

Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross are an ancient way Christ-followers have prepared for Good Friday and Easter. The practice began with pilgrims to Jerusalem walking the road that Jesus followed to the cross. When they returned home, they replicated that experience for others by selecting a series of scenes from Jesus' final hours to create a spiritual walk through Jesus' suffering and death.

The fourteen stations used in our Stations of the Cross are all drawn from the Bible. (There is a traditional version that contains scenes that are not verified in Scripture.) The passage that corresponds with each station is printed in this guide. This guide also provides a reflection prompt and a prayer. These reflections and prayers are offered as suggestions. The Holy Spirit may wish to speak to you in another way or prompt you to respond with your own prayer.

Christ-followers speak so often and so easily about the fact that Jesus died to save us. The familiarity of that idea can often blunt the impact of the reality. The purpose of the Stations of the Cross is to slow us down to pay attention to what Jesus actually went through to save us.

As you walk with Jesus on his journey to the cross, try to imagine what he went through. He took on every form of suffering sin has brought into the world—from the psychological anguish in the garden to the interpersonal pain of betrayal, from the corruption of religious leaders to the injustice of political systems, from the physical pain of crucifixion to the spiritual suffering of being condemned for our sin.

As you go through the stations, perhaps the most important question to ask is: why? Why did Jesus choose to go through this? What motivated him? The answer to that question is the reason Holy Week is holy and Good Friday is good.

Prayer of Preparation:

Jesus, open my eyes to see what you did for me. Give me a greater vision of the wonder of the cross. Soften my heart to respond with gratitude, humility, and love. Amen.



Station 1 – Jesus Prays in the Garden (Matthew 26:36-41)

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

REFLECT: Take time to let it sink in that Jesus was “overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” In light of this, what would motivate Jesus to willingly decide to go to the cross?

PRAY: Jesus, thank you for carrying my burden. You did not have to do it, but you chose to do it knowing exactly what you would suffer. Forgive me for being like the disciples, spiritually asleep and ignoring what it cost you to save me. Help me “watch and pray” as I spend this time reflecting on your journey to the cross. Amen.



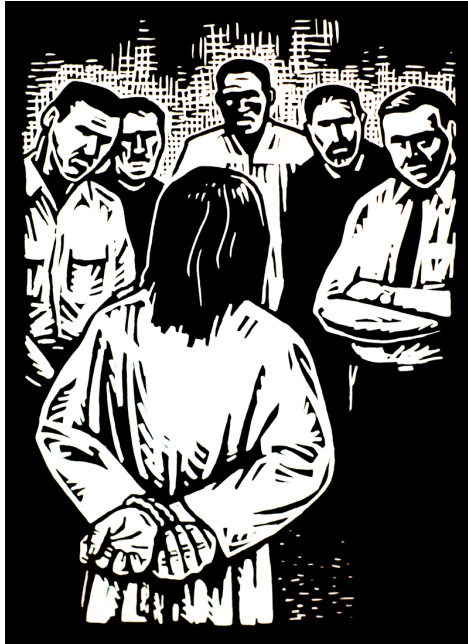
Station 2 – Judas Betrays Jesus (Mark 14:43-46)

Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him.

REFLECT: What was it like for Jesus to have one of his closest friends sell him out and hand him over to die?

PRAY: Jesus, thank you for remaining faithful to us when we have betrayed you. Forgive me for all the ways I have turned on you, when you have never ceased to love me. Amen.



Station 3 – Jesus is Accused by the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66-71)

At daybreak, the council of the elders of the people—both the chief priests and the teachers of the law—met together, and Jesus was led before them. “If you are the Messiah,” they said, “tell us.”

Jesus answered, “If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”

They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?”

He replied, “You say that I am.”

Then they said, “Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips.”

REFLECT: Imagine the contrast between the image of Jesus as the Son of Man, seated at the right hand of God, and the image of Jesus, standing bound and accused before an unjust court.

PRAY: Jesus, you are the Son of Man and the Son of God. You had the power to stop this trial and prevent your death, but you courageously declared who you are, even though it condemned you to death. Teach me to bow before you as you reign now at the right hand of the mighty God. Amen.



Station 4 – Peter Denies Jesus (Matthew 26: 69-75)

Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said.

But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said.

Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!”

After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!”

Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

REFLECT: How have you acted like Peter? In what ways are you currently denying Jesus, with your words or your lifestyle?

PRAY: Jesus, oh, what weak friends you have! I am no better than Peter. I tell you that I love you, but before the watching world, I live as if I do not know you. Forgive me for being ashamed of you. Win over my faithless heart with your faithful love. Amen.



Station 5 - Pilate Condemns Jesus to Death (Luke 23:1-4, 18-24)

Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king."

So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "You have said so," Jesus replied.

Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man." ...

The whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."

But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. So Pilate decided to grant their demand. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

REFLECT: Notice how Jesus was the ultimate victim of injustice. Jesus was condemned, not because he was guilty, but because of a weak leader who was afraid of the crowd. In this story, who are you? The crowds? Pilate? Barabbas?

PRAY: Jesus, you did nothing deserving death, but I ought to be condemned. Oh! How great is your grace, that you would put yourself in my place, so that I might be released. Amen.



Station 6 – Jesus is Scourged and Crowned With Thorns (John 19:1-3)

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face.

REFLECT: Imagine how Jesus would have felt in this moment. What would he have felt being flogged, having a crown of thorns pressed on his head, and being slapped? What would he have felt being ridiculed in this way, when he was, in fact, the King?

PRAY: Jesus, forgive me for mocking your kingship through my sinful disregard of your rule in my life. You are worthy of my true allegiance, because you took my true punishment. Teach me to bow the knee of my heart to you. Amen.



Station 7 – Jesus Carries the Cross (John 19:17)

Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

REFLECT: Imagine the physical weight of the crossbeam of the cross (about 100 lbs) placed on Jesus' shoulders. Imagine the weight of our sin that the cross represented.

PRAY: Jesus, this is why you came to earth. You came to carry my cross, to carry my sin. It was a weight I could not carry myself. Oh, Jesus! I will never be able to thank you enough for taking it for me. Amen.



Station 8 – Simon Helps Jesus Carry the Cross (Mark 15:21)

A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

REFLECT: Even as Jesus carried our cross, he calls us to take up his cross and follow him. This is not a way for us to pay for our own sin. Nothing we can do can add to Jesus' work for us. Instead, when we share in Jesus' sufferings, we do so as a way of imitating what he did for us by doing that for others. Put yourself in the shoes of Simon or his sons. How would this moment have changed the rest of your life?

PRAY: Jesus, give me grace to accept the cost of following you—the difficulty of denying myself, the sacrifice of serving others in your name, and the hostility of people who hate you. All these sacrifices are light compared to the burden of my sin that you carried. Amen.



Station 9 – Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem (Luke 23: 27-31)

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then "'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"' For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

REFLECT: What would it have been like to be one of those women, watching Jesus go to the cross?

PRAY: Jesus, when I am in pain, it is hard to consider the needs of anyone other than myself. But even as you headed to your own death, you were still concerned about the suffering of others enough to warn them. How deep is your love and compassion towards us! Amen.



Station 10 – Jesus is Nailed to the Cross (Luke 23: 33-34)

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

REFLECT: Imagine yourself standing at the foot of the cross and Jesus looking you in the eye. What would it be like to hear Jesus speak those words to you?

PRAY: Jesus, these are the words I long to hear. Have mercy on me, Savior. Your forgiveness is my only hope. Amen.



Station 11 – Jesus Comforts the Repentant Criminal (Luke 23: 39-43)

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

REFLECT: True repentance is when we say, "If I am punished, I would be getting what my deeds deserve." Do you think you could say those words from the heart?

PRAY: Jesus, I deserve to be in the same place as those criminals. The cross you bore was the one I deserved. My only hope is to plead your mercy. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Amen.



Station 12 – Jesus Speaks to Mary and to John (John 19: 25-27)

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

REFLECT: What would it have been like to be Mary—who heard the announcement of the angel, who carried Jesus in her womb, who cared for him as a child, who witnessed his entire life with wonder? Mary loved him in a way no one else ever could, as a mother. What would it be like to be Mary at this moment?

PRAY: Jesus, again, even at the very end, you are caring for the people you love. Forgive me for not seeing and responding to the needs of those you have entrusted to me. Give me your heart of compassion. Amen.



Station 13 – Jesus Dies on the Cross (Mark 15:33-34, 37-39)

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”)....

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

REFLECT: What would cause the Son of God to cry out those words?

PRAY: Jesus, your love is beyond my comprehension. Amazing love! How can it be that you, my God, would die for me? Thank you, Jesus. Amen.



Station 14 – The Body of Jesus is Laid in the Tomb (Matthew 27: 57-60)

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

REFLECT: What do you think Joseph was thinking and feeling as he did this?

PRAY: Jesus, we consider stories that end in a tomb to be tragedies, and that is where my story is headed. Thank you, Jesus, that your presence in the grave changes the ending of my story. Amen.