



THIS IS MY STORY

A journey through the Stations of the Cross

This guide is designed to help you prayerfully reflect upon the crucifixion of Jesus. As you move through the artwork, Scripture Readings, reflections, and prayers of each station, we hope you find your own story intersecting with Jesus' along the way.

Our Savior's journey out of the city on Good Friday was much different than the exuberant procession into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Not long before his agonizing march to Calvary (the Latin rendering of the hill on which Jesus dies), crowds greeted him with shouts of "Hosanna" and "Blessed!" This time, Jesus carries his cross through the narrow, crowded streets of Jerusalem amidst cries of derision and mocking.

Jesus transformed this Roman torture device into an enduring symbol of forgiveness and triumph over evil. Crosses adorn our steeples, necklaces, and homes. The streets of our towns are filled with people who carry their own personal crosses – people who are bruised, battered, and broken. We approach the cross of Christ with mystery and wonder.

This guide is suited for individual and group reflection. At each station you are invited to:

1. **Look at the photo of a sculpture** created by Robin Riddel and consider the emotion, form, and connection to the station conveyed by each figure.
2. Have someone in your group volunteer to **read these sections:**
 - **The passage(s) of Scripture**
 - **Where is Jesus in the Story?**
 - **Where am I in the Story?**
3. Spend some time **reflecting** and/or journaling.
4. If you're in a group, take a moment to **discuss** your thoughts.
5. **Read the prayer** and move to the next page.

Through prayer and reflection, Jesus invites us to journey with him each step and to reflect on his suffering as it continues in the lives of his people. In solidarity with all who suffer, let us pray that we will be open to what he wants us to see, hear, and understand.



STATION 1 // Jesus is Condemned to Die



MARK 14.60-65 (NIV)

Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”

“I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”

They all condemned him as worthy of death. Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophecy!” And the guards took him and beat him.



WHERE IS JESUS IN THE STORY? (STATION 1)

Jesus was captured at night, taken away by soldiers, stripped his garments, interrogated, tortured, and crowned with sharp thorns.

Jesus was unjustly condemned to death on a cross and was sentenced by those who were threatened by him. He was then presented to the public to be openly shamed and displayed.

WHERE AM I IN THE STORY?

The sculpture in the image above depicts a woman buried under stones of condemnation cast by others. Look into her eyes. Think of the stones of condemnation that others have thrown at you and at those you care about.

Can you identify with this woman?

Can you see yourself in her sorrow?

Can you imagine the pain of those in our world that suffer the bitter and unjust condemnation of racism, classism, or prejudice?

Take a moment to think of a word or a phrase that has been used to condemn you.

Is there a label or a false identity that you have been carrying?

The good news is that because of the cross, you no longer have to carry that condemnation. Jesus has taken that condemnation upon himself and will carry it from here.

PRAYER

O Lord, may I be moved by this journey toward the cross.

May I take this journey with You and You with me.

Lord, my heart aches as I imagine you standing among the high priests and soldiers as they hurled insults and spat upon you.

Thank you for enduring shame and condemnation with strength and reserve so that you might know the pain we experience.

Thank you for identifying with my own hurts and pain.

Forgive me for those times when I have condemned others and made them feel small.

In the merciful name of Jesus we pray,

Amen.



STATION 2 // Jesus Takes Up His Cross



JOHN 19.14-17 (NIV)

It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.

“Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews.

But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

“Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered.

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

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



WHERE IS JESUS IN THE STORY? (STATION 2)

Jesus was led to the path out of the city. They handed him the sturdy beams of the cross to carry – the same beams they would soon use to crucify him.

This cross was not just a piece of wood; it represents the weight of life's difficulties.

Jesus carried the cross courageously, with strength and without complaint.

He will soon transform the cross from a symbol of condemnation into one of liberation.

WHERE AM I IN THE STORY?

We all carry burdens, some obvious and some we take great care to hide. Our burdens seem to be elevated to the surface during the struggle we are all facing during this time in our world – the burdens of illness, anxiety, pain, loss of a loved one, financial ruin, fear, loneliness, isolation, job loss, or a failing marriage or relationship.

What burden is on your mind at this moment?

When you are ready; take a slip of paper and write out what's weighing you down today. (Feel free to keep this between you and the Lord.)

This exercise may not be easy but sometimes naming our burdens helps us to face them – and to remember that we do not face them alone.

Hold on to these burdens as you journey with Jesus through the stations.

PRAYER

Lord, may I feel your presence with me in the midst of my burdens.

Help me to give them to you, knowing that you carried the burden of our sin, shame, and pain so that we might experience forgiveness, freedom, and life in you.

Help me to help others who are suffering.

I know that once you lift these burdens,

I will be liberated.

In the strong name of Jesus we pray,

Amen.



STATION 3 // Jesus Stumbles and Falls



ISAIAH 53.7-9 (NIV)

He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
Yet who of his generation protested?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was punished.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.



WHERE IS JESUS IN THE STORY? (STATION 3)

Jesus falls, broken, and exhausted, physically and emotionally.
Lying on the ground, Jesus must decide if he gets up...or gives up.

While there is no text in the pages of the Gospels that explicitly tells us that Jesus stumbles and falls, it is not a stretch to imagine this outcome after the physical and emotional pain Jesus has endured thus far.

Stretched to his breaking point by the torture, the scourging, and the weight of the cross, Jesus continues to stand to his feet and continues this journey.

WHERE AM I IN THE STORY?

The sculpture in the image above depicts a woman struggling and straining – relying on herself and her own strength. She is lost and hidden from the world, as well as hidden from her true self.

Can you identify with her?

Jesus invites the weary and burdened to come to him and find rest (Matthew 11). At times, you might feel overburdened by the cross you carry. You feel like your struggle against sin and temptation is just one stumble and fall after another. You carry pain from struggling under the weight of your burdens and unrealistic expectations.

*Do you find it difficult to take your eyes off your problems and your pain?
What prevents you releasing the burdens you carry?*

Instead of relying on yourself, allow Jesus' fall to remind you that even in the moment of complete helplessness, temptation, depression, or failure, you can stand up again. Remember in this moment that Jesus is your strength.

PRAYER

Jesus, with the Father's help, you found the courage and strength to get up once again and continue the journey.
Let me recognize that I cannot do it on my own.
I need to reach out for you.
May your strength fill me when I am down,
Amen.



STATION 4 // Simon Helps Jesus



LUKE 23.26-27 (NIV)

As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.



WHERE IS JESUS IN THE STORY? (STATION 4)

Simon the Cyrene, a stranger in the city, did not know Jesus. But that did not matter. What matters here is that in this moment of need, Simon is capable of lending his shoulders to one who had nothing left, taking a stranger's cross upon himself.

There was no time for discussion. A need was there and a need was met. Surely Simon's life was forever changed after his journey with Jesus up the hill toward Golgotha.

WHERE AM I IN THE STORY?

Our world is in need today more than any other time in recent memory. We need hope, healing, and provision. Sometimes the needs seem too large, too far, or too impossible to meet. Perhaps we, like Simon, are here to meet the needs we are presented with in our time and place as we are able.

Every day we are presented with opportunities to carry the cross for others. Sometimes you might find it easy to carry the cross for those you believe are deserving of it. Sometimes we justify ignoring the plea of others because we feel they "brought it on themselves." But Jesus was compassionate, especially toward people who were hurting, sick, and living in poverty.

What are some ways you can come alongside your family, friends, or neighbors?

As you pray, let Jesus open your eyes to those who are in need. Perhaps you will hear an invitation to help them pick up their cross.

PRAYER

Lord, make us aware of opportunities to be a Simon in our world.

In those times when we can help, let us have the generosity to do so.

In turn, grant us the humility to accept all the Simons along our road who reach out to help us in our moments of need.

In the name of Jesus, our Suffering Servant, we pray,
Amen.



STATION 5 // Jesus is Nailed to the Cross



1ST READING // MARK 15.25-32 (NIV)

It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!”

In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.



2ND READING // ISAIAH 53.3-5 (NIV)

He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

WHERE IS JESUS IN THE STORY? (STATION 5)

Iron nails pierced his ankles. They pierced his hands – hands that helped the deaf to hear, hands that cleansed lepers, hands that blessed children, hands that touched and healed the sick.

The carpenter's hand is joined to the wood a final time.

As the cross is lifted in place, Jesus hangs in the space between heaven and earth, God and humanity, a blood-stained King reconciling the world to a broken-hearted Father.

WHERE AM I IN THE STORY?

Imagine the sharp point of the nail being driven into the hands and ankles of Jesus.
Let the weight of this moment sink in – beholding the Crucified God.

One misconception of the cross is that because Jesus died as a sacrifice for the sins of the world we are magically forgiven. We must not overlook this vital truth – that whoever believes in Jesus will not perish but have eternal life (John 3.16). The cross stands as an invitation for us to find life and forgiveness when we reach out with hands of faith.

Maybe you need to reach out to him today.

Just linger here for a few minutes in silence with Jesus, the Crucified One.



STATION 6 // Jesus Meets His Mother



JOHN 19.25-27 (NLT)

Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son."

And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother."

And from then on this disciple took her into his home.



WHERE IS JESUS IN THE STORY? (STATION 6)

As a boy, Jesus must have fallen and gotten hurt many times. Each time his loving mother would have been there to pick him up, to wipe away his tears, and to tend to his wounds.

On this day, however, she would be unable to do any of this. She would not even be able to reach out and touch him.

Mary must have felt helpless as she saw Jesus, but experienced the restraints of the guards. Yet it was Mary and a small number of others who accompanied Jesus on his journey to its bitter end.

WHERE AM I IN THE STORY?

As you look at the sculpture above, you might immediately notice that the image is in a state of brokenness, the state we so often find ourselves.

Have you experienced a time when you wanted desperately to help someone close to you – a family member, a friend, a child, a spouse – only to realize there isn't anything you can really do to help?

It is not easy to recognize our own limitations. When we cannot do all that we want to do, we must take our loved ones to the feet of Jesus and intercede for them.

Jesus said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die” (John 12.32-33). Jesus stretched out his arms of love upon the hard wood of the cross so that all might come within the reach of his saving embrace.

Spend a few moments as you silently lift up your family in prayer.

PRAYER

Jesus, we remember the gaze that rested between you and your mother.
In that moment of pain there was also a moment of deep and enduring love.
Jesus, give us the courage to bring that love into the deepest recesses of our homes,
to our children and to our spouses, to those places of fracture and disharmony
in our circle of relationships.
In the reconciling name of Jesus we pray,
Amen.



STATION 7 // Jesus Dies on the Cross



JOHN 19.28-30 (NRSV)

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.”

A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.”

Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.



WHERE IS JESUS IN THE STORY? (STATION 7)

The Son of God is crucified. There are no songs of victory as the King of the Jews is enthroned on a Roman cross. There are, however, words of fulfillment and forgiveness that still resound through the ages.

Jesus cries out “It is finished” as the story of redemption from sin, death, and evil comes to its dramatic turning point. And as life slowly drains from Jesus, his words are not of condemnation or pity for himself. No, what comes from Jesus is forgiveness. Luke records these words of Jesus from the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23.34, NIV).

In the midst of his anguish and suffering, Jesus called upon his Father to forgive those who are putting him to death. In the horror of crucifixion, the triumph of Light over darkness is being won. This is the beauty – and the paradox – of the cross.

WHERE AM I IN THE STORY?

If God forgave the men who nailed His son to the cross, he is able to forgive you.

*Have you ever felt that you disappointed God so much that he cannot forgive you?
What do you think is beyond the reach of God’s forgiveness? Anything?*

God can and will forgive you...if you sincerely and humbly ask.
When was the last time you asked?

John, the beloved disciple who lingered with Mary at the foot of the cross, wrote these words, “If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1.9, NRSV). What an incredible promise.

Remember the burden you wrote down on a slip of paper during your reflection on Station 2? Look at it again. Now, draw a line through the burden you have carried to this point. It’s no longer yours to carry alone. There is freedom and forgiveness available to you at the cross.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, your death has given me life. Forgive me for the times I take you for granted. May the gift of your sacrifice impress itself upon my mind and flood my heart with gratitude and wonder. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.