

**The Walk to Jerusalem
Devotions
For the 15 weeks of Our Journey**



Walk to Jerusalem



Walk to Jerusalem

Week #1 beginning January 6, 2019

Making the Decision:

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

2 Corinthians 5:7

The 250 steps up to the Whispering Gallery of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London are challenging. The passageway is narrow, the steps sometimes slippery and the light is dim. The view at the top, however, is breathtaking.

Not all visitors to St. Paul’s make the decision to climb to the Whispering Gallery. Some have legitimate physical reasons for bypassing the challenge, but others are too hurried or not convinced that the climb is worth the exertion and energy.

We make decisions everyday regarding our physical, spiritual and emotional health. It is so easy to procrastinate and fill our days with everything but that which is good for us. This week as you begin your “journey to Jerusalem” and decide to be good stewards of this body God has given you, may you walk in faith and grow stronger spiritually and physically as you spend time with your heavenly Father. Congratulations on joining in on this journey!

Questions to ponder this week:

- How has my faith developed throughout the years?
- Were there special people who mentored me in my faith?
- What steps am I taking to strengthen my faith?
- Is God telling me to step out in faith about some issue?



Week #2 beginning January 13, 2019

Preparing for the Journey:

He told them, "Take nothing for the journey - no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic."

Luke 9:3

I remember the excitement I felt as a child, anticipating a journey to grandparents who lived 1200 miles away. The suitcases were out for a month prior to departure. We wanted to make sure that all items were in place and that we would be well equipped for the journey. Nothing could be left behind that might be necessary for the journey.

When Jesus commissioned the disciples to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick in the Gospel of Luke, He instructed them to travel light! No staff - no bag - no bread - no money - no extra tunic! Now that is light travel! Ah - to travel light! What a feeling to be able to simplify our lives of clutter and things and enjoy those things in life that truly last - God, people, and the Word of God. Those are the only "items" we will take into eternity - our ultimate journey.

What preparations am I making for that final journey? A deep and personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ will make Heaven an easy transition and continuation of that relationship. Loving relationships with family and friends will continue into eternity. So - to life! Seize the moment! Enjoy God and people! Keep short accounts! Repair relationships as much as it is in your ability to repair! Forgive! The energy and time put into those relationships will bring life, hope and health - physical, spiritual and emotional.

Questions to ponder this week:

- Are there any relationships in my life that need some repair?
- Do I need to make some phone calls?
- Do I need to simplify my life?



Walk to Jerusalem

Week #3 beginning January 20, 2019

Taking the Time:

*“All the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.”*

Psalm 139:6

Have you ever said, “There just aren’t enough hours in the day...” Our days can become pretty cluttered - and yet God says in Psalm 139 that “all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” Does that mean that God knows when we waste time or when we pack too much into our days? Isn’t it a mystery that we don’t know the number of our days or what the future holds? Only a wise God - ever knowing and ever wise - could create such a system. And yet, we live and act as if we know everything and can control our future! Maybe we need to ponder how we fill our days. We can take the time to ponder, and while we “journey” this week, let’s just do that - take the time to ponder the mystery of our all-knowing, all-loving God who knows what lies behind, before and with us today.

Questions to ponder this week:

- God thinks of me constantly. How often do I think of Him?
- What percentage of my day is spent on God?
- What percentage of my day is spent on enriching my relationships with family and friends?



Walk to Jerusalem

Week #4 beginning January 27, 2019

Joining in God's Work:

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially those who belong to the family of believers."

Galatians 6: 9-10

What can I, just one person do? How can I join in on God's work on this planet?

Here is an example what just one person did: At the age of 36, Mother Teresa, after feeling another call from Christ, left her convent to start the order of the Missionaries of Charities. In 2012 there were over 4500 sisters as part of this order and it served people in 133 countries. The order manages homes for individuals dying with AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis; mobile clinics; children and family counseling programs; orphanages and schools. That is a lot of doing good!

God does not expect (or want) us all to be Mother Teresa's. But are there times when our lives have been too busy with other things, that we have missed an opportunity to join in God's Work? Have we really done good to all God's people?

Consider that question as you read Mother Teresa's prayer: "Dearest Lord, may I see you today and every day in the person of your sick, and whilst nursing them, minister to you. Though you hide yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognize you and say, "Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve you.""

Questions to ponder this week:

- Have I missed any opportunities to join God's work this week?
- Have I "done good" to everyone I have encountered?
- What actions must I take to do good to the whole "family of believers"?



Walk to Jerusalem

Week #5 beginning February 3, 2019

Plotting the Journey:

*“In his heart a man plans his course,
but the Lord determines his steps.”*

Proverbs 16:9

It was one of those long automobile rides through Tennessee on Interstate 75. The triptik did not indicate any detours or road construction, but the large “detour” sign and the accompanying orange barrels were unavoidable. The course had been smooth and sleek up until this point with nicely angled roads and well planned rest stops. The detour would delay our arrival and change our plans. We exited the freeway and found ourselves on a narrow winding road dripping with fresh mountain streams, fringed with delightful wild flowers of purple hues, bright yellows and soft magenta. The turns in the road were hard and narrow, and the prospect of an unseen approaching car suddenly appearing on one of those hard turns kept us alert and expectant. But the flowers were beautiful and the streams refreshing even though the road was difficult. The road was also quite brief. It seemed like time stood still as we focused on the beauty and the winding road. In a minute we were back on the super-highway. The drone of the widely paved road lulled us into a senseless stupor of grey cement, blurry green forests and flashy billboards. We struggle to keep awake.

As you continue your journey this week, let your senses come alive as you ponder God’s creation and creativity.

Questions to ponder this week:

- Am I including God in my decision making? Do I trust Him to direct my paths?
- Am I taking time to see and appreciate people, things, blessings in my life or am I riding the superhighway?
- How do I handle detours along the way? Am I flexible to change or very rigid?



Walk to Jerusalem

Week #6 February 10, 2019

Where am I Going?:

*I press toward the goal for the prize
of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*
Philippians 3:14

Are we almost there now? Are we really going to Jerusalem? How much longer before we get there? Are you sure we're heading in the right direction? These are questions that may bring to mind memories of past journeys traveled as a child or with children. Most of us know what it's like to be the child and the adult in such a situation. As a child, we must trust that the adult really knows the way. As an adult, we must press on toward the goal, knowing that if we follow the way and continue to travel, we will eventually reach our goal. Having a goal helps us to continue until we reach the prize of our destination.

Your physical goal the week may be to walk 2 miles - or 5 miles - or 50 miles. Having that goal helps us to continue on. Your spiritual goal may be to read the Word of God daily, pray daily or memorize a Bible verse. The deeper the spiritual goal may be to have a deeper personal relationship with Jesus, to confront each other in a kinder more loving manner to to forgive some. The ultimate spiritual goal is to become more Christ-like in our everyday encounters with people and society.

Questions to ponder this week:

- Do I have physical and spiritual goals for this week?
- Do I have physical and spiritual goals for my life?
- What is one thing I can do to help achieve my physical goal?
- What is one thing I can do to help achieve my spiritual goal?



Walk to Jerusalem

Week #7 beginning February 17, 2019

Continuing to Join in God's Work:

*He has shown you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy.
And to walk humbly with your God.*

Micah 6:8

There seems to be much wrong in our world today and sometimes it is hard to find a nugget of goodness. Many of us are familiar with the Mr. Rogers' saying of "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

So I would ask you to look around at some of the people who have joined us in this journey to Jerusalem:

- You will find people who give of their time to plan, prepare, plant, tend and harvest a huge garden plot only to give it away to those who need it more!
- Then there are the folks who organize, cook, serve and clean up a meal for us in our times of grief and loss with only kindness in their hearts.
- There are also many among us who pray unceasingly and act for others who are in need of justice and mercy.
- Yes, "you will always find people who are helping!"

Questions to ponder this week:

- What have you experienced of God's goodness?
- Where have you seen the need for God's work this week?
- Have you been able to do justice for God's people as you walked humbly this week?



Week #8 beginning February 24, 2019

Walking Cheerleaders:

*Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud
of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders
and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance
the race marked out for us.*

Hebrews 12:1

Being the mother of a cross country runner, I know what it is like to be in the “cloud of witnesses” that cheers on the runners. The runners disappear in a flash as they emerge from woody trails, but I am told that a familiar face - an encouraging “Go Dave” - or a thumbs up gesture is energizing to the runner. Likewise surrounding ourselves with encouragers and being encouragers ourselves is uplifting to our spirits and helps us continue on the course set before us. It has been said that there are no “lone-ranger” Christians. We need each other. Walking with a companion makes the walk seem much shorter. The week as you journey, think about that “great cloud of witnesses” in heaven - cheering you on to run the race and persevere in your faith.

Questions to ponder this week:

- How can I encourage someone in their faith this week?
- Think of a time when someone has been a great encouragement to you.
- Do I have someone in my life with whom I can share deep spiritual thoughts, hope and desires? If not, is there someone I know who might be willing to share their spiritual journey with me?



Walk to Jerusalem

Week #9 beginning March 3, 2019

What kind of walker am I?:

*Praise the Lord, O my soul;
all my inmost being,
praise his holy name.
Praise the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits -
Who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
Who satisfies your desires with good things
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*
Psalm 103: 1-3, 5

When was the last time you walked with a spring in your step? Was there a reason for that feeling of joyous abandon while you walked? Perhaps you received an “A” on a difficult exam or maybe it was news of a baby’s birth, or maybe your soccer team won the championship or you were offered a much needed job.

While you journey this week, dwell on the verses from Psalm 103. We have many reasons to rejoice and praise God. He forgives all our sins and heals our diseases. He satisfies our desires with good things so that our youth is renewed like the eagle’s. Now that is something to rejoice about!

Questions to ponder this week:

- What are some of the benefits of following God?
- Think of some good things God has given to you... the things that made you walk with a spring in your step.
- What desires has He satisfied?
- Think about your deepest desires. Do you think that they are in line with God’s will?



Walk to Jerusalem

Week #10 beginning March 10, 2019

Visitors along the road:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

Galatians 5:22-23

When we think of visitors along the road, the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 naturally comes to mind. We can all somehow relate to that story. The Good Samaritan actually stopped to help the hurting person while others ignored the hurting person. How often can we say that we have walked past a hurting person? How often have we helped a hurting person? The person may not even be a stranger. The excuses are many. To help the hurting person means stepping out of our comfort zone, rearranging plans and yes, showing and living the fruits of the Spirit which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. This week as you journey, you may not see a physically hurting person, but ask God to help you see others as He sees them. If we are willing, He will show us the hurting of this world and fill us with His compassion and love.

Questions to ponder this week:

- Have you ever unexpectedly and spontaneously helped a stranger?
- How did you feel?
- Think about hurting people you know. As you journey this week, pray for those hurting ones. Does God want you to take some action?



Week #11 beginning March 17, 2019

Continuing our Journey with God's Work:

*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this:
to look after orphans and widow in their distress and
to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

James 1:27

Caring for those in distress is not optional for those who follow Christ. Caring for orphans and widows is mentioned 27 times in the Bible. However we must not think of it as simply a command from God that we must fulfill "or else." There is tremendous joy and blessing in serving and standing up for orphans and widows around us. In considering what our own attitude should be to the orphans and widows around us, it's helpful to remember that we were all adopted into God's family through the life and death of Jesus Christ. It should be a joy and blessing to join with God in caring for those in distress among us.

Questions to ponder this week;

- What practical action can I take to look after those in distress among us?
- Is there a group or organization that could use my help?

And now, in honor of St. Patrick's Day:

Christ within me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left.
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ is the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

- St. Patrick



Walk to Jerusalem

Week #12 beginning March 24, 2019

Who is My Neighbor?:

*He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and
with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and,
Love your neighbor as yourself."*

Luke 10:27

How's the neighborhood? That is sometimes one of the first questions a perspective buyer asks when looking at the house, but for many, gone are the days when neighbors sit on porches and spend time with each other. It's difficult enough carving time out for family, let alone neighbors. Jesus says we should love our neighbors as yourself!

This week if you walk through your neighborhood, consider it an opportunity to pray for your neighbors. Pray as you walk by each house. If you see bikes or swing sets, pray for the children in the house. If the drapes are drawn and there's little activity, pray for those who live in the house. Sometimes homes become secret cocoons of pain and strife.

Just as only God knows what is going on inside our lives, God is sometimes the only one who knows what goes on in our homes. Pray that the Holy Spirit can break through and ease the pain and strife that your neighbors may be experiencing.

Questions to ponder this week:

- What can it possibly mean to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind?
- Think about yourself.
Are you pleased with yourself?
Do you love yourself?
Are you able to love others?



Week #13 beginning March 31, 2019

Walking the Walk:

*But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength,
They will soar on wings like eagles;
They will run and not grow weary,
They will walk and not be faint.*

Isaiah 40:31

One of my fondest memories of 22 years at an inner city church was when Bertha would lead us in “Hold to His Hand, God’s unchanging Hand!” “Put your Hope in things Eternal,” “Hold to His Hand, God’s unchanging Hand!” When Bertha led that song, she would strut across the room and bring us all into an electrifying cadence of agreement. Yes, when our hope is in the Lord, we can strut, we can sing and we can walk the walk! Our walk with the Lord should be one of confidence and determination - not of gloominess and defeat. May we step out this week and walk the walk with the One who gives us hope eternal.

Questions to ponder this week:

- Think about what you place your hope in.
- Consider hopefulness vs. helplessness. Does outlook affect outcomes?
- Do you need your strength renewed? Do you know someone who needs their strength renewed?



Walk to Jerusalem

Week #14 beginning April 7, 2019

Are You Thirsty?:

Jesus answered her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

John 4:13-14

Never have I experienced a greater physical thirst than when driving through the Mexican-Arizona desert in a non-air-conditioned car with a screaming 9 month old. How that thirst becomes an ache and a desperate longing when we don't know when or where we will obtain a refreshing drink of water? Desert travel brings thirst. I wonder how thirsty the Israelites must have been traveling through the desert for 40 years. Our lives too sometimes become like deserts. We neglect to replenish our souls with the Word of God.

We forget to pray - or we're just too busy trying to survive the desert experience to stop long enough for refreshment. The Scripture says that if we drink of the refreshing water that Jesus gives, we will never thirst. In fact, that water that Jesus gives us will become a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. May we drink deeply of the water that Jesus gives.

Questions to ponder this week:

- Consider times when you've been physically thirsty.
- Have you ever been so thirsty that you could only think of satisfying that thirst?
- Have you ever been spiritually thirsty? What does that feel like?



Week #15 beginning April 14, 2019

Satisfaction and Keeping On:

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14

We're at the end of our walk to Jerusalem.

Are you weary or are you physically more alive and spiritually more attuned?

Hopefully this has been a journey of physical and spiritual renewal.

Hopefully you've satisfied your soul with spiritual food and living water.

Hopefully the increased exercise has renewed and revitalized the body God has given you and you are able to have more energy for His vital work here on earth.

Serving God and being good stewards of our physical body requires perseverance and commitment.

It helps if we keep our eyes on the prize and run this race to win.

Questions to ponder this week:

- How much energy and commitment am I putting into the spiritual race that Paul speaks of in Philippians?
- Am I more likely to strive for excellence in my secular life or my spiritual life?
- How can I keep on striving for excellence in my physical and spiritual life?
- Do I need to rearrange priorities?
- Do I need to eliminate some activities?