

Prayer in the Garden

by Mary Kane



One of my favorite places to spend time with God is my backyard patio garden. It's just a little garden about fifteen by ten feet, right off my back porch. My husband put in my nice leaf-embossed patio stones a couple of summers ago. Every spring I fill my little garden with my favorite flowers: pink impatiens, blue forget-me-nots and spicy geraniums. Throughout the summer months, I tend it carefully, keeping it safe from my enemies—the deer (see the May theme Bible study). Most nice, warm, summer mornings I can be found in my garden, on my porch swing (another gift from my husband) with my cushions, pillows and Bible study materials, delighting in the quiet with my Father. God just suddenly brought to my mind that the *first* place He ever met with man was in a garden. How nice to meet with Him in my garden *first* thing in the morning.

*"The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden,
and there He put the man whom He had formed."
Genesis 2:8*

Please read Matthew 26:36-41.

Where did Jesus go with His disciples according to verse 36?

Gethsemane is the same word in Greek as it is in English, and it means, "an oil press, a wine press, to thrum or make music with the fingers." Gethsemane was also a garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives, named for an olive press that was located there.

Why do you think that Jesus chose to pray at Gethsemane on the night of His betrayal?

Please read Zechariah 14:4. What future event will occur on the Mount of Olives?

Perhaps being near The Mount of Olives was a great encouragement to Jesus on the night of his agony. Perhaps it helped Jesus to bear His suffering to look and see the place where He would one day return in glory. The mountain may have been a reminder that His present agony was nothing compared to the joy set before Him—His future glorious return to the Mount of Olives!

With whom did Jesus enter the garden that evening?

The NKJV states that He entered the garden with *them*. We must look back a little in the chapter to figure out exactly who *they* were. Please scan Matthew 26:26-30.

What major event had just taken place?

Who was with Jesus at the Last Supper?

Now please read verses 36-37 again. Jesus entered the Garden with *all* of His disciples but He only took Peter and the sons of Zebedee (James and John) with Him to another place in the Garden to watch and to pray. Jesus took the same three disciples with Him on two other occasions; the transfiguration of Matthew 17:1 and the raising of a dead girl in Mark 5:37.

Why do you think Jesus only took three disciples with Him?

When we are troubled, we usually run to our closest companions for prayer and comfort. Let's make sure we don't stop with the comfort of our friends. Following the example of our Savior, let's take all of our needs and suffering to God in prayer.

What did Jesus say to the eleven disciples who entered the garden with Him (verse 36)?

What did He say to the three whom He took with Him more deeply into the garden?

Jesus asked Peter, James and John to *watch* with Him. Before studying this section of Scripture, I used to think that Jesus was asking Peter, James and John to pray for Him, but, as usual, digging into the Greek throws greater light on the text. Let's see what we can discover. The word *watch* transliterates from the Greek to *gregoreuo* which means, "to watch, give strict attention to, be cautious, active, to stay awake. The usage of the *gregoreuo* in this verse implies a spiritual vigilance as well as a physical vigilance. The word *watching* then has spiritual applications as well. Later, the definition states *watching* is, "to take heed lest through remission and indolence some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one." This word also means being primed to battle oppression, spiritual enemies and temptation through watchfulness and prayer. After studying the original Greek, I no longer think that Jesus was asking His disciples to pray for *Him* so much as He was warning His disciples to pray for *themselves*, to be strengthened against an inevitable and furious spiritual attack.

Please write the words in verses 37 and 38 that describe how Jesus was feeling during His private prayer time.

Why do you think Jesus felt so distressed and sorrowful?

I used to think that Jesus was so distressed because He was dreading His death upon the cross. I now believe there was a different reason. Let's turn to a couple of scriptures that will shed a little light upon the reason for the agony of Jesus.

Please record Isaiah 53:6 and 2 Corinthians 5:21 in the space provided.

I believe that Jesus became so sorrowful because He was carrying not only my personal guilt from sin (which would have been enough in and of itself to cause great agony), but the weight of the sin of the *entire world*—even those who would never accept His death. Imagine. Have you ever been truly broken over your sin? I know I have and it was almost more than I could bear. Jesus said He was sorrowful “even to death.” What is the wages of sin? According to Romans 6:23 the wages of sin is *death*. We see again that sin does indeed bring death.

The Greek word used in verse 37 for *deeply distressed* is *ademoneo* which means “to be troubled, great distress or anguish, depressed. This is the strongest of the three Greek words used in the NT for depression” (*BLB*). It also means to be sated with loathing. It hurts me to think of my Savior feeling that way and that I was the cause of it. But it also is great cause for rejoicing that He endured so much because He loves me so!

Please read verse 39 again, taking into account what Jesus does and what He says.

In verse 39, what does Jesus do?

What does He say to His Father?

Contained within Jesus' prayer are two components that every prayer should contain: honesty and submission. First, Jesus was very truthful with His father about how He was feeling concerning the suffering He was about to experience, evidenced by His words, "...if it is possible, let this cup pass from me." Despite the fact that God knew exactly how Jesus was feeling, Jesus told God about it anyway. He was honest. Second, and vastly significant, Jesus ends His prayer request as we should end every prayer request, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Imagine what the world would have missed if Jesus did not pray according to the will of His Father? When I was new in the faith I prayed very strenuously for what I wanted God to do in my life. Over the years God has been patiently teaching me to pray according to His will, not mine. It is not always easy, but I can find peace and rest in leaving everything to Him to manage.

So what can we take away from this passage about prayer?

- **Be encouraged.** We need to ask others to walk with us in our need, as Jesus did. Sharing my prayer requests with my closest, godly friends has always helped.
- **Be careful.** Jesus carefully chose those who would accompany Him in His most trying moments. It is often not appropriate to broadcast every detail of our lives to the general public. Be careful about whom you allow into your life.
- **Be real.** Jesus shared His most intimate feelings with His Father only. God is the only one who can handle our most needy emotional moments.
- **Be strong.** Do not be afraid to let God know that you are afraid, but don't wallow in your fear! God is waiting to give you His grace, power and courage. Take it!
- **Be humble.** Sometimes falling on your face in prayer is appropriate. God can work with a heart that is humble before Him.
- **Be discerning.** Ask God for spiritual discernment to know when He is calling you to times of warfare prayer against the enemy's plans and attacks. Let's be prayed up before the trial.
- **Be prepared.** Prepare your heart to lay down your good plan for our Father's great plan and trust Him. Pray for His will to be

done even if you long for your own plan to be accomplished. We are called to a walk of faith not a walk of feelings.

"The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!"

Song of Solomon 2:12-13

He is waiting.

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