

Movement: Praying with your Feet

Last week we talked about silence. About listening to God in the still moments. This week I want to explore praying with movement. There are lots of stories in the Bible of people moving and wandering to follow God. The Hebrew people in the wilderness of Sinai. Abraham moving to and around Canaan. The early Christians' missionary journeys to the nations. The disciples of Jesus spreading the good news during Jesus's ministry.

Luke 9:1-6 (NRSV)

1 Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. 3 He said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. 5 Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” 6 They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

That passage gives us some insight into how followers of Jesus can move in the world. Not tied down by possessions. With purpose (sharing God's message). Healing wherever they go. And, above all, always moving. God is with the disciples wherever they travel. They can't lose God's trail like Jonah tried when he didn't want to proclaim God's word to Ninevah. Sometimes sitting in silence and stillness is the best way to hear God. Sometimes moving through the world can be the most prayerful action.

Some ideas for prayerful movement:

- Pray in a labyrinth. Make a walkable one on a driveway with chalk, or in a yard with sticks or rocks. Or, if you live in a snowy place, trace one in the snow! Walk slowly and deliberately through the curves. It's not a hedge maze with a prize at the center. If you don't have the space for a large labyrinth, trace a labyrinth pattern slowly with your finger
- Perhaps you have a question to ask God. Ask it on the way into the labyrinth and spend time exploring deeply to the heart of the question as you move towards the center of the labyrinth
- Labyrinths were one way in the Middle Ages of going on a pilgrimage for people who could not afford to travel away from their home cathedral. As you move towards the center of the labyrinth, you are moving towards an experience of God, just as a pilgrim might experience God in a holy place.
- Walk (or perhaps even drive) prayerfully through your neighborhood: be led in your prayers by your surroundings. Maybe pray for the children as you pass an empty playground. Maybe you see a bamboo plant and feel led to pray for the pandas who require bamboo to survive? Maybe you almost stumble over a crack and give thanks for the old trees in the neighborhood (even if their roots do crack the sidewalks)
- In the prayer practices you already keep, notice your posture and movements during prayer. Consider perhaps adding movements or changes in posture (sign of the cross, kneeling, standing) that might add more engagement in your practice. Some people bow their heads at the name of Jesus out of reverence. One side effect of this is having to pay extra attention for the name of Jesus in your prayers! Even that small amount of movement can loosen up a stuck practice into flourishing.