

# Surrender All



*An Illuminated Journal Retreat*  
*through the*  
**STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

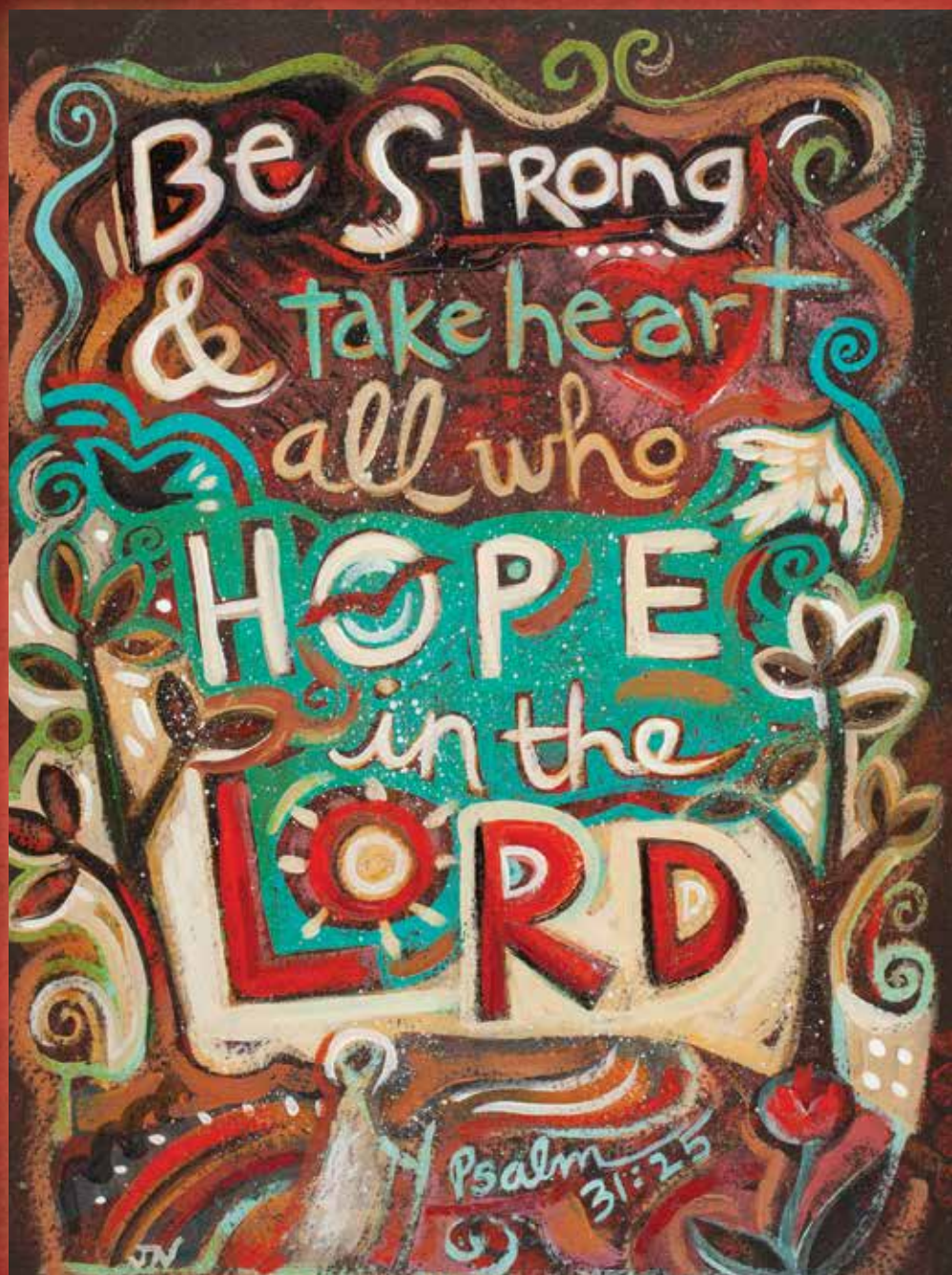
*Ten Norton*

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STATION 7

*Jesus Falls  
the  
Second Time*





## *A Scripture Reading*

Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin any more."

*— John 8:3-11*



## *A Moment to Reflect*

One can imagine the scene: A half-naked woman, dragged from the very bed in which her affair had been discovered, is standing in the middle of a circle of angry men. And where is the one she was with? Did he run off? We don't know. This story centers around the most helpless person, the scapegoat with virtually no voice: the woman. And where is Jesus? He appears among the men and is handed the power to convict. The wolves have circled, hungry for blood and justification. They are ready to fall upon the prey.

Notice that Jesus doesn't say not to stone her, or even that stoning her is wrong or that their wrath is unjustified. He upholds the law. He merely specifies who should throw the first stone: the one without sin. As he silently writes in the sand, the passage says each man went away, one by one, beginning with the elders. They didn't leave in a group, or with a companion, but alone. Interesting.

We don't know exactly what Jesus was writing. It could have been the Mosaic Law—the scribes and Pharisees would have been well-versed in it and recognized their own sins as they saw them written down. Or maybe he was writing specific indiscretions. Perhaps as each one recognized his own fallen state, written by the only one with true authority to convict, they chose to leave silently, not wishing to discuss

their faults with their peers. And why the elders first? They had the hindsight of age. It's easier to justify wrong when you haven't lived long enough to see the consequences of your actions. It's a much more brutal conviction when you've had years to reflect and realize you are much closer to your own day of atonement.

Now the woman faces only Jesus, the man without sin. She has broken the law and expects a consequence. He is within his right to throw a stone. However, he hasn't come here to convict, but to offer salvation. He knows we all fall, unable to stand against the power of our own human desires. Maybe we even need to fall in order to view life from a different vantage point. Jesus meets the woman in the middle of her mess and shame and offers her liberation. He sees her whole story, not just one fallen moment. He only asks that she use this gift wisely and not sin again. She doesn't know it, but he will take the fall for her against that angry circle of men. That's what true love does.



## *My Creative Illuminations*

*Today's scripture is a powerful one, giving each of us an opportunity to see ourselves—perhaps relating to the woman, facing the angry accusers, or maybe recognizing our own tendency to cast hasty judgment, as these men did. Before you proceed with this exercise, reread the gospel passage, taking note of the words and images that are particularly meaningful to you. You might choose to express these ideas creatively, using your favorite art supplies or a special notebook or journal. Once you have placed yourself in the story, take a few moments to reflect on the questions below.*

### **“SURRENDER ALL” JOURNAL PROMPTS**

*Surrender to God's mercy. In the times I have fallen away from Jesus and sinned, do I feel I can be forgiven, or do I still carry the stone of conviction? What is my reaction to the exchange between Jesus and the woman caught in adultery? What do I think God is saying to me here?*



*Forgive as I have been forgiven.* Am I quick to judge others? How does it make me feel afterward? Do I struggle with offering forgiveness in any of my relationships? Can I see a person's fault in the context of his or her whole life, and can I pray for their well-being even as I hold my feelings?

*Consider the sacrament of Reconciliation.* Why is it harder to vocalize my faults and failings to a listening priest rather than just apologize in my own head? When I receive the sacrament, how do I feel, and is there an experience of grace?

## **TURN UP THE LIGHT**

Create or repurpose a symbol of forgiveness that you can wear, carry, or place somewhere to be reminded daily that you can be forgiven. This can be an elaborate and decorative piece (such as a beautiful bracelet adorned with a cross), a religious item (such as a scapular or rosary), or a handmade and simple token (such as a stone imprinted or carved with a cross, or even a sticky note on your bathroom mirror). Use it as a daily reminder to go and sin no more.

Receive the sacrament of Reconciliation if you have not done so recently.



## *Prayer for the Journey*

Dear Jesus:

I am sorry for having offended you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I am sorry for judging others without first examining my own brokenness. I ask for your forgiveness and want to be reconciled to you. I kneel before you, my King, and thank you for having taken the fall for my evil deeds and loving me still. Help me trust that you love me and will not condemn or shame me when I ask for your forgiveness. Help me to avoid sin from this day on. *Amen.*