

## Celebrating My First Walking Anniversary

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I am celebrating the anniversary of my starting the “100 Miles for Hope” Challenge and have walked 857 miles since August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This milestone is special to me as I am celebrating a one-year journey. An anniversary is a special day in our lives. People celebrate their wedding and retirement anniversaries. On January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, my wife and I celebrate our wedding anniversary. It is a special day for us. It has been 41 years, and each year we grow deeper, being rooted in the love of God. At wedding ceremonies, couples make vows to love and to serve God together. At their wedding anniversaries they celebrate all that God has done and the many fond memories He fills their lives with year after year.

On March 6, 2011, my congregation celebrated my wife’s and my “retirement” after thirty years of pastoral ministry since planting our first church in Berkeley, California on March 1, 1981. We turned our pastoral duty of senior pastor over to our disciple who has been with us for two decades since his college days at MIT. The Bible does not say anything about retirement. Thus, we continue in ministry to honor God in obedience until we can no longer serve in our advanced age. When our race comes to a finish at the end of this life, the Lord will call us into His presence in glory, retiring us from the ministry to rest and to celebrate, worship and praise Him eternally in His glorious kingdom.

Bestselling author Amy Mercree says, “Celebrate who you are in your deepest heart. Love yourself and the world will love you.” We need to celebrate all of the positive things in our lives each day to add special meaning. How much we ought to celebrate our ability to walk! Isn’t it such a blessing to be able to walk? Many people are disabled by sickness or accidents rendering them unable to walk. In the Bible there is a story about a beggar born lame. One afternoon he met two apostles of Jesus on their way to pray at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate in Jerusalem. As the beggar was asking alms from them, Apostle Peter healed him, making him able to walk. So the beggar stood up to celebrate, walking and leaping alongside the apostles to enter the temple with them. (Acts 3:1-10)

Psychiatrist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1926-2004) writes of life’s graduations: “I’ve told my children that when I die, to release balloons in the sky to celebrate that I graduated. For me, death is a graduation.” She was a Swiss-American psychiatrist, a pioneer in near-death studies, and author of the internationally best-selling book, *On Death and Dying*, where she first discussed her theory of the five stages of grief, also known as the “Kubler-Ross model.” The Author of life, the Lord Jesus, knowing people’s suffering and troubles, invites man to come to him: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

The famous oil painting, *The Return of Prodigal Son* by Rembrandt, is a celebration for a younger son mentioned in a parable in the Bible (Luke 15:11-24). A loving father waited for his son to come back home. When the son returned home, it was the father who first saw him coming and ran to his son to welcome him back home. This homecoming was an hour of celebration. We are pilgrims in this world. We have a home to go to when this journey comes to end. The Bible speaks of the heavenly wedding banquet (Matthew 22:1-14). We are all invited to celebrate in this glorious heavenly wedding banquet, and all we have to do is accept the invitation to see the true Groom, Jesus, as part of the Church—His Bride. I ask you not to reject the invitation today. You are to accept it by faith in Jesus’ name that your name is written in the Book of Life. It is God the Father who invites you to come to his Son’s heavenly wedding banquet. Say “Yes” to the invitation by faith to celebrate eternally, dwelling in his everlasting kingdom with all the saints who were born again by the Spirit of God, as fellow heavenly citizens. Let’s celebrate every day to walk by faith in Jesus Christ.