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MINISTRIES

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What Does it Mean to Walk Like Christ? (1 John 2:6)

In the book of 1 John, we are instructed to walk in the same way that Christ walked.

1 John 2:6

By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

What does John mean when he says that we should walk like Christ? Since Christ kept the Torah, the law of God, we have claimed that in order to walk like Christ, we should keep the Torah like Christ. However, some have argued that this is not a fair interpretation of this verse from 1 John. Here is what author R.L. Solberg has to say:

Walking as Jesus walked doesn't mean we have to hike from town to town on foot, teaching people about God. It doesn't mean we have to eschew electricity, indoor plumbing, and other modern luxuries. And it also doesn't mean we have to keep the Law of Moses.

-R.L. Solberg, “Walking as Jesus Walked” (<https://rlsolberg.com/>)

It's certainly true that John is not telling us to do every single thing that Christ ever did. Clearly, John is referring to something specific about Christ's behavior that he wants us to emulate. So, is it fair to interpret John's words the way that we have? Does “walking” like Christ mean keeping the law like Christ did, or is it referring to something else? Let's take a closer look.

Why “Walk”?

The first thing to note is John's phrasing in this verse. John could have told us to behave like Christ in any number of ways; he could have told us to “do what he did,” “love like he loved,” or “be like he was.” But the verse says to “walk in the same way in which he walked.” So, why did John choose this particular phrasing? Why specifically mention “walking”? Well, there are many scriptures that speak of

walking in God’s ways. What is relevant to us is that the overwhelming majority of them specifically refer to keeping God’s law. For example, the Torah itself says that we should “walk in” God’s statutes:

Leviticus 18:4

You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD [YHWH] your God.

Ezekiel says that God’s spirit will cause us to walk in those same statutes:

Ezekiel 36:27

And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Ezekiel also gets very specific about some of the statutes that God wants us to walk in:

Ezekiel 18:5-9

If a man is righteous and does what is just and right—if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor’s wife or approach a woman in her time of menstrual impurity, does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, does not lend at interest or take any profit, withholds his hand from injustice, executes true justice between man and man, **walks in my statutes**, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the Lord GOD [YHWH].

Every one of these statutes that Ezekiel mentions comes from the Torah, and Ezekiel says that we should “walk in them.” (cf. avoid idols: Leviticus 19:4; avoid adultery: Leviticus 18:20; avoid intercourse during menstruation: Leviticus 18:19; avoid oppressing others: Deuteronomy 24:10-13; avoid robbery: Leviticus 19:13; feed the hungry and clothe the naked: Deuteronomy 10:18; avoid lending at interest: Deuteronomy 23:19; judge fairly: Leviticus 19:15). But it’s not only Old Testament prophets who use this kind of phrasing; the New Testament also refers to keeping the Torah as “walking” in God’s commandments:

Luke 1:6

And they [John the Baptist’s parents] were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-3

Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus [Yeshua], that as you received from us **how you ought to walk** and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus [Yeshua]. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you **abstain from sexual immorality**.

Regarding this last passage, God’s instructions regarding sexual morality are given in the Torah, specifically in Leviticus chapter 18. Paul says here that believers ought to walk in those instructions.

Time will not permit us to cover every verse that mentions walking in God’s law, but there are dozens of them.

(See also Exodus 16:4; 18:20; Leviticus 26:3-4; Deuteronomy 5:33; 8:6; 11:22-23; 13:4; 26:17; 28:9; Joshua 22:5; 1 Kings 8:57-60; Isaiah 42:24; Jeremiah 7:23; 26:4; 44:23; Ezekiel 11:20; 20:13, 19, 21; Micah 4:2; Psalm 119:1; Nehemiah 10:29)

So, given how the term “walk” is used throughout the rest of the Scriptures, it seems natural to suppose that Christ’s “walk” has something to do with God’s commandments. But the word “walk” is not the only reason to suppose that God’s law is on John’s mind in 1 John 2:6. When we read verse 5, we find a reference to the “love of God”:

1 John 2:5-6

but whoever keeps his word, in him truly **the love of God** is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Why is it significant that the love of God is mentioned here? Well, the Scriptures frequently connect loving God to keeping his commandments. We see one of many examples of this in Deuteronomy 10:

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

And now, Israel, what does the LORD [YHWH] your God require of you, but to fear the LORD [YHWH] your God, **to walk in all his ways, to love him**, to serve the LORD [YHWH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to **keep the commandments** and statutes of the LORD [YHWH], which I am commanding you today for your good?

(See also: Deuteronomy 6:5-6; 7:9; 11:1; 13:3-4; 30:16; Joshua 22:5; Nehemiah 1:5; John 14:23-24)

This exact idea is repeated later in 1 John as well:

1 John 5:3

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

In fact, John is so fond of this idea that he repeats it in his second epistle too:

2 John 1:5-6

And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. **And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments**; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.

So, keeping God’s law, walking in God’s commandments, and loving God are connected ideas, and John references both walking and loving God in 1 John chapter 2. So far, it looks like John is implying that we should keep God’s commandments. Before we dig deeper into 1 John, though, let’s take a minute to explore how love and the law are connected.

God's Love and God's Law

What does God's law have to do with love? Well, the Torah teaches us how to love God and how to love other people. The Torah defines what kind of behavior shows love, and what kind does not. Paul explains this in Romans chapter 13:

Romans 13:9-10

For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Of course, the Torah is where we find the commands to avoid murder (Exodus 20:13), adultery (Exodus 20:14), theft (Exodus 20:15) and covetousness (Exodus 20:17). If we love those around us, then we will not act hatefully toward them by violating these commands. Love is the fulfillment, the fundamental reason for the commands in the Torah—both the commands that Paul specifically mentions here, and also "any other commandment." In fact, the Torah is so concerned with love that it prohibits us from even having hatred in our hearts:

Leviticus 19:17

You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him.

The very next verse tells us that we should genuinely love others just like we love our own selves. Paul said that the other commands are "summed up" by this one:

Leviticus 19:18

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD [YHWH].

So, love is very much connected to walking in the Torah. In fact, we have to love in order to keep the Torah, because the Torah explicitly commands us to love. Without love, we cannot keep God's commandments, and we cannot walk in his ways. So, again, John's comments about "love" and "walking" seem to be directly connected to keeping God's law. Here is what he said one more time:

1 John 2:5-6

but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

The Context of 1 John

Now, even though other scriptures frequently use the terms "walk" and "love" in reference to God's law, it is fair to question what *John* means when he uses those terms. Maybe the context of John's book will reveal that he has something else in mind. After all, some argue that walking in the way Christ walked has nothing to do with the Torah, and that John is talking about something completely different. Here is an example of such an argument:

This idea [that we should keep Torah because Jesus did] is not actually found in the text. The Torah isn't even the topic in 1 John. In fact, John doesn't even mention Torah in his entire letter.

-*Built on Truth*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxRsupsE1LM>, from 3:57-4:05

So, is this true? Is John not concerned with the Torah at all? Did we take John's words here out of context? Well, to find out, let's read the context:

1 John 2:1-6

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua] the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

John starts this passage by saying that he wrote the book of 1 John so that we would not sin. To sin is to break God's commandments. This definition of sin is found all over in the Scriptures, but here's just one example:

Daniel 9:4-5

I prayed to the LORD [YHWH] my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, **we have sinned** and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, **turning aside from your commandments and rules**.

(See also: Leviticus 4:2; Numbers 15:22; Psalm 119:11; 1 John 3:4)

So, when John says that he has written these things so that we will not sin, this is already a strong indication that he is trying to prevent us from breaking the law of God. After all, breaking God's law is what "sin" is. This "law of God" theme is only reinforced in verses 3-5, when John uses even more terms associated with God's law; terms like "commandments," "keep his word," and "love of God." However, it is true that the "commandments" John is referencing are specifically the commandments of Yeshua. In verse 3, when he says, "we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments," the "him" in this sentence is Yeshua. So, it is specifically Yeshua's commandments that John is telling us to keep.

So, then, perhaps John is using terms like "sin," "commandments," "love," "walk"—terms that are usually used to refer to the law of God—and is repurposing those familiar phrases to refer to a new law, a law that Yeshua taught. That idea seems reasonable at first, but it has three major problems. First, John doesn't say any such thing. John never claims that Yeshua replaced God's law with a new or different law. Second, Yeshua did not teach anything contrary to the law of God. For him to give a new law that replaced or contradicted God's existing law doesn't fit what Yeshua said about himself and his mission.

Matthew 5:17-19

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the

least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

It would be very strange for Yeshua to say that he did not come to abolish the law, and then to follow that up by abolishing the law and replacing it with a new one. Here he says that not only is the law not abolished, but that we should do and teach its commandments.

The third problem with the idea that John is talking about a new law is that, if we keep reading John's letter, he makes it very clear that he is not talking about a new law at all:

1 John 2:7-8

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

Here, John says that this commandment that we need to keep—this way in which we should walk—is not new; in fact, it is very old. He says that we can call it new, because a new thing is happening: the darkness is being pushed back by Christ, the true light. But this light was prophesied long ago, and keeping the law is part of its fulfillment. We see this in the prophecies of Isaiah:

Isaiah 51:4-5

Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for **a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.** My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.

Isaiah 2:3-5

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD [YHWH], to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For **out of Zion shall go forth the law,** and the word of the LORD [YHWH] from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come, **let us walk in the light of the LORD [YHWH].**

So, the commandment that John is referring to is not new; it is old. The light that was prophesied to come—which we know is Yeshua—would send out God's law from Jerusalem, not replace God's law with a new one. These prophecies tell us that those who walk in the light keep God's law, his commandments. Not only that, but the next three verses in 1 John tell us exactly which commandment is the “old” commandment he's been talking about:

The Commandment to Love

1 John 2:9-11

Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his

brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

So then, what is the “old commandment” from verse 7 that seems like it’s new? What commandment does one keep that causes him to abide in the light? It’s the command to love one’s brother. Where does this command come from? Directly from the Torah, as we read before:

Leviticus 19:17-18

You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD [YHWH].

So, walking in God’s law, and especially the law to love one’s neighbor, is also walking in the light. Christ walked in the light; he loved others in accordance with Leviticus 19 and obeyed all of God’s commandments concerning how to love others. If we act like he did, we will also be in the light, because we will be loving others and keeping God’s law too. Now, this presents a question. As we mentioned before, John explicitly says in verse 3 that he is talking about Yeshua’s commandments. So, why in verse 10 is John talking about Moses’s commandments—specifically, the command from Leviticus 19 to love your brother? Well, that’s because they are the same commandments. Yeshua tells us that we must believe Moses in order to believe him:

John 5:46-47

For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?

Yeshua taught many things concerning the law of Moses, and one of them was that all of the law depends upon love:

Matthew 22:35-40

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Both of these commandments—to love God (Deuteronomy 6:5), and to love your neighbor (Leviticus 19:18)—come straight from the Torah. They are not new commands that Yeshua invented during his ministry. So Yeshua’s commandment to love was the same as the Torah’s commandment to love. Yeshua repeated this command again when he said this:

John 15:9-14

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

For more on how Christ’s teachings and the law of Moses are connected, see our teaching, [What is the](#)

Law of Christ?

So, in order to abide in Christ's love, we must love our brother. We must keep the Torah's command to love, because this command gives the other commands their purpose. As Yeshua said, all of the law depends on the commands to love God and to love our neighbor. However, this also means that we must express that love in accordance with the law. We cannot truly love our brother if we violate the commands that explain how that love should be expressed. John goes on to explain this in 1 John chapter 3. Before we read that though, let's quickly look at three commands from the Torah that teach us how to love. The Torah commands us not to behave hatefully by murdering or by hating our brother in our heart:

Exodus 20:13

You shall not murder.

Leviticus 19:17

You shall not hate your brother in your heart...

The Torah also commands us to love others by giving the poor what they need to live:

Deuteronomy 15:7-8

If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD [YHWH] your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.

What does this have to do with 1 John? Well, after 2:6, in which John explains that we should walk like Christ walked, and keep his command to love each other, John explains in chapter 3 that we also must keep the Torah's commands concerning murder, hatred, and giving to the poor. He says that all of these commands show us how to express love. Here's what he says:

1 John 3:11-18

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

In this passage, John repeats the command to love one another, but he goes on to explain what that love looks like. We love our brother by keeping the laws from the Torah that show us how to love him—by not murdering or hating, and by taking care of the poor. We should not just love in word or talk, but in deed and truth. We shouldn't just say that we love our brother; we should act in a loving way toward him; we should keep the commandments that show us how to love him. If we are not keeping those commands, then we cannot honestly say that God's love is in us. If we love our brother and keep God's laws, then we walk in the light, the same light that goes forth from Zion in Isaiah chapter 2. But if we

hate our brother and disobey God's law, then we walk in darkness, and we will stumble off of God's path. As David wrote:

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Conclusion: Walking Like Christ

So, is John referring to keeping the Torah when he says to walk in the way Christ walked? It seems very clear that he is. The Torah commands us to love our brother, and both Yeshua and John say to love our brother. The Torah says to avoid murder and hatred, and to give to the poor, and John says the same. The Torah's commands are to be "walked in," and Isaiah 2 connects walking in the Torah with being in the light. John describes those who walk in the way Yeshua walked as being in the light.

So, 1 John is teaching the same ideas that are found in the Torah—ideas that boil down to a simple concept: that we should love our brother. This is not a new commandment, but an old one, straight from Leviticus 19. It's pretty clear that the Torah's instruction to love, and Yeshua's reiteration of that instruction, was in the front of John's mind when he wrote his letter. Walking in the way Christ walked and keeping the Torah's command to love are in fact the same thing. John is telling us to keep the Torah like Christ did.

Now, some may say, "Fine, John was technically referring to the Torah's command to love our brother when he said to walk in the way Christ walked. But he was *not* referring to commands like keeping the sabbath or avoiding pork. Those commands have nothing to do with loving our brother, so they also have nothing to do with walking like Christ walked."

There are several things we can say about this argument. First, commands like the sabbath are still based on love—not necessarily love for our brother, but certainly love for God. As it says in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 11:1

You shall therefore love the LORD [YHWH] your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always.

Deuteronomy 6:5-6

You shall love the LORD [YHWH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

John repeats much the same thing later on in 1 John:

1 John 5:2-3

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

So, all of God's commands are based in love, not just the ones directly concerned with loving our brother. To walk in love as Christ did includes loving God, which entails keeping all of God's commandments. Even if John doesn't explicitly mention every single command from God's law in his book, they're automatically included in the idea of loving God. To love God and to keep his

commandments goes hand-in-hand. But the second point is that John does explicitly mention commands that don't have to do with loving our brother.

John concludes his letter by saying this:

1 John 5:21

Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Avoiding idols has no direct connection to loving our brother. Not only that, but Yeshua never mentions idols anywhere in the gospels. Yeshua gave no commandments involving idols at all. So, where is John getting the idea that we should avoid idols? What does that have to do with the rest of his book? Well, the common theme with the rest of 1 John is the Torah, because the Torah tells us to avoid idols:

Leviticus 19:4

Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves any gods of cast metal: I am the LORD [YHWH] your God.

The same chapter in Leviticus that mentions loving your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18) also mentions avoiding idols. Not only that, but this chapter, Leviticus 19, also mentions giving to the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10), avoiding murder (Leviticus 19:16), and avoiding hatred for one's brother (Leviticus 19:17). Every command mentioned in 1 John is also mentioned in that one chapter of the Torah. Everything that John tells us to do, God's law also tells us to do. When John says to walk in love like Christ walked, to love God by keeping his commandments, to avoid sin, which is breaking the law of God, to give to the poor, to avoid murder and hatred, and to keep away from idols, it seems very clear to us that he's telling us to keep the Torah.

So it is completely justifiable, and very much in-context, to say that walking in the way Christ walked includes obeying the statutes that he walked in. John's main point in his book is that, at the core of those statutes, we find two things: love for God, and love for our brother. We should take John's advice and walk in that love—not just in word or talk, but in deed and in truth. We should read God's law and find out what it means to love our brother as ourselves, and to love God with all our hearts. And, we should express that love by doing the things that God told us to do—by walking in the same way that Christ walked.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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