

DANIELLE  
DEADWYLER

JACKIE  
LONG

KIM  
FIELDS

MALINDA  
WILLIAMS

# a CROSS to BEAR

Sometimes the hardest part of the journey  
is leaving the past behind.



SATURDAY, FEB 18  
7, 9, & 11 PM ET



UPLIFTING ENTERTAINMENT

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## **CREW OVERVIEW**

TANDRIA POTTS (DIRECTOR/PRODUCER)

CAS SIGERS-BEEDLES (SCREENWRITER/PRODUCER)

TERRI J. VAUGHN (PRODUCER)

## **CAST OVERVIEW**

DANIELLE DEADWYLER (ERICA MOSES)

KIM FIELDS (JOAN)

MALINDA WILLIAMS (FAE)

JACKIE LONG (CHARLES)

LECRAE MOORE (JEROME)

KENNY LATTIMORE (PRODUCER)

TREY (KARON JOSEPH RILEY)

TINA (TAMIKA TANNER)

## **USING THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE**

Intended for use after viewing the film, this study guide provides the structure and opportunity for Bible-based discussion of the themes from *A Cross to Bear*. The guide offers exploration of four different themes from the movie and allows groups or families to discuss all the themes in one session, or they might focus on one or two themes at a time.

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**DISCUSSION GUIDE CREATED BY: DAVIDA J. CAMPBELL**

## FILM OVERVIEW

*A Cross to Bear*, written by Cas Sigers-Beedles and directed by Tandria Potts, tells the story of Erica Moses (Danielle Deadwyler) and her battle to overcome the pain and guilt of her past. Erica, who has been on her own since the age of 14, deals with being the victim of an abusive relationship, the loss of her 15 month old daughter, and a strong addiction to alcohol. Erica finds herself homeless and at a crossroads when she is presented with the opportunity to change her life around from the help of well-respected community figure, Joan Blackford, played by Kim fields. Joan houses young abandoned women and helps them restore their lives. With the help of her friend and partner Fae (Malinda Williams), Erica and several other young women realize that their past does not have to dictate their future. Joan and Fae help these women acquire the strength to forgive themselves and others who have hurt them. Through this experience, Erica forms a new understanding of God and how God can help her overcome all obstacles.

Along her journey to finding peace and finding good in others, Erica forms a special friendship with Tina (Tamika Tanner), who is a resident at Joan's House and struggles with an addiction to prescription drugs. Tina is the first person in a long time to get Erica to open up about her career dreams and aspirations, and ultimately encourage her to tell the truth about the death of her daughter. Erica also finds a new friend and love interest in a guy name Charles (Jackie Long), who is a security guard at the office where she works. Erica is quickly interested in forming a relationship with Charles until he shows his disgust for the homeless on their first date. Erica faces a few more trials that causes her to get kicked out of Joan's home, but on her own Erica is able to overcome her battle and show real strength and perseverance. As audiences empathize with Erica's unfortunate circumstances, they will cheer for her new beginnings. *A Cross to Bear* shows that sometimes the hardest part of the journey is the first step.

# Theme One: Self-Image/Insecurities

## Topics with Examples From the Film:

- **Colorism-** Erica auditions for a ballet company.
- **Physicalities-** Erica changes her appearance.

## Scenes to Review

“A Chosen Few” (00:01:10-00:01:28)

“Erica’s Transformation” (00:01:28-00:03:03)

## Scriptures to Reference

Genesis 1:27

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Colorism “can be found across the world. The term is generally used for the phenomenon of people discriminating within their own ethnic groups. The term refers to when lighter skin tones are preferred and darker skin is considered less desirable, or vice versa.”<sup>1</sup> In Erica’s case, she wasn’t chosen to dance in a ballet company she desperately dreamed being a part of as a child. Looking around, Erica believed it was based on the color of her skin. Many times in life, we deal with the insecurities of not liking the way we look. Whether its issues of your weight, handicap, complexion, or any of issues that plague you, just remember, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” and that all of us were created in the image of God.

## Discussion Questions

1. In the film, Joan stated in her voice over, “Classical arts didn’t always cater to girls like her (Erica)...” was there ever a time where you were faced with hardships in extracurricular activities or certain groups based on the color of your skin?
2. How did that make you feel?
3. What are your views on a parent instilling values in their children, in this case—Young Erica, to “use what you got to get what you need?”
4. Do you believe that mentality led to Erica’s self-destruction?

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<sup>1</sup> "Discrimination based on skin color - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia." Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. N.p., n.d. Web. 6 Feb. 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colorism>.

# Theme Two: Personal Struggles

“Those of us with the hardest struggle have the biggest purpose.”- Joan

## Topics with Examples from the Film:

- **Addictions-** Erica’s Alcohol Addiction.
- **Dependencies-** Erica dependent on Trey for a means of living. Tina dependent on her medication to ease the ticks.
- **Death of a Loved One-** Erica loses her daughter.

## Scenes to Review

“Erica walking out of liquor store.” (00:17:57-00:18:30)

“I Have 3 More Months” (00:44:54-00:45:33)

“The Struggle is Over” (01:08:00-01:09:11)

“I Need Some Money” (00:05:05-00:10:23)

“Hair Braiding Scene” (00:28:20-00:29:45)

“Flashback Scene” (00:31:28-00:33:33)

## Scriptures to Reference

Mark 4: 35-41

“**35** And the same day, when the even was come , he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. **36** And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. **37** And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full . **38** And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish ? **39** And he arose , and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace , be still . And the wind ceased , and there was a great calm. **40** And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? **41** And they feared exceedingly , and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” There have been times where we’ve questioned God, if we love and follow him, why is he bringing me to this storm in my life? Storms are designed to build us, not destroy us. You’re not the first and won’t be the last going through a storm. You’re not alone. Just remember, “The will of God will never take you where the Grace of God cannot keep you.”

## Discussion Questions

1. In *A Cross to Bear*, Erica was addicted to alcohol. Has there been a time in your life when you've been faced with an addiction?
2. Are you still struggling with your addiction? If yes, do you plan on getting help? If no, how did you overcome it?
3. Joan wanted Tina to look after Erica. Do you believe that they both helped each other out in the problems that they each faced in the film?
4. After finding the empty bottles of alcohol in Erica's room, was Joan right to kick Erica out of her home? Explain.
5. In the scene, "I Have 3 More Months," Erica exclaims, "If you take us in, you need to deal with our imperfections." Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
6. The death of a loved one can be hard to deal with. Have you lost someone very near and dear to you? How did their passing affect you?



**“Maybe its time for you to start walking into your destiny and stop using excuses.”-Joan**

# Theme Three: Conquering Fears

“You can’t run from your past. You gotta keep working to make sure you have a future you are proud of.” –Joan

## Topics with Examples from the Film:

- **Taking 1<sup>st</sup> Step towards Recovery**-Erica returns to Joan’s House after running away. Erica speaks for the first time when Morgan comes to visit. Erica admits that she drinks when questioned by Joan.
- **Overcoming Insecurities**- Erica begins to dance again.
- **Overcoming Addictions**-Erica attends an AA Meeting.
- **Overcoming Past**-Erica and Charles has lunch in the park.  
Joan reveals she’s Tina’s mom.

## Scenes to Review

“Getting Help” (00:18:57-00:20:58)

“God’s Timing” (00:21:00-00:26:04)

“Starting Today” (00:59:57-01:00:43; 01:09:48-01:13:38)

“AA Meeting” (01:23:10-01:24:44)

“Picnic in the Park” (00:52:53-00:57:01)

“A Mother Knows” (01:16:34-01:17:08)

## Scriptures to Reference

Isaiah 43:18-19

“**18** Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. **19** Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.” Everyone has a past. However, don’t dwell in it because it will cause a hindrance to your future and blessings. In order to achieve a fresh start, you have to make up in your mind that you are not going to sit and wallow in your past, but praise God for where he’s taking you.

A Cross To Bear Discussion Guide 7

## Discussion Questions

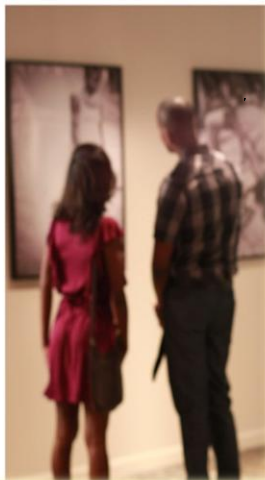
1. Erica blamed her mother for the way her life turned out (i.e. alcoholism, and involved with an abusive relationship). Has there been a time where you've blamed others for your shortcomings?
2. What are some obstacles you've faced in life?
3. How did you deal with them?
4. With Erica's past relationship with Trey, it was hard for her to move forward with Charles. Have you ever experienced hurt from your significant other to where it was hard to move on in a new relationship for dwelling in the past?



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**“We all have our crosses to bear.”-Joan**



**“Will you carry the weight alone or give it over to God?”-Erica**

# Theme Four: Peace & Forgiveness

“In order to move forward, you must have peace. In order to have peace, you must accept the past.”- Joan

## Topics with Examples from the Film:

- **The Power to Forgive**-Erica forgives Homeless guy in the park.
- **Overcoming Guilt**-Joan makes peace and forgives herself .

## Scenes to Review

“Erica and Homeless Guy in the Park” (00:55:44-00:56:35)

“LaLa’s Memorial” (01:01:47-01:03:14)

“Joan’s Monologue” (01:19:11-01:21:45)

## Scriptures to Reference

Genesis 50:17; 20-21

“**17** So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. **20** But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive . **21** Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.” The story of Joseph and his brothers is a remarkable one on forgiveness. Often times, when someone has offended us we tend to not speak and hold grudges. However, we don’t have to hold grudges, because God has already worked it out. As the saying goes, “Forgive them not what they have done, but what they do.” It is the wounds you need to forgive. Repent your sins of unforgiveness and forgive each offense from your heart. In order to make a change, you have to look at yourself, and acknowledge your past. Joan knew she had to forgive herself in order to move forward in life. “I created Joan’s house to right some of the wrongs that I’ve done. Done some good things, but they’ve been out of guilt. They haven’t been from love and I need to do things out of love. I have to ask God to forgive me. I have to forgive myself.”-Joan’s Monologue

## Discussion Questions

1. Erica stated in LaLa's memorial scene, "For the 1<sup>st</sup> time in a long time, I don't feel like crying." Do you think she is now at peace because she has forgiven the Homeless Guy of his acts? Explain.
2. Have you been hurt in the past and are still struggling with wounds that you just can't seem to recover from?
3. Does your heart lack peace?
4. After watching A Cross to Bear, are you going to forgive or not forgive that person?
5. Which of Joan's feelings expressed in her monologue resonated with you? Why?
6. How can you relate to A Cross to Bear?



**“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”- Romans 8:28**