

PART ONE

Creation

DAY

1

An Introduction to Christ Walk

BIBLICAL BIG IDEA #1

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

—Ephesians 5:2a

What is Christ Walk? Christ Walk is a spiritual fitness program. It is designed to improve your physical health, although anyone at any fitness or health level can participate in the program. I have a list of biblical routes (Appendix A) for you to choose a biblical journey to walk, run, bike, or pray (the distance of) during the next forty days. There is a chapter a day (Day 1, Day 2, etc.) to help lift you up spiritually as you make your journey.

In writing this book, I do not claim to be an expert on what is the best thing for you to do to have a spiritually and physically healthy life. I am not a theologian, although from my studies I would argue that anyone who studies and works towards a closer relationship with God could be considered a theologian. I do not claim to have all the answers. Much like any Christian, I have many questions that I constantly seek answers for, which to me is an act of faith. I am not an expert on health, although I have worked in the healthcare field for the last seventeen years with an emphasis on health programs and training. I do not claim that this book is the answer to all of the questions that you may have. It is not a diet, nor a guidebook, nor even a recommendation on how you should live.

This book is a personal reflection on my experiences, beliefs, and knowledge on having a spiritually and physically healthy life. After six years of running a Christ Walk program at several churches that was well received and provided an opportunity for the participants to grow spiritually and physically, I decided to share the program with others. The book in your hands is a manual/journal for you to have an interactive experience in the Christ Walk journey, much as the participants in my

classes experienced! At the end of the forty days, this book should be as much your book as it is mine. Individuals as well as groups can use it. The appendices include options for group leaders and options for individuals to transform their Christ Walk experience from journey to journey. There is always another journey. Christ Walk should not end after one forty-day period. These forty days should transform you to pursue new journeys and new goals.

The Bible is filled with stories about journeys and food and eating and celebration. God did not intend for us to be at war with food, nor did he intend for us *not* to use our feet and our bodies in our daily lives. I am filled with awe that Christianity spread during a time when there were no cars, or trucks, or trains, or airplanes to get our prophets and disciples to the places where they wanted to spread the word. There is a reason God gave us feet! We have feet to walk, run, jump, and skip through our lives. Our feet are to be used to care for the temple God created within each of us.

When I have struggled with how to live my life, for the strength to get out and exercise when all I want to do is stay at home, or when I have been conflicted by the stresses in my life, I have always felt that God was there to help me and provide me with strength and guidance. I remember running my first half marathon. Around mile nine I began to fail and doubt. I began to pray that God would wrap my legs in strength and endurance. I felt the power of the Holy Spirit lift my legs and make them strong again. I truly believe God's strength helped me finish my race. The belief that I was not alone rejuvenated me. I believe that God walks with me in every step that I take. I believe that the Bible is filled with inspirational guidelines on living a healthy life. Through the next forty days, I would like to share that with you, as well as sharing a bit of my life and my journey through Christ Walk.

Each day, there will be a Bible verse related to a reflective piece on healthy living. Some of these days may be more body-focused and other days may be more spiritually or mentally focused. All of these days will help you on your journey to a healthier you! If you are physically unable to walk, I ask that you look at your life for ways that you can change it and improve it. We all have things that we can do to make our lives healthier. Perhaps your goal will be to study something new on your journey, or to pray with more discipline or to focus on changing your nutritional habits. If you cannot physically exercise, discuss with your health care provider some options that you are willing to do to improve your health. There is a place in this journey for everyone. We may need to be creative about how the journey is completed. I ask that you pray through those chapters that

are not applicable to you and really focus on the ones that speak to your personal experience. I have tried to write to many different perspectives and needs. I am aware that this book will not work for everyone, but if you cannot make the journey on your own, consider how you can help others on their journey. Keep an open mind and again, consider, “What can I do to change?”

So how do we make a healthy body? We take care of it. We exercise it, we feed it, we nurture it, and we rest it. Research has documented on multiple occasions that walking is one of the most physically beneficial exercises, as well as one that people are most likely to stick to over time. Most of the journeys in the Bible were done by foot. Consequently, as you begin this journey with me, I am going to ask you to pick a walking goal (see Appendix A) to focus on during the next forty days. There are different walking goals depending on your fitness level. Some people have walked the *Via Dolorosa* (Jesus’ journey through Jerusalem to his crucifixion, one of my favorite routes), others walked Jesus’ birth and death (the distance between Bethlehem and Jerusalem), while others have walked Paul’s missionary journeys. There is a complete list of suggested journeys and distances for you to set for your goal (Appendix A). Or you may choose to set your own goal! It is up to you. But as we physically walk through our Christ Walk journey, it will help to focus you on your spiritual goals as well.

Through Christ Walk, we have taken our daily journey as members of the Body of Christ, and translated that to actual physical walking goals that are pulled from routes that Jesus and the disciples took during varying missions. You can find a breakdown of each of these routes and their miles in the Appendices. Some of these distances are estimates. At the time I developed the routes, I was using a ruler and a map grid to figure out how far we would go. I take full responsibility in any inaccuracies and beg your forgiveness as these are supposed to be representative.

Some of these routes were chosen because they touched a very special part of me for different reasons. These biblical journeys represent different themes to me and I will share with you how they became a part of the Christ Walk journey.

The first year I did Christ Walk, I think I had only three different routes to choose from: a beginner route, an intermediate route, and an advanced route to challenge different fitness levels. Over the years, I have added other routes as I journeyed through the Bible. I have also added “group routes” because we are all in this together! Research supports the positive impact of groups and teamwork on success in obtaining goals. People who set goals together are more likely to stick with them and be successful.

The Nazareth Challenge This was one of the first routes I developed. It is 60 miles between Jesus' hometown of Nazareth and Jerusalem. This is approximately 1.6 miles each day for forty days to walk the distance of the route that Jesus preached to reach Jerusalem. The goal was very special to me because as a military wife, I am often far from home. I look at my journey now as leading me to my final resting spot one day and I find that very satisfying.

The Jerusalem to Damascus Route This journey represents Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road. The route is approximately 3.75 miles per day. What an amazing journey to find your way as a Christian and growing in God's love. I can think of no greater journey than Paul's conversion. If he could walk this route blind, anyone can do it. For me personally, I have a hearing loss that I will tell you more about in another chapter, but Paul's loss of eyesight did not stop him from his calling. This is a wonderful journey to choose.

The Jerusalem Challenge During Jesus' final days, his route through Jerusalem included preaching at the temple, the clearing of the temple, his last meal with his disciples, his arrest at Gethsemane, his trial, Peter's denial, and then his crucifixion on Golgotha. This route is roughly 2.2 miles per day. This is known as the *Via Dolorosa* or The Way of Suffering. What a powerful image to walk the distance of Christ's ultimate sacrifice for us each day. You can reflect as you walk on this great gift we have been given. This is a lovely, lovely journey to try as you explore your spirituality and relationship to God. Can you walk a day in Jesus' shoes? Can you walk forty days in Jesus' shoes? If so, this is the route for you to tackle.

The Damascus to Caesarea Journey This is a journey of 5 miles a day representing the walks that the disciples took on their missionary journeys. I find it inspiring that the disciples traveled such great distances without cars or other forms of modern transportation. Aside from a donkey or camel, these journeys were taken by foot. See yourself as part of that missionary journey and step proudly each day on your challenge. Look at this challenge as a physical testament to your belief in God.

The Bethlehem Challenge I think of this challenge as the Alpha and Omega Challenge. It is about 5 miles between Bethlehem and Jerusalem and represents walking the route from Jesus' birth to his death. This *is* Jesus' journey from where God put him in the world to his ultimate calling. Where will your journey take you?

The Exodus Challenge Not for the faint of heart, this challenge was chosen for some of the most advanced of my Christ Walk participants. This is the route the Jews traveled to get to the Promised Land: 375 miles or 9.4 miles per day or 18,750 steps per day (you may also use this one as a group challenge). We are all on our journey to the Promised Land.

Appendix A in the book have additional group journeys where teams can pool their miles towards additional (and longer) routes found in the Bible. The second year I did Christ Walk, I learned that the journey was a lot more fun when we did it with teams. The teams provided a support system to get each of us through our different strengths and weakness on our routes.

If you are doing Christ Walk as a group, I recommend that during the first week, you arrange for some fitness professionals to come in and discuss principles of healthy living. It is useful to have them provide some type of fitness testing so that you can receive baseline information on the fitness level of your body. These evaluations, such as blood pressure, resting heart rate, body mass index, weight, and cardiovascular fitness can give you some objective information on what you need to change or improve. These tests can be repeated at the end of the journey to show the progress you have made.

There may be another route that speaks more deeply to you than these favorites of mine, and I encourage you to find that route and take it. I have always let the Christ Walk participants find their own journeys. The point is to get up and get moving. You cannot start the journey if you are sitting down.

Each day, there will be a place for you to fill in your steps/distance, your activity, your feelings for the day, and your spiritual thought for the day. Do not rush to finish the book. This book is designed to be read one chapter a day, as a journal to help you on your way and improve your Christ Walk experience. If at any time you need to change your goals, feel free to do so. Life is a journey with many bumps happening along the way! The challenge is that you continue to have faith to continue on the journey, even if it is in a different way than the one in which you started. If you are doing this as a group, these journal entries may help your group to share their Christ Walk experience and deepen your understanding of a life of walking with Christ. See Appendix D for Suggestions for Groups.

So, how do we measure the steps we took, the distance we traveled? I recommend the purchase of a pedometer or fitness tracker, which can be clipped to your belt or pants and will track the number of steps/miles

traveled each day. Recommendations from the experts encourage every individual to take 10,000 steps a day for heart health. You may need to work up to this level of activity, and perhaps this will be one of your goals. Roughly 2,000 to 2,500 steps equal a mile. Depending on the type of pedometer, it may tell you this, or you may have to calculate your stride if you want to be more accurate. For the purpose of Christ Walk, we generally give one mile for every 2,000 steps. There is a brief description of using a pedometer in Appendix B.

If you want to use another form of exercise other than walking (biking, swimming, aerobics, dance, etc.) you may do that. It takes about fifteen minutes to walk a mile, so every fifteen-minute block of exercise can be calculated as a “mile.” The important thing is to choose an activity that you enjoy and do it. The purpose is to get out there and move, to think about every activity you do as walking with God. It is your walk with Christ, so you will have to take it up with your conscience if you cheat! Your job is to give it your best shot with all your heart.

Mileage Calculation Chart

Activity	Time	Steps	Record Miles As:
Walking	15–20 minutes	2,000–2,500	1 or distance on route
Running	Varies	2,000–2,500	Check route distance
Biking	Varies	N/A	Check odometer distance
Aerobics	15 minutes	Varies	1
Dancing	15 minutes	Varies	1
Yoga	15 minutes	Varies	1
Prayer/Meditation	15 minutes	Varies	1
Volunteerism	15 minutes	Varies	1

Take your first step(s) and see how many steps your pedometer took you today. Set a goal to add more steps each day to your journey to work up to 10,000 steps a day in whatever activity you choose.

PART ONE: CREATION

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

1. What is my goal?
2. How do I feel about my goal? Is it reasonable/attainable/realistic?
If not, how can I make it something that I will stick with for the next forty days?
3. Who can help me on my journey?

Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God. —Joshua 14:9

DAY 1 Steps taken: _____ Miles journeyed: _____

Exercise chosen: _____

Spiritual thoughts: _____

Feelings: _____
