

WEEK 1



the BEGINNING
of WALKING



SESSION 1

The Beginning of Walking

You can fill in these blanks as you watch the video for session 1.

_____ : In each of our five weeks together, our goal will be to gain insight into what walking with God looked like in a particular era of biblical history in order to enrich our understanding and appreciation of walking with God in our own.

1. The _____ of walking is _____. Glance at the first several chapters of Scripture as they move toward Genesis 3:8. Walking with God _____ as the _____ of _____ God.

Read Genesis 5:1-24.

2. The mention of _____ means to stop careful readers in their tracks. (Compare Hebrews 11:5-6.)

See Genesis 13:14-18 and Genesis 17:1 for the third figure we find walking.

3. Note the CSB translation *live* rather than *walk*. The two words are also used somewhat interchangeably in translations of the New Testament. They aren't, however, entirely synonymous. _____ lends itself more readily to the notion of _____.

הלך (*hālāk*): v. (qal) go, travel, i.e., _____ to another place, with any form of transportation (2 Ki 7:14); (piel) travel (Ps 104:26) . . . (hitp) go about (Zec 1:10) . . . (qal) walk, i.e., make linear motion on foot or pod (Lev 11:20); (piel) go about (1 Ki 21:27); (hif) cause to walk (Lev 26:13); (hitp) walk about, . . . (qal) follow, i.e., make linear motion behind another object or collection (Ge 32:20); . . . behave, conduct, _____, formally, walk, i.e., go about doing certain actions in a regular, more or less consistent manner, so possibly _____ or lifestyle, as an extension of the act of walking as regular and patterned (Lev 20:23).¹

4. One paradox of the gospel's _____ is found in its _____.



No story is told as big and bold as the one God tells in Scripture. To human eyes, the plot may hide, but it is never lost. Just when you think it so, keep reading and watch it rise from the ashes. It could blow in with the next wind, get picked up by a caravan, float on an ax-head, ride in on a camel, hurl from a slingshot, or burst from a grave. What the story will not do—cannot do—is die. Leave the tome on a shelf to collect an inch of dust, and the pages inside will still teem with the story of life everlasting.

Open the cover of your Bible without turning to any particular page. Simply let it lie open for a moment, and give thought to the wonder there at arm's length. That's no ordinary book, you know. And you do. That's why you're here. And why I'm here. But how unordinary is it? Whether you're just beginning to crack the spine of a Bible or you've spent years inside the pages, no time is the wrong time to ruminate on its uniqueness. How we read what we read frequently determines where it leads. We'll devote this opening lesson, therefore, to exploring that deep, existential question shrugging the shoulders of preoccupied humans:

Why bother?

Specific to the task at hand, why bother with Bible study? I'm serious. Who among us needs one more time-consuming thing to do? Not one of us. Who among us needs divine help to juggle responsibilities, navigate relationships, sort out problems, deal with health issues, love prickly people, resist bitterness, forgive wrongs, be forgiven for wrongs, get back up, start all over, and tumble once again into transcendent joy that somehow makes all the trouble of living worth it? I do. You too?



DAY 1

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Your instructions are a doorway through which light shines.

PSALM 119:130, NET

*You know you're alive. You take huge steps, trying to
feel the planet's roundness arc between your feet.*

ANNIE DILLARD, *PILGRIM AT TINKER CREEK*

There's nothing better than an open heart before God with an open Bible in our hands. Scripture shows us what a walk with God looks like and plants the road signs that direct our course. So let's stir up some fresh appreciation.

Let's start with the remarkable patience of God eternal in the gradual transmission of the Scriptures. Psalm 90:2 reads,

Before the mountains were born,
before you gave birth to the earth and the world,
from eternity to eternity, you are God.

God has always been, is presently being, and ever more shall be. Long before God, in the poetic language of Moses, "gave birth to the earth and the world," he knew to the minutest detail how he would reveal himself and his redemptive plan to humanity. All things are at his command, so he can use whatever he pleases, but in the Bible's unfolding, we find God revealing himself and communicating his presence and desires to humanity through a variety of means. He uses divine speech ("and God said . . ."), creation and the created order, prophetic speech ("the word of the Lord came to . . ."), natural and supernatural events, signs, wonders,

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miracles, dreams, visions, divine and angelic visitations, sounds (thunder, trumpets, etc.), unusual sights, fire, clouds, a donkey, rain, absence of rain, silence, messages through prophets, and, most importantly to us, written words inspired by the Holy Spirit (Scripture) and the coming of Jesus, the Son.

Since Christ—the Word (Greek *logos*), or full expression, personified logic, exact representation, and perfect revelation of God, himself fully God—is eternal in both being and knowing, the words of God can be understood as eternal. In the diction

of Psalm 119:89, “LORD, your word is forever; it is firmly fixed in heaven.” Isaiah 40:8 reads, “The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of our God remains forever.” Christ himself said in Matthew 24:35 (NIV), “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

The eternal words of the Eternal Word.

We don't deify the Bible, of course. A pious form of idolatry is still every atom idolatry. Christ, *the Word*, is God, but the Scriptures are not. Their inestimable worth, authority, and reliability are in their divine inspiration and intention. Reflect on the thought that God would communicate to his image-bearing creatures through the sacred pages before ever fashioning a human body and breathing life into it. He knew the artful means of how—a stylus in mortal fingers moved by the Holy Spirit—and the schedule of when. God felt no urgency to blurt all he had to say in one breath. The one who is timeless owns time and, therefore, took his sweet time inspiring the Scriptures. Divine revelation is many things, but God in a rush isn't one of them.

Up for a little history? The Protestant Bible, comprised of the Old Testament and the New, is a progressively revealed library of sixty-six books written over some 1,500 years through the inspired pens of more than forty human authors, then ultimately bound into one volume with one overarching message: a self-disclosing holy God seeking and saving fallen humans at the highest personal cost.

Even after the final word of Scripture was inscribed on a scroll (possibly but not definitely the book of Revelation), God apparently wasn't stressed by a publication deadline. The canon as we know it, with thirty-nine Old Testament books and twenty-seven New Testament books, was not fully recognized by the church as such until around AD 400, after substantial deliberations and debates over authenticity and standards for acceptance.

In the centuries following, copies of the Scriptures were carefully guarded rarities, hand-written by scribes in Latin and placed primarily in the hands of educated clergy and elites. Translations into other languages like English awaited the invention of reusable type-printing in the fifteenth century and the courage of individuals so determined for the Bible to be in the hands of common people and congregations, they were willing to die for it. William Tyndale, the

linguist, scholar, and relentless reformer first to translate the Hebrew and Greek biblical texts into English, was strangled and burned at the stake as a heretic in 1536 around age forty-two. As is often the case, his driving passion was born from the birth pangs of great frustration. His issue with the religious machinations of his day is evident in the following words attributed to him:

In the universities they have ordained that no man shall look on the Scripture until he be nozzled in heathen learning eight or nine years, and armed with false principles with which he is clean shut out of the understanding of the Scripture.²

Perhaps the most quoted statement of William Tyndale is one he aimed like an arrow straight toward the tip of the ecclesiastical ladder: “If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy who drives a plough to know more of the scriptures than you do.”³

Ultimately, God did call Tyndale to give his life for the cause, but not until the type was set for plough boys—and girls—to hold the Book in their callous hands and read it. The Bible is a marvel, you see, and from this perspective, with a side helping of imagination, you might conclude the cover you just opened is no run-of-the-mill book cover. Picture a door swinging open—not to a fairy tale nor a Narnian land beyond a wardrobe, nor a shadowland of ghostlike spirits, but to the world of the Scriptures, infinitely larger and more fascinating than the earth spinning beneath our feet of clay and the atmosphere over our heads.

God begins the story with the creation of the material world. **Turn now to the opening chapter of Genesis and read verses 1-31. Record the material elements created on each “day.” Feel free to generalize on the lengthier sections.**

<p>DAY ONE</p> <hr/>	<p>DAY FOUR</p> <hr/>
<p>DAY TWO</p> <hr/>	<p>DAY FIVE</p> <hr/>
<p>DAY THREE</p> <hr/>	<p>DAY SIX</p> <hr/>

Beginnings are meant to be remembered, rehearsed, told and retold. God seemed intent from the start to introduce himself as the one who created all things out of no things in order that, among other things, the clay on its most coherent day might see the absurdity of telling the Potter how to spin his own wheel. Turn to chapters 38 and 39 of the book of Job for a clear example. Job is believed by numerous biblical scholars to be one of the oldest books in the Bible, if not the very oldest. If they are accurate, think how apropos a beginning: God, in effect, saying, "Let there be light" on the existential crisis of suffering.

Note the format of the words in Job and how it differs from the predominant paragraph structure of Genesis 1. Though whispers of poetry are there all along in Genesis 1 and some scholars believe that it, too, was intended to be read lyrically, here in this section of Job we behold the Lord blatantly as poet. **Slide your index finger slowly down the lines of Job 38 and 39, and pick several portions you find arresting. Then read them aloud. (Try to always read poetry aloud.) Which ones did you choose?**

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"All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16), but some portions of the Bible are sheer art, meant to hold the gazer's gaze, not just sharpen the student's mind. Job appears among the former, no less than a masterpiece. In these chapters, we feel the emotion, see the fireworks,

hear the morning stars singing, and sense our heads swimming to the whirling of planets. The chart of Genesis 1 gives way to the art of Job 38–39. Job's verses aren't looking to be diagrammed, charted, and parsed so much as they are begging to be heard. Wrestled with. Rehearsed. Imagined. Experienced. Wept over. Dreaded. Rejoiced over. Treasured. Tossed and regathered.

**Lord, how am I
to read this?**

Which expression of the Creator's work is better, Genesis 1 or Job 38–39? Both are essential. Both are God-breathed. In this case, the prose and the poetry are both beautiful, but they approach the reader from different angles and carry varied rhythms. Commands don't read like proverbs. Narratives don't read like epistles. Again, how we read what we read frequently determines where it leads. Sometimes the best question is "Holy Spirit, how am I to read this?"

Walking with God is attempting, however awkwardly and certainly imperfectly, to keep in step to some degree with God's rhythm and reason on any given day and in any season. One

way we may do this is in Bible reading. You may set out to read two or three chapters and find yourself instead absorbed by a single passage or fixated on a phrase. Other times, you may plan to take it nice and slow and instead get swept up in a fast-moving narrative and keep reading for the next half hour. In either case, was the goal unmet? The answer depends on whether the goal was checking the box on an exact length of Scripture reading or engaging with God in the reading. Yielding to the Spirit's pace isn't always obvious, but it is the most satisfying.

Our walks with God don't happen on a preprogrammed treadmill. They happen in the real living, where next week's calendar is maddeningly theoretical. This tandem walk is comprised of communion meant to move at God's discretion, which the human is tasked to discern by faith and not by sight. And thus, the ebb and flow. Keep in mind the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:17:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit
of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Walking with God assumes certain practices like prayer and Bible reading, but if we slip into automatic, where the method and pace become strictly routine, we can walk on for miles and months without any real involvement with God. In these pages, engagement exceeds regimen. Perhaps the simple phrase "walked with God" in Genesis, used in reference to Enoch and Noah, holds two keys that help unlock the pace.

See it for now not only as a phrase but as three separate words that comprise the phrase.
Record something each word indicates to you.

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WITH

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GOD

Walking speaks to consistency. (Pick up the feet, put them down. Do it again.) *With* reminds us that we're not alone in this—that Immanuel is with us. *God* in the opening of Genesis is the title associated most with the majestic Creator. Then, might we be helped by thinking along these lines?

Walking with God blends consistency and creativity.

It is a consistent walk with an immeasurably creative God.

In closing, turn your attention back to the first chapter of Genesis. This time, we'll read Robert Alter's translation of the first four verses:

When God began to create heaven and earth, and the earth then was welter and waste and darkness over the deep and God's breath hovering over the waters, God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness.⁴

Welter and waste and darkness. God breathes over the deep, then order—creative, kaleidoscopic, and spectacular—starts taking form out of chaos. I love to imagine that his breath still hovers over the words he breathed on the sacred page in the expanse of time. I like to ask him to make the words warm with his breath as I read and to bring them to life inside my bones and marrow. My way of talking to God may not and need not be yours, but do dare to ask him in your own words to work supernaturally in your life through the Scriptures. Do ask God to open your eyes so you can see the wonders in his teachings (Psalm 119:18) and open your mind to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). The God with whom you're invited to walk is no small God. Nothing is too difficult for him.

Whatever you do, keep the words of God near the heart of God, where they belong. We can read the print and miss the point. Jesus confronted a group of deeply devoted students of the Holy Scriptures in John 5:39-40, 42 with these unsettling words: "You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me. But you are

not willing to come to me . . . I know you—that you have no love for God within you.” Let that sink in not as condemnation but as caution not to miss the heart of God in the words of God.

The books bound together within this sacred library we call the Bible far exceed a collection of ancient scrolls for display in glass cabinets of museums. Pull a Bible from a box in the attic of a ramshackle house, and it may appear a relic of a bygone era, with long-gone relevance and the vitality of a corpse. Should the discoverer blow the dust off the flaking bonded leather, open its thin pages with frayed edges to the middle, and dare to read a psalm or two, however, she might well find wording for something that needed saying that very morning. The Scriptures are living, breathing words, given by the Holy Spirit and kept alive and vivified by the self-same Spirit in the hearts of humans with a fleck of faith.

The door to the world of the Bible is wide open to you. Come on in.



DAY 2

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*The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east,
and there he placed the man he had formed.*

GENESIS 2:8

*Dear Lord, grant me the grace of wonder. Surprise me, amaze me,
awe me in every crevice of your universe. Each day enrapture me
with your marvelous things without number. . . . I do not ask to
see the reason for it all: I ask only to share the wonder of it all.*

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

What if, over the coming weeks in this study, we read our Bibles with an even higher objective than learning scriptural principles and developing godlier behaviors? To be sure, both ends are important. A disciple is a learner. We can't grow if we don't learn, and we can't walk with God with a hint of consistency if we don't learn how he walks. As for godliness, only a person out of touch with the God of the Bible can kid herself into thinking how she lives makes no difference to God. But my hope is for someone to discover that both objectives—growing in the knowledge of Scripture and in godliness—more often than not end up naturally accompanying an authentic and deliberate walk with God.

You are my hope, Lord **GOD**,
my confidence from my youth.
I have leaned on you from birth;
you took me from my mother's womb.
My praise is always about you.

PSALM 71:5-6

One of our high hopes here is to learn to lean and, in doing so, realize that in leaning we learn. Think of the young shepherd David penning the words to his God: “thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” in the twenty-third psalm (κλν). The shepherd’s staff had multiple features, but certainly among them was a sturdy bend and break-resistant cane, or shillelagh, on which the weary, the overworked, and the weak could lean. Think also of the beloved disciple, who leaned against Jesus at the supper table that last evening before Jesus’ crucifixion (John 13:21-28). What if we also saw our Scripture reading and Bible studying as dining with Christ on the feast of his words and, rather than only sitting classroom style (a good thing), we often sat supper-style and scooted in (an even better thing)?

The benefits of reading Scripture are boundless. No need to choose a few. The supreme purpose of the sacred words, however, is to reveal to us the saving Word who is Christ the Lord. Above all else, the highest, most crucial aim of every spiritual discipline—indeed, every life practice in a journey of faith—is to know Christ, to be drawn by the Spirit into deeper, more satisfying, sanctifying communion with him, to be fed and led by him. In a nutshell: to walk with God. This is something Cece Winans has experienced, as you’ll see in our interview this week.*

I’m proposing that, throughout these five weeks, every time we open our Bibles, we pause and ask the Holy Spirit to quicken those words and bring them to life in a way that is enlightening and transforming—perhaps at times even transfixing and mesmerizing—to us. Let’s ask the Holy Spirit to teach us, inform us, convict us, show us, direct us, thrill us. When it comes to the work of the Holy Spirit, the words of James 4:2 could hardly be more applicable:

You do not have because you do not ask.

To make the connection, read Luke 11:9-13. What is Jesus encouraging his followers to do?

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Fill in the remainder of Luke 11:13. “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father _____
_____?”

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Find Beth's interview with Cece Winans here.

Ask for all of it these next five weeks. Ask for every good thing the Lord is willing to show you and work in you. I'm talking about the things of real value. Of eternal value. Not the eroding things of this world. Ask him for the filling and satisfaction of his Spirit. For the riches of understanding and insight. For wisdom and creativity. For love and joy and faith. For more fruitfulness in your calling. Start asking him to fill the empty places in you with himself, to the full measure. Ask him to cause the seeds of the Word he'll implant in your soul to have a profound yield, "a hundred times what was sown" (Luke 8:8). Why not ask?

Isaiah 7 records a most intriguing dialogue between the Lord and King Ahaz. The Lord says to Ahaz:

"Ask for a sign from the **LORD** your God—it can be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven."

ISAIAH 7:11

Can you imagine God encouraging you to ask for a sign from him and making it virtually limitless? How would you respond? Well, this is the way Ahaz responded:

"I will not ask. I will not test the **LORD**."

ISAIAH 7:12

"But, Ahaz," we'd protest, "the Lord just told you to!" According to the prophet Isaiah, the refusal of Ahaz greatly tried the patience of the Lord. He'd send a sign anyway, but with no pleasure in the king. In Luke 11, Jesus does not tell us to seek signs, but he does indeed exhort us fervently to ask of, seek from, and knock on the door of our gracious heavenly Father for the good and lasting things of the Holy Spirit and of the Kingdom of God. **So, with an asking, seeking, and knocking frame of mind, turn to the third chapter of Genesis and read verses 1-13. After you've completed your reading, meditate on verse 8.**

The man and his wife heard the sound of the **LORD** God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze.

God walking. Since we've been invited into this anthropomorphism, let's go with it. Here we're invited to imagine a God who has legs, and two legs as opposed to four, mind you. God did not create the beasts of the field, the fish of the sea, or the birds of the air in his image. God is wooing us in this scene to picture him with feet. The Lord alone knows to what extent we can stretch the anthropomorphism without it snapping, but questions blow the dust off stale imaginations, even if they have no answers.

Here are a few. In the time prior to the fall in the garden, can we confidently assume that the man and his wife had seen their Creator's actual form? Did God in the nascent era take on the likeness of humanity with a body that could be touched? Did his feet leave prints in the dirt? We don't actually know, but don't you wish we did? Sometimes the attribute most asleep in our Bible study is curiosity, and if we're to appreciate what is meant by walking with God, it needs waking up.

What we do know is that God walked among them in the garden in a way that could be *heard*. "The man and his wife heard the sound . . ."

This singular detail suggests a tangibly impactful form that, if applied to anything else, assumes some measure of weight. If you walk through a stretch of woods often enough, you'll likely learn to distinguish the sound of a rabbit or a raccoon, a deer, a dog, or a person, only the last of which, if you're like me, raises any real caution.

Sometimes the attribute most asleep in our Bible study is curiosity.

The point to be drawn is that hooves sound different from paws, and both sound different from feet. Large sounds different from small. The whistling of a human is distinct from the

whistling of the wind through the trees. In the narrative of Genesis 3, the man and woman crouching in an effort to be unseen recognized God's approach purely from sound.

The messianic passages of Isaiah 53 lead us to picture Jesus as rather unremarkable in size and appearance. How God chose to reveal his presence "in the beginning" is less clear. To be sure, Adam and Eve recognized the Lord God moving among them was not their peer . . . except, perhaps, for one enticing moment when the serpent suggested he was. That fateful day, the couple didn't hide from a being they could take on. They knew more vividly than ever that the one they were dealing with was wholly other.

The Hebrew word for "glory" in the Old Testament is *kavod*. The term conveys weightiness. Think in terms of market trade in antiquity and how the value of a particular item—be it fruit, grain, liquid, stone, or precious metal—was ordinarily estimated by weight. When we use the idiom "worth their weight in gold," we're calculating according to this ancient measure. We don't know precisely how God revealed himself to the man and woman in the garden, but this much we can count on from the expanse of divine revelation: God's glory is immeasurable. His full weightiness cannot be weighed.

The man and woman bought what the deceiving serpent was selling at an incalculable cost. These were people who, before that fateful day, got to live out of their truest identity and fullest security and highest satisfaction. They fellowshiped with their Maker and with each other in a paradise designed for exactly such a purpose.

Let me ask you this: Have you ever gazed at a magnificent piece of art while standing

next to the artist? If so, when and what was the experience like? If not, what do you imagine that experience would be like?

I've had the privilege of standing inches away from contemporary artist and Jesus-follower Makoto Fujimura and looking at one of his paintings with him.* I'd seen it just minutes before he walked in the room. Next to him, however, the interpretation became clearer, and the colors and textures took on entirely new extravagance. I've heard poems read so powerfully and poignantly by the poets who wrote them that I wept. I've heard excerpts from books read aloud by their authors in such a way as to change the way I read their work from then on. The ones who write the words know every intended pause and the precise pace. They know the interpretation. They know the schematics. How much more, then, does God know his own work? Imagine beholding the masterpieces of the universe while standing in the presence and company of the Master. Come near with the faith of a child.

Master, why did you choose to make the horse neigh, the cow moo, and the donkey bray?

What were you thinking when you made a porpoise twirl and a whale frolic and a seal clap?

Master, why did you design a mango to taste this way and a papaya to taste that way?

What did you do out of necessity for creation, and what did you do for the pure fun of it?

I hope one day to ask God some of these questions and endless others. Consider also how he will answer what we didn't know to ask and show us what we didn't know could be seen. Imagine gazing at a mountain in his good company and God saying something like this: "What you see before you isn't all there is. Come with me." Now, imagine he takes you by the hand and leads you into a cave. You bend your body and make your way through a narrow tunnel

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Find Beth's interview with Makoto Fujimura here.

and into an open space where you can stand upright, and suddenly the light of your escort's presence dances on the surfaces of a thousand icicle-like stalactites.

Just think of the conversations we have coming when we're finally in God's perceptible presence. Now, imagine being Adam and Eve and, instead of having such unspeakable privileges of presence *coming*, you're seeing it *going*. The loss would be a living death.

What specific reason is given in Isaiah 45:18-19 for God's creation of planet Earth?

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Consider the particularity of our planet in comparison to others in our solar system. **What are a few of the conditions that make the earth more inhabitable than say, for instance, Venus or Mars?**

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Might it be fair to say that God formed the earth to be inhabitable most exquisitely by humans in order to enjoy them, bless them, and fellowship with them? Would we be going too far to suggest that God designed humans intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and physically distinct from all other creatures so he could walk with them rather than simply watch them walk? By his sovereign wisdom, God also fashioned mortals with freedom of choice, refusing to force them to enjoy his presence or plug their ears to seductive voices threatening to lead them astray. This is no God of oppression. The arms of this God stretch wide open with invitation.