

Take a Long Walk ...

Actually, it might not be so long. It all depends on your definition of “long” and how far away your church is from your neighborhood. You were introduced to Prayer Walking back in Chapter 27 *Take a Hike, Change a Life*. In that chapter, you were invited to pray your neighborhood. However, you got about half the story there. So, in the words of my father’s generational spokesperson, “And now, for the *rest* of the story” (Paul Harvey).

Prayer walking has an additional history that’s than just making a pilgrimage. In fact, the first prayer walk we read about in the Bible is when Joshua, the army, and the priests walked around the city of Jericho (Joshua 6) in prayer and praise, claiming the city for the Lord. This more significant than the modern “name and claim it” phase. The prayer walk wasn’t for the benefit of the nation, but for the sake of God.

Although the Christian side of the Bible makes it clear that God no longer resides in a space built by human hands, but in the hearts of believers, the church has hung on to the notion that there is sacred space and not-sacred space (called *profane space* by many theologians, but that word carries negative connotations not intended by these scholars). But just as God has pronounced all foods “clean” (Acts 10), every place on earth is a part of God’s good creation. However, like Joshua and the priests, we too can make claim to what might be considered neutral space in the name of our Lord. The point of these prayers and prayer walks is simply to quicken the work of the Holy Spirit in the neighborhood around the church – in the homes, green spaces, and businesses and within all who frequent these places.

Most of the instructions for how to do a church campus prayer walk is the same as those in Chapter 27. In fact, you can substitute those instructions completely if you’d like. However, there is one key difference between that kind of prayer walk and this one, at least in the initial intention. Whereas you would pray specifically for the residents and their situations on a neighborhood prayer walk, in this case you pray for the presence and the empowerment of the Lord and the Spirit over the homes, businesses, streets, green spaces, and of course the people while you circumambulate¹ around the church building’s neighborhood. Like Joshua, in the name of the Lord, you claim the space as sacred, as reserved for the needs and the work of the Lord. In some traditions, you might even “call down” Divine protection over the space and the expulsion of evil in Jesus’ name. However you choose to pray, the point is to be present and make an invocation – a prayerful invitation for the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit to be present and active in the space.

Of course, as you walk and pray, you too need to be present to what’s going on around you. Be sure to greet those you meet and be ready to share the reason for your regular walks should

¹ Circumambulate. One of my favorite theological words. From Latin *circum* as in circumference or around and *ambulare* as in to amble about, to walk. Literally the word means to walk around something, like the city of Jericho or around your church’s neighborhood.

someone ask. And, as always, carry your church business cards (Chapter 4) so you can give those you meet the important information about your church.