



A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

Mark 15:21

Oh, the People You'll Meet – Cross-Bearers

This week, as we continue the walk with Jesus to his cross and his empty tomb, we meet Simon, the cross-bearer.

Historians tell us that the Romans would have the criminal, who was to be crucified, carry his own cross to the place of execution. When that became too much for Jesus, Simon from Cyrene was drafted to carry the cross.

As you walk through life you will meet people who are bearing a cross for Jesus. Those crosses are not placed on them by a merciless Roman soldier, but by a merciful God. The essence of the crosses that God places on believers is found in these words of Jesus, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

As you meet these cross-bearers, think about how Jesus might place you in the role of Simon. Think about how you might help them pick up that cross; how you might "carry each other's burdens" (Galatians 6:2).

Recognize also that God has placed crosses on you. He may place on you the cross of fighting the restlessness and frustration that comes with the transition from adolescence into adulthood. There are many questions during teenage years that press hard. There are questions like, "If I don't do what everybody else does, then I won't have any friends. Worse yet, they will discover what I am working so hard to keep a secret: I'm weird! Why does God leave me so alone?" *

As you struggle to help others with their crosses and as you struggle to carry your own, keep your focus on the cross where Jesus hangs. He is on that cross for you. When you think of the times you refused to carry a cross, look at him refusing to come down from his cross. He refused to come down because he was thinking of you. He suffered hell and died thinking of you. When the teenage years get you questioning if anyone could ever love you, look to Jesus on his cross. It is proof that no one will ever love you more than he has or than he does.

* from *"The Theology of the Cross: Reflections on His Cross and Ours"* by Daniel M. Deuschlander.

Prayer: Dear crucified Savior, as we endure crosses in this life, bring us closer to you by the message of forgiveness won by you on your cross. As we stumble under the crushing weight of our crosses, give us strength as we cling to your Word. Amen.