise. The winds are going to blow.

Will your house stand or fall?

If you don't think it will stand, will you come to Jesus today? Will you ask Jesus, the Solid Rock, to save you by his grace and will you commit your life to Him and begin living your life as his disciple? Let your walk match your talk.

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