

EPIC

A journey through the Gospel of Mark

WEEK 7 **STUDY GUIDE**



CENTRAL
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2022

Read: Mark 14:32-42

Scripture Verse: *“Jesus and his disciples went to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus said to them, “Sit here while I pray.” -Mark 14:32*

Today's Thought:

I will never forget the time I had the opportunity to visit and pray in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem on the other side of the Kidron Valley. The garden was literally a large olive grove. Gethsemane, which means 'oil-press,' was an enclosed garden within this grove where Jesus and his disciples would often stop to rest and pray. The garden contains eight ancient olive trees, which scholars and archaeologists think could be actual trees from the time of Jesus. Whether they are or not may continue to be a mystery, but with their gnarled trunks and scanty foliage, they remain regarded as sacred memorials of what happened there on the night Jesus prayed. I remember the eerie calm and quietness of the garden as we entered the enclosed area where Jesus went to pray. There is a large rock in the middle-back, under one of the ancient olive trees, where they tell us Jesus may have prayed. As it was then, it remains today an extraordinary place to pray and listen to the voice of God.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray early on in his ministry because he knew it would be an essential tool for them as they matured in their faith. The Lord was preparing to face some daunting hours. He knew that he needed the Father's help to fulfill the mission of his ministry. All through Jesus' life and ministry, we see example after example of him taking the time daily to pray to the Father for guidance. If it was essential for Christ to take everything to the Father in prayer, so it must be necessary for us. As we contemplate this moment in the garden with Jesus and the disciples, I want you to begin to think of a place you can go to pray. Where is your "garden of Gethsemane?" It can be anywhere you can get alone for a time to pray and listen to the Father. It doesn't have to be long, but it needs to happen. The Father wants to hear from you and speak to your heart through His Word to give you direction in your life. If you haven't found that place, find it today and begin building on your relationship with the Father through the Son. It will not only change your life; it will provide you peace and His direction.

- What is your method for praying?
- Where is that special place you go to be alone with God?
- What does the passage teach us about prayer?
- What was the benefit of prayer for Jesus? You?

Further Reading: Matthew 26:36–38; Luke 22:40

TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2022

Read: Mark 14:32–42

Scripture Verse: *“He took Peter, James, and John along with him. He began to be very upset and troubled. My soul is very sad. I feel close to death,” he said to them. “Stay here. Keep watch.”* –Mark 14:33–34

Today’s Thought:

Jesus and the disciples had just finished dinner, Judas having been called out, had left, and now they were heading out to a place they often went to pray and be alone. It would have been around 10–11 p.m. which was late in that culture when they arrived at Gethsemane. However, it was custom to stay up late speaking and sharing stories of God’s redemption during Passover. On their way to the garden, Jesus shares a warning with his closest students that they are about to forsake him in the moment of his greatest need. I am not sure how much the disciples understood what Jesus told them, but they would surely remember his words three days later. Jesus backed his warning with Zechariah 13:7, *“Strike the shepherd down. Then the sheep will be scattered.”* Yet, after warning them of their coming failure, Jesus assured them He would meet them again in Galilee after His resurrection.

As Jesus and the eleven disciples arrived at the entrance to the garden, he had them sit down and watch while He went back further to pray. Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him. The disciples started to notice a change in Jesus’ demeanor. Mark states that Jesus seemed greatly distressed, anguished, and tormented. He could sense his death so close that He became overwhelmed with sorrow! Unfortunately, when Jesus needed their companionship the most, his tired disciples kept falling asleep, unable to stay alert. They should have been able to stay awake to keep watch; they had stayed up late during many other Passovers but struggled on this night.

In today’s text, Mark gives us a new view of Jesus, letting us see Jesus speak of the coming events directly and personally, for the first time. Until then, He had shared such things only in the third person. The other thing we haven’t seen yet is Jesus’ outward expression of emotion. He had been quietly subtle until now. His mission was starting to get real. Even as readers, we can begin to see, sense, and feel the raw emotion of envisioning Jesus on the cross right here in the garden rather than kneeling before the Father in prayer.

Meanwhile, as Jesus was dealing with His extreme emotion before the Father, the disciples were to be keeping watch. Jesus wasn't as interested in their protection as he was just in need of their companionship and presence during this excruciating moment. It was in this time of prayer that Jesus finally felt the impact of His death and the spiritual consequences struck Him head-on, and it staggered him like a prize-fighter in the 15th round. It wasn't the thought of his great pain or death that shook him; it was the prospect of alienation from His Father.

How often have we nodded off, unable to keep our spiritual eyes open and on Jesus, and fallen short? I wish I could say it never happened to me, but I can't even count the number of times Jesus only wanted my companionship and trust that I let Him down. How about you? May we all wake up, stay with Jesus, and keep watch. The time of our salvation is drawing near!

- How might the disciples be feeling after dinner that night?
- What was Jesus warning them about on the walk to the garden?
- Why did Jesus take Peter, James, and John further back in the garden with Him?
- Jesus asked the disciples to keep watch. What were they to be watching for?
- What was the cause of Jesus' greatest anxiety?
- When have you "nodded" off on Jesus and it cost you something?

Further Reading:

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2022

Read: Mark 14:32–42

Scripture Verse: *“He went a little farther. Then he fell to the ground. He prayed that, if possible, the hour might pass by him.”* – Mark 14:35

Today’s Thought:

Have you ever had to go somewhere or do something you absolutely didn’t want to do, but there was no way of getting around doing it? Maybe it’s that dreaded annual physical or that trip to the dentist for a beautiful root canal. Or is it that dreaded final exam? No matter what stage of life we find ourselves in, there will be times when we have to do things we just don’t want to do. And I believe we run into stuff like this in our spiritual lives—confession of sin, asking someone for forgiveness, or having to forgive someone else. Maybe God is calling you to serve or minister to someone, which scares you to death.

As we read through our text today, I get the feeling that Jesus may have been having one of those days like we have. Each day of Jesus’ ministry that passed was one day closer to the fulfillment of His mission. At different times as we read the Gospels, we get the sense that Jesus can feel it coming. When we read texts where He is praying, there is a sense of intense emotion and spiritual battle within Jesus. This tension may seem strange to us, but remember, although Jesus was fully divine, He was also fully human, which is what we see in those moments.

As Jesus and his disciples entered the garden, he left them and walked further into this place of solitude to be alone with the Father. You can feel the weight of the coming passion pulling him to the ground. And he fell onto the stone-covered floor of the garden to pray. And at that moment, Jesus, in the fullness of his humanity, pleaded with the Father, if there was any other way to accomplish the mission, to let this option pass over him.

Mark describes it as deep anguish; his words are so descriptive that you can almost see Jesus on the cross instead of praying to the Father. Other than from the cross, this is the only time Jesus’ suffering is discussed in such a direct and personal way. And remember this is the first time Jesus refers to His mission in the first person. We know that His soul is overwhelmed with the weight of what He is about to do. It is as if Mark is preparing us beforehand for Jesus’ actual prayer so that we can understand what He means by asking God for this hour to pass, if possible.

I am so glad that Jesus, our Lord, was willing to take on the world's sins, including yours and mine, to the cross giving His life so that we might live! When I think about today's verse, I am encouraged by the fact that Jesus, like us, dealt with situations that were uncomfortable, even hurtful things that, if possible, he wouldn't want to do. I know there have been times when I did not want to do something hard or uncomfortable but gathered the strength to do it. But never once do we get the impression that Jesus wanted to walk away from the mission His Father sent Him to do. Out of obedience to the Father, as we will discuss tomorrow, Jesus prayed, "not my will Father but your will be done," as you planned it from the beginning of time.

- What is that dreaded thing you didn't want to do but had to? How did you handle it?
- Why did Jesus have these moments like we do?
- What might have been some of Jesus' thoughts as he prayed to the Father?
- Why was Jesus asking the Father for this "cup" to pass him over?
- What spiritual lesson do you learn from this text?

Further Reading: John 6:38

THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 2022

Read: Mark 14:32-42

Scripture Verse: *"Abba," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup of suffering away from me. But let what you want be done, not what I want." Abba means Father.*

- Mark 14:36

Today's Thought:

Before Jesus prays, Mark instructs us on how we are to understand what is about to be prayed in today's text, Mark 14:36. Jesus has asked his Father to allow this cup of suffering to pass Him by if at all possible. If we don't read past verse 35, it would sound like Jesus was having second thoughts about his mission. As we look at it through our humanness, we can understand why anyone would want what is about to happen, not to happen. But not wanting His own will, Jesus is willing to take the cup the Father offered.

Interestingly, in both the Old and New Testaments, the word "cup," when used figuratively, would focus on some experience one was about to undergo. For example, in Rev. 14:10, John warns of the "cup of God's wrath" to be poured out on the wicked as an image of God's judgment. But what is Jesus' cup? The experience of suffering that the Father, Himself, pours out for the Son. Jesus knows the hour of terror is upon him. As He prays, He contemplates the torture ahead, including the extreme physical and mental pain due to the cat of nine tails 39 lashes before being nailed to the cross through his wrists and ankles. Yet the worst pain of all will be the horrible feeling of separation from God that is caused by humanity's sin. And in his prayer, Jesus begs the Father not to have to drink from this cup of poison. Although Jesus prayed to be saved from "the cup," He wasn't asking for protection from death; he was asking and confirming that God would faithfully save Him "out of death." After praying this prayer three times, the Father answered the Son's prayer and would grant His request three days later! And as awful as it would be, it led directly to the resurrection and joy of not only Jesus but also for us! Jesus never told the Father what to do but had perfect confidence in God's will. The Father does the same for us when we pray for His will and not our own.

- What are some of the attributes of Jesus' character we find in the text?

- Do you think that Jesus dealt with the temptation of selfishness in this moment?
- Explain the OT and NT meaning of the concept “cup.” Why is it relevant?
- What is Jesus’ “cup?”
- What was more painful to Jesus than the physical torture?
- What was Jesus asking the Father to do for Him?
- What does this text teach us about how we should pray?

Further Reading: John 12:26-27

FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2022

Read: Mark 14:32–42

Scripture Verse: *“Jesus returned the third time. He said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look! The Son of Man is about to be handed over to sinners.”* – Mark 14:41

Today’s Thought:

Life is full of crises. There are work crises, medical crises, financial crises, and sometimes midlife crises. Have you ever found yourself in one of those moments when all of life feels like a crisis? What do you do? Where do you turn for help? When these moments occur, it can be easy for us to want to throw our hands in the air and say, “I quit,” or put our faces in our hands and cry. Although today’s text doesn’t say it plainly, if we read between the lines, we can find the answer to how we should handle life when crises hit close to home.

Jesus was facing a life crisis. Over the last three years, each day was one step closer to fulfilling the mission the Father had sent Jesus to accomplish, and the heavy tension, deep emotion, and spiritual anguish were now at their pinnacle. Jesus could feel the weight of the world’s sin literally on his back. He knows the time of His pain and suffering has arrived. The extreme tension was overwhelming to the point of Jesus sweating blood. But at that moment, when He was at his lowest, Jesus went to the garden to be alone with God. He responded to the crisis with prayer. This Gethsemane moment was calling Jesus’ foundational beliefs into question, so He prayed. This olive grove moment was threatening His faith in the Father, so He prayed. This garden visit even raised the awful possibility that something was not possible for God--allowing the passing of His Son’s hour of suffering and death. Yet, in the chaos of it all, Jesus addressed his prayers to His “Abba,” His Father that loved Him, knowing that everything is possible for the one who believes and prays.

Mark puts on display the very human side of Jesus in His moment of deep distress and trouble. This profoundly emotional time kept causing Him to fall repeatedly to the ground in anguished prayer. Meanwhile, the disciples’ response to the crisis at hand was to lay down and sleep. Three times Jesus returned to them to find them sleeping when He had asked them to stay alert and pray with Him. We see with the repeated failure of the disciples a warning for us to always be alert and pray in times of temptation and crisis. And with Judas’ betrayal of Jesus, we find that it

is not enough for us to be near Jesus or to be called to discipleship or to have received His love. Being a disciple entails total commitment and allegiance to the suffering Christ. While Judas betrayed another disciple resorted to violence. And what's incredible is neither event needed to happen because Jesus had already accepted His suffering and death. Think about that.

Despite the test of faith, Jesus emerges from His place of prayer with renewed confidence in the possibilities of God's will, fully committed to obedience to what the Father wanted. Jesus never even thought about running from His fate. He willingly laid His life down to satisfy Scripture rather than man's plans. Even though all the disciples deserted Him, Jesus never deserts or fails us! He is always there for us, waiting to help us get through the next crisis on our spiritual journey.

- What was the last crisis you had to face? How did you do?
- Jesus was facing the ultimate crisis. How did He handle it? What does that say to you?
- How was this moment calling Jesus' foundational beliefs into question?
- How did this moment call into question His faith in the Father?
- How was what Jesus asking for, possibly something the Father could not do? Explain.
- If nothing is impossible with God how could this be something He couldn't do? Why?
- What do we learn from Judas' betrayal of Christ? What does Jesus want from us?
- Why were the actions of Judas and Peter in the garden not necessary? Why do you think God allowed them to happen anyway?
- What are some of the spiritual lessons we can learn from this garden experience?

Further Reading: Matthew 26:40-46

NOTES



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