

FALL PREVENTION

I once walked through a university hallway with Amanda, navigating the wandering college students. Ahead of us on the left was a young lady who was walking. When I pointed out the asymmetry of her gait, Amanda was quite curious. "Why are you looking at her walking?" It wasn't because of wandering eyes or attraction. It was due to the training I was receiving to assess a human's gait.

What is gait?

Merriam-Webster defines gait as a manner of walking or moving on foot.

How important is it to assess gait?

The National Center for Biotechnology Information states: *In gait testing, right and left feet are evaluated separately for swing (step length) and clearance, and then compared. Each foot should completely clear the floor and should step completely ahead of the other foot. Comparison includes step symmetry and continuity. Additionally, during walking, the path deviation, trunk stability, and stance (normal or wide-based) are evaluated.*

Why is this significant? Susan L. Vaught, MD, reported that in 2001, healthcare costs of falls among older adults were estimated to be as high as \$500 million annually. It is no wonder that they train day-to-day healthcare providers to identify gait problems so they can be addressed before an injury occurs. Fall prevention is an important business.

The apostle John was a caregiver of the soul. In one of his letters, he states:

1 John 2

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

If you look closely, he explains that abnormalities in the Christians' gait can lead to sin. This spiritual injury is precisely what he hopes to prevent. The remedy is walking correctly. Jesus is our model and standard. To stay strengthened, we practice and model his gait through obedience. Living to that standard will protect us from falling.

How's your gait?

Ryan