

“Walking the Road Alone”

Yesterday, Mr. Fritts talked about the goal of building a camp program designed for you...to teach you, to provide a place to have fun in a Godly way with others who think the same way, who value the same things. And it IS fun to be part of a dorm – a group, a camp.

When Mr. Dever says... “Are you ready to have a great day?” And you all shout – Yes-sir! – wow – that’s awesome! We feel strong!

We’re with others who care about us – who’ll cheer us on, who’ll encourage us, who will help us, and who will support us!

But what about when you are all alone?

What about when a father figure, one who is supposed to love you and take care of you and help you treats you as if he just doesn’t care?

....

Orrin

Mr. Pringle/Miss Wagner

Joined by Mr. Kidney

...

If you are willing to step up, you’ll be rewarded. But its not easy being all alone.

So, here’s a question for you today. Its easy to walk together with a group.

But are you willing to faithfully walk the road of life even when you are alone?

Today, I’d like you to consider another aspect of **Psalm 119:105**.

See, there’s a slice of the picture that we must consider if we are going to finish this journey.

Let’s turn there...

Psalms 119:105 *Your word [is] a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*

To get a perspective on Psalm 119:105, here’s a bit of the background. Here are some things you should know...

First, this is the longest chapter in the Bible. Even though it doesn’t specifically say it in the Bible, it is most certainly David who wrote it, composing it over his entire life – with his thoughts about life and God.

Here’s the really amazing thing.

Psalm 119 is arranged in a pattern (acrostic pattern).

There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and this Psalm contains 22 units of 8 verses each.

Each of the 22 sections is given to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each line in that section begins with that letter.

Since this is a Psalm glorifying God and His Word, it refers to **Scripture** over and over again.

The psalm is remarkable for how often it refers to God's written revelation, **His word**. It is referred to in almost every verse.

In this Psalm there are 8 basic words used to describe the Scriptures, God's written revelation to us:

- **Law** (*torah*, used 25 times in Psalm 119): "Its parent verb means ‘teach’ or ‘direct’; therefore coming from God it means both ‘law’ and ‘revelation.’ It can be used of a single command or of a whole body of law." (Kidner)

- **Word** (*dabar*, used 24 times): The idea is of the spoken word, God's revealed word to man. "Proceeding from his mouth and revealed by him to us." (Poole)
- **Judgments** (*mispatim*, used 23 times): "From shaphat, to judge, determine, regulate, order, and discern, because they judge concerning our words and works; show the rules by which they should be regulated; and cause us to discern what is right and wrong, and decide accordingly." (Clarke)
- **Testimonies** (*edut/edot*, used 23 times): This word is related to the word for witness. To obey His testimonies "signifies loyalty to the terms of the covenant made between the Lord and Israel." (VanGemerem)
- **Commandments** (*miswah/miswot*, used 22 times): "This word emphasizes the straight authority of what is said ... the right to give orders." (Kidner)
- **Statutes** (*huqqim*, used 21 times): The noun is derived from the root verb "engrave" or "inscribe"; the idea is of the written word of God and the authority of His written word. "Declaring his authority and power of giving us laws." (Poole)
- **Precepts** (*piqqudim*, used 21 times): "This is a word drawn from the sphere of an officer or overseer, and man who is responsible to look closely into a situation and take action. . . . So the word points to the particular instructions of the Lord, as of one who cares about detail." (Kidner)
- **Word** (*imrah*, used 19 times): Similar in meaning to *dabar*, yet a different term. "The 'word' may denote anything God has spoken, commanded, or promised." (VanGemerem)

So the emphasis in Psalm 119 is on the importance of the Word of God – His laws, and statutes, and judgements – just like Mr. Fritts and Mr. Monson have been emphasizing. But notice something...

Psalm 119:1-4 then verse 5+++

Did you notice the switching of gears? Those/They...David starts out with the group...But then He gets really personal.

Psalm 119:33-40 ...this Psalm is personal. This is David talking to God.

We can worship God together. We can sing together. We can pray together. We can have church together. But at the end of the day, it is you and God. **You** are either faithful to God, or **you** are not. **You** are either obedient to God, or **you** are not.....Not your family, not your friends, not your group...you.

Can you deal with that? Can you stand strong when its only you?

This is what God asks of us. You know how I know this?

Because this is the story of the Bible.

Let me introduce you to a few people and show you what I mean.

Genesis 6:5-12 The wickedness of man on the earth...there was nobody that was decent. You think you have negative peer pressure!

Noah was the only good man on the earth! And God told him to do something that would make him more unpopular – more weird.

Do you have any friends who think you're weird because of your religion? Growing up in the church I sure did. I can't tell you how many times team-mates or coaches would say, "Man, that's too bad you can't be there for the game this Saturday – your parents sure have a weird religion". I admit, there were times when it was just easiest to say "yeah, they sure do..." ☺

Noah stands with the spiritual giants of the history of the world – but he had to be willing to stand alone.

1 Samuel 17:32,38 —52 David stood alone – even when it was Saul who should have been the one to go into battle – remember, he was head and shoulders among men in Israel...

1 Sam 9:1-2

And this is the way it happens sometimes. There is somebody who **should** be the one to step up who doesn't...or won't.

Its that way in your dorm right now. There is somebody **else** who SHOULD be showing the right example. There is someone **else** who SHOULD be the one encouraging others and supporting the counselor. They're bigger, stronger, more skilled, more good-looking...but they are not.

Saul blew it – but David was willing to stand alone.

But Saul's family got a another chance...

Esther 2:5-7 Esther, of the family of Kish (Saul's family) taken to the palace

Esther 2:11- Mordecai paced in front of her quarters – checking in on her – concerned about her. There are those who love you and who want you to succeed – that's for sure, and Mordecai was no different.

Esther 3:8-11 Haman convinced the king to give him permission to kill all the Jews. There's something you should know. Haman's great great great granddaddy was King Agag of the Amalekites. Years ago, King Agag's people were destroyed when Saul killed all the Amalekites. King Agag's life was spared, but he was now king of nothing. Apparently the descendants of King Agag held a grudge.

Esther 4:11-17... Mordecai said to Esther, **“If not you, then who?”**

These are words that should be emblazoned on your mind – you should see them every day. “If not you...then who?”

We all have those moments – those pivotal moments in our life – when either we're courageous and we do the right thing, or say the right thing and play the man or the woman that we should be...or we act like a coward, and we bend in the breeze. When someone is being made fun of in your dorm, how do you act? Do you laugh, ignore it, or say – no matter who else supports you – “That's enough. That's not necessary.”

I read something yesterday – and I can't get it out of my mind.

A Letter From the Fat Person on Your Flight

(<https://medium.com/s/for-the-record/a-letter-from-the-fat-person-on-your-flight-b0ceb1407c61>)

(When another passenger humiliates a fat person, what do you do?)

To the traveler in seat 7C,

I met your eyes for the first time in the Long Beach airport. Quarters were tight and flights were delayed.

Our flight was oversold, and I was reassigned at the last minute to a middle seat. When the ticket agent handed me my new boarding pass, I looked at her pleadingly, feeling the full width of my size 28 body. I know, she said. I'm sorry.

I retreated from the desk, defeated. I remember looking for warm faces, desperate to find softness in the frustrated passengers that would flank me. Who could I trust to tolerate the breadth of me? Whose face bore the marks of mercy?

That's where I found yours, bright and warm, nestled in a persimmon scarf. I think you met my gaze. I think you smiled.

I planned carefully, working diligently to avoid taking any more space or time than I needed. I couldn't afford to give my fellow passengers more reasons to take aim at my body. I lined up early, checked my suitcase at the gate, took my seat quickly. I watched the passengers file down the row, again searching their faces for something forgiving. I saw your warm face again, and hoped you'd sit next to me. You took your seat, one row up.

Then my seat mate arrived. When he sat down, he didn't meet my eyes. He adjusted the arm rest, assertively claiming it as his own. He needn't have—I had learned that any free space belonged to the thin. My arms were crossed tight across my chest, thighs squeezed together, ankles crossed beneath my seat. My body was knotted, doing everything it could not to touch him, not to impose its soft skin. I folded in on myself, muscles aching with contraction.

Suddenly, he stood up, fighting against a stream of passengers in the narrow aisle to speak with a flight attendant, then returned to his seat, looking thwarted. Moments later, he got up again. I couldn't hear what he was saying, but there was an urgency in his face. I wondered what their summit had been about. He returned to his seat again, mouth straight and muscles tense. I considered asking if he was alright, but his agitation threw me. I was a young woman, he an older, upset man, the two of us in an enclosed space for hours to come.

He got up a third time. That's when I heard him say unbelievable, his voice sharp with irritation. The fourth time, I heard paying customer, angrily over enunciated, all convex consonants.

He returned to his seat, and let out the sharp, belabored sigh of a wronged customer. He crossed his legs away from me, leaning into the aisle, chin in his hand, glowering. He checked over his shoulder repeatedly, constantly scanning the cabin.

I didn't yet know how to read those signs. The stove wasn't lit, but it let out the low hiss of leaking gas, and I caught the first whiff of its acrid stench. I moved gingerly, not knowing what it meant. I didn't yet know the certainty of its ignition, or the blast that was coming for me. I didn't yet know how to protect myself, or respond. This was the day I learned.

At long last, a flight attendant approached him and crouched in the aisle, whispering something in his ear. My seat mate got up silently, gathered his things, and moved up one row. Before he sat down, he looked at me for the first time.

"This is so you'll have more room," he said. His voice was cold.

The flight attendant looked at him, puzzled. "This won't be a vacant seat," she corrected. "Someone will still be sitting here." My former seat mate looked away, then took his seat, just opposite you.

That was when I realized what had happened: he had asked to be reseated. The nearness of my body was too much for him to bear. All that agitation, all that desperate lobbying—all to avoid two hours next to me. The next thought came quickly, urgently: don't cry. You can't cry.

But it was too late. Hot tears stung my eyes, then spilled onto my cheeks. I stared at my lap, eyes fixed on the width of my thighs. I glanced up and saw your warm face drained of its color, blank as a canvass, eyes wide and empty. Your neck was craned so you could see me. You were watching me like television.

I stayed like that, body knotted up into its most compact shape, eyes locked low, for the rest of our trip. Flight attendants visited my row frequently, offering free wine, beer and snacks to the passengers sitting on either side of me—apologetic offerings for having to tolerate a body like mine. The flight attendants didn't speak to me. My seat mates didn't look at me. I had been erased.

As we began our descent, I planned my route from the gate to the bathroom, where I could cry until the humiliation had drained me. I just had to get there. When passengers filtered into the aisle to retrieve their bags, my former seat mate looked at me for the second time.

"You know, I wouldn't do this to a person with a walker," he said.

"What?" I struggled to find my words. I hadn't expected to talk to him. I hadn't expected to talk to anyone.

“I wouldn’t do this to a person with a walker, or a pregnant woman,” he repeated.

There it was. A stranger telling me, in no uncertain terms, that my body entitled him to treat me however he saw fit. He could complain openly, scoff at the fact of my body, publicly decry it to anyone who’d listen, and he would only be met with sympathy. He would never treat me with basic dignity. He would never be expected to.

I watched him as he disappeared onto the jetway. When he was finally gone, my eyes settled back to the aisle, where they met yours. You were watching us again.

Since then, I have thought often of what I could have done differently. Whether unprompted kindness would have interrupted the momentum of his anger. Whether I should have confronted him more directly. If I could have made another plea to the ticket agent. Whether I should have skipped the flight altogether. Whether I should ever fly again.

Since we met, you and I, I have spent my time learning. I have learned that airlines have steadily shrunk their seats over the last fifty years, reducing their width by over four inches, making room for more passengers and more fares. I have memorized the policies that give flight attendants the discretion to escort me from the plane if I don’t appear to “fit comfortably,” leaving me stranded in some far-away airport without a refund or a way home. I have heard from other fat passengers, like Errol Narvaez, who experienced precisely that. Errol was publicly led past thirty rows of passengers, and was charged \$170 for the privilege of a rescheduled flight. I have memorized the maze of policies that vary, airline to airline, from kicking me off the plane without warning or refund, to charging me double for the simple privilege of an economy seat. I have found ways to minimize the likelihood of humiliation. I check my bag, save up for first class tickets, which means I don’t often fly. I see my family less often than I would like, and I find reasons not to take work trips. Often, when I board a flight, I think of you. I’ve met you so many more times. I met you in 32A, when you silently watched a woman sitting next to me explain loudly to a flight attendant that she couldn’t be expected to fly this way. I met you when I’d saved up for a first class ticket, believing it would protect me from the hostility and humiliation I’ve since learned to expect. You were there in 2F, as a man made desperate by the presence of my body asked to change his first class seat. You watched, stalk still and silent, as the flight attendant offered him only a middle seat in coach, and he accepted. When I looked to you, you looked away. You are there so often. And you are always silent.

You can be obnoxious and cruel but people will put up with it if your skin is stretched over your body in an attractive way — but for someone who's overweight there's no hesitation in writing them off, making judgements about them, their life, their habits, their value as a human.

Remember: *"Beauty is skin deep – but ugliness runs all the way to the bone."*

How do we **actually, personally**, with personal courage live?

Guys, do you make conversation with **all** the girls at lunch, dance with **all** the girls at the dance? Girls, do you ignore the guys who you may not think is so cute – pretending he's not even there? And isn't that the worst – when we can tell that other people pretend we're not even there.

These is where the rubber meets the road. All the talk about loving God is meaningless if you walk by that "unpopular" guy or girl who you don't deem worth even looking at.

If we can't personally practice doing the right thing apart from what others do, we will not have the courage to face tougher situations – where our livelihood is at stake. Or when obeying God's laws might mean being humiliated by others around us, or shunned by our family or friends.

You and I have to develop the courage to be the Noah, be the Enoch, be the Joseph, be the Moses, be the Joshua, be the Jonathan, be the David, be the Elijah, the Elisha, the Esther, the Peter, the Paul, the Jesus Christ – who stood alone.

And you know, I mention these names from the Bible. But we actually don't have to go that far for examples. There are people in your life who have stood alone in obedience to God. There are people in your congregation who did not accept the false doctrines that washed over the Worldwide Church of God. Some of your parents lost friends and family – who turned their backs on them in those crazy years. There are some in this room who lost greatly but stood basically alone.

Now, I say alone. I mean alone as opposed to as a group.

When we dedicate ourselves to God, when we stand up for what God says, we are never alone.

John 14: comforter...He will strengthen our spiritual backbone to be able to hold the line.

Noah – David – Esther – Jesus Christ - they were alone in their resolve, but God was there.

And here's the amazing thing. There is something that happens when a person stands up and stands alone. In each of these examples, what happened?

1 Samuel 17:52 David...the men arose and shouted!

Now they were all courageous!

It's the same thing that happens again and again. Here's the way it works for you..

Your counselor lays out the rules for your dorm, gives you the plan, what you want to accomplish as a dorm, what you want to work on...

And then he or she tells you, *"Here's the thing, guys or girls. I know that not all of you get it. That's okay. I understand that. But I just one of you. Or, even better, two or maybe three. You*

see, if two or three of you are willing to stand with me – come away from the fringe, and follow me into the battle of the everyday activities, that is all I need – because you will help me to establish an atmosphere that will overwhelm all negativity.”

And it will work.

God doesn't use mobs. He uses individuals – who set the pace, create the atmosphere – who lead.

But how did it start?

Girls, if you are a popular girl, then great, cool, wow, you're awesome. Use your natural influence to show some kindness, courtesy and respect to someone who's not so popular – and mean it. You know what will happen. Others will follow.

Guys, if you are bigger, older, more athletic – you may have noticed that this is not a sports camp. The common denominator of all of you here is your religion, not your sport. And so some of you who are better at football or softball are like a big fish in a little pond here. If it were a sports camp, you'd be a little fish, I guarantee you. So instead of pigeonholing other kids based on their athletic ability, recognize that there's just one big pigeon-hole here – and we're all in it. **Be the one** who is big enough not to have to show off how great you are, but instead, let others shine, and truly, really encourage others.

If you do, others will follow, and then your dorm, and ultimately the camp will be impacted...by YOU!

And...

“if not you...then who?”

Who's it going to be? It will be somebody!

Let me give you a couple action items then...

1. You need to be able learn to BE alone

- a. Can you live with yourself? Can you live in your own head or do you have to have the constant distraction of other people, or music playing or texting
- b. **Psalm 143:5** *“I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands”*
- c. **Can you be alone in your head?**

2. You need your own light.

- a. God's word is a light, but its only useful if you make it your own.
- b. **Deuteronomy 17:18** *“Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from [the one] before the priests, the Levites.*
- c. Read the Bible in a year – make this your challenge between now and next camp. Many of you use your phone all the time – use the BlueLetter Bible app to read the Bible in a year.
- d. We can't get our standards for right living from second-hand sources. Are we standing up for what God actually says – or something that we think He says? That we were told by someone else that He says...

3. You need to keep your light on all the time

- a. Imagine a light-house that was only on sometimes
- b. **Matthew 5:14** *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*
 - i. Light on a hill – to be seen...
- c. You don't get to turn your light on and off according to the circumstances and peer group...
- d. Sometimes we don't want to be different...we want to fit in...we want to look like the world – does this describe you? Are you bringing the world here – so you'll be more comfortable? When you are in different "social spheres" are you a different person?
- e. If you turn it off – what will happen? You'll stumble and fall. In fact, if you turn it on and off, it will be more confusing!

Psalm 119:105 *"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*

Walk your path. Sometimes you'll be joined by others. But be willing to walk it alone if necessary. God will be with you. And others will join you on your journey.

I just want to conclude with a tribute to a bunch of young people who walked their talk this year. They dedicated 9 months of their life to learning more about God's way of life and actually practicing it – living with each other, studying together, working together, playing ultimate frisbee and basketball, having dances, and field trips. I'm talking about our Living Education students – in the first year of our new one-year Charlotte program. You may not know them, but they have paved the way for many of you who'll be able to take part in this program in the years to come. And you know what the really cool thing is – they don't parade it. They just live it. You may not even realize who they are – because they aren't just "Living Education students" – they are young men and women who are Christian leaders as individuals. Jonathan, Yudith, Emily and Katie – thank you!

If you want to be part of this experience...just talk to me. Give a look for this brief video – and have a great day!