



No Greater Love

Meditations on the Way of the Cross

Personal and Communal Prayer

How much meaning do we associate with the word passion? An artist in the throes of painting? The scientist laboring for countless hours in search of an elusive cure? The unstoppable magnetism of erotic love? A slow torturous death on a cross?

For Jesus, the way of the cross happened on the last day of his life as he walked about 2,000 feet from Jerusalem to Calvary. And yet, the way of the cross marked his whole ministry from the moment he was baptized by John in the Jordon to the Last Supper. His whole life, from the moment of conception to his burial, was the way of the cross. This journey of passion, this sacrificial love for the good of the other, is the way of God.

We meditate on the traditional fourteen moments along the way of the cross. This is not a trip with milestones, rushing to a destination. This is a pilgrimage into the heart of God, an invitation into personal communion with Jesus. We walk with Jesus so we can see how he walks with us. We conclude, not with a meditation on the resurrection, but a meditation on mission.

Our prayer is that the following meditations deepen your personal encounter with Jesus, so that your experiences forge a purifying and illuminating relationship with him and authenticate your witness while it fuels your own way of sacrificial love. You may find yourself immediately drawn to one or two of the moments. Start there. This is a cyclic, not linear, journey. Pause after each meditative question. Let your memories, emotions, well up within you.

First Moment - Jesus is Condemned to Death

A Meditation on Judgement

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you said not to judge lest you be judged. Here you are, being judged by the religious and political authorities of your day. Open my eyes, Lord, so I see the judgement you suffered, the judgements I have suffered and the judgements I have inflicted on others.



Meditation:

Where do I feel judgement in my body?
What judgements do I fear, accept, resist?
Who judges me? Whom do I judge?
Where am I when Jesus is being judged? A bystander? A leader? A soldier?
Who or what is so important to me that I am willing to risk any judgement?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love, involves judgement. May my experiences of judgement bring me closer to you and may your suffering of judgement purify and illuminate mine.

Second Moment – Jesus Carries His Cross

A Meditation on Sacrificial Love

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you said to pick up our cross and follow you. Passion, sacrificial love, is not sentiment to you. It is rough and heavy like a cross. You are not filled with anger at the injustice of the cross, but kenosis, self-emptying love. Open my eyes, Lord, so I see the harsh and dreadful love of your cross, your passion, and the few moments where I too suffered for the well-being of another.



Meditation:

Where do I feel the weight, the pain, of the cross in my body?

What crosses do I fear, accept, resist?

Who puts the cross before me?

Where am I when Jesus picks up his cross and begins his walk to Calvary?

Who or what is so important to me that I am willing to bear the cross?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love, involves the cross. May my own crosses bring me closer to you and may your cross purify and illuminate mine.

Third Moment – Jesus Falls for the First Time

A Meditation on Humility

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you said blessed are the poor in spirit. Here you are, humiliated by the weight and awkwardness of the cross you have chosen. Open my eyes, Lord, so I see the humility you suffer as you come to understand the true cost of sacrificial love, the humiliation of the falls I have suffered, and compassion for others who also fall.



Meditation:

Where do I feel falling and humiliation in my body?
What humiliation do I fear, accept, resist?
Who humiliates me? Whom do I humiliate?
Where am I when Jesus falls for the first time? A bystander?
A guard?
Who or what is so important to me that I am willing to risk any judgement?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love, involves humiliation. May my experiences of humiliation bring me closer to you and may your humiliation purify and illuminate mine.

Fourth Moment – Jesus Meets His Mother

A Meditation on Singleheartedness

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you said those who do the will of God are mother to you. Here you see Mary, your Mother, whom you had to leave to walk the way of the cross. Open my eyes, Lord, so I see the cost, and the blessing, of singleheartedness in your life, in my own, and the lives of others.



Meditation:

Where do I feel singleheartedness, resolve, in my body?
What do I fear, accept, resist as I stay focused on my purpose, my goal?
Who distracts me from my resolve? Whom do I distract from their goals?
Where am I when Jesus meets Mary? Am I close by, in the crowd, or far away?
Who or what is so important to me that I am willing to leave my own mother?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love requires resolve. May my experiences of singleheartedness bring me closer to you and may your resolve purify and illuminate mine.

**Fifth Moment – Simeon of Cyrene Helps
Jesus Carry His Cross
A Meditation on Accompaniment**

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you said to take up your yoke and learn from you. Here you are, bearing your cross, and welcoming the support of Simeon. Open my eyes, Lord, so I learn from you, accept your support, and see how my pride blinds me from accepting, or offering, accompaniment.



Meditation:

Where do I feel companionship in my body?
What accompaniment do I fear, accept, resist?
Who walks with me in and through my passion?
Where am I when Jesus accepts Simeon's companionship?
Who or what is so important to me that I need others' support?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love involves accompaniment. May my experiences of accompaniment bring me closer to you and your witness of needing others purify my pride.

Sixth Moment – Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

A Meditation on Tenderness

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you welcomed the tender anointment of the repented woman. Here you are, accepting Veronica's tenderness before the brutality of crucifixion. Open my eyes, Lord, so I see your tenderness towards me and the tenderness I refused to accept or offer to others.



Meditation:

Where do I feel tenderness in my body?
What tenderness do I fear, accept, resist, exploit?
Who offers me pure tenderness and who needs this tenderness from me?
Where am I when Jesus accepts Veronica's tenderness?
Who or what is so important to me that I will accept, or give, tenderness?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love welcomes tenderness. May your acceptance of Veronica's tenderness bring me closer to you and purify my need, and gift, of tenderness.

Seventh Moment – Jesus Falls a Second Time

A Meditation on Fear

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you said to not be afraid. Here you are, falling a second time, fearing failure in your way of sacrificial love. Open my eyes, Lord, so I see your moments of fear, the fears that threaten my faith in you, and the fears of others.



Meditation:

Where do I feel fear or anxiety in my body?

What do I fear?

Whom do I fear? Why?

Where am I when Jesus falls a second time? When he is afraid?

Who or what is so important to me that I will face my fears?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love walks through fear. May my experiences of fear bring me closer to you and may your journey through fear purify and illuminate mine.

**Eighth Moment – Jesus Meets the
Women of Jerusalem
A Meditation on Sadness**

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you said blessed on those who mourn. Here you are, comforting the weeping women of Jerusalem on your way to Calvary. Open my eyes, Lord, so I see your compassion for those who mourn, my own sadness, and the sadness of others.



Meditation:

Where do I feel sadness in my body?
What saddens me? Do I accept or resist sadness?
Who or what makes me sad? Who is sad today?
Where am I when Jesus comforts the weeping women of Jerusalem?
Who or what is so important to me that I will surrender to sadness?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love accepts sadness. May my sadness bring me closer to you and may your compassion for others purify and illuminate the failure of my own.

Ninth Moment – Jesus Falls a Third Time

A Meditation on Exhaustion

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you cured the lame, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead. Here you are, crushed to the ground a third time by pure exhaustion. Open my eyes, Lord, so I see your exhaustion along the way of sacrificial love, the exhaustion I have suffered, and the exhaustion of others.



Meditation:

Where do I feel exhaustion in my body?
What drives me to the point of exhaustion?
Who stays with me when I am exhausted? Who needs me when they are exhausted?
Where am I when Jesus falls a third time, crushed by exhaustion?
Who or what is so important to me that I will risk exhaustion?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love is exhausting. May my exhaustion bring me closer to you and may your exhaustion along the way of sacrificial love purify and illuminate mine.

Tenth Moment – Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

A Meditation on Vulnerability

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you were transfigured before Peter, James and John. Here you are, being stripped naked by soldiers before a faceless crowd. Open my eyes, Lord, so I see your vulnerability, my own, and the vulnerability of others.



Meditation:

Where do I feel vulnerability in my body?
What makes me vulnerable?
Who strips me of my confidence? Who accepts my vulnerability?
Where am I when Jesus is being stripped of his garments?
Who or what is so important to me that I will be vulnerable?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love warrants vulnerability. May my vulnerabilities bring me closer to you and may your vulnerability purify and illuminate what mine lacks.

Eleventh Moment – Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

A Meditation on Suffering

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you told us you would be crucified. Here you are, accepting death by torture. I do not want to look. Give me the strength to see you, naked, stretched, nailed, and hung on the cross. I need to see your sufferings, my own, and the suffering of others.



Meditation:

What does pain do to me?
What pain do I fear the most?
Who has seen me in pain? Who have I stayed with while they are in pain?
Where am I when Jesus is being nailed to the cross?
Who or what is so important to me that I am willing to suffer unimaginable pain?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love means suffering. May my sufferings bring me closer to you and may your suffering on the cross free me to accept brokenness as the path to perfection.

Twelfth Moment – Jesus Dies on the Cross

A Meditation on Death

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you told us you would die. I cannot believe my eyes or ears. You neither welcome nor resist death. You transform it into the ultimate act of love for God, for others, and even for yourself. No greater love. I tremble.



Meditation:

How do I imagine my own death?
What do I really fear about death?
What can death never take from me?
Where am I when Jesus dies on the cross?
For whom or what am I willing to die?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love leads to death. May death bring me closer to you and may your death on the cross purify and illuminate my relationship with death.

**Thirteen Moment – The Body of Jesus is
Taken Down from the Cross
A Meditation on Life**

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you said unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. They have taken your body off the cross. Open my eyes, Lord, so I see your whole life of love that brought you to this moment and the life your death gives to humanity.



Meditation:

When do I feel most fully alive?
Is it death I fear or is it living and loving that I fear?
Who will accompany me through death? Who will I
accompany?
Where am I when Jesus' body is removed from the cross?
Who or what is my legacy to life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love is the path of life. May my gift to life bring me closer to you and may your sacrificial love purify and illuminate all the ways I can choose, and affirm, life.

Fourteenth Moment – Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

A Meditation on Faith

Call to Prayer: Breathe. Jesus is with us and for us. Breathe his love in. Breathe his love out.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you ask us to believe in you. We have gently taken your crucified body, wrapped it tenderly in a shroud, and laid it in a tomb. Give me, oh Lord, the eyes of faith to see beyond the darkness of the tomb to the promise of new life – yours, mine, and ours.



Meditation:

What do I imagine the tomb feels like?
What tombs do I fear, accept, resist, revere?
Who is still alive for me even though they have died?
Where am I when Jesus is being laid in the tomb?
Do I believe in Jesus and his promise of new life? Where is my unbelief?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the way of sacrificial love is powered by faith. May my faith bring me closer to you and may your faith in me, and humanity, purify and illuminate the littleness of my own faith.

A New Moment – The Journey Continues

A Meditation on Mission

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you send us just as the Father sent you. You are alive, you are behind us, you are before us, and you never leave us. Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.

Where do I feel the call to mission in my own body?
What does mission – being with and for others in their context – ask of me?
Who am I called to be with and for? Do I know their joys, sorrows, grief and fears?
Where am I when Jesus sends us disciples on mission?
Can I encounter and accompany others? Am I passionate for Jesus and his people?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, mission is the way of sacrificial love. May I hear, accept, and embody your universal mission that you entrusted to us, your community of missionary-disciples.

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