



Rounding the corner, I finished off the rest of my water bottle. It was hot outside! I was walking a neighborhood loop that my husband mapped out for our walks--2 ½ miles. During the quarantine, the everything's-shut-down period, we'd been missing our gym time, so, we joined the rest of the world and began walking outside. We enjoy walking it together, so during quarantine, it became our exercise routine. Sometimes, though, I would end up walking it alone. But on this occasion, I made three poor choices: I began at 1:00--the sun was fairly straight up; I decided after one full loop to do a second loop; and I neglected to bring a full bottle of water--only a half. It was 95 degrees and I was hot, tired, and thirsty. The beating sun and stagnant air was making it tough to breathe fully and deeply. I was already exhausted on the second loop, wishing I'd stopped after the first. Trudging, I was almost to the point that is the farthest distance from my house when I emptied my bottle. Suddenly, all I could think of was water. I knew I wasn't in danger or anything, because I had my cell phone; I could always call for help. It wasn't that extreme. Still, with each step, I became hotter, weaker, thirstier. I reflected on my foolish choices. I noticed a tree overhanging the sidewalk enough that it lent shade, so I sat on the curb to rest. I seriously considered going to knock on a strange door to ask for a bottle refill. No, I knew I could make it. After a minute of shady respite, I stood and continued, still quite thirsty. Putting one foot in front of the other, I continued to make my way home. But I noticed something. All of the thoughts that normally fill my mind when I walk had vanished. I enjoy solo walking--time thinking and praying. But at that moment, there was no enjoyment; I could think of nothing but water. No delightful getting-lost-in-my thoughts. My thirst took precedence. I guess when you are really thirsty, water takes first place. Maybe air conditioning second.

Later that day, I re-read Psalm 42, because it had become real to me. Even though I was never in danger, I truly felt thirst, so I wanted to connect what I had felt to the Psalm. That intensity of thirst that I felt is how the writer expressed his desire for God. Psalm 42:1b2 "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?(NIV) The Psalmist compared it to the thirst a deer has, *panting*, looking for water. The Word says Jesus *is* the living water, and those who come to Him will thirst no more. He said in John 4:14 "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."(NKJ) Further, He offers me to come to Him, and He will satisfy that thirst. John 7:37 "On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.'"(NKJ) The Psalmist describes true thirst for Him! Psalm 63:1b "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water."(NKJ) He will satisfy my soul when I need Him, like water satisfies my soul when I'm thirsty. Kutless sings "All who are thirsty, all who are weak, come to the fountain, dip your heart in the stream of life." This makes sense, because at the beginning of my walk, when I took the first few sips, it was good and satisfying. However, it wasn't my *only focus*; I was able to think about other things. But once my bottle was empty, I *needed water*, so water became my *only focus*. My goal is to thirst for God with that intensity, as a walker with an empty bottle on the second loop at 95 degrees, just like the deer pants for the water. --Linda Dunlap