

Christ Walk Crushed

A
40-Day
Journey
toward
Reconciliation

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Introduction

What is *Christ Walk Crushed*? It is a spiritual fitness program designed to improve your mind, body, and spiritual health while taking you through a process of reconciliation. By pairing daily meditations with the miles of biblical routes, you will set a physical goal for yourself paired with mental and spiritual exercises. There is a chapter a day (Day 1, Day 2, etc.) to help lift you up spiritually as you make your journey. *Christ Walk Crushed* uses the Christ Walk™ method to engage in a physical mileage goal while meditating on the process of sin, forgiveness, injury, and reconciliation. In many ways, the *Christ Walk Crushed* program seeks to encourage physical action while you process the grief associated with being out of balance in mind, body, and spirit.

In writing this book, we do not claim to be experts on what is the best thing for *you* to do to have a spiritually and physically healthy life. We do not claim to have all the answers. Much like any Christian, we have many questions that we constantly seek answers for, which is an act of faith for each of us individually. We 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. It's a walk to explore those things in your life that you want to work on and process.

After more than ten years of running Christ Walk™ programs at multiple churches, Anna has found that people enjoy having a book as a companion to whatever journey they are on. The book in your hands is that manual/journal for you to have on this interactive experience of the *Christ Walk Crushed* journey. At the end of the forty days, this book should be as much your book as it is ours.

Individuals as well as groups can walk (or run, bike, swim) this journey. The appendices include options for group leaders and options for individuals to transform their *Christ Walk Crushed* experience from journey to journey. There is always another journey, so *Christ Walk Crushed* should not end after one 40-day period. These forty days should transform you to pursue new journeys and new goals.

After completing *Christ Walk Crushed*, you may want to try another of the Christ Walk™ series. It's your choice, just don't stop moving. Our feet are to be used to care for the temple God created within each of us. Keep working on your relationship with God and your relationship with your body, mind, and soul.

If you are physically unable to walk or perform physical exercise, we ask that you look at your life in ways that you can change it and improve it. Everyone has things that they can do to make their life healthier. Perhaps your goal will be to study something new on your journey, pray with more discipline, focus on changing your nutritional habits, or letting go of destructive habits. If you cannot physically exercise, discuss with your health care provider some options that you are willing to do to change. There is a place in this journey for everyone. We may need to be creative on the method that the journey is completed. Pray through those chapters that may not be applicable to you and really focus on the ones that speak to your personal experience. Offering different perspectives and needs, this book may not work for everyone; if you cannot make the journey on your own, consider how you can help others on their journey. At a minimum, keep an open mind and always consider: "What can I do to change?"

How Does This Work?

Through *Christ Walk Crushed*, we have taken our daily journey as members of the Body of Christ and translated that to actual mileage goals that are pulled from routes that Jesus and the disciples took during varying missions. You will find a list of biblical routes (Appendix A) for you to choose a journey to walk, run, bike, pray, volunteer, or whatever activity you choose (the distance of) during the next forty days. Some of these distances are estimates as they are representative of the journeys many in the Bible took as they followed God's call.

We believe God walks with us in every step that we take and the Bible is filled with inspirational guidelines on how to walk with God: mind, body, and spirit. Each day there will be a Bible verse related to a step in the process of reconciliation. It will be paired with a reflection from either David or Anna on that step in the process. We'll close with some questions that we want you to think about or respond to in order to make the journey yours. There will also be a place for you to fill in your steps/distance, activity, feelings for the day, and spiritual thoughts for the day.

Do not rush; this book is designed to be read one chapter a day, with the book as a journal to help you on your way and improve your *Christ Walk Crushed* 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 on that 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 in everyone sharing their *Christ Walk Crushed* experiences and deepen your understanding of a life of walking with Christ in community. You can use the daily questions to facilitate discussions as a group or use one of the outlines found in the appendices. See Appendix D on page 176 for Recommendations for Groups.

So, how do we measure the steps we took, the distance we travelled? We recommend the purchase of a fitness tracker (Fitbit, Garmin, Apple Watch, Omron, etc.), which can be worn on your wrist or clothing and will track the number of steps/miles travelled each day. Recommendations from the experts encourage every individual to take 10,000 steps a day for heart health. For some, this will be an easy goal and you may want to challenge yourself to more steps. For others, this may be challenging, and you may need to work up to this level of activity. Perhaps this will be one of your goals for the 40-day program. Roughly 2,000–2,500 steps equal a mile. You will track your steps, miles, or time in specific activities towards your overall biblical route. For the purpose of *Christ Walk Crushed*, we generally give one mile for every 2,000 steps. There is a brief description on using a fitness tracker in Appendix B on page 171.

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 15-minute block of exercise can be calculated as a mile. It's important to choose an activity that you enjoy and do it; get out there and move, think about every step you take as walking with God. The process of physically moving will help us physically move through the process of reconciliation. It is your walk with Christ, so make it yours. 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

With *Christ Walk Crushed*, our goal for you is to set mind, body, and spirit goals that will help you focus on God and work through the process of reconciliation. We believe that part of this starts with taking care of the temple (the body) that God has given us for the Christ spark in us all. We are all different in shape and size and level of health, wellness, and physical capability, but we all have Christ within us. Therefore, we should take care of that temple that God has given us. A healthy body can do more for others and share the Christ love within us in whatever capacity we are called to serve. You are still called to serve, you still have a purpose, and God still has need for you even as you process your moral injury. We believe this journey is going to help bring you closer to God, to help you find purpose in what you've experienced, and hopefully find a way to use that experience to glorify Christ's kingdom.

Finally, within these pages are our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and experiences with moral injury. We will use a lot of “I” statements since our experiences shaped our theological beliefs on the topics of trauma, health, wellness, and the path to reconciliation. If these thoughts and feelings and beliefs do not resonate with your own experience, that is okay. All of our experiences collectively are shaping the Christian community’s testament to God in the world. It is all good when it is done for the love of Christ. We hope that these meditations help you along on your journey and that you feel free to make them your own so they work within your own set of thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and experiences. Through strong minds, strong bodies, and strong spirits, we can walk with Christ all the days of our lives. Join us over the next forty days on your personal *Christ Walk Crushed* experience and see yourself transformed.

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 I reach to help me out on my journey?

Introduction

My physical goal for *Christ Walk Crushed* the next forty days is:

My spiritual goal for *Christ Walk Crushed* the next forty days is:

My mental goal for *Christ Walk Crushed* the next forty days is:

And Moses swore on that day, saying, "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

What Is Contrition?

BIBLICAL BIG IDEA #1

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. —Psalm 34:18

Me: Hey God?

God: Yes?

Me: This world blows.

God: I know. That's why you need Jesus.

I do most of my running and walking on the ten-mile gravel trail that rings Lady Bird Lake. Since many of my runs are in the dark, I have to pay close attention to the ground, so I don't make an unexpected fall and embed some of the pea gravel in my knee. Unlike smooth river stones, gravel has sharp edges because of how it's made.

Gravel is made by turning big rocks into little rocks. Large rocks are crushed with machines until they're the size of a pea. It's a noisy process and it creates sharp edges. When life events crush us, it's often a noisy process and creates sharp edges. The noise drowns out the normal channels of communication with God, with others, and with our own sense of self. When it's over, we find that we are smaller, with many sharp edges. Life-crushing events have a way of changing our identity, causing disorientation and confusion. Like crushed gravel, we find ourselves trodden under the feet of others who do not know what they do.

The word "contrition" simply means "crushed." Whatever solid state we were in before our traumatic event, we are no longer in that state. We are smaller—broken and ground down by the gears and grinders of life. We are crushed.

Contrition is being aware of how much we are crushed by our own failures or the failures of others. This is a very risky place to be in. When I came home from the Iraq war to a broken marriage, I felt crushed by what happened to me. I felt like I no longer recognized who

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I was. I also knew that, like crushed gravel, I had some sharp edges. I was edgy, and found it hard to enjoy anything, even my two wonderful children. I lashed out at people who cared about me and self-destructed with alcohol. I felt disconnected from other people, from myself, and especially from God.

It's taken me a long time to realize that just at the moment when I felt farthest from God because I was crushed, I was actually closer to God than I had ever been before. "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit," the psalmist writes. Being crushed brings God near. Being crushed in spirit brings salvation.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

1. Was there an event in your life, large or small, that crushed you?

2. Where was God when this happened to you? (There are no wrong answers, just go with your gut reaction.)

3. What was the worst thing about the event that you've never told anyone about?

DAY 1 Steps taken: _____ Miles journeyed: _____

Exercise chosen: _____

Something I thought about: _____

Something I need to pray about: _____

DAY

2

What Separates Us from God?

BIBLICAL BIG IDEA #2

For perverse thoughts separate people from God, and when his power is tested, it exposes the foolish; because wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul, or dwell in a body enslaved to sin. —Wisdom 1:3–4 (RSV)

Me: Hey God?

God: Yes?

Me: Why do I keep doing the same thing over and over and expecting things to be different?

God: Because it's the nature of humans to think they've got it all figured out.

As you walk on today's journey, I want you to think about Sin. We'll be talking about sin for a couple of chapters because it's important. All humans sin. Even prolific Christian writers. In fact, we may be more in touch with or aware of our sins because we write. I am a passionate person. I love fiercely, but I am also quick to anger. Frustration can simmer beneath my exterior when I think things aren't going my way. In fact, my children were recently describing my work and said, "Mommy writes about health policy. She gets mad when people don't listen to her." I cringed. Reacting with anger isn't what God teaches us. These sort of behaviors (and others) separate us from God. Most of the time we don't think about how our behaviors disconnect us from God. Perhaps we sin because we try to figure things out on our own. Humans are generally fallible; we screw up a lot of times, even when we are trying not to. This does not mean we are bad people, it just means we are a broken lot that needs the grace of God to figure out how to get back on track.

All of us sin. Just because we love God deeply doesn't mean that we haven't sinned. (If you've read any of our other books, you would know that we've both sinned quite a bit.) In both of our traumatic experiences, David and I tried to figure things out on our own. We went through stages of anger at God, rebellion against God, grief and loneliness as we wondered if God could ever forgive us our sins. And we experienced joy as we came to realize that God is ever faithful even when we are sinful creatures.

So, what is sin? Sin is any action that separates us from the love of God. The actions that separate us from God are unloving actions. Jesus came to teach us God loves us and had given the Law (such as the Ten Commandments) to help us avoid those kinds of unloving actions. We tend to think of sin as those things we only do to others, but we can also have unloving thoughts of ourselves and harmful actions directed to our own bodies. When we go through a traumatic event, there is a component of self-loathing that causes us to sin against ourselves.

When I was diagnosed with cancer, I blamed myself. I felt unworthy of God's love. I felt completely betrayed and left by God. I was a good girl. I am and was a God-fearing, Jesus-loving, trying-hard-to-practice-my-Christian faith gal. I often thought (wrongly) that all those good behaviors were going to protect me from bad things happening in my life. I thought I had a "Get Out of Jail Free" card tucked in my back pocket. I was doing everything so right, how could things go wrong?

But they do. And they did. And things will probably get upended again before I die. The world has a way of throwing things at you. Just because you are going through something bad now doesn't mean that it won't ever happen again. That's why finding your way back to God is so important.

Jesus died to take our sins upon himself. He showed us *how* we should live for one another and how to love one another: selflessly. God realizes that we are flawed, and we continue to sin, but the gift of Jesus' love and crucifixion gives us hope that we can aspire to love as much as God loves us. A just and perfect God could not simply sweep sin under the carpet and go on running a perfect universe, allowing us to get away with murder (literally and figuratively). The gift of Jesus' life gave *us* the promise of life everlasting with God if we follow in the way of Christ. God's grace doesn't mean that sin doesn't happen, it

means we have a vision of the way things are supposed to be when the bad things do happen, which involves turning back to God in Jesus.

The first step begins when we identify what is making us feel separated from God. From there, we can work on the steps needed to find our way back. That process of the journey will help us explore love and help us to know that we are very much loved, forgiven, and that there's a place for us in this crazy journey of life. As you walk today, think about how you have sinned against God.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

1. Do you feel separated from God?

2. What do you think has separated you from God?

3. Why do you feel it has separated you from God?

DAY 2 Steps taken: _____ Miles journeyed: _____

Exercise chosen: _____

Something I thought about: _____

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Something I need to pray about: _____

DAY

3

What Is Remorse?

BIBLICAL BIG IDEA #3

All of them moaning over their iniquity.

All hands shall grow feeble,

all knees turn to water.

They shall put on sackcloth,

horror shall cover them.

Shame shall be on all faces. —Ezekiel 7:16b–18a

Me: Hey God?

God: Yes?

Me: Why are you looking at me like that?

God: Wait, what? I wasn't looking at you.

“I shouldn't have drunk so much last night,” I said to my running buddy, as we met at zero dark thirty at the parking lot. I continued, “I feel awful.” Whether it's too much to drink or too much to eat, I often have remorse during many a morning workout. “Buyer's remorse” happens often in a consumerist culture. We've all bought things we know we don't need or really want.

Remorse is an emotion we feel when we miss the mark or break the moral code we keep inside us, at least until the moment we break it. Because moral codes come from so many sources, we usually need to sort out with a therapist or spiritual director whether we are feeling shame or guilt. Sociologist Brené Brown's excellent research work¹ makes the distinction between shame and guilt this way: Guilt says, “I made a mistake,” Shame says, “I am a mistake.” The good news is that we are not mistakes, even though we make mistakes.

Shame leads to self-destruction; guilt can lead to a new life, a new start, and a new joy. No matter how bad we feel the morning after, we

1. <https://brenebrown.com>

must remember that God loves us truly and deeply. God does not see us as mistakes, even when we make mistakes. Truly, as the prayer that opens the Ash Wednesday service says, “Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made.”²

Our feelings of remorse are powerful and painful, and they can paralyze us. This is a very critical moment in our journey to healing. This is where we are most tempted to despair, self-destruct and stop dead in our tracks. It is possible to be dead while still alive, the real walking dead. You can see why ancient people wore sackcloth in times of remorse and repentance. They wanted their outward appearance to reflect how they felt inside.

In spite of the risks, this critical moment of our journey holds within it huge possibilities. During a 100-mile race my pacer shared a story with me during the hours of 10:00 p.m. to midnight. He told me how he grew up in church then left it. He was sitting on his couch one night after a very painful breakup, smoking weed and drinking. He was feeling awful about himself and how he always seemed to end up in the same predicament, on the same couch. He was feeling remorse. It was in that moment when he heard God speak to him. God told him to get up and go to church the next day. He did, and to make a long story short, that encounter brought him back into a community of love and hope. He went from poor health to running 100-milers, and from serial breakups to a healthy marriage.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

1. What event prompted you to feel remorse?

2. Book of Common Prayer, 264.

2. What did you do when you felt remorse?

3. Have you been able to see the difference between shame and guilt in your own story?

DAY 3 Steps taken: _____ Miles journeyed: _____

Exercise chosen: _____

Something I thought about: _____

Something I need to pray about: _____

DAY

4 What Is Penitence?

BIBLICAL BIG IDEA #4

*Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy;
when I fall, I shall rise;
when I sit in darkness,
the LORD will be a light to me. —Micah 7:8*

Me: Hey God?

God: Yes?

Me: I am so sorry. Sorrysorrysorrysorry. . . I say this a lot.
I'm sorry.

God: I know. It's okay. I love you anyway.

Penitence is the act of expressing remorse, grief, and sorrow over what separates us from God. In our current pop-culture-filled world, we tend to have flashbacks to *The Da Vinci Code* when we think of penance for our sins where the monk is self-flagellating himself with the cat-o'-nine-tails; a bloody affair. People equate penitence with beating themselves up, but we don't need to in order to recognize that we are sorry for the things that we have done or left undone. Like many things with our faith and spiritual practices, true penitence is the outward signs of those things we've inwardly digested and come to terms with about ourselves. Unfortunately, we often exhibit behaviors that we think express penitence through mental, physical, and spiritual self-flagellation, but we haven't truly inwardly digested and accepted that no matter what we do, God forgives us if we are truly and sincerely repentant.

Self-abuse is not the same thing as being penitent.

I can be sorrowful and remorseful about those things that separate me from God and still continue to do those things that separate me from God, digging into an even deeper hole. I am very good at repeating the same thing over and over while expecting things to be different. Like every step on a journey, we first have to acknowledge those things that separate us from God (awareness), express a true inward desire to

change things from the way they are to a new vision of togetherness with God (penitence), and then we need to take action. Penitence is not just expressing the sorrow, it's the outward expression that we want things to be different. We want to be together with God again. We are acknowledging that something is not quite right with our own personal *feng shui*. We might not quite yet believe that everything can be made right or that we are worthy of that forgiveness. Perhaps we still blame ourselves for what happened in our lives. The steps towards penitence acknowledge that things are off kilter and that things need to be different if we are going to survive.

I knew about nine months into my cancer diagnosis that things weren't okay in my spiritual and mental world. I was doing great (more or less) coping with the physical things that were going on, but I had been so intent on trying to defeat this cancer thing on my own, I left God somewhere behind me. In addition, with all the gung-ho attitude of be-all, do-all, I never really addressed how super pissed off at God I was for giving me cancer in the first place. (Not that God gave me cancer, but I sure did want a Gandalf-like wizard waving a magic wand to make it all go away.) I never acknowledged how I was trying to literally run away from my diagnosis on my runs, or how my once-healthy behaviors turned to not-so-healthy ones in a subconscious effort to punish myself for whatever I did wrong to get cancer. I was going, going, going in the immediacy of dealing with a traumatic diagnosis so that all of a sudden, I ended up in a deep hole wondering, "Where is God?"

A sure sign that things are off balance on your mind, body, or spiritual journey: your body hurts, you are mentally exhausted all the time, you pretty much hate anything to do with the church and God, and you are miserable. Dejected as a person, friend, lover, spouse, child, and/or parent. These are all signs that somehow you've taken a step off the path *with* God and are walking a dark road by yourself. Some people will be aware that they are separated from God and need help. Others will need a buddy to tell them they need to get back on the right path.

When we come to the realization we've become separated from God we grieve. I think our bodies know that we need to be right and tight with our maker. Our soul craves for the balance that a life with God brings. Acknowledge the grief and sorrow that you are (or have been) separated from God and you need to find your way back. That's what *Christ Walk Crushed* is all about.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

1. Are you grieving?

2. What does your journey look like right now? Are you on a path that you want to stay on?

3. What are some things you've done to beat yourself up about events in life?

4. Have these actions done anything to make you feel closer to God or further away?

DAY 4 Steps taken: _____ Miles journeyed: _____

Exercise chosen: _____

Something I thought about: _____

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Something I need to pray about: _____
