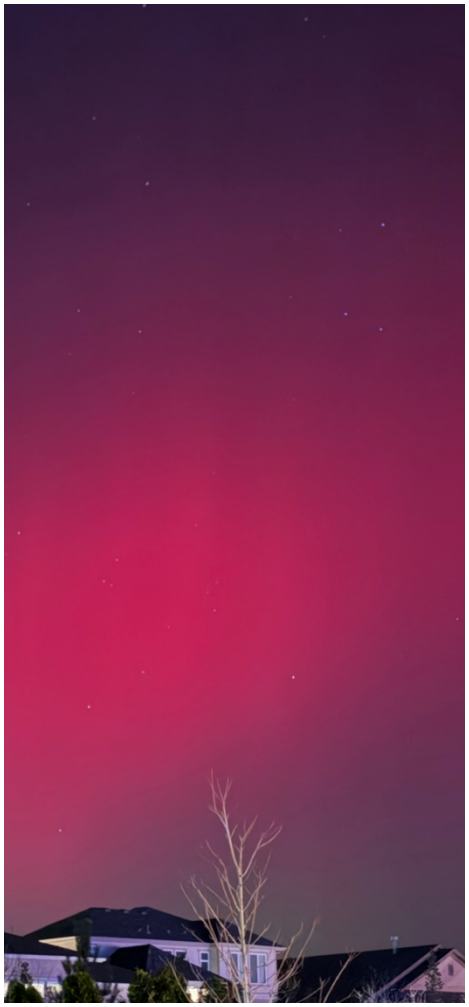
WALK THIS WAY #4: *Grit*

Eph 5:8-10, 'You groped your way through that murk once, but no longer. You are out in the open now. The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around. Get on with it! The good, the right, the true—these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours. Figure out what will please Christ; then do it.' (MSG)

He hadn't always been this way. Once upon a long time ago, he had been Student Council president and voted '*Most Likely to Succeed'* by classmates. He'd been the star trackster and lived in the home where everyone wanted to gather on weekends because his parents were things like 'cool' and 'rad' and enviable to his friends. But that was before. Before the scandal. Before the divorce. Before the money disappeared, like the college plan and the cliques and the inner circle which gave way to small-town gossip when everyone chose sides. Not only was his home no longer the cool hangout, but rather no home at all. That's when he succumbed. All the bad boys toggling their fingers at him, beckoning, 'Come be like one of us. This is where *cool* now exists.' The first cigarette crystallized his lungs and the first stiff drink ate his stomach from the inside out and the tiny little blue pill blew his mind. Yeah, he was one of the '*cool kids'* now. And twenty years later found him digging through dumpsters, huddled in a doorway, not sure if he hoped more for another high or just to never wake up again. On the coldest night of the year, he hobbled into the only warm and welcoming building in the area, and that's where Jesus found him.

Not all of us have tragic stories—testimonies that expose the raw realness of a broken and messy lifetime defined by struggle, sin and scars. But we all can be set free from having a tragic ending to whatever story our lives are writing. Just like my friend above, we never know the place, the day, the reason that causes Jesus and our lives to intersect, but it is available to everyone, any time. And what is most powerful is the way Jesus places each one of our stories together to create a mosaic of unfinished and broken pieces that form a perfect picture of His love and grace.



We may not know what the Lord is doing during the long cold nights when we feel lost, abandoned, hopeless. But if we are able to just hold on long enough—if we will surrender to walking His way instead of always choosing our own path—we likely will be fully surprised at the outcome of His goodness. He writes beautiful music out of the discord in our lives. He weaves a masterpiece tapestry from all the raveling seams and edges in my life when I came undone. He makes beauty out of ashes, and calls dead things to rise and walk out of graves. And all the irritants and suffering and pain occurring deep within you and me is producing something beautiful, priceless, unique.

It really is no different than a pearl. A pearl is created within the oyster at the place where a fragment of sand—which didn't belong there—caused an excruciating, gritty irritation. And out of the suffering, out of the distress and agony, in the place where the wound healed, comes the rarest of gems. God didn't intend for His children to suffer or to carry the weight of shame or be burdened by guilt. Many of the negative things that entered our lives weren't meant to belong inside us. However, all of it produces something He considers worthy and useful and purposeful in drawing others who struggle in similar ways to Him. As the sun sets on another year, don't discount the trials you face. Out of the ridiculous kindness of Jesus, incredible things can color your horizon. And then thank Him, because He is faithful, and true to His Word.