



Jesus spent His last night on earth praying to His heavenly Father. Jesus instructed the disciples to pray so they would not fall into temptation. We see they did not pray, nor were they able to handle the temptations they faced that night.

Day #1: God's Will, Not Mine

Last week, we saw Jesus wash His disciples' feet at the Last Supper. Jesus told Peter that he was clean, but that not everyone in the upper room was clean. Jesus meant that Peter had been made right with God because he truly believed in Jesus. But, one of the disciples, Judas, was not a true believer (John 13:11). Judas had already made a deal with the chief priests to betray Jesus.

+ Then one of the Twelve - the one called Judas Iscariot - went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand Him (Jesus) over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand Him over. - Matthew 26:14-16

The Bible says that Judas was prompted by the devil to betray Jesus (John 13:2). Judas planned to hand Jesus over to the chief priests when there was no crowd around (Luke 22:6). During the Last Supper, Judas left to 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.

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 gave His beloved disciples specific instructions. We will see how important Jesus' words were. They should have listened and obeyed.

Then He went a short distance away from them. There He got down on His knees and prayed. He said, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup of suffering away from Me. But do what you want, not what I want." 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 22:41-44

Please hear the heart of Jesus as He prayed to His heavenly Father. Jesus agonized over His situation. Jesus knew what was about to happen. He was about to be arrested. People would tell lies about Him. He would be beaten and hung on a cross. Jesus was fully God, yet He was fully human (1 Timothy 3:16). In His human body, He did not want to suffer. 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 that 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 #2: Failure to Pray

We don't **see** an action-packed scene when we see someone on their knees praying, but there is certainly action going on! The Old Testament book of Daniel describes what happens when we pray. Daniel was very sad because he knew that his people would soon be in a great war. For three weeks, Daniel fasted and prayed for God to tell him the fate of his people. Finally, a glorious angel came to Daniel with an answer from God. The angel said that God heard Daniel's prayer from the first day, and on the first day God sent the angel to speak to Daniel. But, the angel had been battling an evil spirit for 21 days. The great angel, Michael, had come to help the angel fight, and that is how he was able to get away and come to Daniel. Our prayers connect us to God's power (Ephesians 3:16, James 5:16). We need God's power to fight the battles we cannot even see.

Jesus' time in the garden was so very important. Songwriter, Michael Card, calls it, "The battle before the final war." We may never know how much Jesus' prayer-time 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 our redemption in the incredible task ahead.

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

Jesus had stepped about a stone's throw away from the disciples to pray (Luke 22:41). Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him. Jesus was deeply troubled.

"My soul is very sad. I feel close to death," He said to them. "Stay here. Keep watch." - Mark 14:34

The word *watch* here means to stay alert so that no bad thing would suddenly happen. Jesus knew He was about to be arrested by a group of armed soldiers. Jesus asked his three friends to keep watch for Him so that He could focus on praying to His heavenly Father.

Jesus got up three times to check on the disciples. Each time, Jesus found the disciples were sleeping! While it is understandable that it was late and they were exhausted, they should have listened and obeyed when Jesus told them to watch and pray (Mark 14:38). Three times Jesus told them to pray. These were the men who were closest to Jesus, but they could not even stay awake to pray with Him. Because He was suffering alone, God sent an angel to give strength to Jesus. This fulfilled the words that Jesus spoke only 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 follow 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 it was in Jesus' case, the hard situation you are going through 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 #3: The Arrest

The Bible tells us that Judas knew where he could find Jesus that night. Jesus had gone to the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples often (John 18:2). Judas arrived at the garden with a crowd of people.

A crowd was with him (Judas). They were carrying swords and clubs. The chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders had sent them.

Day #3 continued:

 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 Judas who had led the soldiers to the garden. But Jesus knew what Judas was going to do even before he did it! Or maybe 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:

Then Jesus spoke to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders. They had all come for Him. "Am I leading a band of armed men against you?" He asked. "Do you have to come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courtyard. And you didn't lay a hand on Me. But this is your hour. This is when darkness rules." - Luke 22: 52-53

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 attack the soldiers. 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

Because Peter failed to pray beforehand, he did not recognize 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 every man, woman, and child was at stake.

 It is critical 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. The situation may be just what God wants in order to bring glory to Himself.

Day #4: Peter's Denial

How would you feel if someone that you love suddenly decided to pretend they didn't even know you? What if you went to the grocery store with your dad one afternoon. What if he ran into a friend of his from work, who you did not know. His co-worker asked your dad if you were his child and your dad said, "No, I really don't know who that is." You might think he was kidding. You would probably laugh and say, "Dad, what are you talking about?" Again, he would look at you and say, "Um, I really don't know who that is." Your face would drop and you would say, "Dad..." Finally, he would say, "Really, I've never seen this child before." Then he would turn and walk away. What stinging words these would be! This would be devastating. Today, we will see that Jesus' disciples denied knowing the One who they vowed to follow no matter what.

Jesus warned His disciples that they would all fall away. But, Peter was sure that he would stay by Jesus' side.

 Peter said, "All the others may turn away. But I will not."

"What I'm about to tell you is true," Jesus answered. "It will happen today, this very night. Before the rooster crows twice, you yourself will say three times that you don't know Me."


Day #4 continued:

But Peter would not give in. He said, "I may have to die with You. But I will never say I don't know You." And all the others said the same thing. - Mark 14:29-31

After Jesus was arrested, all of the disciples ran away from the garden (Mark 14:50). Peter entered the courtyard where they had taken Jesus to question Him (Matthew 26:58). Then, just as Jesus foretold, Peter denied knowing Jesus. Three different people recognized that Peter was one of the disciples. Each time, Peter said he was not a disciple (Luke 22:55-60). Peter said he did not even know Jesus!

And immediately, while he (Peter) was still speaking, the rooster crowed. At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Suddenly, the Lord's words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know Me." And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly. - Luke 22:60b-62

Peter did just what the Jewish leaders had done. The leaders who believed in Jesus would not admit they believed because they were afraid of what other men might do to them (John 12:42). Now, Peter had joined the men throughout history who feared men more than they feared God. Remember, at one time, Abraham sinned because he feared the Egyptians (Genesis 12:12-13). Pharaoh sinned because he feared the Israelites (Exodus 1:10). Now, Peter sinned because he feared the people around him. He feared being arrested and possibly killed.

 The Bible tells us that we should not be afraid of what men can do to us. Instead, we must greatly respect and honor God, because He is much more powerful than any man is (Luke 12:4-5). Are you more concerned with what people think, or what God thinks?

Day #5: The Power Source

Peter said he would never deny knowing Christ, yet he denied Jesus three times. This was the very thing that Jesus told Peter to pray about. Jesus knew what a horrible night was in store for the disciples. Jesus knew that they would be frightened and confused. He knew they MUST pray in order to tap into God's POWER. In Luke 22:40, Jesus told the disciples, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." Jesus knew they would be tempted to take matters into their own hands. He knew they would be tempted to abandon Him.


But Peter and the other disciples did not pray. They slept. Because Peter did not tap into God's power, he was left to rely on his own power to fight these great temptations. What did Jesus say about human power?

 *The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. - Matthew 26:41b*

This means, even though in our heart and mind we might want to do the right thing, our sin nature takes over and we do what comes naturally to us - we sin. In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul put it this way:

I know there is nothing good in my sinful nature. I want to do what is good, but I can't. I don't do the good things I want to do. I keep on doing the evil things I don't want to do. - Romans 7:18-19

This is the condition of every believer! What, then, is the answer to this huge problem? We have learned that three years earlier, when Satan tried to tempt Jesus to sin, Jesus used Scripture to make Satan flee from Him (Luke 4:4, 8, 12). And, Jesus told His disciples to pray (Matthew 6:13). Jesus, Himself, spent hours in prayer with His heavenly Father (Mark 1:35). And, of all the things Jesus could have done during His last hours before being arrested, He chose to pray. Through His prayer, Jesus submitted His own will to the will of the Father, and He gained the strength He needed.

 Do you ever feel like the apostle Paul? Do you ever feel that even though you know what is right, you do just the opposite? This is a struggle that we are POWERLESS to overcome without God. Pray daily for God to give you the power to live your life in a way that pleases Him (Titus 2:11-12).

I pray that He (God) will use His glorious riches to make you strong. May His Holy Spirit give you His power deep down inside you. - Ephesians 3:16