

## Experimenting With The Stations of the Cross

In its earliest years, Christianity was known as “The Way.” This was a shorthand reference to “The Way of the Cross.” The cluster of events that occurred in the last hours of Jesus’ life, leading up to the cross and beyond, have always been regarded by Christians as capturing the essence of what it means to follow Jesus—the “way” he showed us. Jesus himself said, “Take up your cross and follow me.” *Matthew 16:24*. In other words, Jesus invites us to enter deeply into his experience of death and resurrection—to live it vicariously with him again and again.

*Why?* So that the patterns he dramatized in his final hours become deeply ingrained in us. So we begin instinctively acting like him in the circumstances of our lives, repeating his pattern.

For this reason, one of the most common forms of devotional prayer for Christians throughout the ages has been *The Stations Of The Cross*. Each “station” represents a significant event in the last hours of Jesus’ life. If we were on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, we would actually walk to each station, stopping for prayer and meditation. Many ornate churches have built *The Stations Of The Cross* into their sanctuary, so people can physically move from station to station as they pray and meditate.

But we can also pray the stations in our homes by using the Bible verses and prayers presented below. These can be supplemented by pictures of each station of the cross. You can assemble your own set of pictures from the web. Or, at the Information Desk, you can pick up one of the picture booklets we have assembled for you.

This week we encourage you to try praying *The Stations Of The Cross* several times. If this prayer experiment works well for you, you might consider making it part of your routine. For example, over the long term, you might decide to devote one Quiet Time each week to praying *The Stations Of The Cross*—so as to keep the most basic patterns of Christianity deeply ingrained in your soul.

### Instructions

1. Quiet yourself, relax, and take a few deep breaths.
  2. Read the first Bible verse aloud slowly.
  3. Then read the related prayer aloud slowly.
4. Pause for a moment. Occasionally, you may sense God wants you to stop and think more deeply about a particular station and how it applies to your life. If so, spend a couple minutes talking to God about that station. If not, move on to the next.
  5. For some people, it may be helpful to actually physically move with each station—from room to room or chair to chair, so as to keep your whole body involved in the process.
  6. Some days you may move through each station without much meditation. That’s OK. Remember, the goal is to ingrain the stations into our souls, so they become part of us and begin subconsciously influencing the way we think and act.
  7. Other days, you may spend so much time pondering one or two stations that you can’t complete all the stations. That’s OK too. Let the Spirit guide you.

*Note:* Over time, there have been various versions of *The Stations Of The Cross*. The exact number and identity of the stations varies. This particular version was adapted for our own use from several traditional models.

### Station 1: Jesus Prays In The Garden

“Jesus threw himself on the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.’” *Matthew 26:39*

Prayer: Increase my willingness to do what is right even when the cost is high.

### Station 2: Jesus Is Tried And Condemned

“The high priest tore his clothes and said . . . , ‘What is your verdict?’ They answered, ‘He deserves death.’ Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him.” *Matthew 26:65-67*

Prayer: When life is unfair, teach me to trust and to wait patiently.

### Station 3: The Soldiers Mock Jesus

“The soldiers began saluting him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him.” *Mark 15:18-19*

Prayer: When people lash out at me, teach me to respond as gently and peacefully as You did.

#### **Station 4: Jesus Takes Up His Cross To Carry**

Jesus said, “If any want to be my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

*Luke 9:23*

Prayer Show me what it means to carry my cross today. May I gladly bear it. Teach me that joy is found in giving of myself.

#### **Station 5: Jesus Falls Under The Weight Of The Cross**

“As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; [the soldiers] compelled this man to carry Jesus’ cross.” *Matthew 27:32*

Prayer: When I fall under the weight of circumstances, may I be humble enough to accept the help of others. May I be to others what Simon was to Jesus.

#### **Station 6: Jesus’ Consoles The Women Of Jerusalem**

Jesus said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; but weep for yourselves and for your children.”

*Luke 23:28*

Prayer: Knit my heart with mothers of the world who weep for their suffering children. Open my awareness to suffering.

#### **Station 7: Jesus Is Nailed To The Cross**

“When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals. . . .”

*Luke 23:33*

Prayer: Each of my sins is like a blow of the hammer that drives the nails deeper into your hands and feet. I do not understand; I cannot fathom Your love for me. Thank You.

#### **Station 8: Jesus Sees His Mother**

“Standing near the cross of Jesus was his mother. . . . When Jesus saw her and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to his disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’” *John 19:26-27*

Prayer: May I love and care for my family as much as Jesus did.

#### **Station 9: Jesus Is Thirsty**

“After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said . . . , ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch . . . and held it to his mouth.” *John 19:28*

Prayer: Help me to know that thirst and longing is part of the human condition. Teach me to acknowledge my thirst and longings, as Jesus did, and to manage them in healthy ways.

#### **Station 10: Jesus Dies**

“When Jesus had received the wine, he said, ‘It is finished.’ Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

*John 19:30*

Prayer: Give me the grace to face death with as much dignity as You did.

#### **Station 11: Jesus Is Buried**

“So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.” *Matthew 27:59-60*

Prayer: When all is lost, dead and buried, teach me to wait expectantly, never losing hope.

#### **Station 12: Jesus Rises**

“Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, ‘. . . Go to my brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to . . . my God and your God.”’ Mary went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord!’” *John 20:18*

Prayer: May I learn from the example of Jesus—that, if I keep faith, death is always followed by resurrection, in all things large and small.