

A person is walking a dog on a city sidewalk. The image is overlaid with a teal color. In the background, there are signs for 'RIVERFRONT PARK', 'The Confluence Denver', 'MRG', and 'bank'.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

*A JOURNEY WITH JESUS THROUGH
THE STREETS OF BOZEMAN*

*WRITTEN BY JASON BOWKER
SOME LANGUAGE ADAPTED FROM KEAS KEASLER*



INTRODUCTION

Before you start, we encourage you to take a moment to center yourself by saying the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." Know that many in our community are praying these same words today and that your journey is bathed in prayer and upheld by our common prayers. Please take time to read this introduction and prepare your heart.

SOME BACKGROUND FOR THIS SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

We are taking a meditative prayer walk. This gets our whole being (body, mind, & spirit) engaged in prayer. Many churches have pictures of these "stations" on their walls, where people take this prayer walk in the quiet of a sanctuary, considering the Lord's sacrifice for them and entering into His death. We, instead, take the walk out to the streets to help see the right-now nature of what Jesus is doing and the present reality of how we can enter into it with Him, in our time and city.

The "Stations of the Cross" originated with believers who visited Jerusalem and literally went along the way Jesus went to the cross. There are records of their acts of devotion dating back to the 300s. The followers of Francis of Assisi (Franciscans) were the great promoters of this practice after they were given custody of the holy sites in Israel/Palestine during the 1300s. The fourteen stations are traditional, not strictly biblical. They function as visio divina, a visual portal for us to see the passion of Jesus re-enacted. The stations are also rarely acted out on city streets. So this meditative prayer walk will require determination and imagination. We are contemplating in mostly noisy places and we are asking ourselves to see familiar sites in deeper ways. Using our imagination and the streets around us, Pilate's court and Golgotha become present realities.

Some help for experiencing this journey:

- Identify with Jesus in His "death march," going with Him to the cross
- Go on an inward journey: remember, grieve, repent
- Receive the love and forgiveness of Jesus in a fresh way
- Go on an outward journey, see the city through the eyes of our dying Savior
- Pray that others remember, turn away from sin, and grieve
- See the love of Christ and receive God's forgiveness in Him
- Let this symbolize your own journey of suffering love for your neighbors

Visualize Jesus in each of the stations. See Him there broken, torn, suffering in love. Don't rush by Him as we often do, as others around you on the street may be doing. The stations slow us down and force us to truly be with Him in His suffering, in our time and in our city, as who we are right now. The New Testament scripture passages are included to help us imagine the scenes. Take a Bible along if you like, so the other passages can help you meditate and pray.

****The idea and some of the text for this resource was borrowed from a church leader named Keas Keasler. Much of the language, however, was changed to fit the Bozeman context.**

TO BEGIN

At the base of the Peace of Christ Community Church front steps, near the corner of Olive and Grand, stand by the railing in front of the large tree.

Reflect on how sin first entered the world through a tree in the Garden of Eden. That's the backdrop to the story of Christ's journey to the cross.

Take a moment to pray and center in on how to take the next step and to consider the city where many have little concern for or understanding of this journey.

FIRST STATION

Walk NORTH to the corner of Grand Ave. and Babcock, stopping beside the Grand Avenue Christian Church sign.

Notice the HOTEL BAXTER sign to the NORTHEAST, looming above the city, the highest point in all of Downtown Bozeman. It's a perfect place for the authorities to watch over Jesus, plotting against him and planning for his arrest and execution.

Now notice the other words you see on the buildings below the sign, just across the street: "rare," "handpicked," "handmade," and "moxie." Spend a moment reflecting on the rare moxie that Jesus shows in being willing to die for you, who he made by hand and picked in love.

Contrast the rare moxie of Christ's love toward us, below, with the authorities' obsession with control, above. This is where the religious leaders treated Jesus with disdain.

Pause to read the scripture below and consider that **Jesus is condemned to death.**

Again the high priest asked Him, "Are you the Christ, 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.

(Mark 14:61-64 – see Psalm 2:1-8)

SECOND STATION

Turn LEFT, cross Grand Ave, and continue about 25 yards to the side-entrance steps of the Emerson Cultural Center on your left.

Ascend the steps and study the building's entrance, with its red door, elaborate brick, and ornate architecture. Notice the enchanting art all around.

As your imagination whisks you away, you'll begin to see the carpet that Pontius Pilate stood upon as he handed Jesus over to be crucified. Imagine the lawn and surrounding streets filled to the brim with massive crowds, all entranced with the stench of mob violence.

At first it was just murmuring and rumblings. But it doesn't take long before the crowd has been whipped into a frenzy and is demanding the release of Barabbas, not Jesus.

Can't you picture what's happening?

Feel the heat from their anger and watch as **Jesus is made to carry His cross.**

*"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 other king but Caesar," the chief priest 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).
(John 19:14-17 – see Isaiah 53:1-4)*

THIRD STATION

Walk back down the steps and turn RIGHT, heading back toward Grand Avenue. At Grand, turn LEFT and cross Babcock. Continue walking until Main Street, turn RIGHT, and cross Grand Ave. heading EAST.

Stop at the concrete bench in front of the Lark Hotel. Like you, Jesus has now been walking for a little while. Unlike you, he's carrying the physical and emotional burden of the cross. He's tired and weary, the weight heavy upon his shoulders. His steadiness is wavering, he loses his balance, and falls to the ground. Here Jesus had to get up after his first fall.

If you are able and willing, lay down on the bench. If not, simply sit down for a moment.

Contemplate all Jesus is feeling and experiencing as he makes his way through the streets of Jerusalem.

As you slowly lift yourself up, feel the weight of the world's burden that Jesus was carrying through the cross. Feel our brokenness, guilt, shame, and sin upon his shoulders.

This is where **Jesus falls for the first time.**

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: "No servant is greater than his master." If they persecuted me, they will persecute you, also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.
(John 15:18-20 – see Psalm 140:5-6)

FOURTH STATION

Continue EAST along Main Street for about 3 blocks. Cross over Willson, Tracy, and Black Avenues before stopping in front of the Main Street entrance to the U.S. Bank.

Take a seat on the brown bench in front of the bright, white building.

Rest for a moment and notice The Great Rocky Mountain Toy Company directly across the street. Think about the mothers that lovingly bring their children into this store. Picture the joy and delight of both children and parents.

If you are a parent, remember the feeling of unconditional love you have for your child(ren). Reflect on the fact that you would do anything to make sure they face no suffering or pain.

Now imagine what it was like when Mary played with Jesus as a toddler. Place yourself in Mary's shoes, painfully watching her son be tortured and eventually killed. Envision her sorrow and grief.

Pause to read the scripture below and remember when **Jesus meets His sorrowful mother**.

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 His mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

(John 19:25-2 – see Lamentations 2:10-13)

FIFTH STATION

Arise from the bench and begin making your way back the direction you came, traveling WEST along Main Street.

Cross over Black Avenue and continue until Tracy Avenue.

Turn LEFT and walk almost a block on Tracy until you arrive at the steps of the HRDC building on your left.

HRDC is an incredible organization in our city, responsible for the Food Bank, the Fork & Spoon (pay-what-you-can) Café, the Warming Center, affordable housing, and so many more assistance programs for those in need.

They selflessly care for the needs in their midst, supporting those struggling under the burdens of poverty, hunger, homelessness, mental illness, and so much more.

As you reflect on the community services HRDC provides for our friends and neighbors, reflect on how a stranger served and supported Jesus as he struggled through the streets of Jerusalem. Simon was just observing the spectacle, one of thousands of crucifixions enforced and endorsed by the Romans. But he becomes a vital part of the passion story through his service to Christ.

It is here we remember how **Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry His cross.**

And when they had mocked Jesus, they took the purple cloak off and put His own clothes on Him, and they led Him out to crucify Him. A certain man from Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

(Mark 15:20-22 – see Psalm 142:3-5)

SIXTH STATION

Continue SOUTH on Tracy Avenue to the end of the block, at the corner of Tracy and Babcock.

Turn LEFT and immediately notice the beautiful, old clock to your left.

By this time in your prayerful walk through Bozeman's downtown, you may be starting to look at your watch and anticipate the end of this spiritual practice. But allow this lovely, unanticipated clock to slow you down and remind you that there is always time for devotion to God and the time is always right for serving Jesus in our community and world.

The original Holy Week was busy with chaos and events, with monumental activity occurring on the daily. But even amidst this frenzy, some of Jesus' followers made time to love and serve Jesus and others, many of them women.

Allow this time near the HRDC clock to be a reminder of the many women who ministered with and to Jesus throughout his life, even up to his death.

Use this space to remember how **Veronica wipes the face of Jesus**.

"Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" And the King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

(Matthew 25:37-40 – see Psalm 119:105-112)

SEVENTH STATION

Continue EAST on Babcock Street, past the HRDC clock and to the end of the block.

At the corner of Babcock and Black, take a seat on the short rock wall to your left (near the Owenhouse Bike Shop parking lot).

Notice the beautiful new building in front of you, diagonally across the street to your left. The bank that once stood in this spot has been razed to the ground, so a new and better thing could be built in its place.

Consider the leveling work Jesus has initiated as he makes his way to Golgotha. His body is being torn down so a resurrected body can emerge. The old systems of power are being demolished so Jesus' new kingdom can reign supreme. Behold, he makes all things new.

It is here, then, we celebrate that in Jesus' weakness, he is redefining strength. It is here where **Jesus falls the second time**.

*I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.
(Psalm 22:14-15 – see Psalm 119:25-28)*

EIGHTH STATION

Turn RIGHT and cross Babcock Street heading SOUTH. Head south on Black Avenue, passing the Post Office on your right.

Continue until the end of the block, where you reach a red fire hydrant at the corner of Olive Street and Black Avenue.

Spend a moment reflecting on the purpose of a fire hydrant. It's something you hope to never have to use, but when a fire rages, the cool, healing waters rush from the hose and alleviate the trauma.

It's this way with suffering and tears as well. We hope and pray for suffering to never surface, but when it does, we often find the cool, healing waters of our tears bubbling to the surface.

For so many, the torture and death of Jesus was the most grievous day of their lives. So in this moment, remember the pain and anguish those present with Jesus to the end must have been feeling.

Slow down. Pay attention. Feel the pain and sadness of death.

Now close your eyes and imagine the soothing, healing water as **the women of Jerusalem weep over Jesus.**

*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."
(Luke 23:27-28 – see Lamentations 1:12,16)*

NINTH STATION

Now simply turn to your RIGHT and take a few steps WEST along Olive Street.

Look up and to your RIGHT, high above St. James Episcopal Church a block ahead of you. Find the cellular tower, looming high above the city.

Now notice the shape of the very top of the tower. Perhaps your imagination will be necessary, but you see the crown-like shape, don't you?

Contemplate this as a crown of thorns, with the red door of the Episcopal Church below it as blood from Christ's brow.

This day is now reaching its apex of agony for Jesus. He's been stripped, beaten, and forced to carry his cross. And now he's both intensely injured and shockingly shamed through the embedded thorns atop his head.

Watch as **Jesus falls the third time.**

It was our weaknesses He carried, our sufferings that he endured... He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

(Isaiah 53:4-6 – see Psalm 26:1-3)

TENTH STATION

Continue WEST along Olive Street, prayerfully plodding with Jesus as you go.

Make your way across Tracy Avenue, past the red door of the Episcopal Church, to the lime-green building of Second Wind Sports.

As you stand outside, consider the clothing and equipment being sold and resold within the store. Think about the people they might have formerly belonged to.

Now picture the Roman soldiers arguing and bartering over Jesus' clothes. They have stripped him naked, rolled dice for his garments, and made a mockery of his very existence.

It is here in this place that **Jesus is stripped of His garments.**

*There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, He refused to drink it. When they had crucified Him, they divided up His clothes by casting lots.
(Matthew 27:34-35 – see Psalm 69:19-21)*

ELEVENTH STATION

Continue WEST along Olive Street until you reach the next street – Willson Avenue.

Stop near the corner of Willson and Olive, noticing how busy this intersection is. There are houses, businesses, and churches everywhere; cars, people, signs, and street lights abound.

Stand there. Look up and all around you.

Imagine this to be the crowded city of Jerusalem. Picture the streets bursting with onlookers—balconies filled and each window of nearby houses plastered with curious faces. Notice the two criminals flanking Jesus, and the chaos of crucifixion looming.

Dwell in the busyness of this intersection as **Jesus is nailed to the cross.**

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with Him to be executed. When they came to the place called the skull, there they crucified Him, 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.”

(Luke 23:32-34 – see Psalm 22:1-2, 16-18, Job 16:18-21)

TWELVETH STATION

From where you currently stand, at the corner of Willson and Olive, look UP and to your RIGHT, noticing the towering, white steeple of the Methodist Church.

It's the highest point in our current vantage.

Consider how Jesus was raised upon the cross. He had already ascended the hill known as Golgotha. He was perched high above Jerusalem, the city he knew, loved, and within which he had done so much life and ministry.

But now he's raised even higher, this time to die. He is elevated above everyone else, but in humility and sacrifice, not power and control.

Consider Jesus' great love for you that he would willingly surrender his own life for the sake of yours.

This is where **Jesus is raised upon the cross and dies.**

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When He had said this, He breathed His last.

(Luke 23:44-46 – see Colossians 2:13-15)

THIRTEENTH STATION

Push the crosswalk button and cross Willson Avenue to the front NORTHWEST corner of Olive and Willson.

Turn RIGHT and walk half-way down the block, stopping in front of the Dokken-Nelson Funeral Home.

As you quietly pause, consider the families who have said goodbye to their loved ones within this building. Think on their grief and sadness.

Reflect on the fleeting nature of life, that the world can be good and right in one moment and turned upside down in the next. Ponder and lament the magnitude of death, darkness, and despair our world is currently mired in.

Now reflect on the process of dealing with death—the people that deal with the bodies, the spiritual caregivers who offer words and presence of comfort, and the family and friends left to deal with their sorrow and grief.

Imagine the suffering and loss of Jesus' family, friends, and followers.

Here is where **Jesus is taken down from the cross.**

*When the soldiers came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead so they did not break His legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away.
(John 19:33-34, 38 – see Acts 2:22-23)*

FOURTEENTH STATION

Turn around and head back SOUTH toward Olive Street. Turn RIGHT on Olive.

Make your way past the Methodist Church and return to the front steps of Peace of Christ Community Church, where this prayer expedition began.

Climb the steps to arrive at the large, grey, metal doors. Imagine them as the stone which ominously guarded the entrance to Jesus' tomb.

This is the end of our journey, just as the tomb was for Jesus.

Take as long as you'd like to pray here.

Here, in the middle of our city, **Jesus is laid in the tomb.**

Joseph took the body, wrapped it in clean linen cloth, and placed it in his 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.

(Matthew 27:59-60 – see Psalm 30:2-5)

CONCLUSION

Turn and survey your surroundings. Remember where you've walked, what you've read, and the thoughts you've processed. Reflect on your experience of walking with Christ through the streets of Bozeman.

Fifteenth Station

Many renditions of the Stations of the Cross include a final station named **Jesus rises from the dead.**

We will metaphorically journey to that station of resurrection together on Sunday morning at 10:30am, through our Easter worship gathering.