

When You Have Difficult Decisions
February 21, 2010
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The opening scenes of the movie *The Passion of the Christ* gave us a dramatic view of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. We'd read about it and heard about it. But seeing it acted out in the movie conveyed in a new way the sheer human agony He suffered in that olive grove.

If there was ever an account in the Bible that convinces us of Jesus' HUMANITY, it must be this one. He was suffering the same HUMAN EMOTIONS you and I grapple with: SHOCK; FEAR; ASTONISHMENT; ANXIETY; DEPRESSION.

Of course, when we think about what Jesus was facing it's easy to understand WHY He would have been so overwhelmed. And, perhaps it's HARD to compare OUR LITTLE PROBLEMS and DECISIONS with what He faced.

But, the story of Gethsemane is NOT JUST A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT to make us SYMPATHETIC to Jesus. There is a REAL LESSON here for all of us when we face the BIG DECISIONS in life.

- The first two verses of Mark 14 set the stage:

1 Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. 2 "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot."

- They wanted to kill Jesus and they needed to do it QUICKLY
- By now, Jesus had identified His betrayer JUDAS who was off to carry out his EVIL DEED
- By now, Jesus had predicted that Peter would DENY him THREE TIMES
- So they went to a place called GETHSEMANE

Mark 14:32-35

Gethsemane

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.

- Gethsemane - The word means "oil press"
- It was an olive grove where Jesus took the disciples when He wanted to get away to rest and pray in quiet

- While He knows they are CONSPIRING to KILL HIM, He doesn't go to a secret place:

John 18:2 (New International Version)

2Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.

- Lesson #1 - When Faced With An Overwhelming Decision: Find a QUIET PLACE and get ALONE WITH GOD.
- By the way, A QUIET PLACE isn't necessarily about a physical place
- How often do we AVOID dealing with the situation confronting us because we won't allow any QUIET in our lives? We drown out the things we NEED TO FACE with the NOISE of MEDIA and ACTIVITY and OUR MEDICINE OF CHOICE
- Some people can't stand the NOISE...others CAN'T TAKE THE QUIET!
- Jesus left EIGHT DISCIPLES on the outskirts of the grove and took THREE with Him
- Why do you think he left the majority OUT ON THE EDGE? What did he tell them to do?
 - To keep watch
- The THREE were his INNER CIRCLE: Peter, James, and John
- He gave them DIFFERENT INSTRUCTIONS...what were they?
 - Watch & PRAY
- Lesson #2 – When Faced With An Overwhelming Decision: It's normal to seek support from THOSE CLOSEST TO US WHOM WE TRUST
- Verse 33: The KJV says Jesus: “began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy”
- The Holman Christian Standard Bible translates it: “deeply distressed and horrified.”
- Verse 34: “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.”
- “Sore amazed”... even though He knew what was to come, in my mind's eye, it's as if the Father pulled back a curtain and revealed to Jesus just what was to come and he was SHOCKED and AMAZED and ASTONISHED.

In his commentary Matthew Henry pointed out that in Luke 4:13 it says...

When the devil had tempted him in the wilderness, it is said, He departed *from him for a season* (Lu. 4:13), intending another grapple with him, and in another way; finding that he could not by his flatteries *allure* him into sin, he would try by his terrors to (FRIGHTEN) him into (AVOIDING GOD'S PLAN).¹

- Verse 35 tells us Jesus WENT A LITTLE FARTHER
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- Though He asked his INNER CIRCLE to PRAY with Him...HE WENT ON ALONE
- Another Lesson: When Faced With An Overwhelming Decision – Support from those we love is GOOD and HELPFUL. But SOMETIMES IT’S JUST YOU and GOD.
- Verse 35 also tells us HE FELL TO THE GROUND...an unusual posture for a Jewish man in prayer (normally standing and palms toward Heaven).
- This shows how DESPERATE He was...and there was GREAT EMOTION
- The writer of Hebrews said in Hebrews 5:7-9:

7During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

Mark 14:36-39

36"Abba,[a] Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

37Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

39Once more he went away and prayed the same thing.

- Verse 36 – He uses the word Abba. It’s the Hebrew way of saying what name?
 - Daddy; Papa

14:36. By the word **Abba**, Jesus addresses God with the household term for Father. This was unheard of in Palestinian Judaism at that time.

¹*King James Version study Bible* . 1997, c1988 (electronic ed.) (Mk 14:36). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- Some families say “daddy” and some say “pop”
- Can you imagine someone praying in public and starting the prayer with “pop”?
- We’d find it irreverent
- It points to Jesus’ unique relationship to God²
- Here is Jesus LYING ON THE GROUND...CRYING OUT LOUDLY...CALLING OUT TO HIS HEAVENLY DADDY

Believer's Study Bible **14:36** Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane was not the prayer of a weak and fearful man. Jesus knew all along what lay before Him in Jerusalem. He was not afraid of the physical suffering and death He knew He was to endure. Jesus did, however, recognize that in giving "His life a ransom for many" (10:45), He would actually become "sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). He also knew that this would bring about temporary alienation from God, which He experienced on the cross (cf. Mark 15:34). For Jesus, who had lived in complete and intimate fellowship with God, this prospect of temporary alienation was horrible. And yet He was obedient to the Father's will rather than His own wish. There simply was no other way to make atonement for sin.

¹*Believer's Study Bible*. 1997, c1995. ©1991 Criswell Center for Biblical Studies. (electronic ed.) (Mk 14:36). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- In the midst of THE WORST MOMENT OF HIS EARTHLY LIFE the last sentence of VERSE 36 starts with an important word: NEVERTHELESS.
- He KNEW THE FATHER COULD DO ANYTHING including TAKE THIS CUP AWAY FROM HIM
- NEVERTHELESS, NOT MY WILL BUT THY WILL BE DONE
- Here's Another Lesson: When Faced With An Overwhelming Decision: You start with PRAYER and you SEEK GOD'S WILL
- Verse 37 – Jesus came back and found this TOP THREE MEN – ASLEEP...something that would happen THREE TIMES in this story
- He addresses Peter in verse 37...WHAT DOES HE CALL HIM?
 - Interesting that Jesus reverted back to SIMON...was it an indication that Peter wasn't living up to his NEW NAME?
- He tells them to STAY AWAKE and PRAY to AVOID TEMPTATION
- V.38: What temptation? The trials to come soon and then later.
- The spirit is willing (good intentions) but the body (flesh) is weak.
- It has been said "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

The Life Application Study Bible points out...

"In times of great stress, we are vulnerable to temptation, even if we have a willing spirit.

Jesus gave us an example of what to do to resist:

1. Pray to God (14:35)
 2. Seek support of friends and loves ones (14:33, 37, 40, 41)
 3. Focus on the purpose God has given us (14:36)"
- Three times He told them to watch and pray and three times they fell asleep.
 - Three times Peter would deny Him.
 - This is encouragement for believers to know that even the "greats" in Christian history were susceptible to "spiritual failure" at times.
 - If you catch yourself agonizing over where you've failed and beating yourself up mentally over and over again...INVEST that time in asking forgiveness and then getting busy doing what Jesus commanded.

- Beginning in verse 41 we're told Jesus went back to pray
- By the way, we all know how the story ended. We all know that the Father didn't "let the cup pass" from Jesus. What does that say to you about prayer?
 - Sometimes God says "NO". But He's always with us through what we must endure. And though He may not give us what we want He WILL GIVE US WHAT WE NEED.
- After finding them SLEEPING FOR THE THIRD TIME He said "Enough!"
- Look at verse 42 – He says: "Get up; let's go; My Betrayer is near!"
- He didn't say 'HOLD 'EM OFF GUYS WHILE I SLIP OUT THE BACK'
- Once He knew God's will HE FORCEFULLY and PROACTIVELY MOVED AHEAD
- Another Lesson: When Faced With An Overwhelming Decision – Once WE'VE DETERMINED GOD'S WILL – MOVE AHEAD!
- But, God this is NOT what I bargained for!
- NEVERTHELESS
- But, God this is going to be PAINFUL
- NEVERTHELESS
- But, God YOU CAN DO ANYTHING INCLUDING SOMETHING OTHER THAN THIS
- NEVERTHELESS...THY WILL BE DONE!
- You know the rest of the story
- A kiss from Judas to ID HIM for his MURDERERS
- A SWORD is PULLED and an EAR is SEVERED
- Jesus says THEY WERE CHEERING FOR ME A WEEK AGO AND NOW YOU COME FOR ME LIKE A CRIMINAL
- "But THE SCRIPTURES MUST BE FULFILLED"
- And verse 50 says it all: "Then THEY ALL DESERTED HIM AND RAN AWAY.

So what's the TAKEAWAY?

- When Faced With An Overwhelming Decision: We need to GET QUIET and get ALONE WITH GOD in Prayer.
- When Faced With An Overwhelming Decision: It's normal to seek support from THOSE CLOSEST TO US WHOM WE TRUST
- When Faced With An Overwhelming Decision – Support from those we love is GOOD and HELPFUL. But IN THE MOST DIFFICULT DECISIONS IT'S JUST YOU and GOD.
- When Faced With An Overwhelming Decision: You start with PRAYER and you SEEK GOD'S WILL

- When Faced With An Overwhelming Decision – Once WE’VE DETERMINED GOD’S WILL – MOVE AHEAD!

As Charles Stanley is fond of saying: “Obey God and leave all the consequences to Him!”