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## OUR WALK TOGETHER

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### Pledge

**As members of this church, we pledge:  
to walk together in faith, love, and hope.**

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### Scripture

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1-6

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### Lesson

#### **Walking Together**

Even before my wife and I started dating, our relationship grew as we took walks together.

It started out rather non-romantically in college, when we would walk from a morning class to the dining hall for breakfast, then from breakfast to a bench

outside an office building. But now, after years of marriage, we still take walks as a way to talk with each other or just to spend time together.

The very act of walking—involving a series of steps toward a certain destination—is a perfect metaphor for living one’s life with purpose. Decision after decision, step after step, you progress toward a certain destination. A lapse in judgment or confusion about the goal can put you off the path. An obstacle can slow you down. An injury can make the journey more painful.

When you add other people to this walk, the metaphor becomes even more powerful. Your journey of life can become more pleasant—or more perilous—depending on your travel companions. To stay together, you must communicate with each other and keep the same pace. Most importantly, you and your travel companions must be headed toward the same destination.

No wonder Scripture uses the picture of our *walking together* to help us envision the Christian life! This metaphor is especially prominent in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. He urges them “to **walk** in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience” (Ephesians 4:1-2). He warns them not to “**walk** as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds” (4:17), but instead to “**walk** in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us (5:2, see also 5:8, 15).

### **Walking in Faith, Hope, and Love**

Drawing from these passages, we identify three key qualities that should mark our walk together: faith, love, and hope.

#### **1. Faith. “One Lord, one *faith*” (Ephesians 4:5).**

**Faith in what?** *Faith* in this context refers to the objective *content* of our faith: specifically, that Jesus is the only King and Savior of the world. Paul put it this way in Romans 10:9-10, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” The statement, “Jesus is Lord,” is like an acorn. Just as an acorn holds the potential for a vast forest of mighty oak trees, so the confession that Jesus is King holds vast implications for everything else we do and say, encompassing every domain of our lives.

**Won’t this cause contention?** Some people have the idea that the specific *content* of one’s faith is unimportant. They say that it is possible to live meaningful, harmonious lives without subscribing to any particular faith. These people are rightly worried that different “faiths” lead to *pride* (“I’m right!”), *fighting* (“And you’re wrong!”), and *intolerance* (“So we won’t accept

you!”). What these people often fail to see is that this very idea is a kind of faith. There’s no way around it: it matters what we believe.

**Which faith can truly unite people?** The question is this: is there a kind of belief that will *smother* the flames of pride and intolerance instead of igniting them? Yes, and it is the faith that *Jesus is Lord*. Here’s why: To confess that “Jesus is Lord,” means that you believe that he alone can rescue you, that you cannot claim any personal righteousness of your own. It means that you have placed yourself under his loving protection. It means that you are committed to a life of living like him.

It is true that we could rally around any number of beliefs: for example, that the Red Sox is the best baseball team, that the earth is spherical, or that the American government should be “government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” However, there is only one faith that can unite people in the deepest possible way. It is the belief that we who once were “dead in trespasses and sins” are now “made alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:1, 5).

**To walk together *in faith* means that we agree together that this is true. It means that we are committed to seeing the implications of Christ’s lordship worked out in our area of our lives.**

## **2. Love. “Bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2).**

When we believe this together, the result will be love: first and foremost, love for God; then love for each other. In other words, *faith in Christ leads to love for others*.

**Where does love come from?** The Apostle John wrote, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers” (1 John 3:16) and, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (John 4:11). Christian love is enabled and motivated by the love that God showed us in sending Jesus to die and rise again for us.

**What does love look like?** 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 gives us a powerful description.

Love is patient and kind;  
Love does not envy or boast;  
It is not arrogant or rude.  
It does not insist on its own way;  
It is not irritable or resentful;  
It does not rejoice at wrongdoing,  
but rejoices with the truth.

Love bears all things,  
believes all things,  
hopes all things,  
endures all things.  
Love never ends.

A common thread throughout this description is that love is fundamentally others-focused, prioritizing the well-being of others over one's own preferences and conveniences. Jesus Christ is the truest embodiment of love, as he gave *himself* for us.

**To walk together *in love* means that we are personally committed to each other's wellbeing.**

**3. Hope. "You were called to the one *hope* that belongs to your call" (Ephesians 4:4).**

Perhaps we underemphasize hope because the word "hope" in English has the flavor of tentativeness and uncertainty. If we want the weather to get warm by May, but are unsure whether it will, we say, "Well, I *hope* so." By contrast, Christian hope is a steady, confident expectation about the future that allows us to be steady and persistent in the present.

It is also an important theme throughout the Bible, and a few statements make it clear how essential it is to the Christian life. Paul writes that "in this hope we were saved" (Romans 8:24), and Peter tells his readers that God "caused us to be born again to a *living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1 Peter 1:3).

If hope is a confident expectation, then what are we expecting? We may put it this way: Christian hope is the expectation *that all the promises of God that have begun to be fulfilled in Christ will one day be fulfilled completely*. We can get even more specific. It means that we fully expect that one day we will be "conformed to the image" of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29), that the brokenness of this world will one day be healed (Romans 8:21), and that we will live in perfect fellowship with God (Revelation 21:1-7).

**To walk *together* in hope means that we are energized and unified by the same forward-looking expectation of our future with Christ.**

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## Putting the Pledge to Work

1. What is it about *walking together* that makes it such a fitting picture of the togetherness of the Christian life?
2. Describe what would go wrong in our church if we grew weak in our commitment to any one of the three qualities—faith, hope, or love.
3. Suppose that in one year from now we were a bit stronger in any of these three qualities. What would be different about our church?
4. What could we do now to make that difference a reality?