

## It Was The Sand In My Shoes

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Imagine the obstacles one might face, the barriers and difficulties one would be forced to overcome if he took up the challenge to walk from New York City to San Francisco. Matt Mattingly does not have to imagine it because he did it! In his book, *The Long Walk Home*, Mattingly chronicles his 3,507 miles/117 days odyssey across America from near the Statue of Liberty in New York City to the Golden Gate Bridge of San Francisco. As he travelled the highways and byways he made note of what he observed, from the number of Coca-Cola cans he saw in ditches to the number of sneakers he wore out on the journey. When asked to tell of his greatest hurdle he gave a rather surprising answer. According to the then 59 year old Mattingly, the toughest part of the trip was not traversing the steep slopes of the mountains or crossing hot dry barren stretches of desert. “The thing that came the closest to defeating me,” Mattingly explained, “was the sand in my shoes.”

Incredible! More than 3,500 miles on foot in extreme climate across extreme geographic structures, and sand, small insignificant rock particles, is what almost brought the journey to an end! How similar it is for many spiritually. We prepare for the mountains; we build storm shelters; we are ever on the lookout for extreme attacks on our faith. We are certain to know book, chapter, and verse to defend the truth of baptism and to confound the error of faith only salvation (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Jas. 2:17, 22, 24, 26), the weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 26:26-29; Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:42; 20:7), and a cappella in our worship without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16-17). We have studied and can accurately use the Word of God to demonstrate the inspiration of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17) through the fulfillment of prophecy (Ezek. 26; Ps. 22; et al) and the demonstration of scientific foreknowledge (Isa. 40:22; Job 28:25; Eccl. 1:7; et al). Without the slightest hesitation we can weave together Old Testament prophecy and New Testament fulfillment showing without fault the truth that the kingdom of heaven is the church and that Jesus is even now reigning as King (Joel 2:28-32; Isa. 2:2-3; Dan. 2:44; Zech. 6:12-13; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27; 24:44-49; Acts 1:8; Acts 2; 1 Tim. 6:15), and Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ of God (Isa. 40:3; John 1:19-29). We have prepared our hearts to be able “to give a defense to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). But are we overlooking the sand in our shoes—those small day to day temptations that we determine insignificant and perhaps never even give them a second thought?

Might it be the case that one is so bold as to believe that one innocent little click on a link to a “questionable” website will have no effect on their heart and mind? How many men and women, co-workers, daily throw caution to the wind as they innocently pass flirtatious remarks or send texts that are too personal and put in jeopardy their marriage, family, and eternal soul? Perhaps the music to which we choose to listen is filled with lyrics about drinking, carousing, unfaithfulness, and worldliness in general—and we never consider that we are numbing ourselves to such sinful deeds. How many times has a Christian brother or sister been overtaken in a fault that began with just one drink? How often is it the case that a brother or sister becomes overwhelmed with an addiction initiated by the purchase of an innocent five dollar lottery ticket? How many souls will be lost because of that tiny insignificant grain of sand we have indiscriminately labeled a “little white lie?” How wise the warning—Beware the little things, for the small things in life are often what bring spiritual giants to their knees!

How vital are the words of Peter and how desperately we ought to give heed in ALL areas of our lives: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). The attacks of our adversary are not always in the form of a ferocious lion! Many temptations appear as a wolf in sheep’s clothing, a cat among the pigeons, or as sand in our shoes. Let us heed the words of our beloved brother Paul, “watch thou in all things” (2 Tim. 4:5).