



In the Garden & the Arrest of Jesus

Matthew 26:36-56; Luke 22:39-46; John 13:21-14:31



After the Last Supper, Jesus led His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. It was a special place where they had often walked, talked, and laughed together. This night, the mood was very serious as Jesus drew strength from His heavenly Father, and freely agreed to carry out God's plan.

Day #1: Need to Pray

Judas had already made a deal to hand Jesus over to His enemies. During the Last Supper, Judas left to go to the chief priests and carry out his betrayal (John 13:30).

After the Passover Meal was finished, Jesus went out to the foot of a mountain ridge named the Mount of Olives. The rest of the disciples followed Him to a garden called Gethsemane. They had been to this spot together many times (John 18:2). More than likely, this was a place where Jesus could spend time with His close friends, away from the crowds of people that always seems to gather around Him.

✝ *When they reached the place, Jesus spoke. "Pray that you won't fall into sin when you are tempted," He said to them. - Luke 22:40*

Jesus did not say, "Pray for Me." Instead, He wanted them to pray for themselves. Jesus knew that the night ahead would be the most difficult that any of these men had ever faced. He knew that they would be frightened and confused. They would be tempted in many ways. They would be tempted to doubt God's plan, to take matters into their own hands, to lie, and to abandon Him.

Jesus said, "The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." (Matthew 26:41) This means, even though in our heart and mind we might want to do the right thing, our sin nature takes over and we sin. Jesus knew the disciples MUST pray in order to tap into God's POWER. We will see how important Jesus' words were. The disciples should have listened and obeyed.

✱ On our own, it is impossible not to sin (Romans 8:7). We must tap into God's power through prayer in order to say "no" to sin and to do what is right (Ephesians 3:16).

*For God is working in you, giving you the **desire** and the **power** to do what pleases Him. - Philippians 2:13*

Day #2: Your Will, Not Mine

Jesus told His disciples to pray for strength for themselves. He took Peter, James, and John away from the other disciples.

✝ *He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me."*

He went on a little farther and bowed with His face to the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from Me." - Matthew 26:38-39a NLT

What "cup" was Jesus talking about? The cup was a symbol used in the Bible for God's punishment for sin (Psalm 75:7-8, Isaiah 51:17). Also, "cup" meant the plan that was laid out for a person's life. The plan for Jesus was that He would go to the cross, and all of the horrible sins of the world would be placed upon Him. For the first time, Jesus would feel the guilt and shame of sin, and even worse, He would feel separation from His Father. The thought of it was almost unbearable to Jesus. Yet, read Jesus' very next words:

Yet I want Your will to be done, not Mine. - Luke 22:42b NLT

Jesus agonized over His situation. The weight of the sin of the entire world was about to come crashing down on the only sinless Person who has ever walked the Earth. Jesus was fully God, yet He was fully human (1 Timothy 3:16). In His human body, He did not want to suffer. He did not want to feel the shame of sin flood into His perfect body (Hebrews 12:2). But, Jesus knew He must sacrifice Himself so that all people could be forgiven for their sins. Therefore, Jesus set aside what would seem to be good (not dying on the cross) for God's plan, which was FAR better.

✱ Jesus prayed to God, "Do what You want, not what I want." Are you willing to give God total control of your life? Have you ever told Him, "No matter what it costs me, do what is best for Your kingdom."? Note that even Jesus made this a matter of prayer! Submitting to God's will is humanly impossible! It takes the POWER that only God can supply.

Day #3: Failure to Pray

We don't see an action-packed scene when we see someone on his or her knees praying, but there is certainly a lot of action going on! Our prayers connect us to God's power (Ephesians 3:16, James 5:16). The Bible tells of battles in which prayer empowers warring angels to defeat evil spirits (Daniel 10). We need God's power to fight the battles we cannot even see (Ephesians 6:12).

Jesus' time in the Garden was so very important. Songwriter,

Day #3 continued:

Michael Card, calls it, "The battle before the final war." We may never know how much Jesus' time of prayer impacted the entire world for all of time. In prayer, Jesus bent His knee and submitted His will to the will of the Father. And from God, Jesus drew the strength He would need to accomplish the incredible task ahead.

Jesus got up three times to check on the disciples. Each time, Jesus found the disciples were sleeping! They did not obey His command to pray. These were Jesus' closest friends, but they could not even stay awake to pray with Him.

 *An angel from heaven appeared to Jesus and gave Him strength. Because He was very sad and troubled, He prayed even harder. His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. - Luke 22:43-44*

Because He was suffering alone, God sent an angel to give strength to Jesus. Only a few hours earlier, Jesus foretold that all of the disciples would abandon Him before the night was over. Jesus said to His disciples, "You will leave Me all alone. But I am not really alone. My Father is with Me." (John 16:32)

 When no one was willing to stay awake with Jesus, His Father was still with Him. Remember that when no one seems to be with you, God is with you. Pray to Him. God may not take away a difficult situation. As in Jesus' case, the hard situation may be completely necessary (Matthew 26:56). But God will comfort you and give you strength to get **through** all of your difficult times.

Day #4: The Arrest

Do you have a special place that you play with a friend? Maybe it's a place where little brothers and sisters can't find you. The Garden of Gethsemane was this kind of a place, where Jesus spent time with His friends. Judas knew he could find Jesus there. Judas used this special place to betray the Lord.

Suddenly, the quiet of the garden was broken by the sound of soldiers marching and swords clanking. Judas arrived with a crowd of people.

 *A crowd was with (Judas). They were carrying swords and clubs. The chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders had sent them. Judas, who was going to hand Jesus over, had arranged a signal with them. "The one I kiss is the Man," he said. "Arrest Him and have the guards lead Him away." So Judas went to Jesus at once. He said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed Him. The men grabbed Jesus and arrested Him. - Mark 14:43b - 46*

But Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" - Luke 22:48

Judas used a cowardly signal! He used a kiss to turn Jesus over to those who came to arrest Him. Judas betrayed Jesus while pretending to be His friend. Perhaps Judas thought Jesus wouldn't realize it was he who had led the soldiers to the garden. But, of course, Jesus knew what Judas was going to do even before he did it! Or maybe

Day #4 continued:

Judas was afraid of what the other disciples would think. But, it was God's opinion that Judas should have been concerned with.

Jesus pointed out that it was ridiculous to send an armed crowd to arrest Him. He had taught among them many times. He taught about peace. There was no need for them to come with swords and clubs. Jesus said, "But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." (Matthew 26:56a)

 As tragic as this story is, it came as no surprise to our Lord. God had foretold these events hundreds, even thousands, of years before. Our God is so great that no one can upset His plans (Psalm 33:11). He can even take the evil plan of a man like Judas and turn it into good! (Genesis 50:20) If you are ever faced with a person that tries to do you harm, pray for that person and ask God to use their actions for good.

Day #5: In God's Control

Have you ever seen a Dad playing with his very young children? He may pretend to lose a wrestling match. Of course, in a real battle between a grown man and a toddler, the man would win. But out of love, the Dad holds back his strength in order to let the child win. In a similar way, God withheld His power to allow the soldiers to arrest Jesus.

Seeing the soldiers grab Jesus, Peter drew his sword and struck the right ear of the high priest's servant (John 18:10). Jesus told Peter to put his sword away (Matthew 26:52). Then Jesus reached out and healed the man's ear (Luke 22:51). Jesus told Peter his action was wrong. Jesus did not need Peter to fight for Him! Jesus asked Peter:

 *"Do you think I can't ask my Father for help? He would send an army of more than 70,000 angels right away. But then how would the Scriptures come true? They say it must happen in this way." - Matthew 26:53-54*

Jesus could have just said the word and instantly He would be free from the men. Because Peter had failed to pray, he did not understand that Jesus' arrest was necessary to God's plan (Matthew 26:56). Peter gave in to the temptation to take matters into his own hands instead of trusting God. God could have easily stopped the soldiers at any point! Jesus willingly went with them, because the salvation of all men, women, and children was at stake.

Then all the disciples deserted (Jesus) and fled. - Matthew 26:56b

We will see that this was just the beginning of the most difficult night of Peter's life. He should have obeyed Jesus and spent the past hours tapping into God's power through prayer.

 It is incredibly important for every believer to pray - especially when the circumstances around you seem to be out of your control. You may find that you are right where God wants you to be. The situation may be just what God wants in order to bring glory to Himself.