

The 300-Mile Challenge



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From New Year's Day until May 4, 2021, I have walked 300 miles. My New Year's Resolution in 2021 was the challenge of walking three miles each day, in spite of Boston's weather conditions. The winters in Boston are long and cold with frequent snow. In such conditions, it was easy to excuse myself from walking, but I determined instead to walk my daily three miles as scheduled. It was my challenge to reach the 300-mile goal by the spring season to see some daffodils emerge from the frozen ground. They are beautiful flowers that remind us that spring is approaching. They are even able to survive a few days covered with snow, overcoming the challenge of their surroundings with the help of the coming warmer weather.

We face many uncertain challenges in life. Sometimes these challenges hit us hard, like strong waves which sweep us along in their current. They are like pop quizzes, which we either pass or fail. In such times, we have to stand and not give up, fighting against the giants before us. In the Bible, we read a well-known story about a youth named David in Israel. He faced his enemy, the giant Goliath, on the battlefield. It was an unexpected challenge, but he stood up with five smooth stones against the fully armored Philistine soldier, who must have experienced numerous wars. The story is told that it was David who defeated the giant "in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Samuel 17:41-54). Later, David became a famous king in Israel who unified his kingdom. Even then, he faced constant challenges throughout his life.

When I was a youth growing up in Korea, I was afraid of the dark. Since there were frequent blackouts and no streetlights, I was afraid to go out on the streets at night. Later, my family immigrated to the United States and I joined the Army at the age of 19. During BCT (Basic Combat Training), there was a night-time exercise where we were to crawl under barbed wire across a field as quickly as possible, with our combat gear on. The drill sergeant warned us from the loudspeaker system that there would be live ammunition firing over our heads! I was so scared of the gunfire coming from every direction right above me in the dark night. I do not know how long I crawled, but I can still clearly remember the sound of the machine guns firing. But once I crossed to the other end safely, I felt my fear of darkness disappear. For 54 years since that night training, I have never again been afraid of the night-time darkness - I overcame that challenge.

Life is filled with challenges, which we are to overcome. They may be small or big tasks - at work, home, school, or in the military. The Bible says a good soldier is required to face challenges - "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him" (2 Timothy 2:3-4). Soldiers endure discipline in their daily lives and in training to overcome challenges, from Day One until their discharge from active duty. It begins with making their beds as soon they wake up at dawn and PT (physical training) before breakfast by 0700 hours. In PT there are pushups, sit-ups, and running. In regular Army basic training there is a 12-mile march with full combat gear - but special forces require much harder challenges over longer periods of time.

From New Year's Day until today, I took up the challenge of walking 300 miles in 13 weeks. I am satisfied to have reached my goal, but am pushing for another 300 miles or more by the end of 2021. I look forward to continuing to walk, in order to remain healthy and disciplined. It is good for me, and I hope it can be a challenge and encouragement to our veterans and the congregations in our churches at home and abroad.