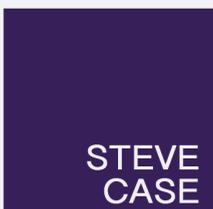


STATIONS OF THE CROSS



STEVE
CASE

THIRTEEN DRAMATIC STORIES OF JESUS' LAST HOURS



THE
YOUTH CARTEL

Stations of the Cross

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Publisher: Mark Oestreicher

Managing Editor: Anne Jackson

Editor: Janice Griffin

Cover Design & Layout: Adam McLane

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ISBN-13: 978-0-9887413-2-4

ISBN-10: 0988741326

The Youth Cartel, LLC

www.theyouthcartel.com

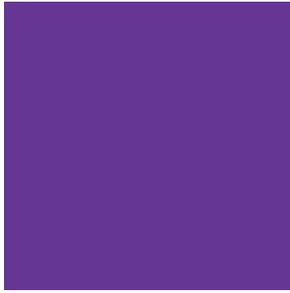
Email: info@theyouthcartel.com

Born in San Diego
Printed in the U.S.A.

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Introduction

You can't have a light without dark to stick it in.

-Arlo Guthrie

Easter is a beautiful time of year. It's filled with bright colors and sweet smells and music that makes the windows rattle. Easter is triumphant. Love wins! Death loses! Glory be to God!

But can we truly appreciate the glory of the resurrection if we have not been to the crucifixion? Can we dance at the party if we didn't go to the funeral? Can we sing the songs of the risen Lord if we have not wept at the foot of the cross?

The *Stations of the Cross* (sometimes called *The Way of Sorrows* or simply *The Way*) is a method of taking us to that dark place. It is a "prayer path" that walks us through the final hours of Jesus' life. For centuries in the Holy Land, and today in churches around the world, there are places where parishioners can stop and meditate on scenes of the crucifixion depicted in art and sculpture. They can focus their minds and hearts on those moments in the Passion story where Jesus took up the cross, fell, and eventually died. It is a dark path designed to bring your soul into a well. It is only from this dark place we experience the return to the light. It is our attempt, with the stories in this book, to re-create, with readings, those "stopping places" along Jesus' final path.

A word on how the book is set up

There have been multiple variations on the Stations over the centuries. Some contain as few as seven stations choosing only those with direct Biblical references. In later versions, an additional station was added to include the resurrection.

This curriculum is a re-imagining of this beautiful liturgy. In this book, we present the Stations like this:

1. Jesus is Condemned
2. Jesus is Given the Cross to Carry
3. Jesus Meets His Mother
4. Jesus Falls
5. The Wailing Women
6. Veronica
7. Simon
8. Jesus is Stripped and Mocked
9. Jesus on the Cross
10. Jesus Breathes His Last
11. Jesus' Body is Taken Down
12. Jesus is Buried
13. Jesus is Alive!

My goal is to help you incorporate The Stations into your ministry. Whether you are a youth minister, education director, or volunteer Sunday school teacher, I wanted to give you a choice.

Our version of this ancient liturgy has 13 stations. We have included a station for the resurrection. If your Lenten Supper Series is only 6 weeks long you can choose which stations best fit your church. If you are leading the Stations as a live event, you can use all thirteen.

How to Use this Book

There are a number of ways to make use of these readings:

As a Personal Devotional

When you work for a church or when you are in charge of helping others experience moments like Christmas and Easter, sometimes it is easy to lose yourself in the job and miss the connection. You can use this book for your own private time with God. Use the questions for personal meditation and reflection. Allow yourself to experience these moments with Jesus and then hang onto that experience as you go about your job of connecting others to Christ.

As a Personal Devotional for Youth

You can purchase extra copies of this book and give them to your students. Encourage them to take their own private time to consider what Jesus did -- what God asked him to do.

Encourage them to write in the margins and jot a list of questions for the group or you, the leader, to talk about. Sometimes it's helpful just to doodle on a separate sheet of paper to deal with the emotions readings like this can bring to the surface.

As a Lenten Curriculum

It is possible to use this book for your entire church (youth and adults). Use it as a curriculum for those Wednesday Night Lenten Suppers. The readings in this book can be used as a discussion starter for small groups in a Sunday School setting or in home-church gatherings. Have someone with a dramatic flair read the stories aloud and then use the questions to lead a discussion. (If you are going to use the book as a Lenten Supper curriculum you may want to break into smaller groups of no more than 8 to 10 people, depending on the size of your church.)

As a Live Event

You can use these readings for your Good Friday service. This is a great opportunity for youth to lead worship. Take an offering and use the service as a fundraiser. Work with your youth in the weeks before the live event. Encourage them to be as creative as possible. What sounds would they hear at the crucifixion? Thirty pieces of silver? Crowds cheering? Crowds jeering? Thunder? Nails being hammered?

[Aside: My own church has used these readings as part of a live event and we discovered that a hammer hitting a nail (placed near an off-stage microphone) sounds nothing like a hammer hitting a nail. We dug out two gigantic crescent wrenches from the custodian's closet and banged these together. Perfect.]

See if your students can come up with something for each of the five senses to be used in a Good Friday service. You can also check <http://theyouthcartel.com/products/stations-of-the-cross/> for a link to a list of music suggestions for the event. And this resource comes with images you could print out or use on screens to add a visual element.

It is important to experience the darkness before the dawn. We have the advantage of knowing how it turns out. Think about Mary and the other disciples. They had only the darkness. Think about what the dawn was like for them.

The *Stations of the Cross* is about the sorrow...the emptiness...the sense of absence associated with the crucifixion. It is important to express these deep emotions. We can sing our grieving. We can paint our sadness. We are dancing in the dark.

Steve Case



Station One: Jesus is Condemned

This is where it begins. Jesus is falsely accused of crimes. No one speaks for him. No one stands up and says, “That isn’t true.” Jesus has to stand and listen to a list of charges and although he can refute them, he chooses not to. Pilate seems too eager to have the matter over and done with, as if he doesn’t believe the accusations either but his hand has been forced.

In many of the depictions we see today, it doesn’t look too violent. Jesus might have a bruise or two but that’s it. This was the start of something violent...something horrible. What they did to Jesus was an abomination. They beat him bloody and then made him march in parade, and THEN they killed him. By the end, one would welcome death with open arms. Have you ever run down a hill so fast you lost control and did everything you could to stay on your feet, scared you could lose your footing and just face plant in the dirt? Imagine that feeling. This is the top of the hill. At the bottom is death. This is where it begins.

The First Station

Jesus looked out on the sea of anger in front of him. Faces he knew. Faces he didn’t know. Faces he had grown up with. They were shouting. Pointing. He was aware that Pilate was standing at his left but couldn’t see him. Blood had caked on his eyelid. He tried to blink it away but his eyelid had swollen shut and wouldn’t move. Jesus shifted his weight to the other foot hoping to ease some of the pain but it merely moved to other places in his body. He turned and looked at Pilate with his good eye. Pilate was screaming at the crowd and pointing back at him but Jesus could not make out the words. The centurion had hit him in the ear and now everything sounded distant and muffled. He remembered when he and his brother were children and would dunk their heads under the water of the river Jordan to try to hear each other shout.

He thought of James.

The caked blood on his eye itched and he wanted to rub it away but his hands were bound. The thorns pressed into his flesh and blood was all over him. However, he was acutely aware of just one drop on his scalp. It rolled down the back of his head. For a moment he didn’t feel it and supposed it had traveled down a lock of his hair and would soon drip off and onto his back. He felt it fall. He felt it hit his shoulder and roll down his spine like a bead of sweat. It was as if this one drop opened a floodgate of pain and he was once again

aware of his agonizing situation. He longed for the moment when the pain seemed to shoot through his body from just one place to one other. Now that one drop of blood seemed to awaken his nerves fully. He was in agony. He moaned.

Pilate turned and looked at him, then came around and stood in front of Jesus' good eye. Through his clenched teeth, Pilate whispered, "Anything. Say anything. Say it was all a lie and I will end this now."

Jesus simply looked at him.

How long ago was he shoved into Pilate's chambers? An hour? Six? A day? How many beatings since then? How many gobs of spit in his face? Pilate didn't want this. He wanted his parties. He wanted his entertainment. He didn't want a rebel. He didn't want crowds questioning his rule. "You say you are God. Is that right?" Pilate had asked. Jesus had looked into the man's eyes. He had looked into Pilate's soul. "You seem to think so."

It was not an answer Pilate wanted to hear. Now, with one eye open and one that would never open again, Jesus looked into Pilate's face once more. This time he said nothing.

As Pilate's brow creased and he looked beyond Jesus' shoulder, Jesus knew the blow of the centurion's staff was coming. He winced in anticipation and felt the wooden staff hammer into the back of his leg. He fell to his knees, grateful in a way because all the aches in his body suddenly concentrated themselves in his knees bringing the rest of him relief.

Jesus started to lean forward but the centurion grabbed his hair and pulled him back. Pilate bent low and looked into his face once again. "Talk to me," he seethed. He brushed the blood-clotted hair from Jesus' face. For just a moment Jesus thought he felt tenderness. He remembered the way his mother would brush the hair out of his eyes; something she always had done and still did when she saw him.

He thought of his mother.

Pilate looked at Jesus' blood on his hand and then turned to the crowd. The centurion pulled Jesus' hair up and Jesus rose to stand again on his bleeding feet. The pain returned to his limbs and chest. He saw a servant girl come forward. Pilate dipped his hands in the bowl of water she carried and washed the blood from his fingers. He flung the water at Jesus who felt the drops hit his skin and tried to imagine himself standing in the rain.

He thought of rain.

Pilate yelled something at the crowd again. The crowd began to speak. As Jesus looked at them they seemed to sway back and forth. Even with his hearing impeded, he was able to listen to what they were saying. It was one word. "Crucify." Except from where he stood the word sounded more like a hiss.

“Crusssssify.
Cruussssiify.
Cruussssiifyyy.”

Pilate turned and yelled something at the centurion. Another one and another and another soon joined the soldiers band. More of them now. They spun Jesus around and shoved him hard. He nearly stumbled but regained his balance and limped off in the direction they shoved him.

Scripture Reading

Psalm 31

- 1 In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.
- 2 Turn your ear to me,
come quickly to my rescue;
be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me.
- 3 Since you are my rock and my fortress,
for the sake of your name lead and guide me.
- 4 Free me from the trap that is set for me,
for you are my refuge.
- 5 Into your hands I commit my spirit;
redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth.

- 6 I hate those who cling to worthless idols;
I trust in the Lord.
- 7 I will be glad and rejoice in your love,
for you saw my affliction
and knew the anguish of my soul.
- 8 You have not handed me over to the enemy
but have set my feet in a spacious place.

- 9 Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and my body with grief.
- 10 My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my affliction,
and my bones grow weak.
- 11 Because of all my enemies,
I am the utter contempt of my neighbors;
I am a dread to my friends--
those who see me on the street flee from me.
- 12 I am forgotten by them as though I were dead;

I have become like broken pottery.
13 For I hear the slander of many;
there is terror on every side;
they conspire against me
and plot to take my life.

14 But I trust in you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my God."
15 My times are in your hands;
deliver me from my enemies
and from those who pursue me.
16 Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love.
17 Let me not be put to shame, O Lord,
for I have cried out to you;
but let the wicked be put to shame
and lie silent in the grave.
18 Let their lying lips be silenced,
for with pride and contempt
they speak arrogantly against the righteous.

19 How great is your goodness,
which you have stored up for those who fear you,
which you bestow in the sight of men
on those who take refuge in you.
20 In the shelter of your presence you hide them
from the intrigues of men;
in your dwelling you keep them safe
from accusing tongues.

21 Praise be to the Lord,
for he showed his wonderful love to me
when I was in a besieged city.
22 In my alarm I said,
"I am cut off from your sight!"
Yet you heard my cry for mercy
when I called to you for help.

23 Love the Lord, all his saints!
The Lord preserves the faithful,
but the proud he pays back in full.
24 Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the Lord.

Questions

Has there ever been a time when someone lied about you? When someone stood in your face and accused you of something that absolutely was not true?

What was the worst physical pain you ever felt? Maybe you broke a bone playing sports, maybe someone hit you, or maybe you were in a car accident.

Would you rather be hurt physically or emotionally? What is the deepest hurt you ever felt? Did someone you loved die? Did you move to another state? Did you lose your best friend?

How do you feel when these things happen? Hurt? Certainly. Rejected? Probably. What about loneliness? What about anger? Jesus was aware of all of these emotions yet he still knew what he had to do.

Think of the things you felt deep inside when life seemed to be at its worst. In your imagination, give them substance. What color are these emotions? What do they feel like in your hands? What do they smell like?

Prayer

God, sometimes I feel like I am hanging onto the edge of the roof.
My feet are dangling.
My fingers are slipping.
Then I see that what I'm hanging onto is a cross.
I remember what Your Son did.
I remember what You asked of him.
There is so much going on in my life, God.
So much that I don't tell others about.
So much that I hold onto and don't need.

(Imagine the emotions and feelings you have collected.
Imagine yourself handing these to Jesus.
A Jesus who is no longer beaten and broken.

A Jesus who is whole and smiling.
He stands with his own hands out, waiting.
Give him what you carry.)

I give these to you - do you love me so much that you'll take them?
I don't need them anymore.
Help me to let go of my pain.
Help me to let go of my anger.
Help me to let go.
I give these to you.
Amen