

Walk Therapy – Turning Your Heart Toward Eden

Introduction

Have you ever felt like you are disconnected from God? You may know the right verses, you are faithful in your church attendance and you try your best to live the Christian life, but somehow it all feels like a performance, with an agonizing feeling like you aren't quite good enough! If you have, I pray that this writing will be an encouragement to you. I have experienced a common disconnection that I have also seen countless other Christians struggle with. This disconnection is the disconnection of the head from the heart. We know about God but we don't really know Him. Or maybe more accurately, we don't really feel known by Him. When this happens, we can become very legalistic about how we do the Christian life and a life that should be filled with love, joy and peace feels more like a task to endure.

The purpose of this booklet is to introduce you to a strategy that will help you to make the head-heart connection. We will look to develop this head-heart connection by incorporating walking with various spiritual exercises. Have you ever noticed how "going for a walk" helps to calm you down when you are stressed? Research reveals many benefits to walking including maintaining healthy weight, reduced risk of high blood pressure or type 2 diabetes, muscle and bone strength, and improved mood. So we are looking to experience these benefits of walking but with the added benefit of growing closer to our Heavenly Father. Our relationship with God is often referred to in "walking" terms. It is common to ask a Christian friend, "how is your walk with God"? We mean by this how is your relationship with Him? So this is the objective of a walking strategy, to spend some meaningful time alone with God, walking with Him, listening to Him, and enjoying the time with Him.

Several verses in the Bible make references to walking in relationship to God:

After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters....And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. Genesis 5:22, 24

Noah found favor in the sight of the LORD... Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God. Gen 6:8-9

He said to me, 'The LORD before whom I have walked will send His angel with you and make your journey a success. Gen 24:40

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. Deuteronomy 8:6

Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires Romans 13:13-14

By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. 1 John 2:5b-6

Personal Testimony

I love being outdoors. There is something freeing for me about experiencing God's creation and walking that allows me to block out the noise of life and to experience God's presence in deep and meaningful ways. We rescued a dog, Chaucer, a while ago who by nature needs lots of walking and exercise to work out his energy. It was fun at first but at times I have to admit it felt like a chore because it was one more thing to do. But as I was walking one day, on a beautiful sunny morning, I really felt the sense of God's Spirit with me as we walked. All of a sudden those walks with Chaucer took on a whole new meaning. I began to look forward to walking our dog because it meant time alone with my Father. Now I don't know who gets more excited about going for a walk, Chaucer or I!

I am slow learner I guess because when I look back on my life I can see other times where my Father was begging me to go on a walk with Him but I was too busy. I would like to share one of those times that deeply moved me and that I hope is an encouragement to you.

Several years ago, I took a more extended walk. That day was one of the most inspiring and encouraging things I have ever done. I was a little anxious about what to do on this extended walk, but I felt this peace as if God were whispering into my ear, "Relax, there is no agenda today. Let's just spend some time together". I spent the time praying, reading and meditating on Scripture. I also took time to be silent. I could really sense His presence in a way that I had not in some time. I did not hear any voice, but I felt a strong impression on my heart that was God's truth for me that day. His truth was not something new, but I needed to hear it in a fresh way. He was simply saying to me, "I love you. Thank you for spending this time with me. What took you so long to do this? I have been waiting for you."

At some point during my walk, this thought came to my mind: "I wonder if this was what it was like in the Garden of Eden". That then triggered an even more amazing thought. This thought brought back a memory of a very special song, one of those all-time favorites. That song is "In the Garden". The amazing thing about that song is there is quite a history around that song in my life. When my wife and I were young marrieds, we would visit nursing homes and lead hymn sings. Each time we did this we would ask for a favorite hymn. Just about every time, the very first song requested was "In the Garden". I liked the song but I have to admit that after the 40th request, I started to lose my appreciation for it. So it was quite ironic on this day, that God would bring this song of all songs to my heart. So I began to sing it silently. As I went through the words, the words hit me like a ton of bricks and the light bulb finally went on in my mind. Now, I understood why that song meant so much to those folks. It was speaking directly to me and my experience that day with my heavenly Father. My Father used these words powerfully at this point in my walk:

"I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses
And the voice I hear falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses.

And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known."

I have reflected on that day many times since. It is amazing how quickly I can lose sight of the truth of God's love for me when back in the "rat race". I am grateful that God brought Chaucer into my life to make walking with Him a daily occurrence.

Ground Rules

As you prepare to embark on this walking experiment, here a few ground rules for you to consider.

1. **No electronics:** except for the worship day that is talked about in Day 3. I am a computer geek and love everything about electronics, but they are also a distraction. So on your walk, try not to use your cell phone.
2. **No legalism:** lay down any pressure to do this a certain way. There is no checklist to accomplish or a manner that you have to follow every time to be effective. The contents of this material are merely suggestions to guide you, not hard and fast rules you need to follow.
3. **Be gracious to yourself:** attempting this exercise may be something new to you and the enemy will do anything he can to discourage you or to distract you from walking with God. If you are like me, your mind may wander and you realize you have lost focus. In that moment, give yourself some grace and return your attention back to your Father. Sometimes I will use a short phrase to get my heart and mind back on track. I may say something simply like:
 - a. "You are a good Father".
 - b. "You are good and what you do is good".
 - c. "Father, your love is better than life".

Sometimes I am just honest and I'll say something like: "Wow, God, my mind took a turn there and went down a rabbit trail away from you. Forgive me for being so easily prone to wander. Thank you for being so patient with me." Not beating myself up, I just move on and enjoy the time.

How to Walk

There is no special formula for making this happen; here is a summary of how I go about each of my walks. I don't always do this, but it is a natural way for me to enter into this special time with my Father.

1. Prepare

I like to have a little transition time between what has been occupying my time and energy and starting my walk. So for 10-15 minutes prior to the walk, I begin to let go and lay down all the events of life and prepare my heart to meet with my Father. Here are a few things I may do:

- a. **Lay burdens/stressors/thoughts before the cross:** I find this really important for me. Otherwise these things will creep back into my mind and interfere with the walk. So I take a quick stock of the activities in which I have been occupied and thoughts and emotions I may be experiencing and pray a short pray of relinquishment where I share these things that are in my life and lay them before the cross, surrendering control over them to Jesus.
- b. **Confess any sin:** Much of this seems to be natural continuation of the first step. As I am taking stock of my day, my thoughts and my emotions, I may confess my sin in not

handling certain situations in the right way, or placing too much emphasis on other things to define my significance more than God.

- c. **Surrender:** I then take a moment of recognition that I am the Lord's and I owe everything to him, so I surrender myself to Him and ask for His help in staying present as we walk together.
- d. **Invite:** right before the walk begins, I invite the Lord to join me in this walk. I ask that this would be a time to experience His presence.

2. Walk

I then go for the walk. Sometimes I use one of the formats that are outlined in this material. Other times I just go and it may be a combination of several of them. This is a time of quiet reflection and relaxation with your Father. So don't rush, this isn't a time to be in training for speedwalking! Again, be kind to yourself. If you catch yourself wandering, go right back to focusing your attention on the Father. The more you do this, the more quickly you will catch yourself and go back. Like learning anything new, it takes practice.

3. Close

I like to wrap up my walk with a moment of gratitude. I thank God for his love for me and ask that I may be a blessing to others.

7 Days of Walking

Below are 7 different types of walks you can try. This is not an exhaustive list and you may discover other formats that are more meaningful for you. I present these here as a place to start, to spur you to your own creativity of finding ways to spend time with God.

Day 1: Creation

Introduction

Creation allows us to get perspective, to get outside of ourselves and see a greater picture of who God is. John Piper says this about creation:

“If created things are seen and handled as gifts of God and as mirrors of His glory, they need not be occasions of idolatry – if our delight in them is always also a delight in their Maker.”

Being in creation can be a delightful experience and as we do so we find delight in our Father who made all things, including ourselves.

Scripture

Below are some scriptures that speak about God’s creation. Take some time to ponder each verse and what it has to say about creation. What is God saying to you in these verses?

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. Hebrews 11:3

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. Colossians 1:16

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” Revelation 4:11

Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. Genesis 2:7

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Romans 1:19-20

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. Psalm 19:1-2

We can gain so much insight into who God is and who we are as we take time to enjoy His creation.

Instructions for the Walk

Below is a summary of what was created in each of the six days. Review these before you walk. Then try to notice evidence of all six days of creation during your walk. Notice the light, the land and water, plants and trees, sun, moon, and stars, animals and mankind. There is so much to take in and appreciate about the greatness of God as displayed in His creation. As you observe creation, you realize

just how incredibly complex and far beyond our comprehension it all is. The One who knows every detail of the universe knows you intimately. It's overwhelming to think about the significance we have in that truth.

If you find your mind wandering, stop and do a "sensation" review. Stop walking for a moment and try to engage all of your senses, taking in all that you can experience. Thank God for the gift of life and allowing you to experience Him in his creation.

Day 1:

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.

Day 2:

God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

Day 3:

The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Day 4:

And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

Day 5:

So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Day 6:

And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

May you too see everything God has made and declare your praise to Him by declaring, "it is very good"!

Day 2: Memorization

Introduction

One of the best ways to draw closer to God is to memorize his word. Hebrews 4:12 describes God's word in this way:

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

There is some amazing power in the word of God to transform us from the inside out. So today we want to allow ourselves to be immersed in a portion of His word, letting that truth fill our every thought and emotion as much as we can during the walk. Our goal is not to check the box and say we have a verse memorized, but rather our goal is to hear from God as we meditate on the verses.

Scripture

Below are some scriptures that talk about the power of memorizing the word of God. As you read through these verses, what is God speaking to you about regarding His word?

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2

I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:11

I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word. Psalm 119:15-16

Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes. Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors. Psalm 119:23-24

I will run in the path of your commands for you have set my heart free! Psalm 119:32

As we memorize and meditate on God's word, we open ourselves up to a transformational change. God's word speaks to our deepest need.

Instructions for the Walk

The first thing is to determine what you want to memorize. I would like to suggest you try memorizing a passage of scripture vs memorizing a verse here and a verse there. I have found great blessing in committing a passage to memory. This won't happen in one walk, but as you go on walks where you are memorizing scripture you can continue to add to the overall passage. Perhaps one of the easiest passages to start with is Psalm 23. So for the walk today, begin reading and memorizing this passage. Before you know it, you will be walking with God and reciting this Psalm from your heart. Don't be discouraged if it takes a while to do it. Enjoy the journey.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

As you read the first sentence, and re-read and re-read as you commit it to memory, allow the words to really wash over you and to grasp the significance of its message. The beauty of memorization is it

allows you to stay with a verse and to be hit by its meaning. The Lord is MY shepherd. He is personally involved in my life. Think about the shepherd and their role in protecting and caring for the sheep. The Lord, the Creator, your Heavenly Father, is your shepherd. Take your time like this as you work through each sentence of this amazing Psalm. May you sense the depth of God's love for you as you commit this and other passages to memory.

Day 3: Worship

Introduction

Worship is something we think about most often within the context of going to church. But worship is a lifestyle. When we worship, we are paying honor to God and acknowledging to Him that He is Lord. When we picture ourselves in the presence of God and we attempt to contemplate His glory and majesty, worship becomes a natural expression. We are humbled by His presence, we acknowledge His power, might, and majesty, and we are overcome with gratitude that the Creator of the Universe actually cares and desires us to be in His presence.

We were born to worship. We crave worship in the depths of our souls. Yet worship so often is the last thing we do as we get distracted by the cares of this life. Job pressures, marital distress, parenting, caring for loved ones and on and on. We can become self-absorbed in our own pain that we forget to seek the kingdom of God first (Matt 6:33). Worship is a wonderful way to get our hearts back into the right place.

Scripture

Read through the selection of verses below. These give us a great picture of what we are to experience in worship. What is God saying to you as you read through these verses?

Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Psalm 103:1

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. Psalm 63:1

How great you are, Sovereign Lord! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. 2 Samuel 7:22

*For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever!
Amen. Romans 11:36*

I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing." Psalm 16:2

*Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,
for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. 1
Chronicles 29:11*

Instructions for the Walk

Most days I like to walk without any technology. I find unplugging from all distractions is a great help in walking with God and experiencing His presence. Today, however is an exception. For the walk today, let's use whatever portable technology is available to us so that we can listen to music as we walk. Music has a way to connect to the depths of our souls and can really enhance a worship experience. Beyond the music though are the words that speak deep spiritual truths and allow us to communicate in a way at times that is beyond any words we can say. Below are the words to the song, "I Need You" by

Tenth Avenue North. Notice how we are proclaiming our utter dependence on God and God alone in these verses.

*I need you. I love you. I want you. No one else can make me new.
I need you. I love you. I want you. No one else can make me new.*

*Your joy is better than wine, It's better than love, It's better than life.
Your joy is where my heart sings, It's where I belong, It's where I believe.*

*I need you. I love you. I want you. No one else can make me new.
I need you. I love you. I want you. No one else can make me new.*

*I will wait for only you, No one else can make me new, No one else can break the silence.
I will wait for only you, My heart needs to hear what's true, No one else will break the silence.
I will wait for only you, No one loves me like you do, No one else can break the silence.
So I will wait for only you, no one else can pull me through, no one else will break the silence*

*I need you. I love you. I want you. No one else can make me new.
I need you. I love you. I want you. No one else can make me new.*

More than anything, we need Jesus. More than a happy marriage, a fulfilling job, or a loving family, we need and yearn for our Heavenly Father. Let this day of worship walking allow this yearning of your heart to be met in the loving arms of God.

Below is a sample of some of my playlist if you are looking for some good starter songs. You do not need to use these, but these are some of my favorites. Have great time of worship!

Playlist

Song	Artist
I Need You, I Love You, I Want You	Tenth Avenue North
At the Cross (Love Ran Red)	Chris Tomlin
Holy Spirit	Francesca Battistelli
Great Are You Lord	Casting Crowns
From the Inside Out	Hillsong United
Redeemed	Big Daddy Weave
Only Grace	Matthew West
Good Good Father	Chris Tomlin
Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)	Hillsong United
Chain Breaker	Zach Williams

Day 4: Popcorn Scripture

Overview

Have you ever watched popcorn pop or listened for the sound of popping as you put a bag of popcorn in the microwave? It takes a little time but all of a sudden there is a POP and then another POP and another.... Today we will borrow that popcorn analogy and apply it to our walk. This day is very unscripted. The idea is to allow God to bring to your mind any scripture that you may have heard or memorized in the past that POP into your mind. The goal is not to repeat the verse perfectly, but rather to hear the word of God as it comes to you. This is not an exercise where you should feel the need to have a bowlful of popcorn flood through your mind. You may only have a few pop into your mind and that is ok. What we want to do in this day is to allow spiritual truths that we have heard in the past to wash over and remind us of who God is and how much He loves us. This is having a spontaneous walk with God where you have no particular agenda in mind but are just open to what the Lord speaks to your heart through his Word.

Scripture

I couldn't really find verses specific to this topic of "popcorn" scripture, so I am stretching a little to add to this section of the booklet. However, if you like popcorn, you might find it delightful. So the whole experience of heating the kernels, listening for the popping, taking in the smell and then eating the freshly popped corn is a delight. In a way, I think that is the attitude we might have on this day, finding delight in God's word as it pops into our minds. So here are few verses that speak of the delight in knowing Gods word.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. Psalm 1:2

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4

For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and lift up your face to God. Job 22:26

Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, "Great is the Lord who delights in the welfare of his servant!" Psalm 35:27

The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way Psalm 37:23

Blessed in the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! Psalm 112:1

I delight in following your decrees as one who rejoices in great riches. Psalm 119:14

Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors. Psalm 119:24

Instructions for the Walk

Begin your walk with prayer and ask God to speak to you whatever verses He may want you to hear today. Just as it takes a few minutes for a kernel to pop, it may take some time before verse may come to mind. No stressing! Sometimes in the midst of quiet God can then speak.

As one comes to mind, meditate on it and ponder the significance on that truth before rushing to hear another one.

Here is a sample of how this might look:

After walking for a few minutes, this verse comes to mind. “The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not be in want”. There is such a calming effect about that verse. There is something personal about a shepherd and his sheep. The shepherd takes care of all of the needs of the flock, he knows them by name and they know his voice. God you are my shepherd and I have all that I need in you.

A little while later another verse comes to mind: “The Lord is my Light and my Salvation. Whom shall I fear?” As I ponder that verse, I begin to think about any fears that I may be experiencing...

This is just a short sample of what this day is intended to be. It’s a great way to engage with God in meaningful but spontaneous conversation, like you would with a really good friend.

If you are new to the faith or you feel stress about not being able to have any verses come to mind, try this alternative. Go to your local Christian bookstore and purchase a scripture memory product that contains wallet sized memory verse cards. Take some on your walk and put them in your pocket. As you walk, “pop” one out of your pocket and read and ponder it for a few minutes. Then try another and then maybe another. The goal is not to memorize, but to allow verses to pop up to our delight.

Day 5: Prayer

Introduction

I have to admit, when I think of praying for an extended period of time, I feel a little intimidated like how can I possibly have more than a few minutes of “stuff” to pray about. However, there is something profoundly important in spending some concentrated time in prayer with God. The goal of the walk today is not to fill 30 minutes with my uninterrupted monologue to God about what’s on my mind. Prayer in its simplest form is communication with God. Communication is 2-way, where I lift my prayer before Him and stop long enough to hear Him respond. I never hear an “audible” voice, but more impressions on the heart, or maybe a verse or song may come to mind as I am sharing all of myself with Him. Sometimes there is silence, but it’s in that silence where I can sense God’s presence sometimes in greater ways. Richard Foster sums up best the goal of our walk today:

“Of all the spiritual disciplines, prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father”

*“To pray is to change. All who have **walked** with God have viewed prayer as the main business of their lives.”*

Scripture

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. Ephesians 6:18

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 2 Chr 7:14

Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. Jeremiah 29:12

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, Matt 5:44

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Matt 26:41

The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him. Proverbs 15:8

I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer. Psalm 17:6

He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea. Psalm 102:17

May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice. Psalm 141:2

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:12

Instructions for the Walk

What do you pray about for extended time? I think that question is similar to the disciples’ question to Jesus in Luke 11:1 when they asked Him to teach them how to pray. It’s interesting to note that this request to learn how to pray follows the scene with Jesus being in Mary and Martha’s house. Martha is getting a little perturbed with her sister Mary because she is sitting at the feet of Jesus rather than helping around the house and serving the guests. Jesus replies to Martha, “Martha, Martha, you are

anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary.” That “one thing” I think was on the minds of the disciples when they asked Him how to pray. They understood that this is a significant spiritual practice and they sincerely wanted to know how to do it and to connect with God more fully.

So with that in mind, let’s use Jesus’ answer to that question as a model for our prayer time on this walk today. I am going to break down the Lord’s Prayer as an example of how to pray during the walk. As you walk through this prayer, take your time and reflect on and pray about the specific part of the prayer. Stop throughout the prayer and wait in silence. You may surprise yourself how long you really can pray. If you are done with your walk and you have not finished with the prayer, that’s ok! There is no penalty for not finishing, be grateful for the time you have had with your heavenly Father.

- **Our Father:** This is a great way to start every walk, but especially on this day. You might just personalize it and say “My Father” or just “Father”. Let those words linger for a few moments. What is implied by addressing God as your Father? It is a statement of our position in God’s family as His dearly loved child. A Father who loves you unconditionally. God the Father can be tricky if you did not have a loving earthly Father. But you know what a good father should be like. If we put down all of the good characteristics we think a good Father should have, that is just the tip of the iceberg of how amazing God the Father is. You might think of an example you have seen in someone else being a loving father. So focus on those qualities of a good father and allow God’s fatherly presence to walk beside you in this moment. Father! Daddy!
- **Who art in heaven:** with this thought, we are declaring God’s position as the creator of the universe. We are pondering His magnificence and glory. He is all knowing, all-seeing, and all-powerful. That’s my Dad! A child sometimes will boast about their Dad because of who they are and what they do. We can boast about our Dad, He’s the greatest Dad ever. He is the ruler of the universe. He’s my Dad! There is a sense of protection and peace in this as well. We can place all of who we are in the arms of our Father because He can fully protect us.
- **Hallowed be thy name:** with this phrase, we are declaring a fundamental character of our Father, He is holy. There is no imperfection or hint of sin in Him. He is totally pure and good. At our core, we humans have a craving for a pure and perfect love. Even the hardest of us desires this. “Holy is your name”. How grateful we can be to know that our Father is holy. He doesn’t lose his temper for no reason, he never abandons us, and He never lies, cheats or steals. He is holy. We would all be hopeless if God were not holy. But, thanks be to God. He is! Another term for God when I think of holy is the term good. It’s the word used in the creation story and is used throughout scripture to describe God. God is good. Psalm 119:68 says “You are good and what you do is good”. Spend a few moments praising God for His holiness and goodness and then stop for a moment and ponder this amazing truth.
- **Thy Kingdom come:** As we have just declared that God is holy and good, it seems like a logical next expression in prayer to say “may Your kingdom come.” If God is the king of the universe and is holy, perfect, and good, you want that kingdom to reign. So with this phrase, you are praying first that His kingdom come now. Even in this walk, may you experience a moment of kingdom living. But also as you walk through each day it is a desire to see God’s kingdom. Like Jesus said in John 10:10, “I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly”. But we also pray this phrase in anticipation for when He comes again. There will be an end of the fallen state of our world and humanity when God’s kingdom will come. And if you are a follower of Christ, you will experience that kingdom. “Father, may your kingdom come!”
- **Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven:** Jesus uttered this phrase at Gethsemane when He declared, “not my will, but thy will be done”. This is an ultimate expression of surrender. All of us struggle with wanting things our way. We want what seems best to us. However, when we

are walking in fellowship with our Father and we trust in His love, goodness and greatness, our soul longs for His will to be done.

- **Give us this day our daily bread:** as we draw closer to God, our desires and needs become more clear. What is the daily bread that you need from God today?
- **And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors:** when we spend time with God in prayer and fellowship, we open ourselves up to the working of the Holy Spirit. Part of this work many times revolves around confession and forgiveness. Take a few moments and confess sin the Holy Spirit may speak to you about. You may also become aware of your relationships with others that may need some attention. What an interesting concept to ask God to forgive in the same way as we forgive others. Forgiveness is the healing agent to all relationships, especially our relationship with God. Are there relationships in your life that need mending? Are you willing to forgive even if you have been offended?
- **Lead us not into temptation:** there are lots of theological discussions around this statement that are far beyond what we can cover here.
 - Temptation: Do not "suffer" us, or "permit" us, to be tempted to sin. In this it is implied that God has such control over the tempter as to save us from his power if we call upon him.
 - Trials: it is not wrong to pray that we may be saved from suffering if it be the will of God. Jesus asked for his trial to pass, but then followed up with, not my will but your will be done.
- **But deliver us from evil:** or the "evil one". The enemy is like a prowling lion (1 Peter 5:8). We live in a broken world and recognize there is a spiritual battle. We pray for deliverance from the evil one for ourselves and our families. In Jesus name, we renounce all lies of the enemy and ask that any strongholds that have been erected by the evil one be demolished (2 Cor 10:4).
- **For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.** It is fitting to close our prayer time with God with praise and worship. This statement is often referred to as the Doxology. Some refer to it as David's doxology (1 Chron 29:11). Here we put our full focus and attention on the greatness and glory of God the Father. Some who are reading this may have grown up in a faith tradition where you sang the Doxology each week. I did and I use it from time to time in my walks:

Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end. Amen. Amen!

This is such an important way to wind up time in prayer. So often we can get "stuck" in our troubles and difficulties that we fail to place our lives in the sovereign hand of God. Don't let your emotions drive your faith. Choose to praise Him in all situations (Phil 2:6-7)

- **Amen.** A way of saying, "so be it" or "let it be so". We are affirming our belief in God and His ways.

Day 6: Thankfulness

Introduction

Why give thanks? For one, our tendency is toward darkness and negativity. That is the price of being a fallen creation. Paul spoke of the impact of negativity and what happens when we are not grateful:

*For although they knew God, **they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him**, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Romans 1:21*

Remove thanksgiving to God from our everyday life and the consequences are severe; messed up thoughts and darkened hearts.

It is also interesting that the more research that is done on the human brain, we are learning things that provide even more insight into the truths of scripture. For instance, did you know that research is showing that we have a natural tendency to be negative? Our emotions normally impact us first before we can logically think through a situation. Our brains actually get “hijacked” by this emotion. The emotion feeds our “fight or flight” instincts. So if we rely on emotion, we will head toward a protective, fearful and negative path. Now what are the odds that the Creator of the Universe might know a little something about this and offers us a path out of this negativity? Research is also showing the impact of thankfulness on our wellbeing. Do a Google search and you will find a plethora of material that shows the benefits of being thankful. Once again, our Father knows what is best. So whether we feel like it or not, let's choose to be thankful.

Scripture

Here are a few verses that speak of being thankful. Take a few moments and allow God to speak to you about being thankful. What is He saying to you in His word?

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! 1 Chron 16:34

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. Psalm 9:1-2

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph 5:20

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Col 1:12

Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! 2 Cor 9:15

Instructions for the Walk

There is an old hymn that is a great theme for the walk today. It goes like this:

When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,

Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Refrain:

Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your many blessings, see what God has done.

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will keep singing as the days go by.

Refrain:

Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your many blessings, see what God has done.

So as you walk today, count your blessings. Name them one by one. This will give you a perspective on your life and help you to see that your Heavenly Father's presence is with you.

Day 7: Self Examination

Introduction

As you develop a practice of walking and you are sensing the presence of God more deeply, there is a natural and healthy openness to self-examination. The psalm below captures the essence of what we want to do on this walk.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting! Psalm 139:23-24*

As we have enjoyed creation, meditated on His word, worshipped Him, prayed and expressed our thanksgiving to God, we are experiencing with greater awareness that our lives only really have meaning and purpose as we walk with Him. So we are doing some self-examination to see what tends to get in the way of us walking in His ways and reflecting His image.

Scripture

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! 2 Corinthians 13:5

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. James 1:23-25

For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load. Galatians 6:3-5

Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD! Lamentations 3:40

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Psalm 51:10-12

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. Psalm 34:18-20

Instructions for the Walk

We can go any number of ways in self-reflection. But here are a few ideas. As we consider each of these, they are done in the spirit of Psalm 139. You may want to start your walk with this prayer:

“O Father, I want to follow you and know you more. Help me to see what keeps me from experiencing your love and extending it to others. I want to do a search of my heart, my thoughts, my emotions, and my will to

see if I have placed anything ahead of knowing you and make me aware of any strongholds of the enemy or woundings of my past that prevent me from experiencing your presence more fully or that keep me from loving others as you have called me to do.”

Idea 1: Make an inventory of your reactions to other people

When others do something that bothers us, we react. We tend to blame others when things aren't right, but if we are honest this reflects the condition of our own hearts. This takes a heart of humility, but an awesome path toward growth is to be willing to look at yourself and ask why did that event or person cause such a reaction in you? Yes, it is possible that the other may be wrong and could have said or did things differently, but how did you respond? As I have pondered this over the years, I have come to the conclusion that my natural reaction is almost always the opposite of what the Bible tells me to do. If my spouse irritates me, I want to retaliate or pull away. The Bible says to love my enemy and to pray for them. What keeps love and prayer from being my natural response? How about you? As you list your reactions, describe the feelings behind the reactions. Where did those feelings come from, what is their origin? Can you remember having those same feelings growing up?

Idea 2: Fruit of the Spirit Assessment

Another path toward self-examination is to look at the condition of your heart. A great way to do this is to use the fruit of the spirit as an assessment tool of how you are doing spiritually.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:22-23

On a scale of 1 to 5, one being never and five being always, how often is each fruit evident in your life? If you are really brave ask someone close to you to answer the assessment for you. Ask God to show you where the enemy may have taken root in your life.

Please note, that self-examination is NOT an exercise of beating yourself up. It is a healthy and honest look with God of your life and where He wants you to grow. God is calling you to draw closer to Him because He loves you. When you get done with this walk, you may want to jot down what Jesus may have laid on your heart. Whatever He may have brought to your attention may need some further work. You may find it helpful to process your discovery more with a trusted friend, your spouse, a pastor or a counselor. Continued self-examination during you walks is also a great way to hear from God. At the end of the day, Christ wants to set you free from whatever may hinder your walk with Him.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

Conclusion

In the introduction, we talked about striving to feel close to God. But we are afraid to start, or to do it wrong. What I have found, and hopefully have shared for you through the descriptions of these seven walks, is that God is waiting....and wanting closeness so much more, even, than you do.

God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows we aren't perfect. He always knew we wouldn't be. That's why we needed Jesus. But we can't use our fear of not being perfect to stay away from closeness to God.

What I am asking is that you take the format and insight I have given you around these seven days...and just start. And each time you take one of the walks, shift it more and more from my style of a creation walk or a worship walk or a prayer walk, to your style.

Most of all, make the commitment to yourself to walk with God in His Garden, and tarry there.