

Romans 1:20 From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God. (NLT)

Speed, greed and confusion are not the message God gives in his word or his world. God's world gives a message of order, growth and exuberant joy; a message quite different from the constant sensationalism/unrest of network television and popular culture.

Slowing down each day for a five minute walk is a reminder our children need...”The Earth is the Lord’s” . Without this daily reminder their minds and emotions are given into the hands of loud music, network television and group think. God’s world proclaims wonder, order, growth, and harmony...needed foundations if we hope for our children to grow emotionally and spiritually strong.

Without a parents sincere daily effort most children will never know what it is like to be immersed in God’s world...a daily dunk where they are free to touch and examine...to enjoy the freedom of the earth God intends for each of us. Walking just five minutes a day is a perfect start.

Walking is also a great model for relating to our children. It helps us view them as fellow travelers and not just baggage we tow through life. Following are some thoughts for adding variety to your daily walk and making it a joy that bonds parent and child to one another and to our creator.

Paper Bag walks: Children love to collect, partly to claim ownership over something, partly out of pure delight and discovery. The rules for the collection walk are: if it fits in a brown paper grocery bag and does not belong to someone else we can take it home. If it fits in an egg carton you can keep it in your room. Examples of egg carton museums I have observed over the years: dried fungus/mushrooms, dead insects, rocks, tree bark, feathers, seeds, seed pods, and acorns. The idea of ownership is important to society so children must learn to respect what belongs to others. It is just as important that they understand everything belongs to God...that we are just stewards. Labeling each egg carton museum: “God’s seeds”, “God’s mushrooms” etc. can be a big step in the right direction. A variation of the collection walk is the “Bug walk” where you carry a clean plastic peanut butter jar instead of a grocery sack. You can only keep a bug overnight and only if you provide air holes and food.

1 Corinthians 10:26 The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.

A camera walk: is like a paper bag walk except you use a digital camera or cell phone.

Hidden in the Grass walks: Put 1-2 inches of cold water in a plastic cup and if it is spring or early summer you are ready for a “Hidden in the grass walk”. Some flowers are so tiny or so hidden that they are almost invisible, but for those who take the time to look the flowers are always there. A child who learns early in life to look for the positive is much better off than most children. There is a custom in parts of the Ukraine that can make the “hidden walk” even more a part of childhood. If no one brings the cook a flower there is no meal, a wonderful custom that encourages children to appreciate what is given them. Starting your own family tradition is as easy as putting a small clear glass vase on your kitchen table, a vase for the children to share their finds. If there is nothing fresh in the vase (even a twig from a tree) the meal could be delayed. This custom helps children understand the importance of expressing appreciation for other family members. It also makes the “hidden” walk a memorable part of their childhood. *Proverbs 8:17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.* When we look for God hard enough we are sure to find him.

The BRISK walk: Physical exercise is another habit that begins early in life. The BRISK walk can be exaggerated and comic with stiff arms and legs or a real cardio walk. (Check out the internet or your local library to see what one looks like.) There is nothing like a brisk walk to drain some of the vinegar out of a child and leave him or her more at ease. Taking a walk has been a sanity saver for weary day care providers for many years...just the break everyone needs. There is no reason it wouldn't work for weary moms as well.

1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

The Transition walk (especially for young children): A child's life is filled with transitions, from school to home, from one parent or grandparent to another. Many of these transitions are emotional for a child. A short walk and talk...just to the corner and back can make all the difference in the world. On the way to the corner talk about what the child has been doing/feeling. Then you turn around and head back to the house/car and talk about what the child will be doing next. Making transitional walks a habit can make being dropped off at day care or changing custody from one parent to another less stressful.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Adopt a tree or plant walks. Adopting a tree or plant can be a child's first step in realizing that living things are different from other things. Whether you visit your tree once a week or once a month choosing a tree/plant together can be a relationship builder that helps us view our children as fellow travelers and not just baggage. 2 Corinthians 13:14 “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the **fellowship** of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Walking together is an ideal model for fellowship. We are separate beings but going the same way.

The looking up walk: Looking up relaxes you. There is something about looking up that slows your heart rate and eases your mind and emotions. It is the only direction we can look that disconnects our fight/flight reflex. No one should look at the sun directly...not even with sun glasses but looking up at the clouds or into the branches of large trees calms even the most hyper child...if you stick with it long enough. Add a few deep breaths before you lay down and you have your own mini spa treatment. There may be bugs in the grass but don't let it stop you. Consider taking a blanket or spraying with an insect repellent. Looking up walks are equally good in all four seasons and can be especially fun **AT NIGHT**. Paper airplanes are a great addition to a looking up walk. If you have a good place for it you might even try kite flying. *Psalm 96:5 For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.*

The bird watching walk: When they are not in the air you might see a bird almost anywhere. On the ground, in a tree or on a building. Bird watching walks are more memorable if you check out a bird book from the library. Seeing and identifying a different bird each time you walk makes each outing unique. You could even keep a list. *Matthew 6:26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?*

In the rain walks: I personally carry an umbrella every time I go for a walk, especially in a new neighborhood...not because I am part British...but for protection. Fear is not of God and the last thing in the world we want is fearful children and yet Dog's and other dangers are a fact of life. It is not wise to run from a dog who thinks you should not pass through his territory. The best idea is to stand still and open your umbrella then back slowly away. In the worst case scenario the dog will attack the umbrella which can then be dropped as you continue to back away. In thirty years of walking and being responsible children I have only had a problem once but I thank God I had the umbrella. Then too umbrellas are fun whether you use them to shield you from the sun or from the rain or to distract a dog. The bible lesson for walking in the rain is that children will need their own umbrellas if they are to be safe. No matter how big our umbrella is it will not be big enough to cover them their whole lives. They need their own. The most important umbrella, the one that keeps us really safe, is faith in god with the spokes of the umbrella being: prayer, bible study, love, and fellowship. *John 17:11 "I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one."*

Blindfold/listening walks: A simple blindfold can make a walk a lot more fun. Walking blindfolded calls your attention to your other senses (enjoy the experience for itself.) Walking blindfolded also makes you much more aware of your walking partner(s). There is nothing like exchanging trust walks (blindfold walks) to get you back in tune and on the same page with your children. *1 Peter 3:8 "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble."*

Sadly the worst kind of pollution in the world is probably noise pollution...but...for children who live outside the city limits walking with a blindfold allows a child to hear all of the sounds that are as much a part of creation as what we see.

The Backwards walk: The two walkers face each other and then one person walks backward and the other forward. Keep a light heart and this walk will be one of your most enjoyable. In the end however the message to parent and child alike is that we are to walk through life facing the future not the past. This walk can be an eye opener for anyone involved in divorce, recovering from a loss of any kind or anyone facing an uncertain or new future. We must release the past, forgive those we need to forgive and then turn around and move forward. Walking backward for just two minutes can be a powerful lesson bringing hope and a renewed zest for life. *Jeremiah 29:11* "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." How could this lesson be better illustrated than trying to walk backward through God's world?

It is the same with many of the Bible's greatest lessons. Without an intimate relationship with creation our children will miss much of what God has to say...through his word... but also through his world. Our role as Christian parents is to expose our children to BOTH his word and his world every day of their lives. A daily walk with your children and God is a very good beginning.

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