

# Ten Traits of Those Who Walk with God — Part 2 of 3

*Numbers 28–31*

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## **A Word Before We Begin**

If you were here last week, you may have noticed that I changed the title of this three-part series on the closing chapters of Numbers. The original title was “The Daily Walk with God.” As I wrestled with the text and thought about how it applies to us, I sharpened it a bit: “Ten Traits of Those Who Walk with God.” My goal across these three sermons is to describe what a Christian should look like — in terms of characteristics, traits, and qualities. I have since realized I probably should have made this a ten-part series rather than three, but here we are.

If you are not a Christian, please listen to these messages as descriptions of what God will do in you when you believe in and follow Jesus. If you are a young or new Christian, hear them as a picture of how God is growing you — a road map of where He is taking your life. These traits do not appear overnight; they are worked into us over a long time, by the power of God shaping our souls in accordance with who He is and His glory.

If you are a longtime Christian — perhaps you grew up in the church, have followed Jesus for years upon years — I hope these traits are things you can say “amen” to and recognize as evidence of God’s faithfulness in your life. But if they do not describe you, I would gently suggest getting on your knees and asking the Lord for both forgiveness and help, and for His leading you into a deeper fellowship with Him by which you may be changed.

And to those who long to see others come to faith: I believe the single most convincing thing that will draw people to trust and follow Jesus is the power of God — His power at work in them through the Spirit, and His power visible to them in you. These ten traits are not merely descriptions of those who follow God; they are descriptions of God’s power made manifest in the world. The question worth sitting with is this: does the world see that power in you?

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## Where We Are in Numbers

We have been in the book of Numbers since April. The book follows the people of Israel as they leave Egypt and move toward the Promised Land. A great deal happens along the way — the dedication of the tabernacle, the organization of the tribes, the learning to live in covenant with God, the hard lessons of dependence on Him in the wilderness. Most of the book is focused either on the journey toward the Promised Land or on the long, painful waiting in the wilderness before entry.

That changes at Numbers 26. From that point forward, everything shifts in orientation: the focus is now on living in the Promised Land within the covenantal relationship with God. If you have ever read a fairy tale and noticed how so many of them end with “and they lived happily ever after,” then Numbers 26–36 is that part of the story — the instructions for how Israel will live out the rest of their days in faithfulness. What does a life of covenant faithfulness actually look like?

This question caught my attention precisely because I believe one of the greatest weaknesses in Christian teaching today is the absence of clear, grounded instruction on what it means to live daily in Jesus — without sliding into legalism on one side or antinomianism on the other. What are the traits of those who walk with God? Numbers 26–36 provides answers to that question. Granted, we are living 3,500 years into the future from these texts, and we live under the New Covenant rather than the Mosaic. There are real differences between us and ancient Israel. But embedded in these instructions are characteristics and qualities that are genuinely applicable to God’s people in every age. That is what this series is about.

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### A Brief Review: Traits One through Three

Last week we examined the first three traits.

Those who walk with God do so in community (Numbers 26). The Christian faith is lived out together — corporately as the church, and personally in friendship and fellowship.

Those who walk with God trust the Lord daily (Numbers 27:12–14). Following Jesus means trusting Him each day for our needs, our situations, our strength, our joy — everything.

Those who walk with God have surrendered themselves to the Lord (Numbers 27:15–23). Those who walk with God look to His will being done over and above their own.

With those three in view, we turn to four more today.

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## **Trait Four: Those Who Walk with God Practice a Daily Rhythm of Praise and Adoration**

Every person alive has a heartbeat. And a heartbeat has a rhythm to it — it may speed up or slow down depending on circumstances, and that is normal, but if it moves out of rhythm entirely, there is a serious problem. A pacemaker is needed.

The heartbeat of a Christian is their praise and adoration of God. I mean that in the broadest possible sense: gratitude, thanksgiving, study, devotion, prayer, and the glorifying of the Lord. These are the things a person does to worship, honor, and enjoy God. And together they form the rhythm — the heartbeat — of the life that walks with Him.

In our scripture today, this rhythm appears in chapters 28 and 29, which describe all the sacrifices and offerings the people are to bring. This is not the only place in Numbers where such instructions appear — we have them in chapter 7 for the dedication of the tabernacle, and in chapter 15 for the time in the wilderness. The book of Leviticus treats the subject in even greater detail. But what makes Numbers 28 and 29 distinctive is the way the material is arranged. It is organized according to a rhythm, a pattern.

It begins with the daily offerings — morning and evening, every single day. On the Sabbath, additional offerings are brought beyond the daily ones. At the start of each new month, still more are added. Then the calendar moves into the great high holy days, all of which cluster around two seasons: the season of Passover and the season of Atonement.

The Passover season includes the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a weeklong celebration following immediately after Passover itself, and then the Feast of Weeks — Pentecost — fifty days later. The total prescribed offerings for the Passover season come to 56 lambs, 316 pounds of flour, 51 gallons of oil, 12 gallons of wine, 11 bulls, 9 rams, and 9 goats.

The season of Atonement begins with the Feast of Trumpets, followed ten days later by the Day of Atonement — the most solemn day in the entire calendar — and then the eight-day Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths. The prescribed offerings for the season of Atonement come to 126 lambs, 950 pounds of flour, 150 gallons of oil, 60 gallons of wine, 78 bulls, 18 rams, and 10 goats.

My first thought when I worked through those numbers was simply: that is a staggering amount. My second thought, close behind it, was that I am genuinely thankful we no longer live under the sacrificial system. All of these offerings seem so foreign and distant. But then I noticed the rhythm — and I realized that the pattern of these prescribed sacrifices and offerings is the same pattern I have come to practice in my own life.

I have a daily pattern of praise and adoration. In the morning — before work, before church — I read Scripture and spend time in prayer. I even do it with a grain offering of my own: a bagel with cream cheese and a cup of coffee. That morning time is long and unhurried. In the

evening, I close out the day briefly — five minutes or so — but there is both a morning and an evening.

Then, every Sabbath — which for us is Sunday — I do something special. We are doing it right now. A corporate gathering of those who follow Jesus.

And on the first Sunday of each month, I observe communion. We celebrate the Lord's Table together.

Through the year, there are two seasons I celebrate — not just single days, but seasons. The first is the Lenten season, beginning with Ash Wednesday and moving through Good Friday, culminating in Easter Sunday. It is a season of remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus. The second is Advent — beginning for me on Thanksgiving, moving through the weeks of the Advent season, with the high points of Christmas Eve and Christmas morning. The purpose of that season is to remember and celebrate the birth of Christ, the Lamb of God, coming into our world.

This is the yearly rhythm of praise and adoration I have followed for years, because it is my spiritual heartbeat. When I do not keep this rhythm — this pattern of daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly praise and adoration — my soul shrivels, my spirit dries up, and my heart grows hard. I encourage you to develop a pattern like this in your own devotional life. Those who walk with God practice a daily rhythm of praise and adoration.

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## **Trait Five: Those Who Walk with God Are Generous**

This trait also emerges from chapters 28 and 29. When you add up all the prescribed sacrifices across the entire year, the total is remarkable: 1,090 lambs, 2,600 pounds of flour, 420 gallons of oil, 265 gallons of wine, 112 bulls, 38 rams, and 18 goats — and this is before accounting for the freewill offerings given throughout the year. On top of all this, the law called the people to live open-handed toward those in need. The people gave much. And this pattern of giving reflects a deep trait of those who walk with God: they are generous.

By generous, I mean something about the orientation of the heart — an attitude toward life that is open-handed. The natural posture of the human heart, apart from the work of God's Spirit, is to be closed-fisted. A closed-fisted life is one obsessed with what is mine — my rights, my money, my time, my recognition, my honor, my pride, my things, my needs, my happiness. Closed-fisted people are consumed by these things, which is why there is so much quarreling, conflict, and an insistence on one's demands. And no matter how wealthy or comfortable such a person becomes, what they have is never enough. Closed-fisted people only consume; they never give.

Those who walk with God are different — not because Christians have more money or more time or fewer needs, but because something changes in us. Instead of the heart being a great black hole that only consumes people and things, something wells up and overflows.

This generosity expresses itself in different directions. There is generosity with what we have — time, money, and talents that the Lord has given us so that we might be a blessing to others. There is generosity with forgiveness — forgiving those who have wronged us. There is generosity with mercy and grace toward those who are hurting, a willingness to welcome broken people. And there is generosity with our words and patience toward others.

There is an old illustration I did not originate, but I have always found it striking. In the land of Israel there are two bodies of water: the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, connected by the Jordan River. The Sea of Galilee is full of life and can sustain life. The Dead Sea is the opposite — so saturated with minerals that if you drink a single cup of its water, it will kill you. Nothing lives in it. What makes the difference? Both seas have an inlet; water flows into both of them. But the Sea of Galilee also has an outlet — it overflows, it gives. The Dead Sea has only an inlet and no outlet. It only receives and never gives, and so it is dead. A life that is closed-fisted is spiritually dead. A life that is open-handed, overflowing, generous — that life is spiritually alive. Those who walk with God are generous.

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## **Trait Six: Those Who Walk with God Are People of Integrity**

Integrity is the theme of Numbers 30, as it is also the theme of Numbers 6, which describes the Nazirite vow. Both chapters are about keeping one's word. The principle is stated plainly in 30:2:

*“If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.”*

The rest of the chapter addresses two limited situations in which a vow made by a woman may be retracted — a passage that raises social questions worth careful study in their own right. But the heart of the chapter, the thing it is fundamentally about, is keeping one's word. That is the essence of personal integrity.

Keeping one's word matters because it is the heart of what it means to be faithful and trustworthy. The word integrity also carries the sense of being whole, undivided, true. Jesus says in Matthew 6:24, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.” Integrity is to serve one master. It means being consistent, pure, and undivided in character.

When I hear the word integrity, I always think of the Roman breastplate. When soldiers saluted and struck their chest, they would shout *integritas* — a kind of self-inspection. The point of the blow to the chest was to produce the sound of a solid thud. If instead there was a jingle, a clank, or a hollow knock, everyone around the soldier knew that his armor was not secure, that something was loose or missing.

It is the same in life. The depth of a person's character is revealed when they are struck by the unexpected. What comes out of you in the midst of struggle, disappointment, and hardship? A person of real integrity continues to be faithful, keeps their word, and keeps doing what is right. They do not bail, do not run, do not offer false excuses. They speak truth, remain honest, and stand firm. The life that walks with God is a life of integrity.

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## **Trait Seven: Those Who Walk with God Are Victorious**

The next chapter, Numbers 31, is a story of victory. The entire chapter recounts Israel's triumph over the Midianites, who had seduced Israel into sin. We are told in verse 16:

*“Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the LORD.”*

In response, the Lord commands Moses: “Avenge the people of Israel on the Midianites” (31:2). And so they do — 12,000 Israelites go out armed for battle, wage war against Midian, kill every male, and put to death Balaam son of Beor. They plunder the cities and return with both treasure and captives.

Numbers 31 is one of those chapters I find genuinely difficult, and it deserves a depth of study I am not attempting today. I want to be clear: living victoriously does not mean waging war on people or seizing plunder and captives. But there is a theme here that speaks directly to us, and I believe it is part of what this passage intends to teach. The people of God are victorious over their enemies. This theme runs through this chapter, through the Old Testament, through the Psalms, and clearly through the New Testament. We are victorious — because greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world.

*“Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)*

*“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4–5)*

In Christ, we are victorious. When I read Scripture, I see this victory expressed in four directions.

In Christ, we are victorious over sin:

“*For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*” (Romans 6:14)

In Christ, we are victorious over death:

“*O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 15:55–57)

In Christ, we are victorious over hardship, suffering, and trial:

“*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*” (Romans 8:35–37)

In Christ, we are victorious over all that is evil:

“*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish. You shall seek those who contend with you, but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all. For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, ‘Fear not, I am the one who helps you.’*” (Isaiah 41:10–13)

Because of our victory in Christ, we no longer need to live afraid of this world or enslaved to it. So many people carry so many fears — fear of making a mistake, fear of not being good enough, fear of not being holy enough, fear of making the wrong decision, fear of the enemy, fear of hardship, fear of death.

“*I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.*” (Psalm 34:4)

That deliverance is found in Jesus Christ. *“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:57). This theme of victory is one I intend to return to before long, because it deserves far more than we can give it this morning.

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## **A Pattern Worth Noticing**

Before we close, I want you to notice something about the seven traits we have covered across these two sermons. As I was reflecting on them, I realized they are all present in the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray.

Those who walk with God do so in community — *“Our Father.”*

Those who walk with God practice a daily rhythm of praise and adoration — *“Hallowed be thy name.”*

Those who walk with God have surrendered themselves to the Lord — *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

Those who walk with God trust the Lord daily — *“Give us this day our daily bread.”*

Those who walk with God are people of integrity — *“Forgive us our sins.”*

Those who walk with God are generous — *“As we forgive those who sin against us.”*

Those who walk with God are victorious — *“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.”*

Hear it all together:

*“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.”*

That these seven traits are all embedded in the Lord’s Prayer tells me two things. First, they do genuinely define the people of God. Second, they are not things we work up in ourselves — they are shaped in us by the Lord. That is why Jesus taught us to pray this way: so that as we pray, the Spirit would form these very traits within us.

That is how I want to close this morning — not with my voice, but with yours, in prayer. Let this be a time when the Spirit ministers these traits into your life.