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**Living What We Believe:
The Walk of a Disciple**

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Everybody Hates Me

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Notes from a Study of Hosea

Living What We Believe: The Walk of a Disciple

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'Walk the Walk and Talk the Talk' is a modern expression of pragmatism; the essence of these words has been with us for eternity as we shall see in this presentation.

Introduction – Integrity in a World of Words

We live in a world overflowing with words: promises; opinions; declarations.

Every day we hear people saying what they believe, what they stand for, and what they intend to do. Yet one of the great frustrations of human life is the gap between what people say and what they actually do.

There used to be a management phrase that became popular in the late 1970s and early 1980s: 'Walk the walk and talk the talk'.

Managers were encouraged to leave their offices and spend time on the factory floor. Instead of leading from a distance, they would walk among their workers, understand the real challenges, and build relationships. This was sometimes called 'management by walking around'. The idea was simple: leadership requires both communication and example. Words matter, but actions matter even more.

In many ways, this principle is deeply Biblical.

From the beginning of Scripture, God calls His people not merely to say the right things, but to live in the right way.

In Genesis God said to Abraham: *"I am El Shaddai. Walk before me and be blameless"* (Genesis 17:1).

In Exodus, Moses was instructed: *"You are to make clear to them the statutes and the laws and are to show them the way in which they are to walk and the work that they are to do"* (Exodus 18:20).

Throughout the Bible, the word 'walk' is not just about physical steps. It describes the pattern of life – our character, our choices, our habits, our relationships. To 'walk' is to live.

So, Scripture calls us not only to talk the talk, but also to walk the walk.

Talk the Talk – Words That Reflect the Heart

The Old Testament takes speech very seriously.

Proverbs tells us: *“Lying lips are an abomination to Yahweh, but those who do what is faithful obtain his favour”* (Proverbs 12:22).

Words are not trivial in Scripture. Words reveal the heart. They can build or destroy. They can heal or wound. They can honour God or dishonour Him.

Talking the talk means speaking with:

- truth,
- integrity,
- consistency,
- alignment with God’s character.

Notice that Proverbs does not praise impressive speech. It praises trustworthy speech. God is not looking for eloquence. He is looking for honesty. Our words matter because our words reveal who we really are.

But the Bible does not stop with speech. It presses us further.

Walk the Walk – A Life That Matches the Words

One of the most famous summaries of God’s expectations appears in Micah:

“O people, he has shown you what is good. What does Yahweh require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

Notice what Micah did **not** say. He did not say: “Speak about justice”, “Talk about mercy”, “Say humble things”.

Instead he said: act, love, walk. These are verbs of action.

Walking the walk means:

- doing justice, not merely admiring it;
- showing mercy, not merely preaching it;
- living humbly, not merely talking about humility.

Micah is reminding us that faith must be embodied. Our lives should preach louder than our lips.

When Walk and Talk Align

Psalm 15 paints a portrait of a person whose words and life are in harmony:

“O Yahweh, who can sojourn in your tent? Who can live on your holy mountain? He who walks blamelessly, and performs righteousness, and speaks the truth from his heart; who does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his friend, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbour; who looks upon a vile person with contempt but who honours those who fear Yahweh; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change his mind; who does not lend his money with interest, nor takes a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken” (Psalm 15).

Notice the order. First comes the walk, then comes the speech.

This psalm describes someone who:

- speaks truth;
- keeps promises even when it hurts;
- refuses to slander others;
- rejects corruption;
- honours what is good.

This is a person whose life and lips agree. And God says that this is the person who may dwell in His presence. Not the loudest person, not the most impressive speaker, but the most consistent.

When Talk Is Loud, but Walk Is Empty

The prophets also warned about the opposite situation:

“The Lord said, “Because this people draws near with their mouth and with their lips to honour me, but they have moved their heart far away from me and their fear of me is a commandment of men that has been taught” (Isaiah 29:13).

This is the danger of religious talk. People may sing the right songs, pray the right prayer, use the right vocabulary. Yet their lives contradict their words.

God is not fooled by spiritual language. What He wants is the heart. And when the heart belongs to God, the life will follow.

A Living Example – Daniel

The book of Daniel gives us a powerful example of someone who walked the walk. Daniel lived in a corrupt empire, surrounded by pressure to compromise. Yet he remained faithful. He prayed

consistently, he lived with integrity, he refused to abandon his devotion to God. When the crisis of the lions' den arrived, Daniel did not need to explain who he was. His life had already spoken.

A faithful walk gives power to faithful words.

Jesus – The Perfect Union of Walk and Talk

When we turn to the New Testament, we see the ultimate example of a life where words and actions perfectly align: Jesus of Nazareth.

For us as Biblical Unitarian Christians, this point matters greatly.

The Bible consistently teaches that there is one God – the Father. Jesus affirmed this when he quoted the great confession of Israel: *“Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone”* (Mark 12:29).

Jesus did not present himself as the God of Israel. Instead, he consistently spoke of the God who sent him. He prayed to God. He obeyed God. He trusted God. Jesus himself said: *“And this is life in the age to come, that they know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent – Jesus Christ”* (John 17:3). This means something remarkable.

When we look at Jesus, we see what a perfectly faithful human life looks like. Jesus showed us what it means to walk before God completely. Jesus did not merely teach righteousness, He lived it. Jesus did not merely teach truth, He embodied truth. His words carried authority, But His actions confirmed them.

When He taught that the greatest must be servants, He washed His disciples' feet. When He taught love for enemies, He healed the ear of a man sent to arrest Him. When He proclaimed God's compassion for the outcast, He welcomed tax collectors, sinners, and the marginalised.

Jesus did not merely talk the talk. He walked the walk in every moment of His life. And in doing so He glorified the God who sent Him.

A Warning from Jesus

Jesus also warned about those whose words and actions did not match. In the parable of the two sons, (Matthew 21:28–32) one son said he would work in his father's vineyard but did not go. The other refused at first but later obeyed. Jesus asked: which son did the will of his father? The answer was obvious; the one who acted.

Jesus' point was clear: God values obedience more than appearances. Words alone are not enough.

Following the Example of Jesus

The apostles understood that the Christian life meant following the pattern of Jesus.

The apostle Peter wrote:

“For you were called to this endurance, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you follow in his footsteps” (1 Peter 2:21).

Notice that word: example.

Jesus showed us what faithful obedience looks like. He showed us what it means to trust God completely. He showed us how a human life can be lived in full devotion to the Father. That is why discipleship is often described as walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

God, Who Gives More Than Enough

The First Sign of Jesus – Water into Wine (John 2:1–11)

1. Introduction – God at Work in Ordinary Moments

The first miracle recorded in the Gospel of John did not happen in a temple, a synagogue, or on a mountain. It happened at a wedding, a simple, joyful, very human celebration.

This tells us something important about the ministry of Jesus. God was not distant from the ordinary moments of life. Through His chosen Messiah, God stepped into everyday experiences – celebrations, anxieties, embarrassments, and needs – and revealed His goodness there.

At Cana, the wine ran out. In the grand scheme of the universe, that may seem like a small problem. But for the family hosting the wedding, it was a serious embarrassment. And Jesus noticed. More importantly, through Jesus, God responded.

This story shows us that the God whom Jesus served and trusted is a God who cares about the needs of His people.

2. The Problem – “They Have No Wine”

Mary went to Jesus with a simple statement: “They have no wine.” She did not tell him what to do. She did not panic. She simply brought the need to him. This reflects a quiet trust. She knew that Jesus was a man uniquely called and empowered by God. She trusted that God could work through him.

Sometimes we feel that our problems are too small to bring before God. But this story reminds us that the God whom Jesus worshipped is attentive even to the small concerns of human life. Nothing is too small when it matters to His people.

3. The Instruction – “Do Whatever He Tells You”

Mary then turned to the servants and said something remarkable: “Do whatever he tells you.” These simple words capture an important principle of discipleship; faith often begins with obedience.

Nearby were six large stone jars used for ceremonial washing. Jesus instructed the servants to fill them with water. And they filled them completely – to the brim. Before any miracle occurred, there was obedience. The servants did what Jesus asked.

Time and again in Scripture, God’s power is revealed when people trust and obey the one whom He has sent.

4. The Miracle – Water Becomes Wine

Jesus then told the servants to draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet. Somewhere between the jar and the cup, something extraordinary happened: water became wine. Through Jesus, God turned lack into abundance. Embarrassment became celebration. A moment of shortage became a moment of joy. And not just any wine – the best wine. The master of the banquet was surprised. Normally the best wine was served first, but here the best had come last. The jars held enormous quantities – far more than what was needed.

The point is clear. The God whom Jesus served is generous. When God provides, He does not merely provide enough to avoid disaster; He provides abundantly.

5. The Meaning – A Sign Revealing God’s Work Through Jesus

John did not simply call this event a miracle. He called it a sign. A sign points beyond itself to something deeper.

This sign revealed something about Jesus and about the God who was working through him. It showed that God had chosen and empowered Jesus as His Messiah. It showed that God’s kingdom was breaking into the world through this faithful servant. It showed that God’s purposes are not about scarcity, but about restoration and joy.

Wine in Scripture is often associated with celebration and blessing. In this moment, the abundance of wine symbolised the joy that comes when God's purposes are at work. And significantly, Jesus did not draw attention to himself. The servants knew what had happened, and the disciples saw the sign and believed in him, but the miracle itself remained quiet and humble.

The focus was not on spectacle but on revealing God's work through His chosen Son.

6. The Application – What Does This Mean for Us Today?

What can we learn from this story?

a. Bring your needs before God

Mary simply brought the problem to Jesus. In the same way, we bring our needs to God – the God whom Jesus himself trusted and prayed to. Nothing is too small when it matters to His people.

b. Listen to the one God has sent

Mary told the servants: "Do whatever he tells you." For Christians, Jesus is the Messiah whom God has appointed and raised from the dead. Listening to him and following his teaching is central to faithful living.

c. Obedience often precedes blessing

The servants filled the jars before they saw any miracle. Faith often looks like simple obedience before we understand what God is doing.

d. Trust God's timing

The provision came at exactly the right moment. Throughout Scripture, God's timing is rarely early, but it is never late.

e. Remember that God is generous

The abundance of wine reminds us that the God revealed through Jesus is not stingy or reluctant. He is a God who delights in giving good gifts to His people.

7. Conclusion – The God Who Still Fills Empty Jars

The miracle at Cana is not merely a story about wine. It is a story about the generosity of God and the mission of the man He sent. Through Jesus, God revealed His compassion, His power, and His desire to bring joy and restoration to human life.

Jesus did not act independently. He lived in constant trust in the Father who sent him. And through that faithful obedience, God worked powerfully.

The same God whom Jesus worshipped is still at work today. He still sees human need. He still responds with compassion.

And through the message and example of His Messiah, He still fills empty places in our lives – empty hopes, empty hearts, empty situations – with new life and hope.

Wherever we feel lack or emptiness, the God whom Jesus called Father is able to bring something new. Because the God revealed through Jesus is a God who gives more than enough.

A Story That Shows the Walk and the Talk

One moment in Jesus' life illustrates this beautifully.

One Sabbath day Jesus entered a synagogue. Inside the synagogue was a man with a withered hand. The religious leaders were watching carefully, not because they cared about the man, but because they wanted to catch Jesus breaking their Sabbath rules.

Mark tells us they watched him closely to see whether he would heal. Jesus knew exactly what they were thinking, so, he called the man forward and asked a question: *"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?"* (Mark3:4).

The room fell silent. No one answered. Because the answer was obvious. Then Jesus looked around the room. Mark tells us something powerful. He looked at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart. And he said to the man: *"Stretch out your hand."* The man stretched it out. And his hand was completely restored.

Think about what happened in that moment. Jesus had been teaching about compassion. He had been teaching that human need matters more than religious legalism. And in that moment, he lived exactly what he taught. His walk matched his talk. And for that act of mercy, the religious leaders began plotting how to destroy him. But Jesus did not compromise. He continued to walk faithfully before God.

Walking with the Risen Christ

For Christians, this call to integrity is not merely a moral principle, it flows from a relationship.

We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him as Lord and Messiah. And because Jesus lives, he is not distant from us. He walks with us. He walks with us through anxiety and uncertainty. He walks with us through illness and disappointment. He walks with us through the ordinary struggles of life. And as we walk with him, he teaches us how to live.

Following the Path Jesus Walked

The early Christians understood that following Jesus meant imitating his life. Paul wrote: *“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Christian discipleship is not merely believing certain statements. It is learning to live the way Jesus lived, to trust God the way Jesus trusted God, to love people the way Jesus loved people, to obey the Father the way Jesus obeyed the Father.

Jesus walked the path first. And now he invites us to follow.

The Call to Walk in a Way That Pleases God

In his letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul wrote:

“Furthermore then, brothers and sisters, we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus, that just as you learned from us how you must walk and please God – indeed, you are already walking in this way – that you would do so even more” (1 Thessalonians 4:1).

For Paul, the Christian life is a walk – a daily pattern of living that reflects the God we serve.

The Thessalonians had come from a pagan culture where many behaviours that were accepted did not reflect God’s character. But Paul reminded them that knowing God means living differently. They were called to holiness, not because God wanted to burden them with rules, but because God wanted His people to reflect His character.

What Holiness Really Means

Holiness is often misunderstood. People imagine it means becoming rigid, joyless, or withdrawn from life. But holiness simply means being set apart for God. It means being shaped by God’s character. It means allowing God’s spirit to transform our lives so that we reflect His justice, mercy, and love.

Holiness is not about superiority. It is about distinctiveness – living in a way that allows others to see something of God through us.

Living in a Way That Others Can See

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to live quiet and faithful lives. To work diligently, to love one another. To behave honourably toward outsiders.

Why?

Because people are always watching. If our lives contradict our message, our words lose their credibility. But when our walk and our talk align, our witness becomes powerful.

Speaking with Grace

The same is true of our speech. Talking the talk is not about preaching constantly or forcing conversations. It means speaking with:

- truth,
- grace,
- kindness,
- encouragement.

Our words should heal rather than wound. They should reflect the character of the one we follow.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus remains the perfect example. His life demonstrated:

- total obedience to God,
- humble service,
- compassion for the broken,
- courage in the face of opposition,
- consistency between message and lifestyle.

His walk confirmed His talk. And that is why His message continues to transform lives.

In Conclusion – Does Your Walk Match Your Talk?

Let me close with a simple illustration.

Imagine waking up one winter morning to find the countryside covered in deep snow. The path ahead is difficult to see. The snow is deep, and every step is hard work. But then you notice something. Someone has already walked the road before you. There are footprints ahead in the snow. Instead of trying to guess where to step, you simply place your feet where those footprints already are. Step

by step, you follow the path. The journey becomes possible because someone else walked it first.

That is what Jesus has done for us. He walked the road of faithful obedience before us. He trusted God completely. He loved sacrificially. He endured suffering. He remained faithful even to death.

And because he walked that road, we can now follow in his footsteps. We do not walk alone. We walk behind the one whom God raised and appointed as Lord and Messiah.

So, the challenge for all of us is simple.

Talk the talk – speak truth.

Walk the walk – live truth.

Let our words reflect our hearts. Let our lives reflect our faith.

And most importantly: follow the footsteps of the faithful man whom God sent – Jesus the Messiah.

If we do that:

- our lives will speak louder than our words,
- our witness becomes credible,
- our faith will become visible,
- our lives become a testimony and our walk will lead others to the one true God – the God whom Jesus himself worshipped.

Day by day, step by step, place your feet in the footprints of the faithful man whom God raised and appointed as Lord and Messiah: Jesus of Nazareth.



*The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.*

(Numbers 6:24-26; NKJV)



Everybody hates me!

(John 15:18–24)

Ben Roe

Inspired by the article ‘Why Is Christianity So Detestable to So Many People?’ by Greg Grandchamp:

https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/why-is-christianity-so-detestable-to-so-many-people.html#google_vignette

Christianophobia. There’s a word for everything these days! Have you come across this one before? What does it mean? Perhaps you’re familiar with phobias: arachnophobia (fear of spiders), claustrophobia (fear of confined spaces), or how about this one; hexakosioi-hexekonta-hexa-phobia – fear of the number 666! So then Christianophobia must be the fear of Christians? The ever-reliable Wikipedia gives a definition pretty close to that; ‘The fear or hatred of Christians or Christianity’. Maybe now my talk title makes more sense

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Origins

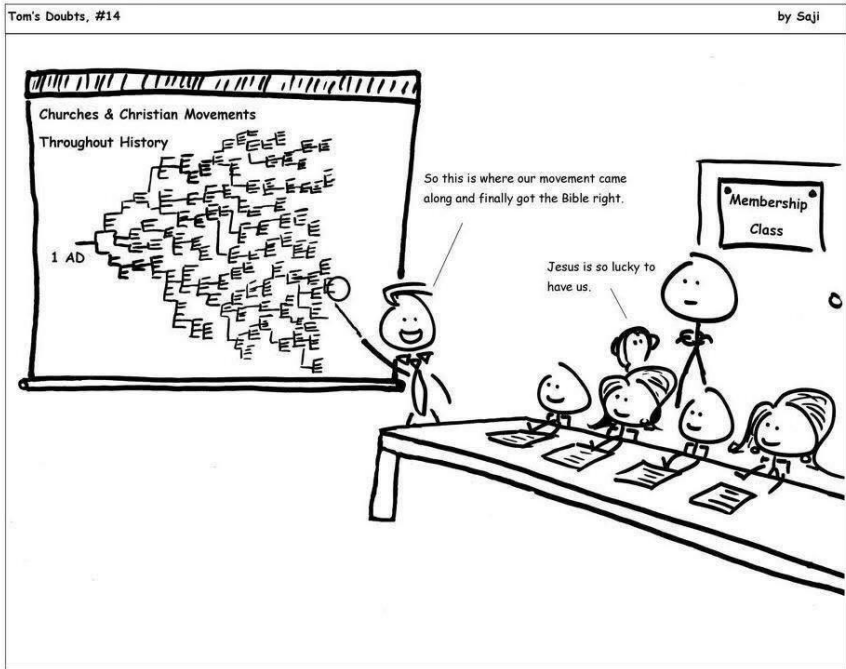
Where did this fear come from? When did it start? Let’s read from John 15:18–24:

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.”

It’s fairly clear to me that anti-Christian sentiment began with Christ himself. *Some* evidence (*clears throat* yes, that’s sarcasm) toward this could be that Jesus was crucified for his message. So clearly some people didn’t like him very much. Let’s jump straight back to the 21st century (for now) to see why people **now** don’t like modern Christians/Christianity.

Division, infighting and misuse of scripture

This is a meme. If you don't know what that means, this is a cartoon:



My point here isn't about who's right and who's wrong with their doctrine, that's a different discussion entirely. Instead, I'm pointing to the fact that there are so many different groups of Christians, and even completely separate religions that have emerged from Christianity, that all seem to fight amongst themselves. The division and infighting and misuse of scripture (consider the Spanish Inquisition) don't suggest to an 'outsider' that Christianity is the truth and may discourage them from being drawn into the war (as they may see it).

Casual Christianity

There are lots of people in the world who call themselves Christians. What that actually means to them, where their heart is, and how they live out their faith is between them and God. But there are plenty of these people who cause a lot of suffering to others; they act selfishly, they put themselves before others and before God. This reflects on

the 'image of Christianity', to quote Sheldon Vanauken, an American author and friend of CS Lewis:

"The best argument for Christianity is Christians: their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians – when they are sombre and joyless, when they are self-righteous and smug in complacent consecration, when they are narrow and repressive, then Christianity dies a thousand deaths. But, though it is just to condemn some Christians for these things, perhaps, after all, it is not just, though very easy, to condemn Christianity itself for them. Indeed, there are impressive indications that the positive quality of joy is in Christianity – and possibly nowhere else. If that were certain, it would be proof of a very high order."

We can rattle off a few more arguments against Christianity: evil and suffering in the world, people want to live their own way and don't want there to be a God, 'science has proven you don't need God', Christian morals are so old-fashioned, and so on.

Fundamentally, it comes down to beliefs. There are lots of people in this world, and many different belief systems. Our modern western society has gone largely in the direction of atheistic and humanistic views. This has led to a lack of moral foundations that allows people to say things like "you do you" or "this is my truth". The problem with this is that Christianity holds to an objective truth, which means that those who don't hold the same world view are, in fact, wrong. And the push for self-determination means people want all views to be acceptable, but Christians claim an objective truth. The way this has been handled by Christians (and this hasn't changed in the last two thousand years) has often been poor.

Ok, well that was a bit philosophical! I want to take a look at a few quick examples of things that Christians are accused of, and then I'll offer some (hopefully) useful suggestions as to how to be a good witness to someone who is prejudiced against Christianity.

Christians are...

So, what is it about Christians that so many detest? I understand that they don't like the idea of objective truth, but why can't it be 'live and let live'. Why are so many people riled up by Christians?

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’. There is no commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31).

Despite this affirmation of love, one of the biggest recent accusations is that Christians are unloving. The main reason is the rejection of same-sex marriage (in most churches), and the various combinations and permutations that have followed it. After all, ‘love is love’, and “*God is love*” (1 John 4:7–8).

Personally, I don't think that most people today understand what love actually is. They focus on feelings of desire and the sexual aspects of love to fulfil themselves, and less often place other's needs above their own. The different words for love in Greek would help to have a better understanding of what love is, but that's another tangent.

Christian morals and ethics these days are often considered ‘old-fashioned’, judgemental, intolerant and any number of other trigger words that the media loves to use. But ultimately what people hate is the way they are treated by Christians. A nice way to summarise the issues we see in Christianity (and therefore why terms like Christianophobia exist) is the following statement:

“Being Christian is like owning a gym membership. Just because you have a membership doesn't mean you're in shape. Just because you call yourself a Christian doesn't mean you're bearing fruits of righteousness” (Hope365; reddit).

How to respond

We've spent long enough looking at the faults of Christians and some reasons Christianity is objectionable to many. The important thing for us is to know how to act and react. How do we show love to all, without condoning sin? How do we challenge someone's worldview when they become defensive? Should we be friends with Christianophobes?

WDJD

Maybe you know the initialism: WWJD - ‘what would Jesus do’? I want to look at WDJD - what **did** Jesus do? It's hard to find exact examples of Jesus confronting hatred, but here are some passages that I think have useful takeaways. I'll briefly highlight the useful points in each

passage, and then when we look at how we should apply them, I'll try to flesh out what that looks like in practice a little better.

Matthew 5:44–48

“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”

I take three things from this passage:

1. Pray for those who hate you;
2. Love those who hate you; and
3. Greet those who hate you.

From this it seems to me that it's important to create or maintain friendships with non-believers.

Matthew 15:1–14

“Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ‘Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!’ Jesus replied, ‘And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honour your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’ they are not to ‘honour their father or mother’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’ Jesus called the crowd to him and said, ‘Listen and understand. What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.’ Then the disciples came to him and asked, ‘Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?’ He replied, ‘Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up

by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.’ ”

Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees as well as his disciples the hypocrisy of the way the teachers of the law were living and in what they were teaching. He also wasn't worried that the Pharisees and teachers of the law were offended by what he said. But he told his disciples to leave them (be) – not to further antagonise but also not to continue to engage with them as their hearts weren't ready for change.

Matthew 26:59–68

“The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, ‘This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’ Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, ‘Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?’ But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, ‘I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.’ ‘You have said so,’ Jesus replied. ‘But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?’ ‘He is worthy of death,’ they answered. Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said ‘prophesy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?’ ”

The priests here were looking to bait Jesus into an answer that would give them the charge they wanted. He stayed silent. But then he was charged under oath to answer and he gave a witness to his work for his God.

I feel it's worth mentioning that Jesus knew people's hearts and was able to respond in a way that was best for that person. We don't have his insights, but that doesn't mean we can't learn from the way he spoke and acted; it just means we need to be careful and considered, knowing we don't have Jesus' ability to see directly into people's hearts. What do they expect from us?

So, who does actually hate me? In my day-to-day life, the answer might seem to be ‘nobody’ (or at least not many!). I have lots of different people I work with on a regular and semi-regular basis, and I get along well with most of them. But one thing I've noticed is that this depends on the topic of conversation. It's fine to talk about footy, music and interpretation, the weather, world events, Trump; but once you try to talk about faith or truth, **most** people become defensive, fearful even or merely indifferent. Now this might not be an active hatred toward Christianity (or me), but the result is the same – the conversation stalls and they avoid such topics at all costs.

When you come across someone who hates (or is indifferent to) Christianity, I think there are two questions to ask:

1. Do they know you're a Christian?
2. How do they expect a Christian to treat them/act?

We've seen that there are lots of examples throughout history of Christians not imitating Christ. So, do you know if they know that you're a Christian? Do you know if they've had prior good or bad experiences with Christian behaviour? Do you know if they're open to discussion – in general topics as well as faith matters?

It can be hard to know the answers to these questions, but if we don't consider them, I think we may end up unintentionally causing more damage, perhaps by being overzealous to encourage them to faith or by being under-zealous and not recognising their interest or desire to understand Christianity. From the passages we read before there are some things we can act on to help us answer those questions and affect the person positively.

Positive Action

- 1. Matthew 5:44–48 – pray for those who hate you ... love (them) and greet (them).**

Take the time to pray for people who have been antagonistic towards you, or who've perhaps posted something anti-Christian on Facebook. If you are already friends with the person, continue the friendship. If you are not friends with them, but know who they are and you run into them, greet them – don't close that door. And remember to pray for your non-Christian friends and family frequently.

Now I know, that Revelation 18:4–5 says:

“Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “Come out of her, my people,’ so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.”

But Romans 10:14–15 also says:

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’ ”

I think that as long as we are not ‘sharing in her sins’ we can maintain a personal relationship with these people. Where it’s important, we should clearly say no to things that we know are wrong, but there are many situations where a simple friendship can be held, and it gives us an opportunity to find out their attitude and perspective, and to hopefully encourage them to a faith in God through Jesus.

2. Point out hypocrisy

This is something best done within a conversation. I would suggest you don’t just walk up to the person and tell them that they are a hypocrite; that tends not to be so well accepted! It’s probably also important that you know the person fairly well so that you know how direct you can be without turning them defensive. A couple of things I’ve tried to point out are; faith isn’t ignorance, they ultimately have faith in something as they cannot prove all things; the scientific method can’t explain everything (some believe it will), quite apart from the theories we have it always asks, what and how, but never why (in purpose).

3. Offend, don’t antagonise

We read previously in Matthew 15 that Jesus offended the Pharisees with his words. It seems that at the moment, being offended is considered a right, or even a sport – ‘I’m more offended than you about that ...’. If we are trying to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) then I don’t think we should be too concerned if what we say offends someone. However, we should never seek to antagonise. Stating an opinion about someone’s worldview or what we believe to be true is, I think, fine, but attacking the person themselves because of their worldview etc. is not right – this is the sort of judgemental behaviour that many expect from Christians.

4. Listening is important, silence might be the best response

Sometimes people just need to vent, or even want desperately to justify their own beliefs and aren't yet ready to be challenged or to hear alternatives. In this instance, I think we can imitate Jesus in his trial before Pilate and stay silent. Not only should we stay silent, we should listen and not immediately try to cut in and defend our view. By trying to define their own worldview, some people may realise the holes in it and that might be the revelation they need to search deeper.

5. Witness to your faith

On the other hand, like Jesus in his trial before Pilate, when we are *directly* challenged, we should be ready to answer.

1 Peter 3:15–17

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”

Final Thoughts

When I was considering what to write about for this talk, I came up with this topic and had a few different working titles. One of them was ‘In the world, but not of it’. Perhaps that best describes what I'm hoping you have taken away from my thoughts. It's my belief that we should live in the world, live alongside the world, but not be of the world. This can be a difficult line to tread, but being able to have a positive influence on even just one person, and help them to reconsider their prejudice against Christianity should confirm that it is worth it. I'll finish with a short passage from Romans:

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17–19).



Hosea

Since November 2025 we have been studying the minor prophets; any background on the historical context and the prophets themselves plus an overview of each book (not a detailed examination of how the prophecies can be interpreted). We have also looked at where these books are quoted or referenced in the New Testament and how the verses are applied by the NT writers. We noted that the prophets are called 'Minor' because their books are considerably smaller than those of the 'Major' prophets, not because what they wrote was unimportant or less important. Below are the notes on our study of Hosea.

These are the thoughts expressed during the study. Readers are encouraged to test all thoughts against the Scriptures (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

- “Five powerful lessons from the book of Hosea include understanding the profound heartbreak and love of God in a marriage-like covenant, the consequences of idolatry and forgetting God's goodness, the importance of personal and relational ‘knowledge’ of God, the call to love the unlovely despite personal hurt, and the power of leadership to influence followers for good or ill” (Google AI overview).
- Hosea means ‘salvation’. He was from the tribe of Issachar (<https://www.o.ca.org/saints/lives/2018/10/17/102983-prophet-hosea>).
- According to verse 1 he lived during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah kings of Judah, and prophesied for at least 38 years (NIV introduction: Author and Date).
- Comments in Schofield’s Bible: Hosea means ‘the Lord saves’. He lived during the reigns of four kings of Judah and one king of Israel. He was a contemporary of Amos in Israel and of Isaiah and Micah in Judah. His ministry continued after the first group of Israelites were taken to captivity in Assyria. He was 10 years later than Amos but his ministry was very different.
- His case is interesting because his life was an object lesson. He was instructed to take to himself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness (1:2); in this way his life represented the message he had to bring to Israel.

- Ezekiel was also instructed to perform certain acts to illustrate his message: *“Now, son of man, take a block of clay, put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it. Then lay siege to it: Erect siege works against it, build a ramp up to it, set up camps against it and put battering rams around it. Then take an iron pan, place it as an iron wall between you and the city and turn your face toward it. It will be under siege, and you shall besiege it. This will be a sign to the people of Israel. Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the people of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side. I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the people of Israel. After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the people of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year. Turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem and with bared arm prophesy against her. I will tie you up with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished the days of your siege”* (Ezekiel 4:1–8).
- The lesson of Hosea is that it is a parable of God’s relationship with Israel; he was trying to bring an idolatrous race of people back to himself cf: Hosea was instructed to take his wife back again (3:1).
- Hosea used many illustrations, including prostitution, to show what Israel had done to God. He told them that their evil ways meant that they were going to be captured by Assyria as punishment but that God still loved them, and if they came back to him he would still be there.
- Schofield: the theme of Hosea is Israel’s unfaithfulness given in terms of the marriage relationship. The adulterous acts of Hosea’s wife were an allegory of the Lord’s experiences with Israel.
- Hosea 6:7 *“Like Adam, they have broken the covenant; they were unfaithful to me there.”* It is interesting that the mention of Adam breaking a covenant is brought in.
- Hosea 5:3 is an example of two words that mean the same thing being used. i.e. Israel and Ephraim: *“I know all about Ephraim; Israel is not hidden from me. Ephraim, you have now turned to prostitution; Israel is corrupt.”*
 - Jacob means ‘to grasp the heel’ or deceiver. After Jacob fought with the angel he was given the name Israel, but the nation was still trying to deceive God.

- Hosea 6:6 *“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings”* (RSV).
 - This Hebrew word translated ‘steadfast love’ is hard to translate; it is closest to the old English ‘troth’ i.e. I plight thee my troth.
 - NIV note verse 6: *“mercy: Hebrew ‘hesed’, a word that can refer to right conduct toward one’s fellowman or loyalty to the Lord or both – the sum of what God required of his servants. Here it perhaps refers to both.”*
 - The Hebrew word is all encompassing and appears to have a broader and richer meaning than is conveyed in any of the English words used to translate it.
 - A similar thought is found in Psalm 50:8–9 *“I bring no charges against you concerning your sacrifices or concerning your burnt offerings, which are ever before me. I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens ...”*
 - Some have the tendency to think that Jesus died as a sacrifice so we can ‘repent’ then sin again, and continue the cycle. Israel was sinning then bringing sacrifices to cover their sins but without true repentance. God desires the sacrifice of repentance.
 - Israel’s sacrifices under the law could not remove sin, but Jesus’ sacrifice *“once for all”* removed sin for all time. *“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, my God.’” First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” – though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”* (Hebrews 10:1–10).

- Verses from Hosea quoted in the New Testament:
 - 1:10 *“Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘children of the living God.’”* And 2:23 *“I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my loved one.’ I will say to those called ‘Not my people,’ ‘You are my people’; and they will say, ‘You are my God.’”*
 - Romans 9:25–26 *“As he says in Hosea: ‘I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people; and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one,”* and, *“In the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘children of the living God.’”* ”
 - 1 Peter 2:9–10 *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*
 - These verses are an indication that the Gentiles have been accepted and are now considered to be God’s people.
 - 6:6 *“For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”*
 - Matthew 9:12–13 *“On hearing this, Jesus said, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.’”* ”
 - Matthew 12:7 *“If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.”*
 - 10:8 *“The high places of wickedness will be destroyed – it is the sin of Israel. Thorns and thistles will grow up and cover their altars. Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Cover us!’ and to the hills, ‘Fall on us!’”* ”
 - Luke 23:28–30 *“Jesus turned and said to them, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then ‘‘they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’”* ”

- Revelation 6:15–16 *“Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” ”*
 - 11:1 *“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”*
 - Matthew 2:13–15 *“When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.” ”*
 - 13:14 *“I will deliver this people from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction?”*
 - 1 Corinthians 15:54–57 *“When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
- Does the marriage analogy of Hosea apply to the Israel of God?
 - *“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us”* (Romans 15:4).
 - The warnings of the Old Testament are as applicable now as they were then. Jesus draws attention to the old things and brings them into the new era, especially in the sermon on the mount (Matthew chapters 5 and 6).
 - *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching ...”* (2 Timothy 3:16). The New Testament often clarifies the Old Testament. We should be wary of interpreting OT prophecies without NT support. The principles of Hosea are lessons for us in that we need to be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10). We all fail but God wants us to repent and return to him.

- In spite of Israel's disobedience God was still faithful and wanted them back; he showed compassion. It is the same with us; he has our names engraved on the palms of his hands (Isaiah 49:16).
- The lessons are applicable but not the specific prophecies e.g. captivity in Assyria.
- Egypt is mentioned several times in Hosea e.g. 8:13 *“Though they offer sacrifices as gifts to me, and though they eat the meat, the Lord is not pleased with them. Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sins: They will return to Egypt.”* However, Israel didn't go to Egypt; they were exiled to Assyria. In this case Egypt is used as a figure of captivity.
- Chapter 11 especially verses 8–11 – can this be seen as a prophecy of the return of natural Israel to their land?
 - Israel went to Egypt in the time of Jacob, then God brought them out through Moses and gave them the promised land. They were dispersed by the Romans after AD70 and figuratively 'sent to Egypt'. Many settled in Europe where Hitler later killed millions; God sent the hunters to hunt them back (Jeremiah 16:16). They sought to return to their roots in Israel but they have made a pig's mess of it because God has been left out.
 - There are many different understandings about God's plans for natural Israel that are beyond the scope of this study. Each person is encouraged to consider both Old and New Testament scriptures, to pray for wisdom and to come to an understanding that he/she thinks is reasonable.

Autumn Conference

We were greatly blessed to be able to share in-person fellowship for our 49th autumn conference at the Foothills Conference Centre in Mooroolbark between Friday 17th and Sunday 19th April 2026. We were treated to presentations, devotions and Bible studies related to our theme of “Walk the Walk” (of which two have been published herein), and there were also plenty of opportunities for informal discussions with fellow believers.

We have booked the Conference Centre for Friday 2nd to Sunday 4th April 2027, so please reserve these dates in your diaries and consider how you may be able to contribute to the program.

Final Issue

As we received very few responses to the survey published in the previous issue, we have decided to make this the final issue of the New Covenant News. We will continue to provide resources on our website (see box below), where you will also find back issues of this newsletter:

(<https://www.newcovenantfellowship.org.au/resources/#Newsletters>).

If you have a specific query or question please email us.

We thank our Heavenly Father for the thoughts shared by numerous contributors to this publication over many years, and we wish you all God's blessing as you continue to 'walk the walk' to make your calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).



Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 6:8-9 (NKJV)

THE NEW COVENANT NEWS

The New Covenant News is compiled by an editor responsible to the New Covenant Fellowship. The thoughts expressed do not necessarily represent the understandings of all the members of the group, and readers are requested to heed the words: ***“Prove all things”*** (1 Thessalonians 5:21).



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