



# PATH/TRAIL DEVOTIONAL

ACTS 2:28

“You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”

## EXPERIENCE

I love paths! I delight in walking on them, biking on them, skiing down them, building them, maintaining them. Trails are the pathway for adventures! Mountain trails and forest paths are my favorite, especially when the path leads to a beautiful or fun destination. Take a moment to list in your mind, or on paper, your favorite paths—memories will flood your mind and heart. In just five minutes of reflection my mind recounted twenty sweet memories of adventures and beloved destinations. My guess is that most of the trails that came to mind were life-giving, but not always.

When I was in college, my girlfriend (now wife) and I were aware of a particularly beautiful hiking path that interested us. Even though we discovered a “no trespassing” sign, we unwisely pressed on down the

path. Later, when we were walking out, an angry landowner confronted us. Thankfully, he was gracious to us and after our promises to refrain from ever returning, he let us go without consequence. I wish I could tell you that was my only experience with forbidden paths. However, this memory reminds me to consider wisely the paths on which I choose to travel.

Take some time to consider the path you are about to journey down, are currently on, or just completed. There are plenty of questions to ponder, here are just a handful:

- What brought you to this trail?
- Are you on an easy path, hard path, or a bit of both? What about this path was pleasant and/or challenging?
- What were your favorite features of this path?
- What makes this path unique or special?
- Why will you return or not return to this trail?
- How was this path a blessing/benefit to you?

## CONTEMPLATION

Paths in the Bible are a common metaphor for walking in God's ways or rejecting God's ways. The above questions are meant to apply not only to physical paths with dirt and rocks, but to all our life choices and circumstances—all the ways we have chosen to live. Paths are meant to prompt us to contemplate all our ways (Proverbs 4:26). The prophet Jeremiah recounts God saying to his people: "Stand by the ways, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls" (6:16). The point is to consider and inquire about the well-worn and wise paths of those of God's people who have walked before you. Observe their good and

wise ways, then, choose to walk wisely! Not all that is ancient is necessarily good, but well-worn paths that have proved their wisdom and goodness over extended lengths of time are worth trusting. The Bible has proved its wisdom and goodness many times over. Its proven trails are the paths of life. Let your mind and heart delight to stroll down these trails over and over again. You will find wisdom, love, gladness, rest, and so much more.

The Scriptures help us avoid walking down forbidden trails and dangerous paths (see Psalm 119:104-105). Yet, when we have erred and gone astray the Bible guides us to see the best paths and the Holy Spirit empowers us to repentantly choose these paths of life. Towards the end of Jeremiah, God says about his people: “With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble” (31:9a). What good news for God’s people! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has opened this way to life, so that anyone who believes in him might walk in newness of life. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, the life” (John 14:6). Jesus is the path of life. Have you chosen this path?

## PRAYER

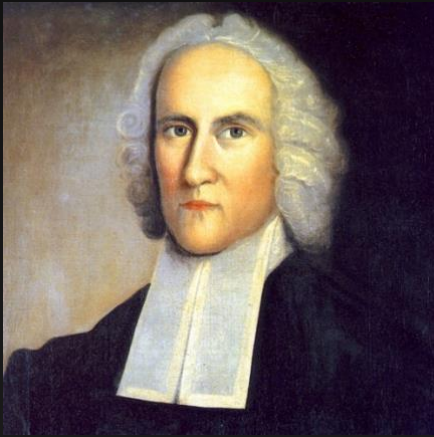
Gracious God, I submit to your Lordship. I know that you, O Christ, are the way, the truth, and the life. I understand that you were crucified and resurrected so that all those who believe in you might live. I believe in you. I trust what you accomplished on my behalf. I desire to tread the paths of life, the ancient paths where I will know the good way and find rest for my soul. Lord, I confess the ways I have walked down forbidden paths, taken trails that transgressed your commands. You know all the ways I have stumbled. I ask your

forgiveness. Lead me down paths of righteousness, for your name's sake. Empower me to walk in your ways. I ask all this in Christ's name. Amen.

## CONFIRMATION

There are some emblems in Scripture that are so blatant they hardly need confirmation. Paths are such an emblem. Paths are clearly a biblical symbol for the way people live their lives, the decisions they make, or that are made for them, and the resulting circumstances arising from those choices.

Walking is one of the images most closely associated with paths. Walking in the Scriptures is a way of communicating a submissive relationship with God displayed by obedience to his commands. For example, Genesis 6:9 says, "Noah walked with God." Believers are exhorted in Proverbs 4:26 to "ponder the path of [their] feet." The perfect place for a person to ponder the ways they are living is as their feet are literally walking on a path. Walking is an activity that is suitable, even ideal, for meditation. A pace can be set that is conducive to deep thinking and praying. No speed is too slow. The next time you are hiking a path, slow down and do some biblical creation meditation. This experience will confirm the profound associative connections between the physical path you are walking on and your "ways"—the ways you are living either submissively to God and obedient to his commands or in a manner not submissive or obedient.



## Jonathan Edwards

FROM *SERMONS AND DISCOURSES 1720-1723*.  
[WJE 10:331-332]

“1. We must take care not to walk in those ways in which, if we walk, we shall be certainly lost. If we would not be lost, we must not take wrong paths; if we continue to walk in those ways which lead to destruction, without doubt we shall come to destruction at last. We all know that the ways of sin and iniquity are wrong paths; everyone knows [that] all the paths that are contrary to God's commands are paths that lead to destruction and that they all meet together in hell; wherefore, let us take care that we do not walk in those paths.”<sup>1</sup>

\*\*For those of you who love horseback riding. One of the fun facts about Jonathan Edwards was that he did a lot of meditating as he rode his horse on roads and paths around the countryside. Edwards had a unique way of remembering his meditations. As biographer George Marsden describes,

[He] carried with him pen and ink to write down his thoughts. . . . For longer horseback rides, he used a memory device. For each insight he wished to remember, he would pin a small piece of paper on a particular part of his clothes, which he would associate with the thought. When he returned home he would unpin these and write down each idea.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Sermons and Discourses 1720-1723" in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 10*, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 331-332. (hereafter, WJE).

<sup>2</sup> George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 135-36.