

Scripture: 1 John 2:6, *“Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.”*

Message: In His Steps

April 29, 2018; Bethel CRC, Brockville, ON

GEMS Sunday

Pastor Jack Van de Hoef

So, you showed up at church this morning sometime between 9:30 and 10. The service is usually an hour and so you might leave here by 11:30. That’s just under 2 hours that you are at church. Then, if you add your GEMS evening, which is about 1 ½ hours, I could say that you spend about 3 ½ hours at church in one week.

How many hours a week do you spend looking at a screen, either a TV, phone, computer? Have you ever added it up? Probably more than 3 ½ hours a week.

What are you learning from all that time in front of the screen? What is it teaching you about the steps to take in your life? What is it teaching you about what is right and wrong, about what is good or bad?

Now, don’t think I’m saying that the only good place to be is in church, or that I’m against phones or screens or TV. That would be like a discussion that took place over 65 years ago (in 1952, before I was even born!) There was an agency from the church called the Back to God Hour that was using the radio for broadcasting sermons and messages from the Bible. In 1951 it was suggested that they consider using television. In 1952 some people opposed that saying “Televising our program might be construed as an endorsement of television in the home.” In other words, we would be saying that television is a good thing and we wouldn’t want to do that! Television programs were bad and we don’t want to be associated with that.

Well, they did start using television and now Back to God Ministries International uses websites, apps, Facebook and all sorts of other media, or “screen” options.

So, it’s not about using phones or tablets or TV. But that doesn’t change the question: What are you learning about your walk in life? Where do you learn about what is right and wrong, what is the right path to walk or the wrong path.

When you, as a GEMS group, went on your hike up Blue Mountain, someone led the way. Or someone told you to follow a certain path. You were given instructions by your leaders because they didn’t want you to get lost.

Where are you getting your instructions and directions for the decisions you make today and tomorrow? Where are you getting your instructions and directions for how you treat other

people on the playground and what words you say and how you talk about someone who dresses differently or who speaks a different language? How do you know what is right and wrong?

Your theme this year is “In His Steps,” referring to the steps of Jesus. It comes from the verse in 1 John 2:6 that says that if we believe in Jesus we must walk as Jesus did.

So, to walk in his steps starts with believing in Jesus. We believe his words that we read in the Bible. We believe in what he taught us about loving God and loving our neighbour and serving others. We believe in his love as the one who died on the cross that we can know our sins and wrongs are forgiven.

But believing in Jesus is more than just knowing certain things about him. There is a big difference between knowing *about* a person and *knowing* that person. I may know many things about our Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, by reading the news or watching TV. But I do not know him personally. I’ve never met him or spent any time with him or had a selfie taken with him.

You might know me as Pastor Jack and know some things about me as the minister of this church. But that does not mean that you *know* me as a person or as a friend.

In the same way, you may know a lot *about* Jesus, but if you have not accepted him as your Saviour and your friend, you do not know him personally.

There was a man in the Bible named Paul. He was a very smart student who knew a lot about the Bible and what the Jewish faith taught. He was very obedient to do all the right things in worship and keeping the law of God. But he wrote (Phil. 3:8), “... I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...I count all that other stuff as garbage so that I may gain Christ.” Paul knew a lot *about* God, but he didn’t know God personally until he came to believe in Jesus Christ, and accept Jesus as his Saviour and Friend.

Walking in Jesus’ steps starts with knowing as a friend the person of Jesus as the one who will lead the way. We know Jesus from reading the Bible, which are his words to us. We know Jesus from listening to others who can tell us about Jesus, like GEMS counselors or parents or grandparents, or coming to church, or programs on your screen. We get to know Jesus by talking to him in prayer, and listening to him in prayer. We get to know Jesus by trusting that he is walking with us and listening to him as he nudges us to do what is right.

So, we believe in Jesus and know Jesus. What difference does that make for how we live and for the steps we take?

Let me use the screen and show you a video that makes us think about what it means to walk in his steps. The person talking is Francis Chan.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuiSHmuslU8>)

To walk in Jesus' steps means we are wholeheartedly willing from now on to live for him, to live as Jesus did. It's more than admiring him and memorizing Bible verses. It's becoming like Jesus.

It's not just about following rules, but about following Jesus. To become like Jesus, we have to know Jesus.

It's not just becoming all that you can be, but it's living out of a power of the Holy Spirit in you.

"Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." Jesus is our #1 example for living. Jesus showed us how we can live in total dependence on the Father, trusting God always. Jesus showed us how we can live in complete obedience to his will, no matter how difficult.

I have intentionally been talking about *walking* "In His Steps." We not racing each other to get ahead of someone else. Walking might not be as amazing or as fast as running, leaping, or flying. But it is a steady, sure movement in one direction. It gives the idea of moving toward a destination or goal. A walk is made up of many specific steps, but it points to the overall picture of life, not to any one step.

Walk "In His Steps." Walk as Jesus walked, trusting God, obeying God honouring God in everything we do. We're not going to do this perfectly. We'll make mistakes. We'll stumble sometimes. We'll walk in the wrong direction at other times.

But the love of God is patient and kind and he will lead us back to the right path. He will forgive us for our wrongs. He will show us where to walk "In His Steps."

Because we not only know who Jesus is, we also know who we are: a dearly loved child of God. When we know who Jesus is, we know who we are: a child of God.

Children of God, walk "In His Steps."

Amen.