

In June, I started walking in the morning. It's something I tried before, but I always found a reason to quit. I've used a variety of excuses. "I don't have time. It's too hot. It's too cold. It's too dark." There are probably several other reasons that I've used but forgotten. I'm not sure what my record is for walking longevity, but I'm sure I'm approaching it. September is my fourth month. I haven't walked every day. I don't walk Sundays, and I've missed a few days for various good reasons.

One of the reasons that I've been successful is my walking buddy. When I started walking, I took Harley with me. He loves it, and he encourages me. When I come out of the bedroom to put on my shoes, he starts talking to me. He whimpers, moans and makes various other sounds that say, "I'm ready." Eerily, he doesn't whimper on Sunday mornings when we don't walk. I'm not sure how he knows it is Sunday, but he does. Together, Harley and I have amassed 253 miles in almost four months.

I started walking for my physical health; I started daily devotions for my spiritual health. Like walking, I've had a difficult time keeping up my daily devotions. Like walking, I could find a variety of reasons to skip them. "Someone died. I have a sermon to write. I study when I prepare my Sunday school lessons. I can read an e-devotional." You get the idea. I decided I needed a devotional buddy.

At the end of last year, I covenanted with Pastor Jim Abbott to read a daily devotional book by Walter Brueggemann. We do the daily readings and meet regularly to have conversation about the readings. We also email each other our thoughts on the daily texts that go with the reading. Like walking, I have missed a few days, especially on weekends. It's hard to read on Fridays when I get up early for golf, and on Sundays when I get up early for church. I usually walk and then do my devotional readings. Like Harley, my walking buddy, Pastor Abbott encourages me to keep my devotional habit. I hope that I encourage him, too. We are almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way through Brueggemann.

I tell you these two stories because they are about accountability. Both Harley and Pastor Abbott hold me accountable to my promise. Being accountable to a dog may seem strange, but it works for me. Pastor Abbott holding me accountable is normal. Accountability is a good way to make changes in our lives. We are more likely to continue those changes when we are accountable to someone for them.

Perhaps, you are looking to make some changes in your life. If you are, I recommend an accountability buddy. Find someone to walk with you through the changes. Maybe you have a friend that wants to make some changes in his or her life, and you can be an accountability buddy. You can be there for him or her.

I give thanks for Harley and Pastor Abbott. With their help, I've been able to make some change in my life. I am by no means perfect at walking or devotions, but I'm much better than before. It's a good feeling.

Pastor Parnell