

Sermon Title: "WALKING SAFELY"

Text: Psalm 119:105

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You may remember the old simple joke from grade school, "Why did the chicken cross the road?" The standard answer was, "To get to the other side." The problem is that sometimes the chicken doesn't get to the other side and many times our children and even adults don't make it to the other side of the road when crossing. The real problem is that pedestrian and motor vehicle safety just isn't taken very seriously by a lot of people. Another answer to that time-worn joke of "Why did the chicken cross the road" was, "She wanted to lay it on the line!"

Today I want to lay it on the line about pedestrian safety, especially for our children. In a few days, on Wednesday, October 8, we will observe the "2008 International Walk to School Day." What an important opportunity to emphasize to our children and to ourselves the importance of walking, crossing streets, and driving on the roads according to the law and with respect to others under God's guidance. As Lon Anderson of the AAA Office of Public and Government Affairs said recently, "It is war out there on our roads."

God wants us to be aware of our responsibility to others and to ourselves to be safe and watch where we are going and how we are getting there. In that longest of chapters of the Bible, Psalm 119 verse 105, we read about what God's word is to be for us as we progress through life. It says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." There is no doubt that the more we depend on God in our lives and fix our minds on His word, that our path will be opened before us.

However, let's stretch this verse a bit to make it as practical as possible. If there are any theologians in the congregation, give us a little leeway in expanding our interpretation of this verse to include pedestrian safety! If the "Word of God," which is His law, is a lamp to our feet, then let's accept the fact that the safety laws of the State of Maryland and this county are also like "lamps" that can guide our feet as we cross the road. If the "Word of God" is a light to our path, then we can transfer that symbol to explain how traffic lights provide safety for our pathway.

You see, God wants us to be spiritually and physically safe. He wants us to stay close to Him through the reading of His word and prayer. In addition, He wants us and our children to be safe through the laws and protective agencies that help get us safely across the road.

(Illustration---you can place your own story or comments here or use the following comments) I don't know what your earliest encounter with public safety may have been. Perhaps you remember a kind policeman helping you in a difficult situation. Perhaps you recall walking to school and being assisted at each street corner by a school safety patrol. There are currently thousands of young people involved in that program sponsored by the AAA. Whatever your first encounter was with public safety, you need to renew your enthusiasm for it. Personal and public safety on the roads is vital to a growing and safe community. Make sure you give strong support to the October 8 "Walk to School Day" initiative, which encourages our young people and other pedestrians to be safe on the roads of Maryland. There are many organizations and agencies involved with this including the State of Maryland, our local county, the Multijurisdictional Pedestrian Safety Committee, AAA, and others.

Walking safely on the streets of Maryland is so important. Even more important is walking with God. If we stay close to God, He will protect us physically and spiritually. When we review the Biblical account of ancient leaders we see in Genesis 5:22-24 that Enoch "walked with God." In Genesis 6:9 we read that Noah "walked with God." Genesis 24:40 tells us that Abraham walked before the Lord and Psalm 116:9 portrays David as someone who walked "before the Lord." How important it is for us to walk with God. It will protect us from temptation and trouble. Close association with God in a personal daily walk with Him will keep us from straying out of the protected "crosswalk" of life. Through the guidance of God's Spirit and grace, we can focus on God's commandments and laws, which help us to know how best to live and interact with others. This guidance gives us safety and direction in life. Similarly, following the pedestrian safety laws of Maryland will give us and our children safety and direction as we stay within the protection of the literal crosswalks of our streets.

Walking with God provides us with so many blessings. Physical walking, using appropriate safety precautions, provides us with many benefits. Walking is one of the best physical exercises possible. It is free and doesn't place unusual stress on your joints. It provides for healthy inhaling of oxygen and gives you time to look around and appreciate the beautiful world that God has created. If you would take time to walk safely, you would see a marked increase in your physical health. God wants us to be in physical health just as He desires to see us spiritually healthy. So don't only encourage your children to walk safely, get out there and walk with them! Enjoy the benefits of walking using the safety procedures provided by the State of Maryland and other agencies. The safety laws of the county and state will protect you and so will God.

As David the Psalmist says in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm verses 3 and 4, "...He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His names sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me...." He also admonished us in Psalm 27:11 to ask God, "Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path..." What a privilege to entrust ourselves into the hands of God to lead us in a "smooth path" spiritually and in our daily living. It is also a privilege to entrust ourselves to the helpful pedestrian and motor vehicle safety provisions enacted by our state and county to keep us safe.

Put yourselves and your children in God's hands for protection and on Wednesday, October 8, encourage the special effort to keep our children safe on the streets throughout the year by supporting the "International 2008 Walk to School Day" initiative. Support our local safety and civil authorities. Pray for our police officers and other agencies that provide for community safety, and remember to place yourselves and your children in God's hands so that you will experience the wonderful protective blessing given in Isaiah 58:11 which promises, "The Lord will guide you continually..." May God bless each of you as you walk in the crosswalks of our streets and as you walk in the "crosswalk" of life.