

## The Gift from Walking

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Since August 7, 2020, I have walked 1,100 miles on my neighborhood streets and our city park. I never imagined myself being able to walk with such consistency, exhibiting discipline in my daily life for over a year. It truly has been a gift to me, but not in terms of any monetary value. Actually, the gift that walking has given me is far more valuable than anything else. I have received an hour every day to reflect on the many thoughts that come to my mind—in essence, these times have become my prayer walks. The gift is three-fold: physical, mental, and spiritual exercises. Furthermore, it has challenged our congregations at home and abroad, and many have imitated me in walking as well.

*The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis was a Christian devotional book published in the 15<sup>th</sup> century that touches on important elements of Christian theology, ethics, and spirituality. As the disciples of Christ, we are to imitate Jesus in our lives. The Lord Jesus himself washed the disciples' feet as an example toward the end of his earthly life: "For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you." (John 13:15) Leaders are to lead their followers by example to show them how to live a worthy life. In history, there has been no one like the Lord Jesus, who set the life example to teach us his love, righteousness, and holiness. He has given the ultimate sacrifice by dying on the cross and shedding his precious blood to wash our sins away, that whosoever believes in him may have eternal life. The author of Hebrews says, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." (Hebrews 13:7)

In reality, walking itself is a gift, yet we take it for granted without giving any thought to it. Many people are not able to walk—whether because they were born lame, were affected by sickness, or were in an accident—preventing them from enjoying such a gift. The average American walks 3,000 to 4,000 steps a day, or roughly 1.5 to 2 miles. An interesting fact is that the average person with an average stride who lives to be 80 will walk a distance of around 110,000 miles. It is the equivalent of walking about 5 times around the earth, right on the equator. A 2019 study on older women found that those who walked 4,400 steps a day had lower mortality rates over four years of follow-up than those who walked the least (about 2,700 steps a day or fewer).

Walking is beneficial to health. Likewise, walking by faith is beneficial to spiritual life. Before the Global Flood in the days of Noah, there was a faithful man named Enoch who walked with God for 300 years. So God took him out of this world, and Enoch did not have to face death; God will do the same for his church in the rapture to come. (Genesis 5:21-24; 2 Kings 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) Thus we are to walk by faith in this pilgrim journey facing heavenward, not gratifying the desires of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16-26) Therefore, walking is a gift that gives double blessings. Why don't you start your walk—both for physical and spiritual health—NOW?