

**Introduction**

1. Have you ever been so sleepy that you couldn't keep your eyes open even if you tried?
  - a. In 2008 I was on an overseas mission team to Banda Aceh, Indonesia.
  - b. We went as part of the on-going relief/ministry effort after the 12/26/04 tsunami. It took us over 30 hours with multiple flights to make it to Aceh.
  - c. Aceh is 11 hours ahead of the US in time. The evening that we arrived, local missionaries came to our hostel to introduce themselves and their ministries.
  - d. While their presentation was interesting and helpful, none of us could keep our eyes open. The missionaries were upset that we didn't pay better attention. What they failed to remember was that it was 4am in the morning for us after a long trip!
2. Jesus' disciples had had a long Seder meal topped by the stress of Jesus' prediction of their betrayal
  - a. Jesus took them in the middle of the night to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray.
  - b. However, the disciples were so exhausted that they couldn't keep their eyes open as Jesus bared His soul to His heavenly Father.
3. **Read Mk 14:32-42.**

**A. The Need for Prayer (32-34)**

1. As Jesus and the disciples came to the foot of the Mt. of Olives, they entered "Gethsemane" (32).
  - a. This garden is comprised of a grove of ancient olive trees.
  - b. The word Gethsemane means "oil press."
2. Jesus' purpose for coming to this lonely place in the middle of the night was to pray.
  - a. From the beginning of Mark, Jesus has often gone out at a late or early hour to a lonely place to pray by Himself (cf., Mk 1:35, 6:46).
  - b. This is the third and final time that Mark records Jesus going alone to pray.
  - c. James Brooks notes "Mark pictured Jesus as praying at the beginning (1:35), middle (6:46), and end of his ministry. By so doing, he indicated that Jesus' life was characterized by prayer. The clear implication is that the lives of disciples should be also" (James Brooks, *Mark*, 233).
  - d. This last time, Jesus took His disciples at least part of the way with Him to pray.
3. Jesus commanded all but three to "Sit here while I pray," (32) and took Peter, James, and John alone with Him a bit further into the garden (33).
  - a. Jesus was "deeply distressed" (Gk., *ekthambeisthai*) and "troubled" (Gk., *ademonein*). (33) – The RSV translates these words as "Horror and dismay came over him" which may be a better translation as "Mark employed words that express the strongest possible anguish" (Brooks, 234).
  - b. Jesus admitted to His inner circle "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow (Gk., *perilupos*) to the point of death (Gk., *thanatou*)" (34) – "This statement probably alludes to Ps 42:5-6,11 and perhaps also 116:3. Mark indicated that Jesus did not die with stoic apathy as though death were of no consequence. He really hurt as he approached the cross" (Brooks, 234).
  - c. Warren Wiersbe notes, "When about to experience great suffering, most people want to have someone with them, to help share the burden. . . . Being perfectly human, Jesus wanted companionship as He faced the cross, and He selected Peter, James, and John, the same men who had accompanied Him to the home of Jairus (Mark 5:37) and to the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:2)" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 167).
  - d. He commanded these three disciples to "Stay here and keep watch"
    - 1) Jesus' command to "keep watch" (Gk., *gregoreite* – Be spiritually alert and on guard for the temptation of indifference) uses the same strong word of command that He had used in regard to being alert and awake while awaiting the return of the Lord. "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'" (Mk 13:35-36)
    - 2) The events unfolding before the disciples were important kingdom events. It was time to watch, wait, and prepare for all that was about to happen.

## B. Jesus Prays (35-36)

1. Jesus went “a little father . . . fell to the ground and prayed . . .” (35)
2. Praying prostrate was a sign of deep distress and urgency as Jews normally stood before the Lord in prayer with hands raised.
3. There are four key parts to His prayer.
  - a. Cry – He cried out to His heavenly Father, “*Abba*”
  - b. Acknowledgement – He acknowledged the Father’s sovereignty—“everything is possible for you”
  - c. Request – He made His request, “Take this cup from me”
    - 1) The cup of which Jesus speaks is the cup of suffering and God’s wrath
    - 2) Daniel Akin observes “. . . the ‘cup’ that [Jesus] prayed might be removed was not the physical pain He would endure on the cross. . . . No, the cup that so distressed and troubled Him was the spiritual suffering He would endure as He would bear the sins of the world and drink to the last drop the fierce wrath of God as our substitute” (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 334).
    - 3) Remember the Cup of Redemption which we drink in remembrance of the fact that Jesus drank the cup of God’s wrath in our place.
  - d. Ultimately, Jesus yielded to His Father’s will above His own: “Yet not what I will, but what you will.” What a model He gave to each of us!

## C. The Disciples Sleep (37-42)

1. Meanwhile back at the Gethsemane Ranch, the disciples were asleep as Jesus returned from His first round of soul-wrenching prayer (37a).
  - a. Jesus asked Peter, “are you asleep (Gk., *katheudeis*) Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour?” (37b)
  - b. It is interesting that Jesus specifically speaks to Peter since James, John, and the others were most likely asleep as well.
    - 1) Remember that it was Peter who had been so vocal about not betraying Jesus, ever (cf., Mk 14:31).
    - 2) Peter had already “betrayed” Jesus by failing to do what He had asked—watch and pray.
  - c. Jesus commanded Peter to “watch” (Gk., *gregoreite*) and “pray” (Gk., *proseuchesthe*) so that he “might not fall into temptation (Gk., *periasmon*)” (38a).
  - d. Jesus noted that “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (38b) and returned to pray alone again.
    - 1) Jesus drew from David’s prayer in Psalm 51 when David confessed the weakness of his flesh in his sin with Bathsheba and his need for the Spirit of God to cleanse and restore him.
    - 2) See also Paul in Ro 7:14-25 regarding the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit.
    - 3) William Lane notes, “. . . ‘flesh’ in its weakness [is] a description of sinful man left to his own inadequate resources who becomes overwhelmed by a situation, his best intentions betrayed by his inability to resist the pressures of the demonic. The ‘willing spirit’ which stands in opposition to the weak flesh is not a better part of man but God’s Spirit who strives against human weakness. . . . Spiritual wakefulness and prayer in full dependence upon divine help provide the only adequate preparation for crisis (cf., Ch 13:11)” (William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 520).
2. After praying the same prayer a second time, Jesus returned to check on His disciples again.
  - a. “. . . he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy” (40a)
  - b. The disciples had no excuse and didn’t know what to say.
  - c. Jesus went back to pray a third time. It was a third and final confession of His struggle with and ultimate submission to His Father’s will
3. After the third and final time of prayer, Jesus again found His disciples asleep.
  - a. Three rounds of prayer and three rounds of sleeping revealed Jesus’ diligent effort to take the unfolding events to His Father in prayer and the superlative inability of His disciples to keep watch with Him in this difficult hour.
  - b. Jesus declared, “Enough!” (Gk., *apechei*) – The time for prayer and watching are over and the time for His holy action is at hand.

- c. Jesus revealed God's will and plan, "The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners.
- 1) The verb "delivered" (Gk., *paradidotai*) is the same one that had been used to describe Judas' scheming with the Jewish leaders to "hand over" or "betray" Jesus to them (cf., Mk 14:10,18).
  - 2) This is another important Son of Man saying as Jesus speaks of Himself as the one coming to fulfill the Father's plan.
- d. Jesus commanded His disciples, "Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"
- 1) The disciples may have been somewhat refreshed by their sleep, but they were not ready for what was about to happen because they had failed to keep watch and pray with Jesus.
  - 2) Jesus knew the Father's plan and was ready to complete it despite lack of sleep.
4. Akin concludes, "Gethsemane was 'hell' for Jesus, but I am so thankful He went through it. You see, if there is no Gethsemane, there is no Calvary. If there is no Calvary, there can be no empty tomb. And if there is no empty tomb, there is only hell for us" (Akin, 334).
5. Lane concludes, "Just as rebellion in a garden brought Death's reign over man (Gen. 3:1-19), submission in Gethsemane reversed that pattern of rebellion and sets in motion a sequence of events which defeated Death itself (cf., Heb. 5:7-10)" (Lane, 522).

#### **D. Questions/Thoughts for Reflection**

1. Is your life characterized by prayer like the life of Jesus? Watch and pray more!
2. Do you know when you need to pray? Do you stop and pray or just try to keep going on your own?
3. The warnings to and failures of Jesus' disciples in this account are both a warning and encouragement to us in our own failures and weaknesses in obeying the Lord.
4. Have you ever been so distressed and overwhelmed in the flesh that you didn't know what to pray? Let God's Spirit pray for you. "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans" (Ro 8:26).
5. How is Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane a model prayer for us?
  - a. Cry out to the Father in the intimate relationship you have with Him through Jesus.
  - b. Acknowledge your problem or struggle and God's sovereignty.
  - c. Make your will/request known to the Father.
  - d. Be ready and willing for God to bend your will to His will. It may not be easy, but it will be best.