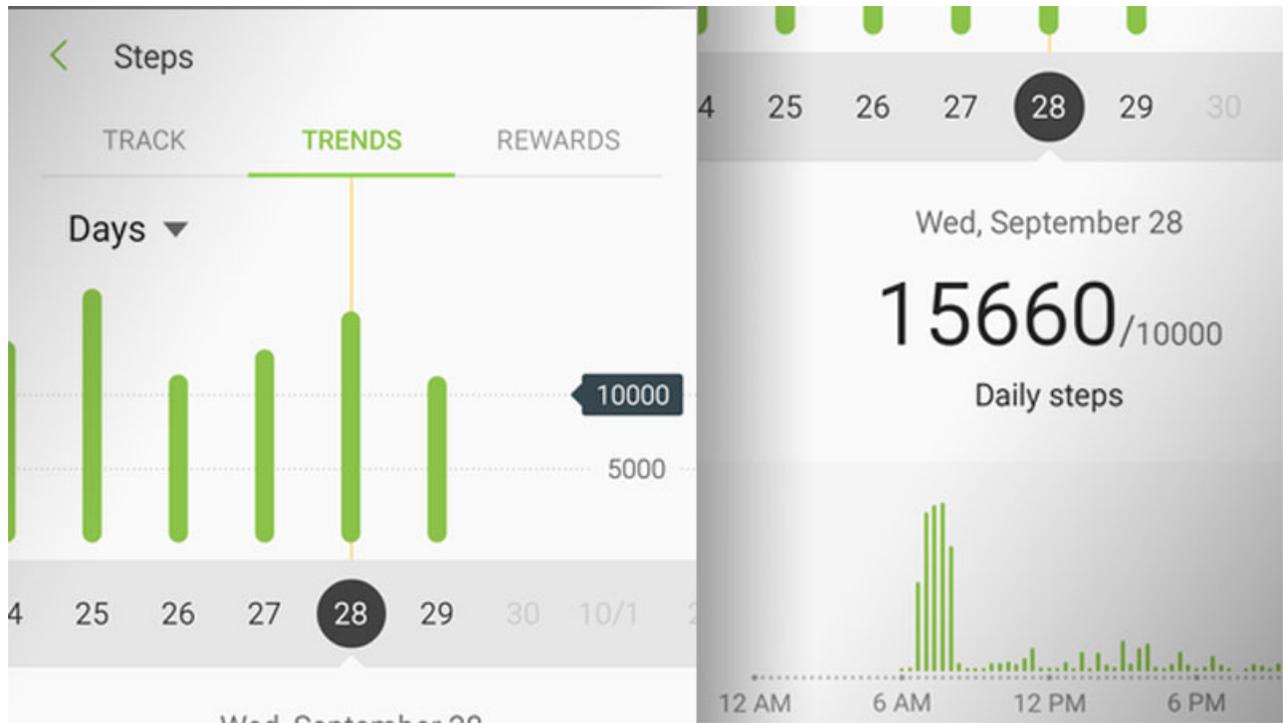


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Counting Steps



DEBBY & KYLE WITMER



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Over the course of the last 8 months, I've been counting steps. Not as a law which cannot be broken, but as a challenge to be met. I started small, and have moved my way up to meeting the goal set for me by my phone. Yes, I let my phone set a goal for me. (The phone is easier on me than I would have been on myself.)

There are a number of reasons for this change. Firstly, I needed a way to get by myself. In a culture and place where it seems that someone is constantly wanting a piece of you, I needed a place to get away and just listen to music, pray, or just not think about anything (including how to say that in another language). Secondly, because I like food, I needed an outlet for some of those calories that keep finding their way into my diet. This really had become a concern as blood sugar is an issue with many family members. (You'll be happy to know that for now, mine is doing fine.) Thirdly, in my former life (read this as 30 years ago), I was able to participate in any sport I chose. These days, I have thought about considering making it up and down the stairs as some sort of modified sport. This counting of steps has worked for me. I didn't meet the goal at first. I didn't worry about that. I was doing what I was doing for reasons other than making my phone send me a notification. And in reality, this is still true. Yes, I walk my 10,000 steps in the morning before I go off to teach, but what really matters is that I get some time to just focus on Jesus while walking a very familiar pattern.

I should tell you that I stay in my neighborhood. I pass the same people every day. I have some of the same conversations with the same people day in and day out – and I love that part. It took a while. It was 3-4 months before the neighbors would speak with me at all. I would greet them daily, and hope for an opportunity, and while those were slow in coming, they seem to be on the rise. A few weeks back, one of our neighbors allowed me to pray for her as she had shared with me some of the struggles of getting older. Another lady I see every morning shared with me that her daughter lives in Chicago, and that she speaks with her daily. One man I walked with told me all about the neighborhood and “how it used to be” as he has lived in the neighborhood for 55 years. And then there is this one woman...she was slow to greet me every day. It took a few months before she spoke to me directly. However, she wasn't shy about saying things almost under her breath after I had passed her. I wear headphones, and I think she was under the impression that I couldn't hear her. The first time I heard her comment it was something akin to “you sure do walk a lot.” When I passed her the next day, I said, “I sure do like to walk a lot.” She stopped me a few minutes later to carry on a conversation. It was the breakthrough I needed.

Today, it must have been time for a lesson. She made a comment about the shirt I was wearing (it was a golf shirt, and had a collar – not something you see Thai people wearing for exercise.) When I came back by her, I said that I liked my shirt. And when she knew that I could hear her and understand her, she engaged me in further conversation. Her first question was, “How many rounds do you make? Do you walk 10 rounds?” I said that I really didn't count the rounds. She asked, “How long do you walk – how much time?” I answered that the time varied by the day. I told her that what mattered to me was counting my steps. “I walk 10,000 steps every day.” She thought for a moment. She queried, “You count your steps?” I responded, “yes.” She said, “I wish more people would do that. If people would count their steps, no matter who they follow – Buddha, Jesus, Mohamed – the world would be a better place.” How true. If we counted our steps, the world might really be a better place.

Are you counting your steps? Personally, I don't think that by being or doing good that you will somehow earn the right to life eternal. And I don't think that you're going to somehow

coerce God into loving you more. I think God is already crazy about you. But, I do think that there is a place for counting our steps. Sometimes, just counting our steps helps us focus enough to take the next one. I know for me, that has been true. I take the next step, and wait and watch to see where Jesus will lead.

So, count your steps. And, make your steps count.

Grace and peace,

Kyle