

A Closer Walk With God,

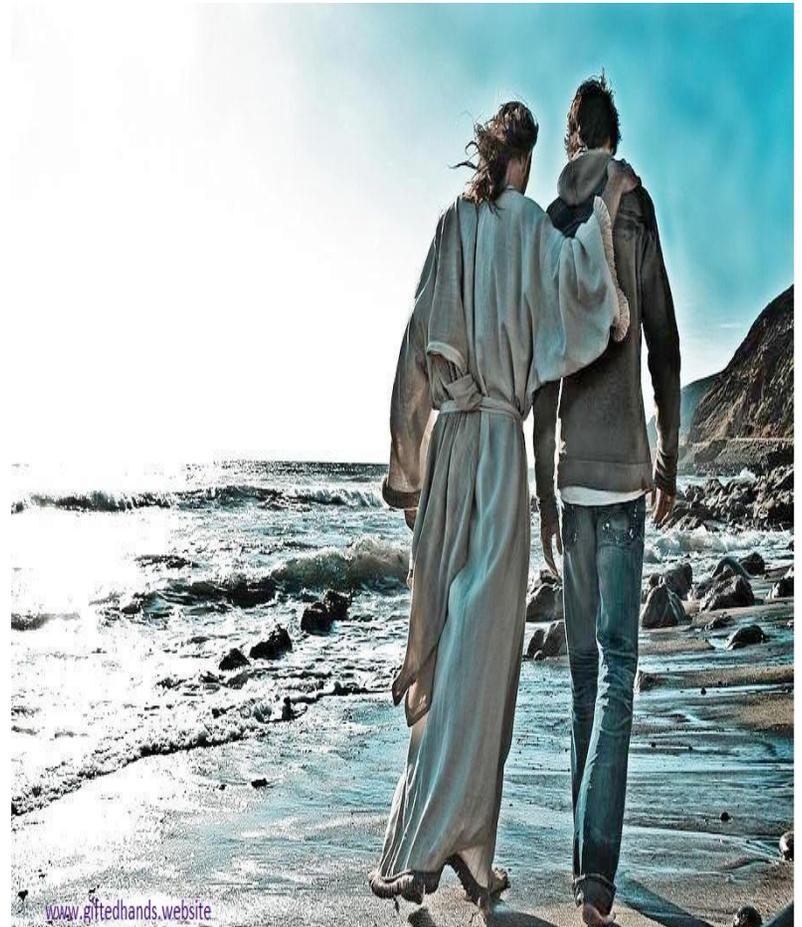
O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame,
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!



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Walking with God



www.giftedhands.website

Day by day, morning by morning, begin your walk with Him in the calm trust that God is at work in everything....It is your personal business, as a discipline of your heart, to learn to be peaceful and safe in God in every situation....Remember, friend, where your real living is going on. In your thinking, in your reacting, in your heart of hearts - here is where your walk with God begins and continues. So when you start to move into trusting Him, stay there. Don't wander out again into worry and doubt! - Anne Ortlund

Walking with God

As a doctor, I consistently tell people that walking is one of the best exercises for health. Anyone can do it at any time of the day, and it requires nothing more than a comfortable pair of shoes. As a pastoral minister, I consistently tell people that praying is one of the best exercises for spiritual health. Anyone can do it at any time of day, and it requires nothing more than desire.

What could be better than walking and praying at the same time? Here you will find a sample walking meditation. It is divided into sections correlated with each of the senses and punctuated by prayer, using a psalm. In addition to focusing within, you will be guided to focus on the glory and presence of God all around. You don't need to walk fast or far, although you can if you like.

Print out the reflection to carry with you. You may not need the whole thing, but you will at least need the psalm prayers between each section unless you know them by heart. It might be good to have the rest for reference in case you get stuck. You can even record them on your cell phone and take them with you.

If you are on a time limit, set the timer on your watch or cell phone to three minutes for each section. If you are not on a strict schedule, allow each part of the meditation to spontaneously conclude on its own.

Introduction

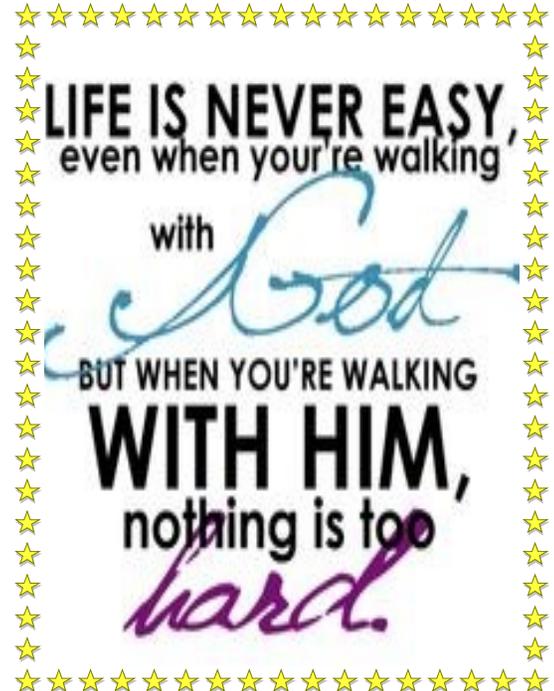
Start your walk simply by inviting God to show you his creation. Thank him for this time together. Stand still for a minute and take a few deep breaths to clear your head and engage your body. Then start walking at a comfortable pace.

Seeing God's Gifts During the first three minutes, concentrate on everything you see. Let go of any other thoughts or sensations that pop into your head. Notice the sky and its shades of blue. Notice the trees. How many colors of green are there? Do you see any buds or flowers? How about insects—flies, beetles, mosquitoes?

Look in all directions. Look up close, out to the horizon, and between the trees. Search out small details—the veins in a leaf, the wings on a dragonfly. Survey the broad picture: the hills in the distance, the clouds at the skyline. Keep walking and looking until your timer goes off at three minutes or you feel the Holy Spirit nudging you into the next phase.

Remind yourself that God has given you all these treasures as signs of his love; imagine the joy he feels showing them to you.

Finish the visual meditation by reciting Psalm 8:4–10:



If you have a few extra minutes when you get home, jot down the ideas that came to you during your walk. Keeping a prayer journal is a great way to remind yourself of God's work in your life. And remember, this meditation is only a sample—adapt it to suit your needs in whatever way is most helpful. With God's help and your imagination, walking and praying can be a regular part of your day!

Colleen Arnold, MD, is a physician and writer residing in Lexington, Virginia, who also holds a master's degree in pastoral ministry. Her blog can be found at ColleenArnold.org.



When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you set in place—What are humans that you are mindful of them, mere mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them little less than a god, crowned them with glory and honor.

You have given them rule over the works of your hands, put all things at their feet: All sheep and oxen, even the beasts of the field, The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatever swims the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord, how awesome is your name through all the earth!

Hearing God's Gifts

During the next three minutes, concentrate on everything you hear. Stop looking intently and listen instead. Once again, let go of any other thoughts or sensations that pop into your head.

Listen for traffic. Can you hear cars on a city street or an interstate? A lawnmower? An ambulance? How about air traffic, such as a plane or helicopter? Are there birds? How many different bird calls do you hear? Are there people nearby? Children playing and laughing or people chatting with each other? Are there animals—a dog barking, a rooster crowing, a horse whinnying?

As before, walk and listen until your timer goes off or you feel the Holy Spirit nudging you into the next phase. Remind yourself that despite all this noise, God hears you whenever you call out to him.

Finish the listening meditation by reciting Psalm 86:1–7:

Hear me, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed. Preserve my life, for I am loyal; Save your servant who trusts in you.

You are my God; pity me, Lord; to you I call all the day.

Gladden the soul of your servant; to you, Lord, I lift up my soul.

Lord, you are kind and forgiving, most loving to all who call on you.

Lord, hear my prayer; listen to my cry for help.

In this time of trouble I call, for you will answer me.

Touching God's Gifts

During the next three minutes, concentrate on everything you feel, not on the inside, but on the outside. Remember to let go of any other thoughts that pop into your head, and walk until your timer goes off or the Holy Spirit nudges you into the next phase.

Can you feel a gentle breeze on your face or a stronger wind? Is sunshine warming your face or rain tickling your skin? Is the surface upon which you are walking hard like pavement or soft like grass? Look down and study whatever is at your feet. A pebble? A stick? A leaf? Gently pick it up and hold it in your hand. Roll it between your fingers, sensing its texture, shape, and detail.

Try to feel your feet connect with the ground beneath you. Notice as your heels touch first and concentrate as the rest of your foot connects with the sturdy ground.

Concentrate on each step and on the subtle differences in the terrain. Even when it's irregular, notice how the ground is solid and reliable.

Remind yourself that God is sturdy and reliable and will not let you down. Finish the touch meditation by reciting Psalm 91:1–12:

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, Say to the Lord, "My refuge and fortress, my God in whom I trust."

God will rescue you from the fowler's snare, from the destroying plague,

Will shelter you with pinions, spread wings that you may take refuge; God's faithfulness is a protecting shield.

You shall not fear the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day, Nor the pestilence that roams in darkness, nor the plague that ravages at noon.

Though a thousand fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, near you it shall not come.

You need simply watch; the punishment of the wicked you will see.

You have the Lord for your refuge; you have made the Most High your stronghold.

No evil shall befall you, no affliction come near your tent.

For God commands the angels to guard you in all your ways.

With their hands they shall support you, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

Tasting and Smelling God's Gifts

These two senses are intricately connected, so we will focus on them together. Open your mouth slightly and touch your tongue to the back of your teeth. For the next three minutes, breathe through your mouth and nose, allowing each fragrance to evoke a taste.

Are there city smells, such as exhaust or tar? What does tar taste like? Is it pungent or bitter? Are there smells of other people around you? Is there body odor that smells like pizza, or perfume that smells like vanilla? Are there country smells like manure or hay? Does the hay smell sweet? What about fresh-cut grass or flowering buds? Do they smell like onions or mint?

Remind yourself that no earthly food or pleasure can fill your heart's deep longing for God. Finish the taste and smell meditation by reciting Psalm 42:2–6:

As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God.

My being thirsts for God, the living God.

When can I go and see the face of God?

My tears have been my food day and night, as they ask daily, "Where is your God?"

Those times I recall as I pour out my soul, When I went in procession with the crowd, I went with them to the house of God, Amid loud cries of thanksgiving,

with the multitude keeping festival.

Why are you downcast, my soul; why do you groan within me?

Wait for God, whom I shall praise again, my savior and my God.

Closing

Stand in place for a few minutes, or even for only a few seconds. Thank God for this time you shared and the gifts he revealed. Resolve to carry this mindset of gratitude and awareness through the rest of your day.