

## Start Now To Begin Walking

Walking and a Cause as Metaphor  
John W. Ritenbaugh  
Given 22-Oct-11; Sermon #1071

This way of life is not very difficult to describe to people, but it is something that is not easily done. There are some who are unable to do what God requires of them because they are incapacitated in some way by physical difficulties. There are others who are able to do it, but they do not grow and overcome. They may be lazy, or distracted, or full of fears, or unwilling to make the sacrifices required.

But the great men and women of faith all accomplished it and did it well, most of them for very long periods of time. In some cases, like Abraham, it was around 100 years. For those who lived before the Flood, it might have been hundreds of years.

The Feast of Tabernacles conjures up pictures of God's Holy Spirit being poured out far more generously, and on virtually all of mankind, during the millennial period. Every one of those great men and women of the past, who lived the subject of this sermon, were empowered by God's Holy Spirit, thus showing that God is very willing to assist us along the way. Without it, they never would have accomplished it, because the Holy Spirit is like the fuel that makes things go.

My subject at this point in the sermon is going to be *walking*. That is what the Israelites did: they walked to their destination. Several years ago I gave a series of sermons that focused on the uses of the word *eating* in the Bible ("Maintaining Good Health"). So this sermon is going to parallel those sermons in some way. Eating is one of the master images used in the Bible, by virtually every one of the Bible's writers, in order to give us instruction vital to a broad understanding of how life is to be lived and God's purpose fulfilled, within the common circumstances of life. Eating appears over 700 times in a variety of contexts.

Now walking appears between 200 and 300 times, depending upon the translation. Two hundred in the older translations, closer to 300 in the newer translations. One reason it was used so frequently is because when the Bible was written it was the most common way of getting from one place to another. And therein lies its value as a teaching instrument. It suggests movement, a progression toward a goal, and at the same time, suggests a passing of time as well. God's children are on a pilgrimage, progressing toward the Kingdom of God, and all the while they journey, they are preparing for their arrival there. But time is slipping by, too. You might be interested to know, that of all the references in the whole Bible to the physical act of walking, Jesus is the most persistent pedestrian.

On a figurative level, walking becomes the prime metaphor for two often-related motifs. The first is interaction with a companion: you walk and talk at one and the same time. The second big motif that the Bible makes the most use of is walking as a lifestyle, as a mode of living, as a way of living. Walking, like *way*, is used in that sense.

The Bible writers used a fairly large number of Hebrew and Greek words for "walking." All of those Hebrew and Greek words have the same basic meaning, in that they are in some way synonymous with the English verbs to go, march about, step ahead, pass, travel, proceed, lead, go before, and follow. Every one of those terms has a sense of walking and also moving.

Once one gets past the situations in which walking is literally indicated, and into a context in which a figurative usage is demanded, those same Hebrew and Greek words become synonymous with the English words conduct, live, behave, observe, perform, and do, even though the simple word “walk” may still appear in the verse. In other words, you have to translate it yourself and adapt the context to *walk* or whatever the word is that is being used.

This is a series of verses that we are very familiar with, as a platform from which we are going to continue building.

**Matthew 24:9-13** Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended [He is talking about Christians here], will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end, the same shall be saved.

I believe that as Jesus gave this prophecy, He was showing a gradually increasing intensity of events. The events that He is listing and describing are going to occur. I feel certain that all of us of adult mind have a certain amount of apprehension concerning the fairly near future. Given the conditions of today’s times, we wonder how much worse can it actually get, and fear that it is going to get much worse than it already is if things go on much longer before Jesus Christ returns.

If my understanding of some of these prophecies is correct, it is going to get *much* worse. The worsening conditions are going to exert greater and greater pressure, because that is really what the word ‘tribulation’ means, in its most literal sense. It is pressure on us to seek relief and abandon the faith. That is why Jesus said that many will be offended and there will be betrayal, and people’s love will diminish. The pressure of those situations will cause people to become distracted, more fearful, more involved with the world. At least we have not reached the place yet where it is impossible to work unless we accept the mark.

So this sermon is most directly aimed at preparing for the Kingdom of God. It does not contain a great number of details, but rather, generalities, because it is each person’s responsibility to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, and every life has its own nuances. The details fall on each person to identify what pressures are coming upon him and what to do about it. The pressures might be different from your neighbor's in the church. Maybe not greatly different, maybe just marginally different. But they are going to be different, because we are individual personalities.

One of the major problems that we have regarding overcoming is that we do not deeply consider ourselves as involved in a cause. The emphasis is simply on overcoming, but for what reason? Without a cause as an additional motivation, stagnation is ever more likely to occur.

There are two somewhat conflicting causes that are in the news very frequently these days. The older of the two is the Tea Party Movement. Those people are involved in a cause: They want to throw the government out! Or they want to change things radically, so that the lives of many people are going to go back a period of 40 or 50 years, “the way we used to do things.” They have a cause, and those people are motivated. They want to accomplish, and they push themselves in order to bring their ideals to pass.

The second more recent cause is the Occupier Movement, aimed at unsettling corporate interests. Those people are trying to accomplish something a good deal different than the Tea Partiers, but they are also involved in a cause. They are making ground, at least in terms of making their cause well-known and hoping that their cause will cause others to join with them. And why? Because large numbers of people make the cause more attainable. At least that is the way it goes here in the United States of America.

Interestingly, in Luke 19:13, Jesus commands us, His servants, who are illustrating a part of the parable, to “occupy till I come.” Meaning, “Be busy at what I assign as your responsibility until My prophesied return.” So we are to occupy, be busy at, what He has assigned to us.

As we age, from birth to about the early twenties, growing physically in height and weight is natural and occurs as long as we are at least doing the bare essentials necessary to maintain life. I am talking about eating, getting a little bit of exercise here and there. In your own family, the growth is not necessarily very noticeable, but somebody from another family that has not seen you or the one who has been growing for a long period of time, says “Wow! Have they grown!” Evelyn and I noticed it very strongly, that these little kids, that were nothing more than ankle-biters around the Fort Mill congregation and elsewhere, are now five or five and a half feet tall. They are singing in the choir and contributing, their growth is obvious.

But spiritually growing and overcoming requires an unnatural attention. We grow physically, making very little effort, because the growth in the body takes place as God designed it to do so. But growing spiritually is *unnatural*. It requires discipline and motivation. It is much different from growing physically. That is because spiritual faith must first be activated by God’s calling and God’s truth, and that faith is not natural. It must be given from an outside source, and that outside source is God. That outside source, once given to us, must be fed and nurtured by truth. God’s Word is truth, and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. And both of those factors are not natural to humanity.

It is natural that we would be able to understand that there is a God, a creator God. But it is not natural for people to have saving faith, the faith of God. This kind of growth requires effort on our part, as well as the gift of God giving us this opportunity. For this reason, it is very helpful for producing the greatest amount of growth for us to see ourselves as part of a cause, because a cause provides motivation. That motivation that is inherent within believing in a cause can sometimes be a very powerful stimulus.

For some groups, preaching the gospel to the world is a measure of built-in motivation. Those groups often focus upon numbers—how many stations are we on; how many people have we contacted; how many letters have we received; how many are being baptized? That is not of any extremely small emphasis in providing motivation, but is that the growth that God is concerned about, or is it possible that it sounds suspiciously like an American business report that a corporation would make? There is a major stumbling block in this approach, because it lures the unwary into believing that he himself is right and good, in good standing with God, simply because he is part of the system doing the preaching. What this eventually produces is reliance upon group salvation. And that is not God’s method.

I will give you three scriptures, three witnesses. Notice how clear this is.

**Romans 14:12** So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

Each one has to give account of his growth before God. Growth in conduct, growth in spirituality, growth in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Everybody has to do that himself. He cannot say to God, “Well, I was in this group that was preaching the gospel.” “Oh?” He would say. “Good for you, but what did you do?”

**II Corinthians 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

And all the way at the end of the book, practically the last piece of counsel that is given in the entire Book, says this:

**Revelation 22:12** And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Group salvation is not God’s foundation of judgment. Everybody has to do their own work. Now we are not really getting too far away from walking. Walking is work, and the person has to walk himself. Is that not correct? So just hold that in mind.

Another factor in a group in which the preaching of the gospel is dominant is that a great deal of the actual work of preaching of the gospel is done by relatively few. That leads directly into the “pay and pray” syndrome, and that is not producing personal growth at all. All it is doing is helping somebody else do the work. Now there is nothing wrong with that, and so a person can say, “Well, I helped Joe Smith do the work.” That will certainly earn them some reward. But I am looking for the greatest growth that we can possibly have.

I personally believe that what I am speaking of here played a major part in why so many were unprepared for what happened when doctrines began changing in the Worldwide Church of God. I believe it is why so many just simply disappeared. Maybe they lost their love, maybe they turned Laodicean, then they fell asleep, as the Worldwide Church of God imploded. After all, the gospel was being preached, so why worry? Why be concerned? Call me Alfred E. Neuman, but it is really sad, because that approach, if it dominates in a group, is going to lead to something that is very dangerous. That is because God’s purpose is to reproduce Himself, and that is an entirely different and far bigger goal, a far greater cause, than merely preaching the gospel. I personally believe that approach played a major role in why so many were unprepared for what happened.

God’s purpose is to create us in His image, and that requires personal faithfulness in the experiences of life. That, brethren, is not something that anybody can do for anybody else. Each person can be faithful only on his own. The virtues, the qualities, the characteristics that require personal involvement—they cannot be given to somebody else.

I am still touching on the “walking” thing: walking is work, walking is moving, walking is producing something, in the biblical sense. It is something that rests upon the quality of our own personal relationship with God. It is in this very area that it helps greatly if we see ourselves as part of a cause.

A cause, brethren, motivates. It is going somewhere, it is producing something. A marathoner is one who likes to run, and they want to run 26 miles. Maybe they are doing it for fame, for fortune, for

personal fulfillment, and that is that person's cause. So what does he do? He prepares himself, through training, to achieve his cause. No one else can do that for him. You cannot trade one person's physical fitness and give it to someone else. Neither can one's spiritual fitness be transferred from one to another.

A cause is more than merely a goal, because some goals are very quickly reached. A cause requires sustained effort. It is not something that is over in the blink of an eye, or in one day, or one week. It is something that pushes a person, for perhaps many, many years because he envisions the fulfillment of that cause, and the joy that he will have whenever it is finally accomplished.

Now the word "cause," according to *Webster's New World Dictionary* is "anything producing an effect or result; any objective movement that a person or group is interested in and supports, especially one involving social reform." We are involving personal reform in the image of God. *Webster's Lexicon of the English Language* says this: "That a cause is a side, [like the Democrats are on one side, and the Republicans on another side; the Cardinals are on one side, the Rangers are on another side] taken in a contest between individuals, political, or religious movements." Synonyms are: prime-mover, (a cause is a prime-mover), instigator, producer, generator, trigger, justification, reason, and initiator. You can see every one of those synonyms is something that is moving, pushing at accomplishment.

A cause motivates from within and gives resolve to produce change, as in social reform. We have to see that the cause is greater than ourselves. That is what drives us to make sacrifices. It is in this area that one discovers whether our conversion is merely to words and feelings, or to the realities that those words represent. If those words represent something really meaningful, then those words become a cause.

This is one of the major factors God is discovering in this trial that has hit the church of God. Are we really driven from within, because we see the beauty of the cause that God is working in and through us? Unfortunately, many people are only converted to words. It is nothing but intellectual agreement to doctrinal technicalities. The person is not converted to conforming to a personality that we are to marry, and a way of life involving His character and our conduct, in preparation for the reality of Christ's return.

There is a cause that will bring about cultural reform: God's cause, of bringing mankind into the image of Jesus Christ, will bring about cultural reform. But in order for the cause to really take hold within us, we must understand the need for it and also believe that it is coming, whether we are ready or not.

God has a time schedule. We do not know exactly what it is. He gives us little hints in the prophecies. But no man knows the day nor hour. Since we do not know, then it is good to be as ready as we can, *all the time*. There is pushing that is coming from this concept of cause. If we are not ready, then life may have been lived in vain. But if it does make a difference, then we can make a real difference in the cultural changes that are going to come.

Now as we begin another post-Feast of Tabernacles season, I want to make several simple suggestions to help us know we are part of the most worthwhile cause ever to hit this earth. Suggestions that show that if we do not make some effort, then we may very well be neglecting this great salvation. These suggestions are simple, but sometimes, carrying them out can be pretty difficult, because it requires some things of us that we are often reluctant to give.

**Hebrews 2:1-3** Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. [It is easy to drift. It is much harder to push onward.] For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him?

Reaching this point where neglecting becomes more difficult is going to require that we educate ourselves as to how great this salvation is. It is something that has to be studied into and be burned into our minds as something that is going to happen. *It is going to happen* ! I am talking about the return of Christ.

Sometimes it is not easy to carry these things out, because life is busy. There is much to accomplish, even in the maintaining of life itself, working for our wages so that we have money to buy food. There are many other things that can very easily impinge upon our time and our energies. We may get sick from time to time, and that will have an impact upon whether we neglect our responsibilities.

What we have to do is work out a way to work out our own salvation, in which we can maintain a good relationship, despite what comes along in life. I mean a good relationship with God, because as I said many times in the past, that relationship *is* salvation. There is nothing that can take the place of that relationship. Nothing will build toward salvation but that relationship. That is what God began: He interfered and intervened in our lives in order to create a relationship, because He knows very well how much that relationship means to us, in terms of salvation.

There are a large number of things that can cause us to allow things to degenerate. Because we are physical, we cannot always maintain the same energy level that we had. Evelyn and I are witnessing this. We just do not have the energy that we used to have. When we had that energy that we were used to, we never really thought about it just dissipating away, but it does! And there is nothing you can do about it. Both Evelyn and I have striven to maintain as good a physical health as we know how to do. But we are still getting older, we are still getting slower, our eyes are going dim, our ears seem like they are plugged up anymore, and time and attention has to be given to those things that when we were 35, we did not have to give attention to.

There are things that are going to work on you, that are going to cause there to be a drop in your efficiency in maintaining spiritual health. It is not all bad, because generally we find that as we get older, we get a little bit wiser, too. We do not have to use as much energy as we wasted before. Now we know simpler ways to do things, and maybe faster.

But the cause never diminishes in its importance, unless we allow it to. And if we do not allow it to, God will make up as we go along, because the relationship is good. We are doing what *we* can to maintain the relationship.

We also find as we go through the years that we allow things to capture our time and attention that used to be less important. We have to watch that we do not allow ourselves to get distracted by those things. Instead of going up the steps two at a time, now we take one. You have to make adjustments as you go along. But, that warning is in the book of Hebrews, and Paul knew full well that as we go through life, we have to adjust to the trials of life, and work so that we do not lose the focus of the cause.

**Matthew 6:33** But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

That is a command, and appearing as it does in the Sermon on the Mount, it is of great importance. Its importance lies in giving guidance towards setting priorities and making choices as to the use of time. Aging will force adjustments to be made, so God's instruction here is actually very clear. Regardless of age, regardless of number of years in the church, "seek you first the kingdom of God." Because we are doing that and the relationship with God is maintained, He will add ways by which, I will call it the excitement, the energy, the vision of the cause will continue to drive us on.

Without following this guidance, it becomes very easy to neglect salvation simply because it is a matter of faith. The things of faith are not often of immediate concern, pressing us for action, and the reason is because human nature is driven by sight. One of my greater concerns for us all is that because we live in a world created by Satan, it is very easy to be overwhelmed by things that are merely *busyness*. And through the spirit of the times, the *zeitgeist*, he has subtly made us feel a sense of urgency about accomplishing wrong things. We are virtually tyrannized into activity that has little or nothing to do with the Kingdom of God.

This is not something theoretical. We are constantly hammered at by our employer, by the bank, by the radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and the telephone, to keep ourselves busy, buying, entertaining ourselves and others, working in the garden, shopping for a car, clothing, furnishings, running to the gym, and on and on it goes. It can be endless. What is endless is the busyness that Satan can come up with in order to keep us on a wrong path.

It is not that any of those things are inherently evil, but simply time-consuming, and choices have to be made. Daniel says that at the time of the end, people will be running to and fro. Even good activities have to be scrutinized for their real value and brought under control.

How many have been sucked in by television, into watching a soap opera, day after day, or a favorite sitcom, or an adventure series, or a sporting event? We will find time to do those things, and then complain or feel guilty that other things of higher priority were passed over. It is the guilt thing here: we know we have done wrong, that we have made a wrong choice. But the time is gone, that is the important thing, and no progress whatever was made in that time.

In the *Charlotte Observer* newspaper I read of a man who is a pastor in another organization, who said: "Nobody knows it, but I am running on fumes. I'm lonely, hollow, shallow, and enslaved to a schedule." He had constant, incessant activity in his life, and he felt burned out. Was he really going toward the Kingdom of God? He did not feel like it; his comment is very clear. He was strung out. He admitted, elsewhere in the article, to being impatient and occasionally resentful. And worst of all, he felt empty.

Here is the trap: a person may feel productive simply because he is doing things, and he is accomplishing things. And the person really *is* productive. But what is the eternal value of what is being produced? Now he obviously did not feel there was much, in all of his busyness, that he was really accomplishing.

I am going to give you a stunning statistic that Evelyn and I heard. One Sunday morning, as we were eating breakfast, we turned the news on, and then after the news was over, the man on the radio was interviewing a preacher. He said that every month in the United States of America, 1,500 ministers

leave the ministry. He said they are always being replaced, somebody is coming up out of a seminary or school and taking their place. But he said, it never stops. That is quite a witness. Those people leave, most of the time, because they feel burned out by the responsibility of ministry. They cannot hack it. They also said they are burned out because they cannot really solve anybody's problems.

I am glad I confessed that when we started the Church of the Great God—I have not repeated this very often, but I told the people when we began—"Don't expect me to solve your problems." I learned that in the Worldwide, it cannot be done. Everybody has to work out their own salvation. I can teach, and I can give solutions in those teachings, but I cannot say, "Shazam!" and your problem disappears. It just will not happen, that is not the way God ordered things. Everybody has to work on their own problems. That is the only way that we can be created in the image of Jesus Christ.

The busyness circumstance of which I am speaking may provide people with plenty of church involvement with other people. It can also be quite wearying. However, as these ministers from the world testify from their experiences, that in such a circumstance, is there really sufficient time and energy left over for one to actually come to know God intimately and deeply?

Have you ever looked into something deeply in the Scriptures? We are going to look at one particular word, because it involves the concept of depth.

**II Timothy 2:15** Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed [no guilt feelings], rightly dividing the word of truth.

So Paul's advice to the minister under him is to be diligent.

**II Timothy 4:9** Be diligent to come to me quickly.

Now one more (getting back to the word "walk" in just a minute):

**Ephesians 4:1-3** I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you are called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The same Greek word was used in each of those three verses. It is pronounced *spoo-dad'-zo*. In the King James, I believe that word is translated "study." Here, in two verses, it was translated, "be diligent." The word itself means "make haste, make effort, be prompt, earnest, due diligence, endeavor." It gives every indication of truly working, making progress, sweating, laboring at accomplishing some task. We found in Ephesians 4 that the task can easily be understood as walking. As one commentary said, it can easily and rightly be translated as "let us labor."

At one time, I had two pictures in my office of deep things. They were pictures that showed depth. One was a National Geographic calendar of a deep valley between two mountains in Scotland. The other was a picture of the Grand Canyon, taken by John Reid. I could look at those pictures and derive pleasure from them for long periods of time. Now they were *literally* deep. I am not talking about deep intellectually, in that sense, but they were deep, in the sense that they portrayed depth.

One picture consisted of endlessly interesting rock formations, and way off in the distance, there was a small slice of the Colorado River. (I am talking about the Grand Canyon.) There it was, snaking



off, a mile beneath, and trees that must have been at least seventy, eighty, or ninety feet tall, from that distance, looked really tiny against the deep canyon walls. I know the first time I ever saw the Grand Canyon in person, I had the sense of holiness. That is the only way I can describe it. I was in awe of seeing God's handiwork. And here it was, in a sense, nothing more than a deep gouge in the earth's surface. But it was awesome to my mind, and it also gave me the picture of being in a cathedral, like a holy place, as we might consider it.

The other picture was a montage of colors, mostly different shades of green. At the bottom of the valley, way, way down there, was a house. It was probably a shepherd's or farmer's, but that house was so far down, just like in the Grand Canyon, it appeared in the picture as nothing more than a speck. All you could see was the roof, and maybe a little bit of one wall. What dominated the picture was a mountain that was towering over it.

Both of those pictures made me feel overwhelmingly small. Insignificant. That I was bound. And maybe the most meaningful thought of all, I was enslaved by time. Because both of those pictures to me were timeless in what they showed. I would see myself as nothing more than the blink of an eye, or a whisper in the teeth of a hurricane. And yet, I know that the God who created these things is aware of me, and I want to get to know Him better. What He shows me of Himself and of His mind is awesome. How deep is God?

**I Corinthians 2:10** But God has revealed them [His truth] to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

Now that is encouraging. Because God is our partner is this, He makes it possible for us to understand deep things about Himself that He is willing to share with us.

Referring to Jesus Christ:

**Romans 11:36** For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

What are these things?

**Romans 11:33** Oh the depth of the riches of both the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

God is *very* deep. We need go no further than His awesome creation to illustrate. David said we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and His mind, in this area alone, is so deep and expansive that after 6,000 years, men have barely begun to scratch the surface of understanding even the human body's operations. Everywhere they look, new avenues open to look for, and He has given us the tools we need, and the invitation to plumb some of His depth.

Do you understand that there is plenty of time that we can spend with God on things like this? They are there for us to know, to understand, to become like Him. But His primary concern in this Book is that we search into His mind in regard to moral, spiritual, ethical, and historical areas that pertain to the conduct of our lives, and our relationship with Him, and with our fellow man.

In a sermon, we are occasionally asking whether we really believe what God says. It is obvious to me that we do not always believe everything that God says. It is either that or we do not understand what

the words are saying with as much depth, because we have not thought them through and their application to us thoroughly and personally. Now the words are there, and that is important. But remember the words are just the first step toward knowing God. They are part of the scaffolding that leads to Him. It is Him that we need to develop a relationship with.

In the book of Psalms we see a little bit of the extolling of the mind of God:

**Psalm 36:6** Your righteousness [David says] is like the great mountains [I was just talking about these deep valleys, with mountains reaching up on all sides]; Your judgments are a great deep, O LORD, You preserve man and beast.

Job says:

**Job 12:22** He uncovers deep things out of darkness.

Now here is a convert, let us say, of God's: it is Job, and Job is reporting that God uncovers deep things out of darkness. Things that were a mystery, and bring the shadow of death to life. So God uncovers and reveals deep things to His people.

This time it is Zophar speaking:

**Job 11:7-9** Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven—what can you do, deeper than Sheol—what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.

When Job responded, he said in Job 12 that God is willing to reveal these things to us. They may not be things from the natural world, things that He created, but the deep things of His Word, of His truth, He is very, very willing to share that with us.

**Daniel 2:22** He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.

So the answer is that we can learn very much about the mind of God. There will always be things that we do not know, but He wants us to strive to find them. And He says, He will reveal them. He says that directly, even in the New Testament, in I Corinthians 2.

But there is a key that we must understand, and that is found in Psalm 111:10, which basically says that He will do this for those who keep His commandments. In other words, there is a requirement attached. We not only have to seek things intellectually, we also have to apply His commandments to our lives, and He will respond. God does not reward intellectual vanity. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, and then put into practice in their lives what they can learn. And He gives His Spirit. It says in Acts 5:32, He gives His Spirit to those who obey Him. So we should be seeking to know Him better through obedience, so that our faith will increase.

I once read a quote from a man by the name of Richard Foster in a book that is called *Celebration of Discipline*. He gave an observation that I think is worth passing on, and I think that you will find this true. He says, "Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is primarily a

spiritual problem.” In other words, we leave off our thinking and studying too quickly. We want it instantly. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for *deep people*.

Depth requires time. In this very hurried and hassled age that Satan has devised for us to live in, we seem to move like a herd of cattle in a stampede, rather than a contented, slow-moving flock of sheep grazing in a pasture God chose, that His people are supposed to be in.

You heard the sermonette, talking about how destructive sheep are ["The Shepherd's Guidance"]. If they have a good shepherd—and we have a good Shepherd, and that shepherd is Jesus Christ—He will keep those people, those sheep, moving from place to place to place, and every place they stop for awhile to graze is a time to learn.

Now television has been the great intellectual- and maturity-leveling instrument of our time, and shows on American television are almost uniformly scripted on an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. That is neither deep nor mature. There is virtually nothing on television that does any more than stimulate feeling. It does not challenge intellectual thinking. That kind of thinking is actually hard on us, because TV discourages both thinking and work. I am not saying that we should never watch any TV, but it does tend to mold us into passive watchers. Is that not true?

Now to the book of Proverbs for God’s prescription through Solomon:

**Proverbs 2:1-9** My son, if you receive my words and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding, yes if you cry out for discernment [that is what we want], and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path.

That is very clear. The things of God require digging, similar to the hard work required to dig precious metals from the earth.

Now back in thought to the walking metaphor, with which I began this sermon: I believe that it is time to begin walking. In this metaphor, God is not asking us to run, but to walk, to begin moving step-by-step toward the completion of the cause that He has called upon us to complete. Regardless of the length of any journey, they all begin with one step. And then another, and then another. One step at a time, followed by another, will complete any journey of any length. God has not called us to walk to the moon. But if He did, and each step was a stride of two feet, you would only be walking four miles a day, 28 miles a week, 1,456 miles in one year. It would take 165 years to reach the moon. That is more than two lifetimes.

So God is only asking us to walk willingly on this pilgrimage. Completing this pilgrimage is our cause, so that we will be prepared to receive our inheritance, until or when this present life is ended. The pilgrimage begins as any journey begins, with one step. Let us make this day, after this Feast of Tabernacles, begin with that one step.