

A New Look at the Cross

[Luke 23:26-32](#)

Luke 23:26 (NIV)

²⁶ As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

v. 26 Simon of Cyrene—Not mentioned in any other scene in the Gospels, nor elsewhere in NT

Though not listed as a disciple, he enacts the role of a disciple (9:23; 14:27)

He was forced. They seized him.

He may have been a traveler to Jerusalem (Acts 2:10) or perhaps working in the field.

Jesus had concentrated his ministry in the countryside.

We don't know if he was a Jew.

Cyrene was the capital of Cyrenaica, which lay on the coast of North Africa, where today Libya is located. The population of Cyrene was mixed, but included Jews

The Gospel of Mark mentions his sons Alexander and Rufus, (Mk 15:21) presumably members of Mark's community (for them to be mentioned, the original readers would know them).

Why was he chosen?

Did he have Negroid features? Did he wear unusual clothing indicative of his culture?
Was he considered strong? Trustworthy?

What do we do with Simon?

Literary Standpoint: He represents those in Luke's Gospel who are exploited by Roman compulsion.

Homiletical Standpoint: He is a reminder of the African slave trade and the Middle Passage? His presence establishes a lineage of African Christ followers.

Spiritual Standpoint: Though pressed into service, Simon still helped Jesus carry out his liberating mission by carrying his oppressive cross. According to some, Simon exemplifies discipleship.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. How do you view Simon of Cyrene? Victim? Hero? Both? Why?
2. Is it possible to be compelled or forced into discipleship? What reasons or examples would you give to support your answer?
3. Do you believe Simon's encounter with Jesus was by happenstance as a traveler to Jerusalem who just runs into the procession? Or was it more divinely ordered? Why?

4. What do you feel for Simon...Pity? Pride? Empathy?
5. What does his story and the fact that his sons were a part of the Christian community suggest to you?
6. Is there any symbolism from this story that speaks specifically to you?
7. After focusing on Simon of Cyrene today, what kind of prayer are you inspired to pray for your own discipleship?