

# Trail Walk

## "Being with God"



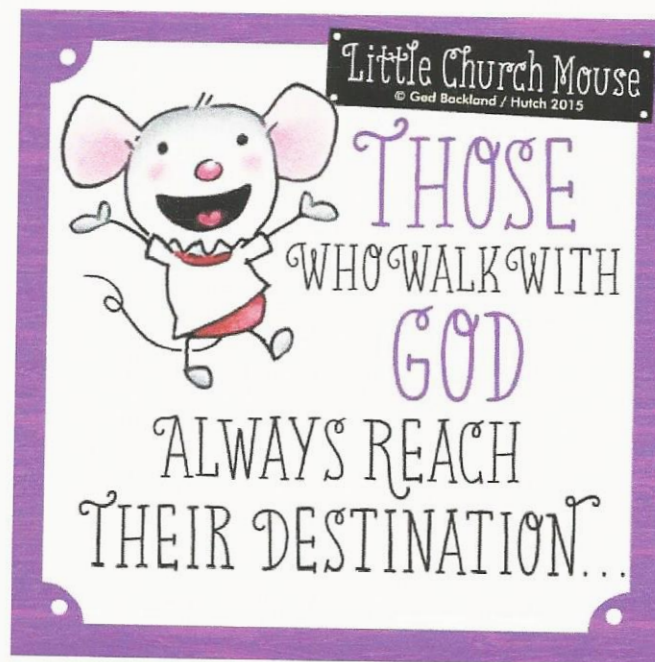
Facilitated by  
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# How to Prepare for a Hike

\*Taken from [wikihow.com/Be-Prepared-for-a-Hike](http://wikihow.com/Be-Prepared-for-a-Hike)

- **Enlist a friend to hike with you:** someone who likes hiking and is good company is a good choice.
- **Choose where to hike.** Consider the following when choosing: natural views and landscape, accessibility, the availability of marked hiking trails, the length of the hike based on your personal experience and ability. Consider the terrain of the area as well. Hills and mountains are beautiful but even a short steep hike can be too challenging.
- **Pack plenty of water.** Even if you plan to hike for just a couple of hours, you do not want to run the risk of becoming dehydrated. Plan 1 L per person per hour of hiking.
- **Wear supportive, closed footwear and comfortable socks.** Hiking boots are best. If you do not have boots, wear comfortable shoes with thick supportive soles. Make sure to take an extra pair of socks as well, particularly if you are going on a longer hike.
- **Wear comfortable clothes in layers that you can remove or add as needed.** If you are hiking in an area where the weather is changeable, pack rain gear.
- **Wear a hat and sunscreen.** Pack additional sunscreen.
- **Pack some nutritious food.** Somewhere along the trail you will probably get hungry, so you should pack something like GORP (Good Old Raisins and Peanuts). GORP doesn't have to be raisins and peanuts. Cherries, almonds, M&Ms, walnuts, cranberries, and peanut butter chips are all good. Anything non-perishable and bite-sized will do. If you are eating a meal on the trail, pack light, and as spill-free as possible. Sandwiches, bite-sized vegetables, beef sticks, fruit leather, and apples are also good trail food. Pack a small bag to contain any trash that you make. Do not leave any trash on the trail.
- **If you are going somewhere with steep, rocky slopes, then fingerless gloves are a good thing to have on you.** Normal work-gloves are good too. Hiking or walking sticks are also helpful for getting up steep slopes, particularly if you carry a heavy pack or do not have good balance.

- **Let someone know that you are hiking, where, and how long you expect to hike.** Tell them you will check in with them when you return. Then check in with that person when you return. Just in case anything goes wrong (for example, you get lost), that person will know where to look for you, or know to contact help if you do not return as expected.
- **Pack a cell phone, map and compass.** There are apps you can download that you will be able to navigate when there is no cell service. Be aware that in many hiking areas, there is no cell coverage -- check your provider's coverage map.
- **Pack basic first aid supplies, including bandages, moleskin, tweezers, and antiseptic wipes.**
- **Pack your camera.**
- **Make sure you are conditioned for long hikes.** For example, if you are going on a 9-mile hike, try a 5-mile hike a week or two before, carrying the same gear on your back that you will have for the 9-mile. This gives you time to get comfortable with your bag, and to fix any weight-distribution problems in your packing, and also time to find a comfortable strap adjustment.



# Walking Prayer – a Nature Walk with God

Updated: Sep 9, 2018



It is that time of year when we wake up to crisp, fresh air, colorful trees, and morning mist. Last Fall when I had just moved to Colorado, I wondered if I had ever lived the change of the seasons more fully awake and in awe of its beauty. The bright colors of the aspen leaves and first snow on the mountain tops are magical. It is absolutely stunning here at this time of the year!

**"Let the Birds Do the Heavy Lifting"**

In spiritual direction we often say, *"let silence do the heavy lifting"*. It is a gracious reminder of the fact that we are not in charge. God desires to reveal himself to us, more than we want to hear and see him. I recently read in Richard Louv's book 'Vitamin N' the following,

*"Take a break. Look at the clouds. Listen to the wind. Let the birds do the heavy lifting."*

What a lovely reminder it is of how God wants to meet us in and through his creation. When we feel tired and heavy-hearted by the complexities of our lives and this broken world, the birds of the air remind us of Jesus' words, *"Are you not of more value than they?"* (Matthew 6:26). And perhaps we come to release our tight fists a little and breathe a little more deeply and slowly.

"Let the birds do the heavy lifting..." Hmm.

Taking a walk outside is such a wonderful spiritual practice. In fact, research shows that most people's earliest memories of God, or spiritual experiences took place in the outdoors. Being immersed in God's wild creation is one of those "thin" or "privileged" places where God's reality and felt presence comes near to us.

Next time when you are outside, why don't you try some new ways of engaging with God, and his creation through imagination and senses?



### *Use Your Senses to Really Notice*

Close your eyes, tilt your head slightly back and take a deep breath in through your nose to smell the air. Stick out your tongue to feel which way the wind is blowing and feel the temperature. Cup your hands around your ears to listen to what's in front of you, or cup them backward to better notice what

you hear behind you. Form binoculars with your hands to imitate owl's narrow straight-facing eye view, and turn your head and body to observe your surroundings. Use your eyes to notice the wonders of nature by zooming into a pattern of a leaf, texture of a rock, or the form of a small insect. Don't only focus on fixed objects, instead look into the spaces in between the objects, movement, shadows and shades.

### *Touch, Play, and Make Something*

God did not make the earth only for us to care for but also to enjoy.

Nature is a source of beauty, rest, inspiration, and healing. Instead of just observing your environment from the distance get close and in touch with it.

Gently rub your hands on the trunk of a tree, snack on the wild berries, hop across a ditch, imitate a bird tweet, or walk barefoot in a shallow creek. Do something that feels fun, playful, invitational, and allows you to embrace the child within you. I sometimes like to take close up photos or draw details of patterns that catch my interest. Depending on where you live and what the regulations are, nature can be a wonderful source for art, craft, nutrition, and building supplies. Simply enjoying the diversity of God's craftsmanship displayed in nature can be a powerful spiritual experience. For others, joining in the pleasure of creating through natural materials enhances the felt union with the Maker.



## *Prayer of Simple Regard*

Prayer of simple regard is a way of praying while we hold a gaze with God on a person, nature, or an object without judgement or analysis. We spend a few moments simply looking at something, allowing this practice to be a channel of God's loving presence with us in the moment.

Here is a short prayer guide for your use as you go on "wonder walks" in the nature this Fall.

### **You will need:**

- Comfortable walking shoes.
- Drawing paper and clipboard, or a drawing pad with a hard back.
- Notebook or journal.
- Pencil (and whatever other art materials you may wish to use).

### **Prayer Guide:**

Take a slow walk outside alone or with someone else. If you have company, choose not to talk to each other for a while so that you can be more aware of everything else around you. You can take a walk in your home garden, own neighborhood or out in the mountains, seaside, or riverfront.

Begin by standing upright and balanced. Pull your shoulders back and relax.

Notice your body and its subtle movements, possible tensions and aches.

Become aware of Jesus being with you. Can you imagine what he looks like? What is he wearing?

He invited you to go for this walk with you. He is eager to show things to you and be with you. You can talk to him quietly in your heart and listen to him as you walk, or just be quiet together.

Start taking in your surroundings, the smells, sights, temperature and sounds. Do not rush. You might see something that you want to touch. Go ahead and touch it (if it's allowed and safe, of course!).

After a while, notice if there is something in particular that catches your attention. Pause and get closer to it. Hold your gaze on the object or creature for some moments. It can be a stick on the ground, a tree, a stone, a building, an insect, or even a person. If you can, hold it in your hand. Take time to study the details of it (texture, weight, smell, etc.). You might even ask yourself what it would feel like to be that object.

Peacefully, keep your eyes on this one thing or person. Remind yourself that Jesus is with you and is watching closely the same thing that you are. Hold this gaze with Jesus. Imagine what he sees. What do you see? Is there something that

Jesus wants to tell you through what you are looking at? Don't analyze or try to explain anything. Simply look.

Draw what you see, or if you can you can pick it up and take home with you.

Remember that some things should be left in the nature.

Next to your drawing, if you wish, write down any thoughts that came to mind.

If you were able to bring your object of observation with you, you can use it as part of a nature weaving or hanging mobile. Each time you go for a walk and your eye catches something that you want to spend time looking at with God, you can bring this home and finally you have enough to make a weaving. Alternatively, you can simply place the object at your prayer table, or somewhere in your prayer nook.

### **Notice:**

What was it like to go for a walk with Jesus? How was it different from any other walk, even though Jesus is always with you? What made this time different?

What did you notice about your surroundings?

What did you spend time looking at? How was it for you to pay such a close attention for a long time to one thing?

Reflection: *Do you have a fixed "sit spot", a "sacred place" out in the nature where you can go, rest, and observe the world around and within you?*

*What is your earliest memory of you enjoying the nature? Where were you? What did you do?*

*How does weather and your physical environment affect your life with God?*

*What hinders you from spending time outside?*

### **Resources:**

*'The Last Child in the Woods', 'Vitamin N' and 'The Nature Principle' by Richard Louv*

*'Sacred Rhythms' by Ruth Haley Barton*

*'We Are Home' by Shannon Jung*

*'Grandad's Prayers of the Earth' by Douglas Wood and Illustrated by P.J. Lynch*

*'Outside Your Window: A First Book of Nature' by Nicola Davies and Illustrated by Mark Hearld*

[Children and Nature](#)

[Generation Wild](#)

[Pinterest Board "Whole-Person Prayer"](#)

**-Taken from Kutsu Companions**

# Suggested Prayers for the Walk



## A Prayer of Gratitude for Creation

God of the universe,

We thank You for Your many good gifts -

For the beauty of Creation and its rich and varied fruits,

For clean water and fresh air, for food and shelter, animals and plants.

Forgive us for the times we have taken the earth's resources

for granted

And wasted what You have given us.

Transform our hearts and minds

So that we would learn to care and share,

To touch the earth with gentleness and with love,

Respecting all living things.

We pray for all those who suffer as a result of our waste,

greed and indifference,

And we pray that the day would come when everyone has enough

food and clean water.

Help us to respect the rights of all people and all species

And help us to willingly share your gifts

Today and always. Amen.

- Fiona Murdoch, Eco-Congregation Ireland



## Creation Prayer

God our Father, you created the world and sent your own Son to live among us, made of the same stuff, breathing the same air, marveling at sunrise and sunset just as we do. Help us to participate in the life around and within us as your life, as you living in us and we living in you and in each other. God of love and life, restore us to your peace, renew us through your power and teach us to love all that you have created and to care for the earth as your gift and our home.

- The Earth Community: In Christ through the Integrity of Creation

[www.franciscans.ie](http://www.franciscans.ie)



Through the silence of nature,  
I attain Thy divine peace.

Oh sublime nature,  
in thy stillness let my heart rest.

Thou art patiently awaiting the moment  
to manifest through the silence of sublime nature.

Oh nature sublime, speak to me through silence,  
for I am awaiting in silence like you the call of God.

Oh nature sublime,  
through thy silence I hear Thy cry.  
My heart is tuned to the quietness,  
that the stillness of nature inspires.

— *Hazrat Inayat Khan*


Christ within us,  
Light above us,  
Earth beneath us,  
Love surrounds us.

- from *Eco Congregation Ireland*



May the waters flow peacefully; may the herbs and plants grow peacefully; may all the divine powers bring unto us peace. May the rain come down in the proper time, may the earth yield plenty of corn, may the country be free from war. The supreme Lord is peace.

-Hindu prayer



Gracious God, your amazing love extends through all time and space, to all parts of your creation, which you created and called good. You made a covenant with Noah and his family, putting a rainbow in the sky to symbolize your promise of love and blessing to every living creature, and to all successive generations. You made a covenant with Abraham and Sarah, blessing them and their descendants throughout the generations. You made a covenant with Moses and the Israelite people to all generations, giving them the 10 commandments and challenging them to choose life. In Jesus, you invite us to enter into a new covenant, in communion with all who seek to be faithful to you.

As people of faith, we are called into covenant. Your covenant of faithfulness and love extends to the whole creation. We pray for the healing of the earth, that present and future generations may enjoy the fruits of creation, and continue to glorify and praise you.

-National Council of Churches