

Walking with Jesus

The Spiritual and Physical Benefits of Walking

Suasnna Billington PT



Just a Closer Walk With Thee!

[Just a closer walk with thee - Patsy Cline And Willie Nelson](#)



Just a Closer Walk With Thee

Written by William J. Floyd

[C] I am weak but Thou art [G7] strong;
Jesus, keep me from all [C] wrong [G7]
[C] I'll be satisfied as [F] long As I [C] walk,
Let me [G7] walk close to [C] Thee.

Chorus

[C] Just a closer walk with [G7] Thee,
Grant it, Jesus, is my [C] plea [G7]
[C] Daily walking close to [F] Thee,
Let it [C] be, dear [G7] Lord, let it [C] be.
Through this world of toil and snares,
If I falter, Lord, who cares?
Who with me my burden shares?
None but thee, dear Lord, none but Thee.
When my feeble life is o'er,
Time for me will be no more;
Guide me gently, safely o'er,
To Thy kingdom shore, to Thy shore.

Road to Emmaus Videos

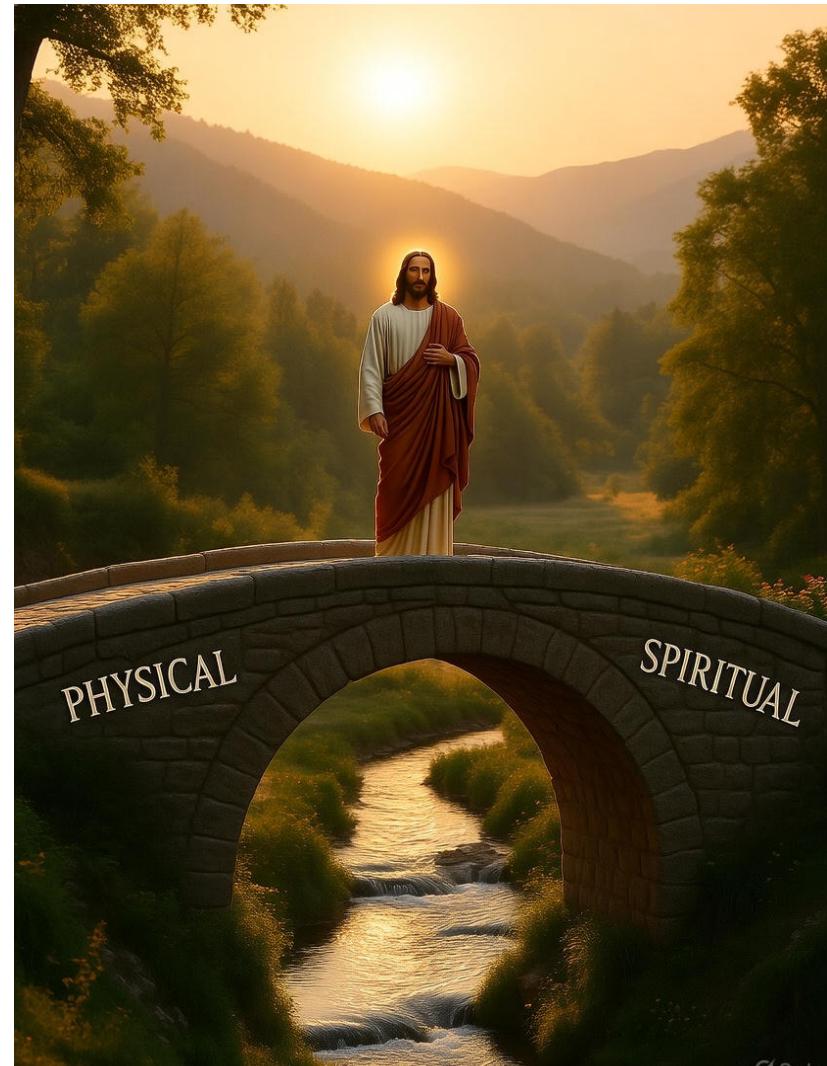
[The Shocking Truth About Emmaus: Why Didn't They Recognize the Risen Jesus?](#)

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=vepBqHvZ0Xs&si=CMcbQfu7yUq532IW>

What Inspired This Talk?

- Museum of the Bible in Washington DC: Road to Emmaus Exhibit
(Luke 24: 13-35)
- Explosion of Walking Research over the past 10 years in the Medical Literature
- Declining mental and spiritual health corresponding with increased anxiety, depression, loneliness
- Decrease in Religious Affiliation Nationally
- Increase in Chronic Diseases

***WALKING WITH JESUS IS THE
BRIDGE BETWEEN
PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH***



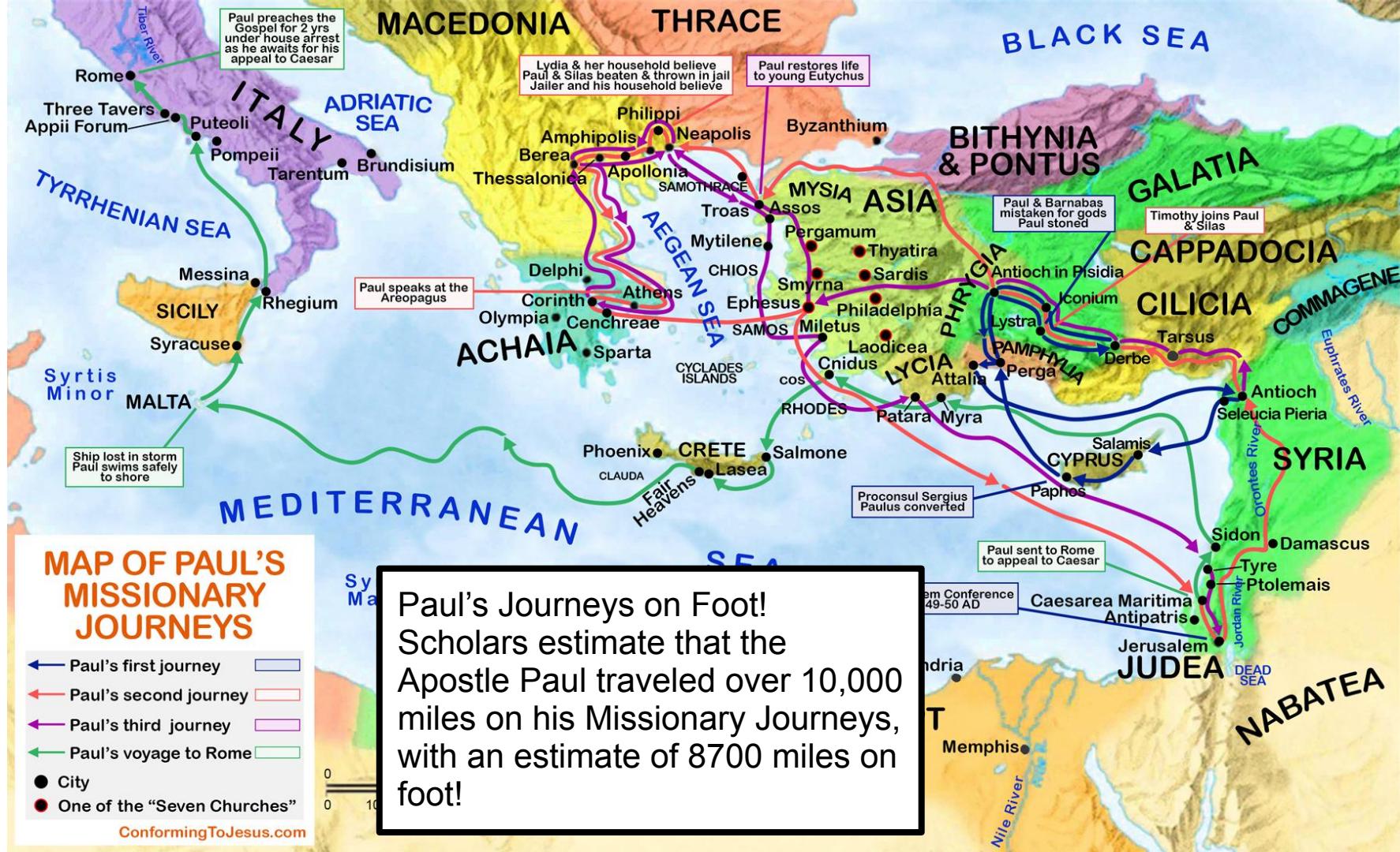
Walking is a Part of Our Humanity!



OUR HUMANITY is Closely Linked to OUR WALKING!

We are the only Creations of God that walk upright! It has allowed us to free up our hands so we can cook food, carry children, carry logs to build homes.

- Walking is Good for our Minds, Bodies and Communities
- Provides us with a Multisensory Experience of the World (experiencing shapes, forms, sounds, feelings).
- Walking improves our thinking, feeling, creative selves, our health, and I would argue our connection with God.



MAP OF PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

- Paul's first journey
- Paul's second journey
- Paul's third journey
- Paul's voyage to Rome
- City
- One of the "Seven Churches"

Paul's Journeys on Foot!
Scholars estimate that the
Apostle Paul traveled over 10,000
miles on his Missionary Journeys,
with an estimate of 8700 miles on
foot!

Where did Jesus Walk?

- The Jesus Trail: A hiking and pilgrimage route in the Galilee Region of Israel that follows a path that Jesus may have walked, connecting sites from his ministry.
- Journeys between Galilee and Jerusalem
- Radius of About 100 miles from his Birthplace in Bethlehem
- During his ministry of 3 ½ years, scholars estimate that he walked about 3125 miles.
- This was a Pedestrian Culture, where most travel was done on foot.

Problem: We live in a Society that is Non-Pedestrian!

- We have created a society that doesn't have Walking Build into our Infrastructure
 - We Sit for Long Periods at the Computer
 - We have long commutes in our cars
 - We drive to the Gym
 - We don't have to walk in the mall anymore because we order everything on Amazon!
- Problems with Too much Sitting / Not Enough Walking
 - Back Pain
 - Weight Gain
 - Decreased Bone Density
 - Depression
 - Less Connected
 - Many, Many More Problems, too numerous to list!!!!
 - Sitting is the New Smoking!

What Happens when We Stand Up and Walk?

- When we stand up from our chairs, there is a sudden change in our brain and body.
- Become more “Cognitively Mobile”
- Minds are in Movement
- Brain Activity Changes / Brain Rhythms more Active
- More Alert / Breathing Changes
- Body is Read for Action

Latest Research on Health Benefits of Walking



Walking Combats Bone Loss

- Walking is a Weight Bearing Activity
- Study in the *BMC Geriatrics Journal* concluded that walking at a pace of 100 steps per minute for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week resulted in notable increases in lean muscle mass, bone density within 12 weeks.
- Note that it increases Bone Desnity in your Legs, not your arms! If you want to build bone density in your arms, carry weights while you walk!
- Prevents and slows progression of Osteoporosis



Walking Improves Metabolic Health and Insulin Resistance

- What is Metabolic Health?
 - How Effectively your Body Processes and Uses Energy, Nutrients and Hormones.
 - Encompasses Blood Sugar Control, Body Fat Distribution and Blood Lipids
- What is Insulin Resistance?
 - Condition when the Body's Cells become less responsive to insulin, which helps glucose (sugar) from the bloodstream into cells for energy.
- Walking for 10 minutes after dinner helps regulates blood sugar as well as a shot of insulin
- Walking 10,000 steps a day reduces risk of developing Diabetes and Lower HbA1C levels



Walking and Mental Health

- UCLA Study (2025) published in JAMA Network Open (Peer Reviewed Medical Journal by the AMA) :
 - Mental Health Benefits occurred by walking as little as 1000 steps a day. (10% Reduction in Depressive Symptoms).
 - 7500 steps a day: 42 percent reduction in depressive symptoms.
- Meta-Analysis Study (2023)
 - Regular walking (30 minutes a day) improves mood and overall emotional well being by releasing endorphins, reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety by 30%
 - Walking 45 minutes EQUIVALENT to taking an antidepressant!



Walking Improves Memory and Prevents Cognitive Decline

- Studies Link Brisk Walking to Increased Hippocampal Volume. (Literally enlarges your Hippocampus, the part of your brain responsible for memory.)
- Walking releases BDNF (Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor)
 - Protein
- r

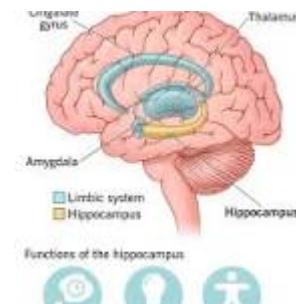
Walking Increases Your Life Span

- JAMA Internal Medicine Study (2025) concluded that:
 - Walking 10 minutes of walking a day increases Life Span by 7%
 - Walking 30 minutes a day increases Life Span by 17%
- American Journal of Preventive Medicine (2023)
 - Walking Briskly 9-12 minutes Decreases Chance of Developing a Mobility Disability by 85%
 - Walk at a Pace of at least 1.5 m/s or 3 mph (I need to catch a bus pace!)
 - Walking Briskly 15 minutes a day lowers your risk of dying from anything over a 16.7 year period by 20% .
- Meta Analysis of Studies from 2022
 - Regular Walking (4000-8000 steps a day) lowers overall mortality risk by 40% and reduces risk of cancer, respiratory diseases and other chronic conditions.



Walking Enhances Memory and Improves Cognition

- Enlarges (literally) the size of your Hippocampus, the part of your brain responsible for memory.
- Releases BDNF (Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor)
 - a protein crucial for survival, growth, and maintenance of neurons (nerve cells) in the brain and spinal cord.
 - Supports Synaptic Plasticity, vital for learning and memory
 - Low BDNF levels: linked to depression and neurodegenerative changes (i.e Alzheimer's)
 - High BDNF levels: promote overall brain health and cognitive function.
 - Possible role in managing neurodegenerative diseases (i.e. Parkinsons)



Shout out to Stretching!

- Deep Stretching (yoga like stretching) also helps to release BDNF
- Energizes the brain to help you stay alert, organized and on task! (*Study from Experimental Gerontology*)



Walking Improves Cardiovascular Health

- Strengthens Heart Muscle
 - Walking is an aerobic exercise that helps strengthen the heart muscle, and improves efficiency
- Lowers Blood Pressure
 - 2025 Study Shows that women who did Brisk Walking 4 days a week for 30 minutes saw a drop in systolic blood pressure (top number) by 8 points in 5 months.
 - With Moderate Pace, systolic still dropped by 3 points
- Lowers your Risk of Heart Disease
 - 150 minutes per week / 7000 steps a day lowers the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular events.
- Improves Cholesterol Levels
 - Increases HDL levels (good) and decreases LDL levels (bad)



Walking Improves Blood Circulation

- Increases blood circulation throughout the body, especially to your legs.
- Stimulates growth of new blood vessels (angiogenesis)
- Helps maintain health and flexibility of your arteries.
- Lowers blood pressure
- Improves circulation to the Brain !
- Prevents Blood Clots (DVTs)

Walking Helps with Weight Loss

- Helps combat menopausal weight gain
- Brisk Walking helps you to lose belly (visceral) fat
- Reduces Food Cravings
- Walking at Moderate Pace for 30 minutes burns between 100 and 200 calories, depending upon your weight.



Walking Improves Your Quality of Sleep!!!!!!

- Sleep is important for cellular repair and to improve immune function!
- 10-30 minutes a day can help you fall asleep faster, sleep longer, and reduce nighttime awakenings.
- Helps to regulate your body clock and set circadian rhythm
- Encourages Deep Sleep



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Walk in the Morning Light To Improve Sleep Quality!

- To help set your Circadian Rhythm, aim to walk for 10-15 minutes in the Morning Light within the first hour of waking up.
- Don't wear sunglasses!
- Morning Light suppresses melatonin (sleep hormone), signaling your body to wake up!
- Morning Light increases cortisol (just enough) to increase alertness, focus and mood throughout the day.
- By regulating circadian clock in the morning, you are better able to fall asleep at night.

Morning Light!

- 2 Samuel 23:4

“He is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings grass from the earth.”



Walking Helps Your Hearing!

- Moving your legs, increases circulation, boosts blood flow to our ears and increases production of hormones that slow aging of inner ear nerve.



SOCIAL WALKING!

- Get a Walking Buddy or Join a Walking Group!
- Increased accountability and more likely to show up
- The Power of the Other: Encouragement
- UCLA Study shows that Social Walking reduces stress and loneliness
- Loneliness equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day



Walking Improves your Balance - Now and Later!

- Improves Balance Now
- Prevents Balance Decline Later Uncle Verne (100)
- Will Bunge (95)
- 4 miles a day!

! FALL PREVENTION



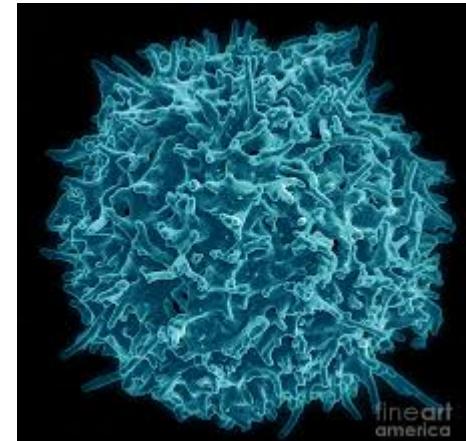
Walking Improves Overall Musculoskeletal Health

- Strengthens Bones
- Improves Joint Health (synovial fluid!)
- Reduces Arthritis Symptoms due to Low Impact Movement
- Increases / Maintains Strength of Large Functional Muscle Groups (Gluts/ Quadriceps/Hamstrings/Calfes)

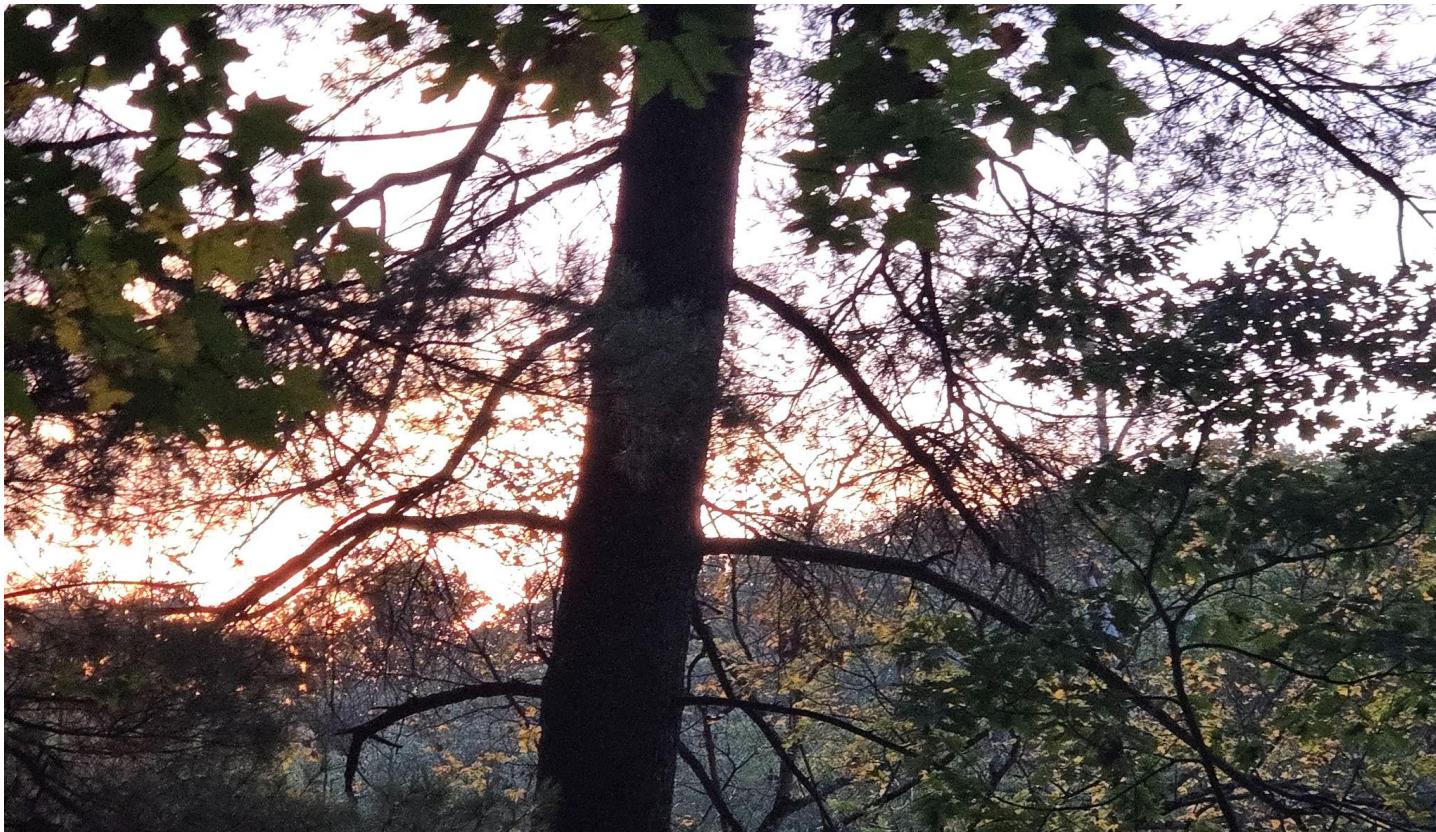


Walking Improves Immunity

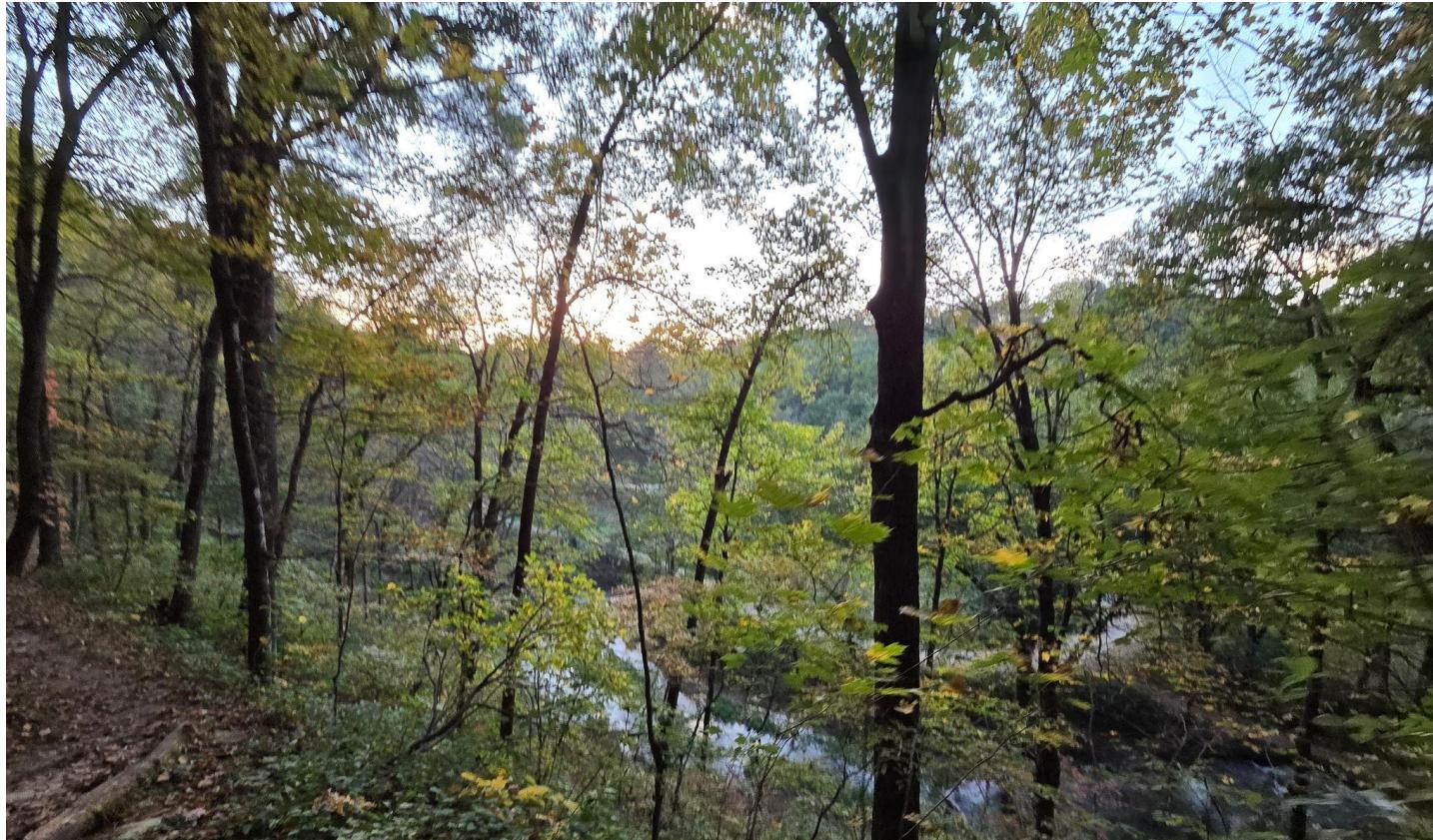
- Walking Increases Immunity by
 - Increasing Blood Flow
 - Promoting Circulation AND Production of Immune Cells (TCells)
 - Reduces Stress Hormones
 - Improves Body's Defense Against Pathogens
 - Walkers have Reduced Number of Sick Days and Reduced Incidence of Infection



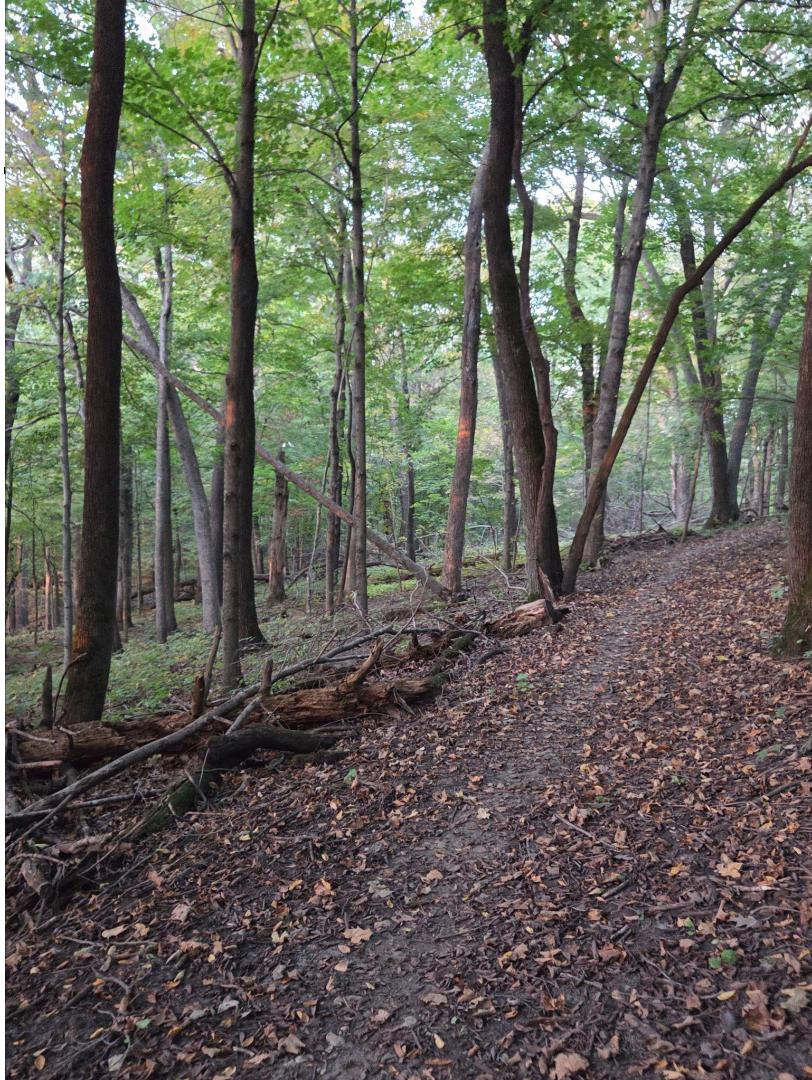
Walking In Nature



More Nature Walking in Iowa



And More Walking in Iowa....



Green Exercise! Enhance Effects of Walking!

- 2024 Study : Walking in Nature for 20 minutes lowers cortisol (stress hormone) by 28%
- Walking in Nature overall Reduces Stress
- Enhances Sleep
- Increases Vitamin D production
- Increased Mindfulness
- Reduced Burnout
- Promotes Relaxation
- Reduces Anxiety /Depression

Shinrin-yoku (Forest Bathing)

- Japanese Practice of Mindfully Connecting with Nature to Improve Physical and Mental Health
- By immersing the senses in a forest, blood pressure and cortisol lowered
- Boosts mood and concentration
- If you don't have a forest! Watch Naturescapes on Youtube!
- 2024 Canadian Study
 - Taking a stroll through a wooded trail or forest once a month improved immunity for 30 days!
 - When Subjects inhaled aromatic compounds released by trees, T Cells (Virus Killing Cells), soared for 30 days!



Optimal Walking Practices

- Minimum of 150 minutes /week of moderate intensity (WHO , 2020)
- Benefits Increase with Higher Step Counts (7000-10,000)
- Gait Speed Matters! More Benefits with Brisk Walking
 - “Catch A Bus” Pace: 9-12 minutes
 - Japanese Walking: 3 minutes fast / 3 minutes normal pace (6 cycles)
 - Study: Lowered Blood Pressure by 5 points, lost more belly fat, and lowered blood sugar 250% more than regular speed walking.
 - Aim for 3.1-4.0 mph (1.5 m/s - 1.8 m/s)
- Walking in Nature offers more benefits (cortisol reduction by 28%, more stress reduction)

Slow Walking Better than Nothing! Do what you can! Break it up if you need !

Walking

- Highly Effective, Low Cost Intervention for improving Physical, Mental, Social, and I would argue Spiritual Health
- More Research is needed to Refine Optimal Walking Protocols and New Benefits
- Walking Should be Integrated into DAILY ROUTINES for all Populations!



Reasons Why People Don't Walk!

- Fear of Falling / Poor Balance
- Chronic Pain
- Chronic Disease (i.e. COPD)
- Heart Condition
- Lack of Time

What to do ? Find a Physical Therapist!



Walking with Jesus

Deepen your Connection with God and
Others!



Walking in the Bible

- Deuteronomy 5:33

“Walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.”

- Micah 6:8

“ What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

- Isaiah 40:31

“..but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Brief Mention.... PILGRIM's PROGRESS

- Published in 1678
- Written by John Bunyan
- Christian Allegory
- Best Selling Book of All Time next to the Bible (Still!)



Spiritual and Physical Walk With Jesus!

- Two for One! You can do both at the same time!
- Walk and Pray: Pray for the entirety of your walk. Talk to Him!
- Walk and Listen: Listen to an Audio Version of the Bible as you walk.
- Walk and Talk: Have a problem? Talk it out with Others as you walk. Jesus is listening too.
- Walking Prayer Chain: Get a Group Together to walk and share Prayer Requests and Concerns.
- Walk in Nature : Connect with God's Creation!
- Walking Ministry: Take someone who can't walk by themselves for a walk.

Walking in the Spirit! Galatians 5:16-25

- Submission to the Holy Spirit
- Opposite of the Flesh
- Fruit of the Spirit - Indicator of the Presence of the Holy Spirit
- Guidance and Wisdom from the Holy Spirit
- Inner Transformation - Change from Within
- Obedience to God's Word - Walking the the Spirit, Following God's Lead, The Word of God influence and instructs us!

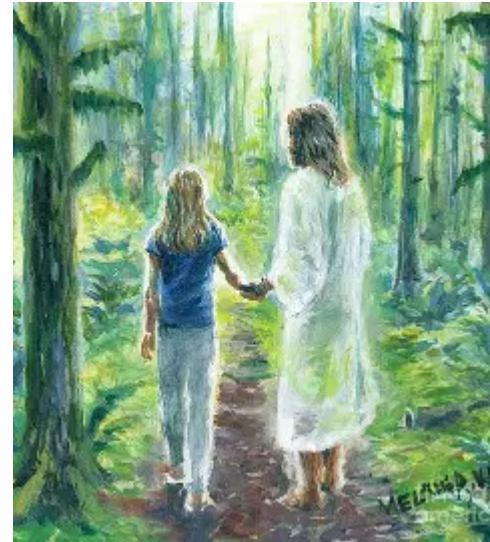
In the Bible, walking is a metaphor for RELATIONSHIP.

It requires Effort!

It requires Action!

It requires you to Show Up!

This is true in our Relationship with God and Others!



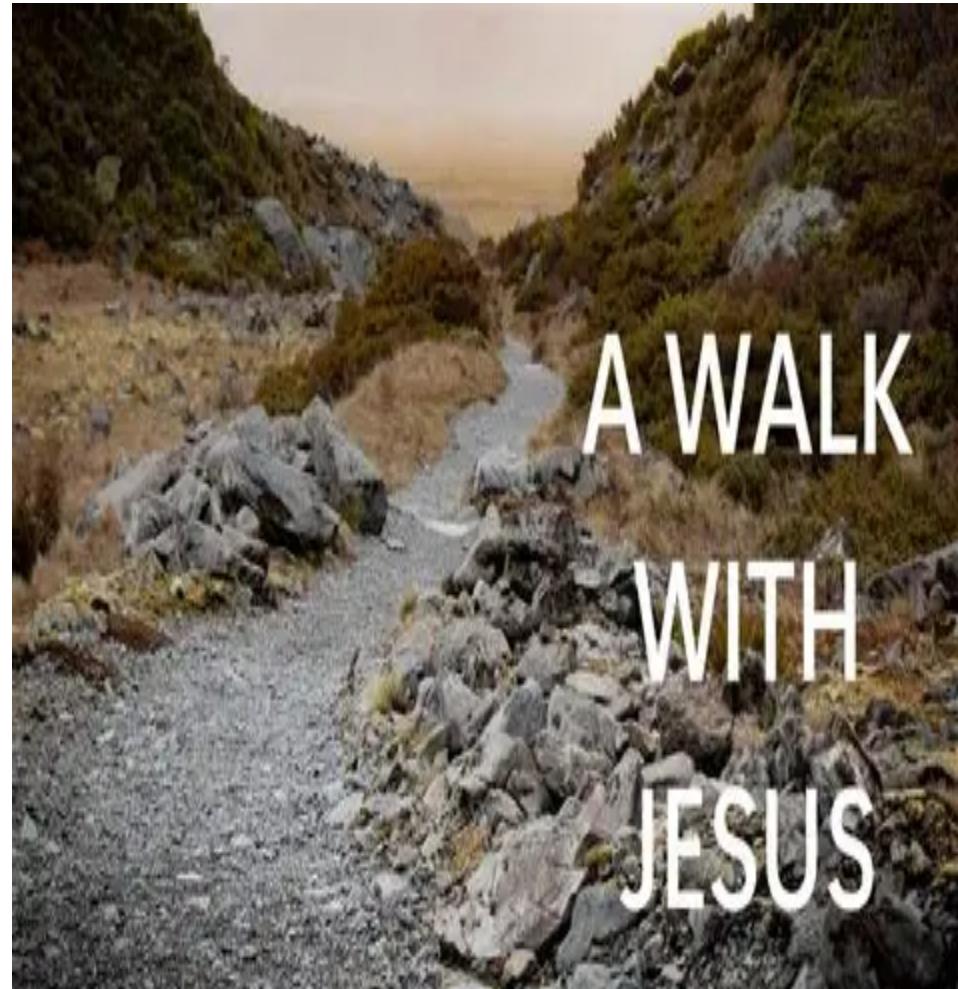
And then there is the Road to Emmaus

- Luke 24: 13-35
- First Part of Walk : No Hope/ Full of Despair / Disappointed(They don't know they are with Jesus)
- Second Part of Walk: Full of Hope / Joy / Burning Desire to Spread News (When they realize they are with Jesus)



The Difference

- Walking with Jesus, we have...
 - Direction
 - Purpose
 - Peace
 - Surrender
 - Joy
- Walking without Jesus, we are....
 - Lost
 - Lack Meaning
 - Angst /Despair
 - Out of Control (although we try to control)
 - Sorrow



Road to Emmaus Videos

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Questions



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