



# STATIONS OF THE CROSS

JUSTICE FOCUSED PRAYER GUIDE



## **INTRODUCTION:**

Going to the stations of the cross is a moment to remember what Jesus experienced for us. The pain that he endured so that we may be washed clean. As you embark in this practice may each station help stir your affection for what God has done for you. We focus on injustice in this guide because Jesus chose to bring justice to our world through the most unjust act in history - while he was truly innocent, he was executed for our sake.

Injustice is still seen throughout the world today. We see growing economic disparity, systems that limit equal access to healthcare, gender inequality, racial prejudice and so much more. These actions and structures deny the dignity and worth that every human is born with as image bearers of Christ. This injustice is not only found in overt cruelty but in the passive silence of those unwilling to stand against it.

Although we do not pray to the icons in these displays, we agree that symbolism can help us contemplate all that has been done for us. **As you approach each station, read through the scripture and prayerfully engage with the text below.**

### **Station 1 - Jesus is Condemned to Death**

*"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified. Mark 15:14-15*

An innocent man is about to be killed, and the laws of the land will not protect him. A crowd has gathered, not to protest, but to cheer. Their government leaders were more concerned about politics than justice. We may not be in a crowd cheering the evil deed, but are we indifferent? Will we be like Pilate and the crowd, or will we use our opportunities to create opportunities for others?

*Christ Jesus, you were a victim of injustice, condemned by those who had the power to save you and ignored by those who might have spoken up on your behalf. Help us to use the opportunities we have to speak out against the injustices around us, knowing that you desire justice for all.*

### **Station 2 - Jesus Takes up the Cross**

*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 19:16-17*

Pilate did not seek the truth, but instead went along with the crowd. His unwillingness to stand up for what was right reflects the same attitude we see today, one that continues to allow discrimination and injustice to persist in every age. Too often, we do not want to know the truth.

*Jesus, help us to seek and acknowledge the truth with honesty and courage. The injustices caused by indifference, discrimination, and hate are far too common and impose heavy burdens on our brothers and sisters. Help us to speak the truth about the magnitude of the injustices they face.*

### **Station 3 - Jesus Falls the First Time**

*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. Isaiah 53:4-5*

Jesus accepted his cross and carried it valiantly despite his weakened state. But he could not bear up under the load. He fell. Injustice imposes heavy burdens, too. People face insults, exclusion, and threats because of who they are, where they come from, or the circumstances of their lives.

*Jesus, the cross of injustice is heavy. Help us not to dismiss it as just "the way things are," but rather to acknowledge the crosses others must bear because they are marginalized, and to find ways to accompany them in their journey.*

### **Station 4 - Jesus Meets His Mother**

*Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." Luke 2:34-35*

Mary was cautioned from the beginning that the blessing of bearing Jesus would come with a cost. The joys and the sorrows were mingled in her unflinching heart. Mothers and caregivers today launch their own children toward independence with difficult conversations about how to navigate a world that may not treat them fairly.

*Jesus, although at this time you could not relieve your mother's fears, you did acknowledge her pain. Help us to stand with anxious and grieving mothers and work to end the injustices that besiege them.*

### **Station 5 Simon Of Cyrene Helps Carry the Cross**

*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. - Mark 15:21*

Simon of Cyrene did not volunteer to help Jesus. But his very presence meant that Jesus was not totally alone. Although Simon did not have a choice but to help carry Jesus's cross, we do. We can keep our distance, or we can reach out to learn from and support those who have been pushed to the peripheries of our society.

*God, you have arranged the universe so that one person's action can help ease the burden of another. Embolden us to reach out and to speak out, to make others' crosses easier to bear.*

## **Station 6 - Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus**

*He grew up before him like a tender shoot, / and like a root out of dry ground. / He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, / nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. / 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. Isaiah 53:2-3*

Crowned with thorns and struck repeatedly on the head with a reed, covered in blood, sweat, and dust, Jesus's face that day would have been difficult to behold. Yet, in the story of Veronica, she pushed through the crowd and offered Jesus her veil to wipe his face. How do we respond when we see someone suffering unjustly?

*Jesus, so many of our brothers and sisters suffer daily from multiple types of injustice. Give us the gift of courage and reach out to those whom society has rejected and show them love.*

*The sixth station is inspired by a story that has been passed down through tradition. While it is not found in Scripture, it has been preserved because it offers a powerful example of love and compassion that can inspire us today.*

## **Station 7 - Jesus Falls the Second Time**

*I am the man who has seen affliction / by the rod of the Lord's wrath. / He has driven me away and made me walk / in darkness rather than light; / He has barred my way with blocks of stone; / he has made my paths crooked. / He has broken my teeth with gravel; / he has trampled me in the dust. Lamentations 3:1-2, 9, 16*

Jesus fell a second time under the weight of the cross. He suffered immensely for his willingness to identify with our humanity. Undoubtedly, some who saw him were quick to look down on him unsympathetically, as being a criminal. One of the signs of prejudice is to separate ourselves from those we deem unworthy or inferior. As soon as we start mentally separating people based on stereotypes, we judge falsely and break the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves.

*God, it is easy to fall into the trap of biased thinking without even being aware of it. Help us to view all people as individuals with unique dignity, value, and worth.*

## **Station 8 Jesus Meets the Women**

*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*

The women of Jerusalem were able to see beyond themselves and grieve the injustice done to Jesus. When we witness injustice, how do we respond? Do we care? Do we weep? Every day, countless people face anxiety, fear, and suffering. For some, it takes a conscious choice to notice and to care. The women of Jerusalem made Jesus's suffering their own—will we show that same compassion and concern for those in need today?

*Jesus, you call us to speak out against all injustice, not just the injustices that hurt our own communities. Help us to develop hearts that beat with genuine compassion when anyone's community suffers injustice.*

## **Station 9 - Jesus Falls the Third Time**

*We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.  
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.  
Isaiah 53:6-7*

Jesus is weighed down by the weight of the cross, as he bore the sins of the whole world. Injustices are not only experienced by individuals; they affect entire communities. Around the world, social structures and political institutions often uphold policies and practices that amplify the suffering of those who have been "othered." As a result, systemic injustice persists across generations. We must work to change them.

*Jesus, the call to change the structures that perpetuate injustices can be uncomfortable and challenging. Help us to acknowledge the roots of injustice and work to change them. Give us eyes to see and courage to act.*

## **Station 10 – Jesus is Stripped of His Garments**

*When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. John 19:23*

Part of the humiliation of crucifixion was that the prisoner was stripped of their clothes. This was done to deny the condemned person's dignity. Injustice all around the world today also attempts to strip others of their dignity. While our human dignity is an indelible gift from God, discriminatory attitudes and actions undermine the human dignity of the oppressor as well as the oppressed.

*Jesus, in becoming human you ratified the dignity of all humanity. Help us see every person's dignity as important as our own and create social structures that promote dignity for all.*

## **Station 11 – Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross**

*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. Luke 23:33-34*

Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross so that we might be reconciled with both God and each other. Reconciliation involved repentance where we must turn away from habits and patterns of sin and toward Jesus. It is easy to recognize an individual sin of discrimination when someone violates justice or fails to extend the love of Christ to others. But even people who seek to live justly cannot escape the taint of injustice prevalent in our world.

*Savior, forgive us for the sins we have committed and for the sins of omission that allow injustice to persist. Help us to stand up to the structures of sin and become advocates in the work of justice.*

## **Station 12 – Jesus Dies on the Cross (struggling with this one)**

*And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "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!" Mark 15:34,37,39*

The centurion recognized the injustice that had taken place and testified to the truth. We are called to be united with those who suffer injustice. Their pain should be our pain. Are we willing to acknowledge injustice and learn to see others in a new way, to connect with them and testify to their pain?

*Jesus, Son of God, when no one else seems to care, you care. You call us to care as well. Lead us to an ever-deeper relationship that bears fruit in true solidarity with those who suffer.*

### **Station 13 – Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross**

*Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.*

*John 19:38–40*

In order to claim Jesus's body and give him a proper burial, Joseph of Arimathea sacrificed his own comfort and safety and risked angering the powers of his day. The responsibility to call out the sin of injustice in our day often means risking our own comfort as well. We must engage with others in respectful conversations and act to reform structures that perpetuate injustice in a way that is both gracious and true.

*Jesus, the structures of your day were indifferent to the demands of justice. Give us the courage to transform our culture and the willingness to do what is uncomfortable so that the work of justice may bear fruit in the lives of our brothers and sisters.*

### **Station 14 – Jesus is laid in the tomb**

*At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.*

*John 19:41–42*

When the stone was rolled across the entrance to the tomb, marking with finality the apparent end of Jesus's life, all seemed lost. The hope of the world was gone. But the tomb was not the end of the story. Injustices we face, in all their ugly forms, are also not the end of the story. Jesus makes all things new. He can transform our hearts, and he can help us transform our social structures and institutions to remove the scourge of injustice.

*Jesus, We are your hands and feet. Guide us as we welcome those who are marginalized and as we work for justice.*

*Loving God, you call us from every background to be one human family. Our world has fallen far short of that goal. Too many of our brothers and sisters are ignored, ostracized, mistreated, and even killed because of the evil in our world. Transform our hearts, renew our minds, and inspire our actions to effectively address and overcome injustice in our day. Help us form new relationships, transform social structures, and reform public policies to establish justice for all.*