

Parent's Guide to The Stations of the Cross in Nature for Children

Note to Parents:

It can feel odd and difficult to talk about topics like death with children. Doing the stations of the cross teaches children that our faith is big enough to hold the saddest and most difficult parts of life. Every child will encounter suffering, bullying, death, and grief, even though we try to protect them from it.

These stations will help children know that they are not alone when they experience these things. Jesus experienced them too — and is with us in our most challenging times.

The Cross

“The cross is the instrument of Jesus' death and the central symbol of the Christian faith. It represents Jesus' offering and sacrifice of his life in love for us and our salvation. The cross thus symbolizes the Christian life, especially in terms of love, generosity, and sacrifice.” — *from An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*

By finding the Stations of the Cross in nature, we can find the shape of Jesus' moments of suffering and consolation on Good Friday written into the world around us.

How To Use This Guide

Use this abbreviated guide for children to find nine stations of the cross “written into nature”. Each station has a sentence from scripture, a simple prayer, a question, and an activity. Parents may modify this appropriately for the age of their children.

We invite you to use this guide in your neighborhood, a park, or on a trail. Here are some locations that may be fun to explore as a family.

- The Solomon Episcopal Conference Center
- LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens
- New Orleans City Park
- The Northlake Nature Center
- The Tammany Trace, near the bridge over Lacombe Bayou
- Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge

Stations of the Cross in Nature - for Children

Find the stations in nature...

1. **Jesus is condemned to die.** *Find a spout, fountain, or body of water.*

2. **Jesus picks up his cross.** *Find a heavy log.*

3. **Jesus falls with the cross.** *Find a quiet place to sit.*

4. **Jesus meets his mother.** *Find a flower.*

5. **Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross.**

Find a tree leaning against another tree.

6. **Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.** *Find a tree or rock that is stained*

*LOOK FOR A NICE PLACE TO SIT, PERHAPS BY THE WATER,
AND TAKE A BREAK*

7. **Jesus is stripped of his garments.** *Find a tree whose bark is stripped.*

8. **Jesus dies on the cross.** *Find a stump or fallen tree.*

9. **Jesus is laid in the tomb.** *Find a large stone or rock.*

**Trust that God will reveal each station as you
need it!**

Stations of the Cross in Nature - for Children

1st Station – Jesus is condemned to die

In Nature: Find a spout, fountain, or body of water



WE TELL THE STORY:

After Jesus rode into Jerusalem treated like a king, Jesus' jealous enemies circled and pressured the Roman leader of Jerusalem, Pilate, to sentence Jesus to death on the cross. Even though Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, Pilate did what they demanded. He washed his hands to show that he did not feel responsible for what he did.

WE READ:

“So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing...he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.’” -Matthew 27: 23-24

WE LOOK AND REMEMBER:

To remember Pilate washing his hands, find a spout or body of water.

WE DO AND REMEMBER:

To remember Pilate washing his hands, do the washing your hands action.

WE WONDER:

Pilate didn't really want to do this to Jesus, but he saw other people being mean to Jesus and didn't do anything to help. Why do you think that was?

WE PRAY:

Jesus, forgive us for all the times when we have stood by and watched while other people were being treated in a mean way. Help us to forgive the people who have been mean to us, and the people who didn't step up to help. Help us be brave enough to stand up for other people when they need us.

Amen.

Stations of the Cross in Nature - for Children

2nd Station – Jesus picks up his cross

In Nature: Find a heavy log



WE TELL THE STORY:

Jesus' punishment was to be nailed on a cross, the very worst death that his enemies could imagine for him. But first, Jesus had to carry his cross outside the city, where he was to be raised up. The cross was very heavy and hard to carry.

WE READ:

“So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.”

- John 19:16-17

WE LOOK AND REMEMBER:

To remember Jesus picking up his cross, find a heavy log.

WE DO AND REMEMBER:

With the help of an adult, try to pick up the heaviest thing you can find.

WE WONDER:

Why did Jesus willingly carry such a heavy thing such a long way? What do we mean when we say things in our life are “heavy” or “a lot to carry?” Where is God in those times?

WE PRAY:

Jesus, help us to face the hardest parts of our lives. Help us to remember that you know what it feels like to be scared and in pain, and that you are with us even during scary and sad times.

Amen.

Stations of the Cross in Nature - for Children

3rd Station – Jesus falls with the cross

In Nature: Find a quiet place to sit



WE TELL THE STORY:

The cross was so hard and so heavy that even Jesus fell down when he was carrying the cross and walking to the Place of the Skull. He didn't just fall once, he fell three times. But Jesus didn't give up, because he knew what he had to do – and he knew the end of the story: Easter Sunday.

WE READ:

“Upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.” - Isaiah 53:5

WE LOOK AND REMEMBER:

To remember Jesus falling with the cross, we find a place to sit and rest.

WE DO AND REMEMBER:

Sit in silence.

WE WONDER:

Sometimes when we have to deal with something that makes us scared or sad, it can feel like we keep falling, over and over, and nothing can ever go right again. The same thing happened to Jesus. How does Jesus help us get up when we're tired and in pain?

WE PRAY:

Jesus, help us when we feel like giving up. Help us to remember it is okay to fall and need to rest. Thank you for being there to help us up and give us the strength to keep trying.

Amen.

Stations of the Cross in Nature - for Children

4th Station – Jesus meets his mother

In Nature: Find a flower



WE TELL THE STORY:

But Jesus wasn't alone. There were three special people who were there to help Jesus and be with him in his pain. The first person Jesus met was his mother, Mary, who loved him just as much as your parents love you. She knew he was very special because of what the angel had told her. She also knew that his life would be difficult.

WE READ:

Then Simeon...said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.' - Luke 8:33-35

WE LOOK AND REMEMBER:

To remember Jesus' mother, we find a flower.

WE DO AND REMEMBER:

Give your mom or dad a hug!

WE WONDER:

Jesus must have been grateful his mother was there for him. Who was there for you when you were sad or scared?

WE PRAY:

Jesus, we thank you for the love of our parents and the other adults who take care of us, the same way that your mother Mary took care of you. Help us to show our love to them every day.

Amen.

Stations of the Cross in Nature - for Children

5th & 6th Stations – Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross and Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

In Nature: Find a tree leaning against another tree & find a stained tree or rock



WE TELL THE STORY:

Jesus met two friends along the way who helped him. Simon helped Jesus to carry the cross and Veronica wiped the sweat from his face.

WE READ:

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. - Luke 23:26

WE LOOK AND REMEMBER:

To remember Simon, we find a tree leaning against another tree. To remember Veronica, we find a stained tree or rock.



WE DO AND REMEMBER:

Ask someone how you can help them today.

WE WONDER:

Everybody needs some help sometimes. Who has helped you? Can you think of a time when you helped somebody else?

WE PRAY:

Jesus, we thank you for the friends in our lives who help us when we feel sad or scared. Help us to be good friends to other people, and to show our love to them by taking care of them.

Amen.

Stations of the Cross in Nature - for Children

7th Station – Jesus is stripped of his garments.

In Nature: Find a tree with stripped bark



WE TELL THE STORY:

Before Jesus died, the people in charge pushed him around and made fun of him. They took all his clothes, and they made him wear a crown made out of thorns that hurt his head. They were hurting his body, but they also wanted to make him feel bad about himself.

WE READ:

They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head...they spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. - Matthew 27:5-34

WE LOOK AND REMEMBER:

To remember Jesus being stripped, we find a tree whose bark is stripped.

WE DO AND REMEMBER:

The best thing we can do to get rid of hate is to cover it up with love. Put your hands of love on the bare part of the tree.

WE WONDER:

Has anyone ever made you feel bad about yourself by making fun of you? Have you ever seen someone else make another person feel bad by making fun of them?

WE PRAY:

Jesus, forgive us for the times when we have hurt other people or made them feel bad. Help us to think about how we use our words, and to use them in kind and helpful ways instead of using them to hurt people.

Amen.

Stations of the Cross in Nature - for Children

8th Station – Jesus dies on the cross

In Nature: Find a stump or fallen tree



WE TELL THE STORY:

Jesus died on the cross. Jesus gave over his spirit and life to God.

WE READ:

Jesus said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

- John 19:30

WE LOOK AND REMEMBER:

To remember Jesus’ death on the cross, we find a stump or fallen tree.

WE DO AND REMEMBER:

We put things on the altar to show that we’re giving them back to God. Lay small stones or leaves on the stump to give all your feelings about Jesus’ death back to God.

WE PRAY:

Share a moment of silence.

Stations of the Cross in Nature - for Children

9th Station – Jesus is laid in the tomb

In Nature: Find a large stone or rock



WE TELL THE STORY:

Jesus' friends were very sad. They took good care of his body. They washed it and wrapped it in spices that smelled good. They went away in grief, but God had a surprise for them on Easter.

WE READ:

So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. - John 19:30

WE LOOK AND REMEMBER:

To remember Jesus laid in the tomb, we find a large stone.

WE DO AND REMEMBER:

Head home and wait for Easter to come!

WE WONDER:

Have you ever been to a funeral? What happens at a funeral? What do you remember? What can we do when we can't have a funeral?

WE PRAY JESUS' PRAYER:

*Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed by thy name.
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.*

*And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.*