

Spiritual Wayfinding

33 Walking
Meditations
for
Navigating
Life with
Embodied
Wisdom



DEBORAH
GREGORY



InterVarsity Press
ivpress.com

Taken from *Spiritual Wayfinding* by Bette Dickinson.

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Published by InterVarsity Press,

Downers Grove, IL. www.ivpress.com



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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This easy-to-use walking guidebook provides meditations to help you navigate life with embodied spiritual wisdom. Each meditation includes a short story with practical insights, walking prompts, and a Scripture passage.

The guide is divided into six parts. The pre-amble sets the pace for your journey with God, reminding you to walk in love and humility. Parts 1, 2, and 3 address the question *Where am I?*, focusing on sensory systems, emotions, and cognitive awareness. Parts 4, 5, and 6 address the question *Where am I going?* by exploring spiritual orienteering through principles of natural navigation, spiritual discernment, and transformative aspects of pilgrimage.

Although the meditations are sequential, there are four ways you can walk this book:

1. **Thru-hike:** Walk each meditation in consecutive order to integrate accruing insights into your daily walking practice.
2. **Expedition:** Use the walks on a pilgrimage, backpacking trip, sabbatical, or silent retreat. Move through the meditations at the pace of your heart.
3. **Camp out:** For those new to spiritual practices or wanting to deepen their prayer life, you may focus on specific exercises like the *Prayer of Examen* (Walk 19) or *Awe Walking* (Walk 9). Extend these meditations over days or weeks to integrate them into daily life.
4. **Field guide:** Spiritual directors, pastors, and guides can adapt these meditations as a resource for the individuals or groups they serve.



Scripture meditation with imaginative contemplation. Imaginative contemplation involves engaging Scripture with your imagination. Each meditation begins with a Scripture passage and a focus phrase to help immerse yourself in the story with your senses and emotions. You can either read the Scripture before you walk or listen to it through an audio recording while you walk.

Steps to Practice:

1. **Read:** Choose your preferred translation and read the Scripture slowly. Allow the words to wash over you without analysis.
2. **Imagine:** Read the passage again. Imagine yourself in the scene, engaging your senses and noticing your emotions.
3. **Look for God:** Reflect on how God is revealed in the passage or what God might want to show you.
4. **Carry it forward:** By placing ourselves in God's story, we can more easily find God in our own story. As you prepare to *Walk It Out*, select a word, image, or insight to carry with you.

If a Scripture passage evokes painful associations due to past misuse or abuse, feel free to meditate on the suggested focus phrase or select an alternative text that helps you connect with God.

Walk it out. Each chapter suggests a different way to walk. However, the duration, location, and way of moving are entirely up to you. Consider exploring alternate movements or accessible paths that can deepen your connection with God and cultivate embodied wisdom.

- Engage both sides of the body with activities like yoga, butterfly tapping, marching in place, or listening to binaural beats. These bilateral movements help synchronize brain hemispheres, regulate emotions, improve focus, and enhance decision-making.
- Let your eyes wander as you gaze out a window, watch scenery pass by while riding in a car, or stroll through an imaginary landscape.
- Play with a finger labyrinth, prayer beads, or a fidget toy.
- Follow a single thread of yarn or untie a knotted rope to engage the same mental and physical processes as labyrinth walking.

Explore options that work for you, trusting your body and instincts to guide you. Whatever method you choose, stay mindful that God is with you.

Rest and reflect. After your walk, take some time to reflect on your experience. Notice how you feel physically, emotionally, and mentally. Consider journaling or engaging in another form of creative expression to capture and process your insights.

Find a walking partner. A key principle in wayfinding is to *never hike alone*. Whether you physically walk these meditations by yourself or with others, finding a companion to accompany you on your spiritual journey can be beneficial. A walking partner can be a trusted friend, a walking group, a pastor, or a spiritual director who will pray with you for guidance, discuss your experiences, and help you listen for God's direction.



PRE-AMBLE

Put on Your Shoes

Begin with love and humility

toddle

lift, lean, keel, drop

steady hands catch my fall

I'm learning how to walk again

giggles

delight

knowing I am safe and loved, I

let myself fall forward

lift, lean, keel, drop

toddle

DEBORAH GREGORY, "LEARNING TO WALK"



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WALK 1

Right Shoe

Walk in Love

*God loves me. It still humbles me that this force that makes
leaves and fleas and stars and rivers and you, loves me.
Me, Maya Angelou. It's amazing. I can do anything.
And do it well. Any good thing I can do it. That's why I am
who I am, yes, because God loves me and I'm amazed at it.*

MAYA ANGELOU, IN CONVERSATION WITH OPRAH WINFREY

DADA WAS MY YOUNGEST daughter's favorite word as a baby. She adorably said it with a growl, imitating his deep voice. Her Dada delighted in dropping to her eye level and adoringly saying her name in response: *Maggie*. It dripped with tender affection.

Maggie learned to walk in our apartment in Israel. A few weeks before, we attempted to take a picture of her “walking on water” during a trip to the Sea of Galilee. She adamantly protested! Instead, she waited to walk in the safety of home. Her Dada offered support and helped her back on her feet after stumbles. I was ready to catch her.

Walking isn't just a motor skill. Walking is a relational skill. Babies stabilize their attachments with caregivers around the time they learn to walk. Walking strengthens these social bonds and fosters a sense of autonomy as children begin to explore. In the book



The 6 Needs of Every Child, child psychologist Jeffrey Olrick identifies *delight* as the key ingredient for developing healthy self-esteem, security, and well-being. When Maggie took those first brave steps, our family became stronger. She was seen, encouraged, comforted when she fell, and celebrated with each step. Our delight gave her the confidence to keep trying.

Recently, after fracturing my ankle, I felt frustrated that learning to walk *again* took longer than the initial weeks and months it took my daughters to learn to walk. I wondered if there was something I could learn about walking with God by learning to walk again. Perhaps *walking with God* is not meant to be a metaphor but rather an embodied experience intended to draw me closer to God.

Previously, I used the metaphor of walking with God to describe my Bible study and prayer habits, which were always stationary. I had no framework for *delighting* in God or practicing physical movements in prayer. When the storms of life shook my faith, my thoughts swirled with shame and doubt. *Is God really loving and safe? Does God see me and desire good for my life? Or is God demanding, critical, and punishing?* When I didn't perceive God as loving and safe, I viewed difficulties as punishment and sought comfort elsewhere.

I am learning that walking with God isn't just a theological skill; it's a physically active relational skill that deepens my secure divine attachment. That's why the first step in learning to walk with God is love. To "walk in love, as Christ loved us" (Eph 5:2) recognizes that love begins with God. The Evangelist John is more explicit: "We love because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19).

God is love. Love is the overflowing of God's very self into creation. Walking in love aligns us with God's movement of love and

stabilizes us amid life's storms. God takes the first step; we respond by taking the next step.

I recently asked Alina, Maggie's older sister, about her thoughts on walking with God. "It's like when Maggie learned to walk," Alina reflected. "You will only be brave enough to take the first steps when you know you are safe and loved by God." I want to be brave like Maggie, knowing God will provide support when I falter. I want to feel my Father's eyes of delight on me, celebrating my developing skills and trusting that he will set me back on my feet when I fall.

This meditation begins a discovery journey of walking with God through embodied wisdom. Each step invites us to enter the flow of God's love and step forward in greater love in our daily lives. By walking with God, we can strengthen our divine attachment and experience God's delight. Are you ready to take the first step?





WALK IT OUT

Scripture Meditation

Read Psalm 36:5-9. Focus phrase: *God's love is steadfast.*

Walking Meditation

Before you go:

- **Hold** the shoe of your dominant foot and let it serve as a symbol of God's love. Imagine God's love enfolding you as you put on your shoe.

As you walk:

- **Chant** a phrase about God's love with each step (silently or aloud). Examples: *God's sustaining love. God is love. God loves me. You delight in me. The love of God enfolds me.*
- **Notice** how you feel in your body, mind, and emotions.
- **Delight.** How do you experience God's love and delight? What do you long for in your walk with God?

Rest and Reflect

- After your walk, reflect on this question: *Where do I need courage to step forward with greater confidence in God's love?*



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