

# EXTRA

Our Bible study this year recalls the details of the days leading up to the trial, death and resurrection of Jesus. In meditating upon His sacrifice for us in this “thoughtful hour”, we pray that you will sense your connection with all of heaven. Feel free to post your thoughts and reactions to things you have read and experienced in the study, #messagemag. Above all, it is our prayer that you get to know Jesus and experience His life-changing power for yourself.

- The Experience
- The Experience Study

**The Bible is full of random extras.** Here and there, people just kind of show up unannounced. Often a part of a larger narrative, they may have limited interaction or dialogue with leading characters. Sometimes they deliver messages. At other times, they’re passing by. In many instances, their names are not given.

You’ve read their stories, but have you noticed them?

There’s the boy who, while chasing Jonathan’s arrows, passes David and unknowingly aids the future king of Israel and Judah (1 Samuel 20:35-40). Naaman’s servants talked sense into the leper who was seven dips away from new skin (2 Kings 5:13). What about the man of God who went from speaking the truth to believing a lie in the same chapter (1 Kings 13:1-3, 11-19)? How could we forget the little boy and his sack lunch, which Jesus used to feed 5,000 men at The Hillside Fish Fry (John 6:9)? Of course we remember the woman who touched the hem of Jesus’ garment (Mark 5:25-34). There’s also Matthias, the 13th apostle (Acts 1:26), and Rhoda, the servant girl who left Peter on the front porch (Acts 12:13-16).

Perhaps the most famous extra of them all appears in the midst of a swelling crowd on the way toward a skull-shaped hill.

“And as they led Him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus” (Luke 23:26, ESV).

Not much is known about Simon besides his name, his sons’ names, and where he was coming from. Simon, father of Alexander and Rufus, is remembered for returning from the country and being forced by soldiers to carry the cross for Jesus.

## **Simon’s Cameo**

John’s Gospel says Jesus carried His own cross to Calvary (John 19:17). Matthew, Mark, and Luke report that Jesus did not carry His cross all the way to Calvary. He had help. In each of the synoptic Gospels, this fleeting episode occupies a singular verse (Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). Collectively, three verses record this peculiar happening.

It’s a brief cameo appearance, but it made the news. Can you hear the conversation between the Channel 10 news anchor and the field correspondent? “Well, it’s all anyone is talking about. The man so many call King is carrying a cross. Our own Tim Stable is live on-the-scene. Tim, what is the latest?”

“Uh yes Phil, I don’t know if you can really see behind me, but a massive

crowd has formed to follow three men, one of whom appears to be a man named Jesus. Sources say He is originally from Nazareth, but has no juvenile record or criminal pattern to speak of. However, over the past three or so years, He has been known to keep company with 11 or 12 men of varied characters. Comments from the crowd are mixed. Some say He was just a good man who loved to help people. Others say His teaching was strange, almost otherworldly. "The latest development happened a few minutes ago when one Simon of Cyrene was forcibly burdened with the cross Jesus was carrying. We aren't exactly sure why this was done, but I will say this: there was a mixed expression of sympathy and fear on his face. Back to you Phil."

### **The Crosswalk**

Simon was just trying to make it home after a journey out into the country. Any attempt to deduce why he was in the country would be strained conjecture. We simply do not know. Neither are we sure why the soldiers chose him out of a crowd of people. Did he shed a sympathetic tear? Was he capturing law enforcement brutality with his cellular device? Did he have a muscular build? Was he the nearest person to the grumbling soldiers? Whatever the cause, this was an interruption he didn't see coming. Simon's luggage is tossed to the side. He isn't asked to sign a liability waiver. He isn't compensated. He's given a cross and told to walk.



Have you ever had one of those interruptions? You were minding your own business when all of sudden your time, attention, and direction was diverted to something far less amusing and fulfilling? Indeed, the most perturbing interruptions are often the ones we didn't expect. But, alas, in these unexpected interruptions, God often gives unsolicited blessings.

What blessing could Simon possibly receive with a hundred pound beam on his back? May I suggest that the blessing was not in what He was forced to carry, but in whom he was privileged to follow?

"If I had just made a left on Broad instead of staying straight on Main, I could have avoided all of this," Simon may have thought. But, frustration gives way to conviction as he watches the wounded Man laboring before him. Jesus staggers, visibly weakened by hours of torture. Simon walks in-step with the bloody footprints He leaves behind. The splintered weight of the

cross digs into Simon's shoulder, but he barely notices. He marvels at Jesus' dignified silence in the heat of derogatory claims and pejorative comments. What could a man have done to deserve such shameless derision?

**Momentous Moment**

Simon's heart is touched by the scene. Could this man, broken and battered, truly be Savior of the world? If Jesus was willing to endure this genre of humiliation for the sake of others, then the least Simon could do was carry the cross, following close behind. It wasn't on his agenda, but it was on heaven's. What was once shameful became an honor. Had he never been interrupted, he may never have followed.

"The bearing of the cross to Calvary was a blessing to Simon, and he was ever after grateful for this providence. It led him to take upon himself the cross of Christ from choice, and ever cheerfully stand beneath its burden." Ellen G. White *Desire of Ages*, page 742.

"And He said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'" (Luke 9:23, ESV).

.....

RICHARD MARTIN is an assistant pastor at Emmanuel-Brinklow Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ashton, Maryland. He and his "Bermuda-ful" wife Kylaah enjoy traveling.

.....

ELLEN G. WHITE (1827-1915), the most translated female author in history and recently named one of the "100 Most Significant Americans of All Time" by the Smithsonian Institution in 2014, was a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

\*You can read *The Desire of Ages* in its entirety online at [www.whiteestate.org/onlinebooks](http://www.whiteestate.org/onlinebooks).

**Where's My Spotter? Luke 23:26**

Life can be heavy. Family, bills, children, work, church, money, illness and pain are some of the things that can make life heavy. Have you ever felt the weight of the world on your shoulders? Sometimes it can be overwhelming. Have you wondered whether Jesus felt like it was too much and was willing to receive help? He did, and I invite you to prayerfully think about the time when an "extra" took center stage in the plan of salvation.

=====

**Day 1 -Read Luke 23:26**

There is something to be said about being in the right place at the right time. The Bible says that Simone of Cyrene was "coming in from the country." Have you ever been minding your own business, and God decides to just drop a ministry opportunity in your lap? Maybe you have felt that tug on your heart to be exceptionally kind to someone you don't even know. If so, let us know at *Message* on social media using the hashtag #messagemag.

**Day 2**

We see people every day, but do we actually love these people? We can speculate that Simon had heard of Jesus. Maybe he witnessed one of the many miracles Jesus performed. What we do know is that this man was called to help someone with whom he didn't necessarily have an intimate relationship, And he didn't refuse.

### **Day 3**

We have altered and distorted our concept of love to require public exaltation. Jesus, however, did everything He could to make sure no one knew many of the great things He did. He constantly told those He healed to tell no one. Often when throngs of people would follow Him, He would find a way to make them want to leave. What Simon did here was the opposite. His good deed was out in the open. He was willing to bear a shameful symbol for a Man being shamed. Are you willing to love God and the people around you, even if it means you'll be looked down upon? Pray about it. Journal about it.

### **Day 4 - Read Matthew 27:32**

Though Simon didn't refuse the cross, he didn't volunteer either. I don't believe God takes away the gift of choice from anyone. It seems to me that there are people for whom God orchestrates unique circumstances for unforgettable experiences. Have you ever felt like God has cornered you? Has he put you in position in which you almost had no other option but to do the right thing? If so, share it with us here at *Message* using #messagemag on social media.

### **Day 5 - Read Mark 15:21**

I noticed that when the cross was given to Simon, he walked behind Jesus. This is after Jesus carried the cross on His own, and He had been beaten and bloodied. His pace would have been slow. Simon had to walk at the same pace as Jesus. I have a question for you: Do you ever feel like Jesus is moving too slowly while you have weight on your back? Have you ever felt like God wasn't an "on-time God?" Be honest with us and share on social media using the #messagemag.

### **Day 6 - Read Luke 23:26**

I have a younger, bigger brother. He is a physique competitor. He recently placed second in a field of over 100 competitors to obtain his pro card from the International Bodybuilding and Fitness Federation. He is the real deal. I work out with him sometimes, and he always wants me to try an exercise I've never done. Or he wants me to try lifting weight that's almost too much for me. Whenever he does, though, he always does it first. When I attempt it, he always stands behind me to make sure nothing goes wrong. Consider that Jesus carried the cross before Simon did. Tell us what comes to your mind on social media using the hashtag #messagemag.

### **Day 7**

Seeing my brother lift the weight before I do lets me know that he can spot whatever weight I attempt. Jesus bearing the cross shows us that there is no weight on us that He hasn't carried already. Simon's encounter with Jesus shows us that the best of us need someone to spot us. Pray to God to bring you into true friendship with people who will spot you when life gets heavy. Ask Him to provide people who'll be willing to walk your journey with you—no matter what twists and turns it takes.

..... . .  
Rashad Burden is the pastor of the Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ozark, Alabama. He also pastors the Mt. Olive Seventh-day Adventist Church in Dothan, Alabama.