

[The Chickamauga Battlefield Weekend of Ministry and Running.](#)



A few of the CR smile for a pic just prior to racing.

It just takes one.

I met Andy Koss and a few members of the Chattanooga Christian Runners chapter last year at the Chickamauga Battlefield running event. Yes, believe it or not those ‘other’ Christian Runners chapters displayed on our website exist and have REAL LIVE people associated with them! If you happen to be traveling to an area that has a CR chapter, consider dropping an email to the address posted for their chapter and let them know you’re visiting their location. It’s nice to have friends away from home!



Andy Koss: Friend away from home... starting off our festivities at the spaghetti dinner.

Maybe there were 8 Christian Runners from the Atlanta and Chattanooga chapters combined at last year’s Battlefield race. At that time Andy was still trying to get his chapter established. He was going through what most new chapters go through: First, advertise the run. Then, show up early with food and drink. Map the route. Wait. Wait a little longer. Pray for someone other than yourself to show up for the run. Saturday after Saturday after Saturday. I did this with the Tuesday night track-fest, too. Many weeks would pass and I’d STILL end up running alone! Sometimes it’s so hard to work through things like that. This anticipation builds before every group run. It can be so discouraging when you put out so much effort only to have no one to share it with. One day, though, just when you think nobody will EVER show up... you get ONE! Let the games begin!

While Andy and I and a few other CR members were sitting around after the race last year, this ‘idea’ came up. How did it go? “Man, I wish we could have all of the people in both of our chapters do this race together next year.”

A couple months later I got a message from Andy. He was SO excited because he had 10 runners show up for the Saturday run! Somewhere in that conversation we started talking about that idea of getting our chapters together for

the next Chickamauga race. After that call the prayers began. I was praying for Andy's chapter to keep growing. Andy was praying for our Atlanta track night runs. We tossed around the idea of having a spaghetti dinner for our two groups the night before Chickamauga. We envisioned a ton of Christian Runners running the race and supporting each other during the event. Imagine all those runners out there representing Christ together! We laughed at the thought of the logistics involved: Hotels, travel, commitment of several runners to show up and run the race, a Friday night dinner to organize, who eats what kind of foods, what time to do this or that. Would we put forth all the efforts only to have nobody show up?

NOT A CHANCE!!!! ☺

Last week our little idea came to fruition. I LOVE it when the plan comes together! Andy and his wife, Rene, and about 15 other Chattanooga Christian Runners welcomed our group of Atlanta Christian Runners to the most delectable pre-race spaghetti dinner I've ever eaten (*besides my mom's... ☺*)!



Chowin' down!!!

The gathering was fabulous! Andy's friend, Aaron Ford, gave an appropriate devotional that lasted about 15-20 minutes. It was so fitting that he focused on the similarities between running a marathon and running a spiritual race. According to Aaron, we *think* about doing a marathon. We then take action by training for it every day. We focus on it and carve out time to physically do the required work so that we may have a successful race. We often *think* about putting God first in our lives but unless we adopt similar methods to achieve this (like those we used in our marathon training) then God usually takes the back seat while we're busy focusing on the rest of our lives. Andy and Aaron will both correct me if I missed the point of the devotional, I'm sure. Certainly God can be first if we think about Him, then take action by studying the Bible daily, praying, devoting time to Him and making the commitment to get God back in the driver's seat, right?

We had the most amazing fellowship as our respective chapters united that night. After a year of building up to the event, we knew that God must have had it planned long before Andy and I ever met. There's another Running Shorts in that somewhere...

Race morning was COLD! Regardless, the Chickamauga Battlefield race was/is one of the most beautiful courses! Runners take in views of hundreds of memorials throughout the course.



Memorial...☺

The event is held during 'peak fall foliage season' so every road is lined with trees displaying the most intensely fall-colored leaves God has ever painted.



God's painting...

We encountered a million deer, a groundhog or two and flocks of Canadian geese honking at us to run faster. The course was abundantly stacked with volunteers and water/fuel stations. Gold stars to ALL the Chattanooga Track Club runners and volunteers who made this race such a great event worth traveling for. Oh- not to mention the EXCELLENT schwag! Runners hit the jackpot with the ultra-cool technical running shirts AND technical running hats (specific to the race you signed up for...1/2 or full marathon)! It's no wonder the promoter had to cap the ½ marathon as it filled to capacity for the first time! I'm sure this will be a race-in-demand next year so be ready to sign up early!

We had our traditional pre-run blessing. I love the pre-run blessing because it puts me in a state of mind that reiterates the reason why we run. Sure, it's fun to win age groups or qualify for Boston or run a personal best when you never thought you could do all of that. But it's more fun to not care about ANY of that and just run THANKFULLY with every step. On the back of our CR singlets is the verse from Hebrews 12:1 'Running with endurance the race that is set before us'. I can't tell you how many times someone has commented on that verse to me during or after a race. People see that verse and their focus immediately changes from their exhaust or pain to being grateful that God has allowed them to be in that state while so many others can't. They are suddenly running with their focus on Christ instead of their pain and then the pain isn't so bad. Interesting, eh?

All of the runners from BOTH chapters had phenomenal runs that morning. Between our groups we had some first-time marathon FINISHERS, TONS of personal bests and a boat-load of age group winners!



Kimber and Cindy (Cindy's first marathon!)



Chris slipping into the age group awards!

Best of all, we came away from the weekend with some great new friends who we can't wait to see again. It's funny, you know? I've heard that saying about how it just takes ONE moment to change everything. One moment, one thought, one comment, one idea, one commitment. I suppose most people would see our little weekend as just a dinner and a race. But I have no doubt that there was one 'something' at that event that very possibly changed the direction of someone's life permanently.

I mentioned to Andy that he should pick an event for HIS chapter to come to here in Atlanta next year. It's just an idea... 😊

Congratulations and thank you to all who made this weekend phenomenal!

Andy and Rene Koss for organizing...

Mindy for super-fantabulous desserts!

Aaron Ford for the inspiring devotional!

Delynn and Butch Campbell for bringing the food!

Max, Joe, Ryan, Greg, Kauri, Mandy, Kelly, Mary, Amy, Heather, Sharon, Joan ... for welcoming our CR chapter so graciously to your stomping grounds at the Battlefield!

And Eric, Chris, Cindy, Kimber, Mike, Mom and Dad: It was GREAT to have you all there! I am blessed.

