



BY YOUR SIDE

Stations of the Cross for Teens



by Steve
Givens

BY YOUR SIDE Stations of the Cross for Teens

By Your Side may be used in a number of ways, primarily as a communal gathering where prayer, readings and music come together to create an enriching reflective experience for the assembled. *By Your Side* has been created specifically for teenagers and young adults. Like all Stations of the Cross, its purpose is to aid reflection on the passion and death of Jesus Christ, allowing those gathered to walk beside him to Calvary, while contemplating his death and their own lives and faith.

Each station contains three elements: a short verse, a brief meditation, and a prayer that invites the participants to enter into the passion of Jesus and to address an issue pertinent to the lives of young people today.

The reflections and prayers can either be read by a leader or recited in unison. *By Your Side* is also useful as a personal guide to the Stations of the Cross for use by individuals as they make their way from station to station. Many blessings to you as you walk with Jesus, "by his side."

—Steve Givens

Prayer Before the Altar

Jesus, I want to give you some of my time right now. I know that's something that I don't always do. I know in my heart that, when the pressures of being a teenager really seem to be heaped up all around me, I should come to you for help. But I just don't always remember to do that. So right now I want to walk along beside you. I want to tell you about the things that are bothering me the most right now. I want to think about all that you have done for me and I want to share in your suffering in this small way. That's what I want to do right now. Be with me as I try.

Help me to understand the immense love that you offer through the way of your cross. Help me to understand that your death was not only a moment in time many years ago, but an act of unconditional love that lives in each of us every day. Help me to understand that you are "here and now" and not "there and then." Amen.



· First Station ·

Jesus Is Condemned To Die

Responding To Misjudgment

Verse

By your side, condemned to die.
By your side, condemned to die.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

Jesus stands, strong in his silence, as he is condemned to die for a crime he did not commit. He has been betrayed by a friend, falsely

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accused, and judged wrongly. And yet he accepts his punishment without a word of protest.

Prayer

Jesus, sometimes I'm misjudged also. Sometimes my friends ask me to do things that they know I don't want to do. Sometimes I think the whole world thinks that I'm stupid or worthless just because I'm young. How am I supposed to respond to all this, Lord? Help me to learn to respond as you did. Teach me not to lash out at these people (some of whom love me) even if I don't agree with them. Instead, help me to show them that I can take the pressure and have enough sense and faith to make good decisions. Help me to respond with love, and then be with me and help me through the tough times. Amen.

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· Second Station ·

Jesus Is Forced To Carry The Instrument Of His Own Death

Bearing Burdens

Verse

By your side, you bear the load.
By your side, you bear the load.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

Jesus begins his terrible journey up the hill to Calvary. The weight of the cross bites into his

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shoulders and he is reminded with each step that the pain he bears will be the cause of our joy. Despite his pain, his mind is filled with thoughts of us.

Prayer

Jesus, sometimes it seems like I'm bearing a huge burden, and I know that you know how that feels. So much is expected of me everywhere I turn, and sometimes I feel like I can't take it all. There are pressures at school like grades and tests and decisions about college. There are pressures at home and conflicts between me and my parents. There are pressures with my friends, with my teammates, and with my fellow students. It's not easy being me. You bore the pain of the cross. Help me to bear with all the pressures of being a teenager and help me know that there is always hope. Let me know that I can get through it all with your help. Amen.

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· Third Station ·

Jesus Falls For The First Time

Falling And Failing

Verse

By your side, you bend and fall.
 By your side, you bend and fall.
 Jesus, Lord, be ever near
 As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

Jesus stumbles along the hot, dusty, rocky road. He is crushed under the weight of the wood and is bruised and beaten down by the soldiers.

He falls, for even though he is fully God, he is filled with the weakness of being fully human. This is the wonder of our God-become-flesh in Jesus.

Prayer

Jesus, you know that sometimes I fail, and that's a lot like falling. I don't like it very much. It seems like everything in the world is geared toward success and winning. So what happens when I don't make it? I feel like I'm letting everyone down: myself, my parents, my teachers, my friends, my coach—the list goes one and on. So I guess what I need from you right now, Lord, is permission to fail once in a while. As I see you here at this point in your journey, I see you fallen by the side of the road. So I guess it is okay to fall and fail. Just give me the strength and hope I need to get back up. Amen.



· Fourth Station ·

Jesus Meets His Mother

Faith In Each Other

Verse

By your side, you see her face.
 By your side, you see her face.
 Jesus, Lord, be ever near
 As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

Jesus—tired, sore, bruised, bloody and on his way to his own execution—looks up to see the face of his mother along the road. What a

moment for both of them. No words are exchanged, but Jesus can see the sadness and pain on her face. He knows that she was chosen for this road, chosen to bear him into the world, but he still knows her pain.

Prayer

Jesus, I can see the face of your mother as she watches you go by on the way to your death. I can sense the sadness and questioning inside her. I know that it must not be easy to be a parent. I especially know that it must not be easy to be my parent. I know that sometimes I can be difficult and I've seen that look of sadness on my parents' faces. So I ask you to help me be a better person, for my parents' sakes. And, Jesus, I also ask you to please help my parents. Show them that I need their love along with their criticism. Help them to know that I will respond better to encouragement and confidence than to demands and doubts. Give us both enough faith in you that we can learn to have faith in each other. Amen.



· Fifth Station ·

Simon Carries Jesus' Cross

Helping Friends

Verse

By your side, your pain is eased.
By your side, your pain is eased.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

Just when Jesus begins to think that he can go no farther, just when the soldiers begin to doubt that Jesus can make the long journey up

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the hill, they grab a man from the side of the road and force him to carry the cross. Simon feels the bite of the wood on his shoulder, and certainly he must have wondered why he, an innocent man, should be asked to do this.

Prayer

Jesus, I think I know how Simon feels. He's caught in the middle. He has no choice. He just has to do what he has to do. On the one hand, it's a tough position to be in. But on the other, thrust into those kinds of situations, we have a chance to show others what we're made of. I often find myself caught in the middle, caught between two friends who are fighting or two parents who can't get along. It's not easy to know how to react in those situations, so I need your help, Lord. Help me to be the one who brings peace. Pull me out of the crowd, Lord, just like Simon, and give me the wisdom and the right words to help those I love through difficult times. Amen.

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· Sixth Station ·

Veronica Wipes Jesus' Face

Helping Strangers

Verse

By your side, she soothes your face.
By your side, she soothes your face.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

Blood from the crown of thorns and sweat from the hard work of carrying the cross mix in Jesus' face. This is not an easy way to show love.

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The blood and sweat drip from him and sting his eyes. From out of the crowd steps a woman named Veronica who lovingly wipes the face of Jesus. It is a simple but important act of love and compassion for the giver of all love and compassion.

Prayer

Jesus, so often it is easy to pass by someone who is in need. Either I just don't want to get involved or I think that my small act of kindness won't make any difference. Those are dangerous thoughts, Lord, and I know that's not the attitude I want to take with me into adulthood. I know that I don't like adults who act that way, so why do I act that way now? Help me to understand that stopping to help the new girl at school find her way to class or giving encouragement to the new boy on the team are both ways in which I can show your love to the world. Help me to remember that whenever I stop doing what I'm doing to help someone else I am showing those around me that there is something more important in my life than me. And it's you, Lord. Amen.

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· Seventh Station ·

Jesus Falls Again

Continuing With Confidence

Verse

By your side, you fall again.
By your side, you fall again.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

Jesus has been wracked by pain, but he has been comforted by the care of Simon and Veronica. He continues on his journey, feeling

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the rhythm of the road beneath his feet. As he falls again, all the pain is renewed. A jolt of agony shoots through his body. But he rises again, and continues on his way. He is thinking about you.

Prayer

Jesus, in this picture of you I see a man who knows what he has to do and, despite the obstacles and the pain, continues on the road with confidence. I don't very often have that confidence, Lord. Sometimes I'm just not sure of myself. Some of the people in my life have given me confidence, but others have left me with doubts about myself and my abilities. I wonder who is right. For some reason or other, it's easier to believe those who have filled me with doubt. Please help me, Lord, to see the good in myself. Give me the strength and confidence to tackle the challenges in my life. And when everything seems too much to bear and I just want to give up, remind me of this picture of you, rising once more from the dusty road. Amen.

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· Eighth Station ·

The Women Of Jerusalem Mourn For Jesus

Sharing Faith

Verse

By your side, you hear the cries.
By your side, you hear the cries.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

As Jesus walked along the road toward his death, some people laughed. Some stood in si-

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lence and wondered who he was. Some cheered. But one group of women, seeing him hurting, tired, and beaten down, cried. This small act of faith and courage in the face of adversity supported Jesus in his grief, perhaps when he needed it most.

Prayer

Jesus, I know I'm not always like these women. Sometimes I have a hard time showing compassion to others. Sometimes I have a hard time caring about anyone other than my family, a few close friends, and myself. It's much easier not to get involved, much easier not to put myself in a situation that could be uncomfortable for me. It's very easy to look at the poor, the homeless and the sick, and just be happy that it's not me in those situations. But I also know I'm wrong to do that. So I'm asking you for help. Give me the strength and courage to be compassionate to others, just as you are compassionate to me. By what I say and what I do, may the world always see that I draw my life, my strength, and everything in me that is good from you. Amen.

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· Ninth Station ·

Jesus Falls A Third Time

Remembering Jesus

Verse

By your side, you fall again.
By your side, you fall again.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

Jesus can now see Golgotha looming ahead of him. He knows the end is near. He is parched and dry, so weak from the loss of blood and the

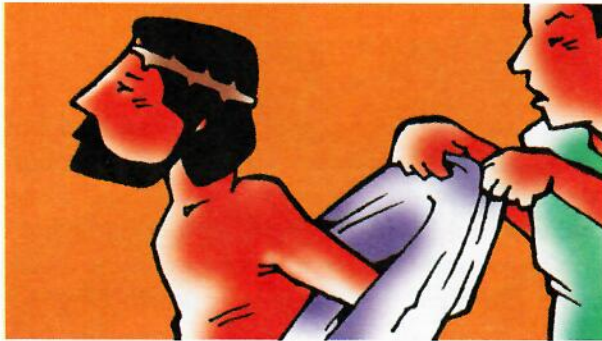
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sheer pain that he can barely stand, much less carry the heavy cross. He falls again. Still, his executioners mercilessly urge him on.

Prayer

Jesus, when I see you like this, I feel bad that I don't always remember you. As I run through my life, between school and sports and clubs and work and time with my friends, I know that I don't take enough time to think about you. How could you have borne so much pain? Why did you choose to do this for me? I'm not sure that I'm worth it. If I ever begin to doubt the love you have so freely given me, remind me of all that you went through to gain my salvation and show your love for all people. Help me to remember that no matter how many times my sins separate me from you, you are always there to forgive me. Amen.

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· Tenth Station ·

Jesus Is Stripped Of His Garments

Being A Fool For Jesus

Verse

By your side, they lay you bare.
By your side, they lay you bare.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

Jesus finally reaches the top of the hill—the place of his death. His reward for completing

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this part of the journey is to be savagely and brutally stripped. His open wounds cling to his garments, so the pain is excruciating as the soldiers rip his garments from his body, taking flesh and blood along with the cloth. To be forced to stand naked before the jeering crowds is humiliating for Jesus.

Prayer

Jesus, you know that it's not easy for me to talk to others about my faith in you. I feel foolish when I try sometimes. I suspect my friends think I'm a fool for trying to be Catholic. Sometimes I wonder if they're right and I'm wrong. Those are the times I need you most, Jesus. I need to remember you as you are now, being made to play the fool for the laughing, jeering crowd. Help me to remember that it's okay to be considered a fool for your sake. Give me the courage to be strong in my faith in you and to be resolute, even if the rest of the world considers me foolish. Amen.

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· Eleventh Station ·

Jesus Is Nailed To The Cross

Accepting The Gift Of Life

Verse

By your side, upon the cross.
By your side, upon the cross.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

With a thief to his left and right and encircled by a crowd of onlookers, Jesus gently and willingly stretches out his hands and accepts the tor-

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ture of the nails. In the midst of this most intense agony, his heart remains on his people: "Father forgive them," he prays, "for they know not what they do."

Prayer

Jesus, I know that sometimes I take my life for granted. In fact, sometimes when things aren't going well at home or at school or with my friends, I begin to wonder what good my life is. I begin to wonder *what use* my life is. I just don't see the point sometimes. But as you stretch out your hands and accept the executioner's nails, I can't help but see the meaning in my own life. Since I was a child I have been told that you did this for me—you died for me. Thank you, Jesus, for this gift. And if I ever doubt my own meaningfulness, help me to remember you, dying for me. Amen.

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· Twelfth Station ·

Jesus Dies On The Cross

Giving Our Lives To Jesus

Verse

By your side, I watch you die.
By your side, I watch you die.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

Jesus didn't immediately die when they nailed him to the cross. He suffered for three long, agonizing hours first. The giver of life, who stood

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side by side with the Father at the moment of creation, was now dead. His mission on earth was nearly accomplished. He gave up his spirit, and gave us his life.

Prayer

Jesus, I have a lot of decisions to make in the coming years, and some of them will affect the rest of my life: where to go to college, what career to choose, whom to marry. And I know I'll be making other decisions every day of my life, some of them just as important as those big "life decisions." I'll have to decide who my friends will be, what I will put in my body, and what I will do with my body. Tough decisions, all of them. What I want to do right now is give my life to you so that I won't be tempted to give it to someone or something else. With you at the center of my life, I know I'll be able to make the right decisions. Stay close to me, Jesus. Amen.

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· Thirteenth Station ·

Jesus Is Taken Down From the Cross

Having Courage

Verse

By your side, they take you down.
By your side, they take you down.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

When the crowds finally went away, a few of Jesus' followers were brave enough to ask for

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his body so they could bury it. Two men carefully remove the body from the cross and lay it in the arms of his waiting mother. Tears run down Mary's cheeks as she holds the son given to her so many years before.

Prayer

Jesus, I don't always have the courage I need to openly tell others how important you are to me. In fact, I know that sometimes my words and actions tell my friends that you mean nothing to me. Sometimes I turn away from you, leaving you hanging there on the cross instead of being brave enough to take you down and show you to the world. I want to be one of your followers. I want to hold you up for the world to see. I want to do what you ask. But I need your help. I need you to make me stronger and braver. Having faith means having courage, but I know I can't do it on my own. Help me. Amen.

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· Fourteenth Station ·

Jesus Is Laid In The Tomb

Changing Our Lives

Verse

By your side, laid in the tomb.
By your side, laid in the tomb.
Jesus, Lord, be ever near
As I walk, by your side.

Meditation

Mary and the friends of Jesus prepare his body for burial and lay it in a tomb cut from solid rock. They have forgotten—or perhaps

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failed to believe—the promise Jesus made to them. He will rise from the dead. As they roll the rock across the doorway, sealing the tomb, they feel that this special time with Jesus has come to an end. They know their lives will never be the same again.

Prayer

Jesus, I need my life changed, just as you changed the lives of those men and women. Help me to see that once I know the power of you in my life, I will never be the same. I'm not always happy with the choices I make, the people I hang out with and the way I spend my time. Sometimes I find myself doing things I know you don't want me to do. I know I need to change, and I know this change will be possible only if I make you the center of my life. So be my center, Jesus. Amen.

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Concluding Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for allowing me to follow you on your journey of pain and love. Allow my small act of faith to fill my life with renewed love for you and your Church. Give me the courage to live my life in a way that others may see you in me. Help me to remember that I have hope because of the life you have given me. Thank you, Jesus, for your way of the cross that gives me confidence, knowing that you are with me always, by my side. Amen.

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