

Psalms 119:105

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Outline:

- I. The need to walk in God's Word for our spiritual health
- II. The need to walk in the right direction
- III. The need to change our habits
- IV. Walking in the Word changes lives

When was the last time that you went for a walk? Walking is something that we do for various reasons. Some of us walk because it is good for our health. Others may spend much of the day walking because of what their job entails. Others of us may walk just for the pure enjoyment of being outside in God's creation. Regardless of the reason we may walk or the reason we don't walk, most health experts will tell us that we need to do more walking to stay healthy. Walking can provide some great benefits to our health if we do it consistently. It helps us keep the weight off, strengthens our heart, and helps control blood pressure as well as many other benefits.

While we may know the benefits that walking provides us, that does not mean that we are going to do anything about it. Many folks think, "I should get some exercise, I should go for a walk," but then simply sit down again. Exercise is an individual decision and it is not enough to just desire to go for a walk. You have to actually do it.

(Optional illustration: Many people have recently purchased a Nintendo Wii video game system and a number of them also have the program Wii Fit. Wii Fit is a video game that is designed to encourage people to be physically fit by making it fun to work out, but I am going to guess for most people the Wii Fit sits unused in the corner. It's a nice investment with good intentions, but not really beneficial to the person's health if it's not used.)

You are free to walk or to sit still, but the decision you make will affect your health.

I. The need to walk in God's Word for our spiritual health

If you came to worship today for a physical fitness advice, I am sorry to say I don't have too much to give you. However, I do have some advice from the Word of God on spiritual fitness and it involves walking in the Word of God. In our reading today from Psalm 119 we are told that, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." God invites us today and every day to be in his Word, assuring us that he is with us to guide and lead us. What a great opportunity our Heavenly Father gives to us by giving us His Word. We don't have to wonder what he is thinking or wonder about his nature or desires for our lives and this world. We can hear our Father's heart directly from Him in the gift of Scripture.

In an article on physical exercise, the author encouraged people to walk at least 30 minutes a day. He asserted that just 30 minutes can make a huge difference in your health. While spending 30 minutes a day focused on our physical health would be good for all of us, what about our spiritual walk and health? What would happen to your spiritual life, to the life of the church, if those who loved the Lord spent 30 minutes a day walking in the Scripture? As followers of Jesus, we need to have that daily time with Him in His Word, taking advantage of the opportunities we are given to study His Word in Bible studies, in small groups, through personal devotions, and the like. And here is even better news: unlike food we eat and must watch so that we don't eat too much, we never need worry about "overeating" when it comes to digesting the

Word of God. Perhaps we need to start thinking about having a daily personal appointment (or "walk" if you will) with the Lord in His Word.

Think of a daily appointment in God's Word as being wonderful nourishment and strengthening for your spiritual body. In my vocation as a Pastor, I have visited many people in the hospital. One of things that happens after being ill for a long time and confined to a bed is our muscles begin to weaken from not being used. It is amazing to me that without walking on a regular basis, legs that once worked well can now only hang there helplessly. Many times, with therapy and determination, the muscles can be strengthened so that those who may not be able to walk now can have a chance to walk again.

Many Christians have been sitting too long without being active in the reading of the Living Word of God. They have become stuck in their spiritual growth. Being stuck in their spiritual growth they often will find it spills over to other aspects of their lives. In fact, many have wandered from the faith. They fail to apply the teaching of this Word in their lives and as a result they have become spiritually unhealthy. As the church, one of our tasks is to build up the Body of Christ to true spiritual health so that we might be better equipped to reach those outside the church.

One example of how the church at large is doing this is through the mites of the LWML. City of Hope in Cleveland, Ohio, is one such project supported by the LWML and local churches. Through the ministry of willing volunteers, lives now and lives eternally are being changed. They are providing for spiritual health as well as physical health to the community by opening "Urban Family Learning Centers" in Cleveland, Akron, Youngstown, and Cincinnati. These programs are reaching out to children and families with Saturday Schools that provide a weekly round of music, crafts, and Scripture memorization along with a nourishing meal. Our communities need men, women, and children who are spiritually strong and healthy, and these people, by the power of the Holy Spirit, are working to make a difference.

II. The need to walk in the right direction.

Walking daily in the Word of God can help empower us through the Holy Spirit to serve our fellow human beings with the love of Jesus. That same word, though, also calls us to remember who we are and to show us the error of our ways. *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart* (Heb. 4:12 NIV).

This verse reminds us that you and I need to know the truth so that we walk in the right direction. While most of us don't like to be corrected, correction is beneficial. Think of it like going to a doctor for a checkup. He may listen to your heart and say, "I do not like what I am hearing." Now if the doctor would say that to you, would you want to know what the problem was? Or would you rather not know and remain ignorant of the problem that is going on inside of you?

God's Word is what we need to walk in the right direction in our lives – sharper than a two-edged sword! Perhaps some are not in the Word because they do not want to hear what the Word has to say to them. The Word penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joint and marrow. That is an amazing statement.

The Word of God judges the thoughts and attitudes of the

heart of man—your heart and mine. It cuts through the baloney (if you will) of life and lays it out on the table. Here it is. That is how the Word of God in the law does its work. It exposes the disease of sin, so that the healing can begin with the Gospel. Without that exposure, the sin can fester, grow, and lead to death. But when brought to the Light of God's News in Christ, the healing begins.

Psalm 119 speaks to us and says *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path*. I know that while we enjoy the blessing that God gives to us as his children gathered together here around His Word and Sacrament in worship, I need him guiding not just my steps on Sunday morning (or *whenever worship time is*) but throughout my week. His Word is the lamp and light every day because He knows the pathway that I am on, He sees the snares and things that would trip me up along the way, and He sees the detours that would tempt me to turn aside.

I need His word in my life to keep me walking in the light and in the truth of his Word. Sometimes that truth convicts me because it points out the sin in my life, yet I need to hear it. That Word of truth calls me to repentance, reminds me of the truth of a Friday that we call Good on which Jesus died for my sin, and, just as importantly, reminds me that the victory won on Easter was for me. I can walk in the truth that Jesus' blood was shed for me so that life now and life forever with him is assured.

All need to hear the truth of God's Word. One of the mite missions of the LWML brings the truth of God's Word by supporting a female missionary to work with Muslim women. I will not mention her name or the country that she is in for her protection. In a hostile environment, where the Word of truth is suppressed, there is a desperate need for the light of God's Word. Women in the Muslim world are not allowed to have conversations with men who are not their husband or close relatives. But they need to know that truth! The prayer is to touch the lives of Muslim women with the Good News found in Christ.

St. Paul, Luther, and many others devoted themselves to the study of the Word of God. Nourished by that Word, they were able and you are able to live a new life in Christ. It is through the Word that we receive the message of hope found only in Jesus.

III. The need to change our habits

So how much or where do you walk? It depends on how healthy you want to be. Do you need to change the way you walk in God's Word? Change is not always easy. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to change our poor habits of walking in God's Word for good ones. When a child is learning to walk, there are many times he or she falls down and then gets up again. But there is a determination to get it right! Maybe you have fallen down in the study of the Word. Now is a great time to get up again. The more you practice, the better you will become by the strength that God provides. Part of learning, however, is falling down and getting up again. Do not be satisfied with where you are!

I believe that as the children of God called to be His very own through baptism we truly have a desire to hear from our Father. Our struggle, like many things in life, is that we have the best intentions and plans until it actually comes down to how to begin that walk. A person does not enter a marathon without lots of training and building up to that event. So, too, as we explore God's Word on our daily walk we can start with small steps.

Let me make a suggestion on how to begin those small steps. This week, just like last week, has seven days including today ahead of you. Now I would challenge you all to spend 30 minutes every day in God's Word. It would be awesome to spend 210 min-

utes this week with God. I am sure it sounds good to you, too. But I also know it might be a little overwhelming, so let's start with some small steps by saying 5 of the 7 days this week we are going to spend 5 minutes a day with God in His Word to hear from Him. To help in this, we have 5 devotions to give to you as you depart worship this morning. Each devotion has a short Bible passage to read, some thoughts to reflect on from that passage, and a short prayer. Let's all start with these small steps together and listen to what God would have us hear from His Word.

III. Walking in the Word changes lives

What comfort, strength, guidance, and love we find in the Word of God! Yet there are many in our neighborhoods and world who do not know the Word. Jesus prayed for his disciples and for us, the children of God the Father, on the night that he was betrayed when he said in **John 17:17**, *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world*. As those who know the truth of that Word, our calling is to go to our neighborhoods and throughout the world to proclaim the truth of that Word. In that same passage Jesus says *My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me*. As Jesus sent the disciples into a world in need of the Word, so also today, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are sent into the world to proclaim the story of Jesus as Savior.

- Sometimes that involves walking across the hallway from our apartment to be the hands and feet of Jesus to a neighbor in need.
- Maybe that involves walking to the cubicle next to you and proclaiming the hope of Jesus to a coworker, inviting him or her to worship with you.
- Perhaps that involves walking onboard an airplane and going to another part of the globe as a short term missionary for two weeks to teach another person English while using that opportunity to share the word of Jesus.

Groups like the Lutheran Women's Missionary League exist to help equip people to proclaim the love of Jesus throughout the world. Mission grants help raise money for supporting the work of those walking in the path of Jesus around the world by helping to train pastors, equipping youth to restore homes while sharing the love of Jesus, and providing medical care in the name of the great physician Jesus Christ. There are many ways that we can walk in the Word to make an eternal difference in the lives of those around us, but it starts with our own connection to Jesus. He is the one who gives us the strength through the Spirit to know the truth of the Word and to proclaim that truth in Word and deed in our lives and through the lives of people throughout the world.

The apostle Paul writing to the church in Rome quotes from the prophet Isaiah when he declares, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Sisters and brothers in Christ, we have some beautiful walking feet here this morning who have been given a wonderful message to proclaim in the world. We proclaim that Word through supporting the work of our congregation here and through organizations like LWML, making sure that all people can hear the Word of God, the message of sin and grace, the Good News of Jesus as the Savior of all people. What a great honor our heavenly Father has given us to be the beautiful walking feet in this world. May God strengthen your walk this week as you spend time with Him in His Word and as you go forth to proclaim the joyous Word of Christ in your families, neighborhoods, schools, and world. Amen.