

The *Way of the Cross* (also known as the *Stations of the Cross*) is a devotional practice commonly observed in the Roman Catholic Church. It is intended to help believers reflect on the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ by symbolically retracing His final steps—from His condemnation by Pontius Pilate to His burial.

In Jerusalem, the path traditionally taken by pilgrims stretches about 600 meters, beginning at the *Fortress of Antonia* (believed to be where Jesus was sentenced) and ending at the *Church of the Holy Sepulchre*—considered to be near the place of His burial. Every Good Friday, Catholics walk this path in remembrance of Christ's passion. For those outside Jerusalem, the practice is often carried out within churches, where worshippers move from image to image representing 14 key moments (or *stations*) in Jesus' journey to the cross, pausing at each to pray.

The 14 Stations According to Catholic Tradition:

1. Jesus is condemned to death.
2. Jesus receives the cross.
3. Jesus falls the first time.
4. Jesus meets His mother.
5. Simon of Cyrene helps carry the cross.
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.
7. Jesus falls the second time.

8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.
9. Jesus falls the third time.
10. Jesus is stripped of His garments.
11. Jesus is nailed to the cross.
12. Jesus dies on the cross.
13. Jesus' body is taken down from the cross.
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb.

What Does the Bible Say?

While the Way of the Cross is a meaningful tradition for many, it is important to ask: Is it biblically accurate? Not all of these 14 events are supported by Scripture.

Events that are clearly biblical include:

- Jesus being condemned to death (Matthew 27:26).
- Receiving the cross and going to Golgotha (John 19:17).
- Simon of Cyrene helping to carry the cross (Luke 23:26).
- Jesus speaking to the women of Jerusalem (Luke 23:27-31).
- Jesus being nailed to the cross and crucified (Luke 23:33; John 19:18).
- Jesus dying on the cross (John 19:30).
- Jesus' body being taken down and buried (Luke 23:50-56).

However, some stations do not appear in Scripture:

- Stations 3, 7, and 9 (Jesus falling three times) are not mentioned anywhere in the

Gospels.

- Station 4, where Jesus meets His mother, is not recorded in the biblical accounts of His journey to the cross.
- Station 6, where Veronica wipes His face, is entirely absent from the Bible and appears to originate from later tradition.

The Bible warns us not to add to or take away from God's Word:

"Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar." — Proverbs 30:6

"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book." — Revelation 22:18

Should Christians Practice the Way of the Cross?

As sincere as the intention might be, the practice of praying through the Stations—especially when focused on images or locations—can drift into idolatry, something the Bible clearly

forbids:

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image... you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.” — Exodus 20:4-5

Jesus Himself told the Samaritan woman:

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” — John 4:24

While meditating on Christ's suffering is biblical (Philippians 3:10), turning it into a ritual that is not grounded in Scripture or based on unverifiable events may lead people away from true worship. Our reflection on the cross should come from biblical truth, not man-made traditions.

Furthermore, Jesus never instructed His followers to commemorate His suffering through stations or pilgrimage. Instead, He commanded us to remember His death through the

Lord's Supper:

"Do this in remembrance of Me." — Luke 22:19

The Way of the Cross, as practiced in Catholic tradition, contains a mixture of biblical and non-biblical elements. While reflecting on Jesus' suffering is valuable, Christians should be careful not to base their faith practices on traditions not found in Scripture. Our focus should remain on the Word of God—complete, inspired, and sufficient.

Let our worship be guided by truth, not human invention.

Shalom.

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