

Fix Your Eyes on Jesus at Prayer: “Watch and Pray”

Focus Passage: Matthew 26:36–46

Other Passages Referenced: Isaiah 51:17, 22; Romans 8:33–34; Hebrews 12:2

Comments to Group Leaders:

- Remember to make plans with your group about scheduling around the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.
- For question 3 in the Allow the Word to Speak section, note that Matthew mentions Jesus finding the disciples asleep three separate times. Discuss the possible links to Jesus’ previous warnings that they would all fall away (Matt 26:31) and that Peter would deny Him three times (Matt 26:34).
- Call attention to the links in the Further Resources section to find training from the Navigators on different aspects of how to pray.

Sermon Recap

In addition to reading God’s Word and participating in corporate worship, prayer will provide the greatest opportunity to fix our eyes on Jesus. In prayer, our eyes shift from our problems and cares, to Jesus’ provision and care for us. Jesus’ prayer on the last night of His life in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:36–46) teaches some important lessons about prayer for us.

- Why did Jesus pray on this occasion? (vv. 36–39)
 - Jesus knew that His mission was to take the cup of God’s wrath upon Himself, and He was tempted to not follow through. Essentially, Jesus was tempted to be a Savior with suffering and a son without obedience.
- How did Jesus pray on this occasion? (vv. 38–41)
 - Jesus prayed at length and Jesus prayed with all that was within Him.
- What did Jesus pray on this occasion? (vv. 39, 42, 44)
 - Jesus prayed for God to intervene and He also prayed to align His will with God’s will. The longer Jesus prayed, the more His prayer moved toward alignment with the Father’s will.

If Jesus needed to pray as God in human flesh, we certainly need to pray when tempted and suffering. Like Jesus, when we pray, we need to balance praying for God to intervene with praying for our will to align with His.

Jesus not only prayed during His life on earth, but He continues to pray for us even now (Rom 8:33–34).

Interpretive Helps:

- *Gethsemane* means *oil press* and was an area filled with groves of olive trees, many of them owned by well-to-do Jerusalemites. The Garden of Gethsemane was situated on the slope of the Mt. of Olives.¹

Group Gathering

Group Check-in — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

¹ Craig Blomberg, [Matthew](#), vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 394.

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Discuss how it went as everyone tried to take steps of obedience to what they sensed God saying to them.

Allow the Word to Speak — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

READ Matthew 26:36–46

1. What from the passage or sermon was most impactful to you?
2. Were you left with any questions or confusion about the passage or sermon?
3. How many times did Jesus return to Peter, James, and John to find them sleeping? ... How do you think that detail may be significant?

Put the Word into Practice — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Jesus' prayed that the Father would take the cup of suffering from Him, yet the Father did not grant the Son's request. This a clear example that even when the one praying has been obedient to God's will, sometimes God does not answer prayers the way the one praying desires. Can you share an experience of a prayer that was not answered the way you desired, even though you thought you asked with right motives and were being obedient to the LORD? ... How did that experience impact your intimacy and trust with God?
2. The anguish and sadness Jesus demonstrated in Gethsemane clearly indicate that even extreme anxiety and sadness are not necessarily sinful. How does this inform your perspective on anxiety and depression and how you relate to people who are struggling with one or both?
3. In Matt 26:41, Jesus said, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Do you have any tips to share about staying awake and alert, so you can pray for extended periods?
4. Jesus prayed at length and with all that was in Him. Will you commit to praying for one continuous hour in the coming week? ... seeking to pray with all that is within you and seeking to align yourself with God's will as you ask Him to intervene? (See the Further Resources section below for suggested helps.)

The Big Question: What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group or another trusted Christian and ask them to pray for you.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES:

- The Chapel will host the Community of Faith Mission's homeless shelter January 10 – February 7. You may find more information and a sign-up [here](#).
- Other opportunities to serve during the Christmas season at the Chapel, with Grove Christian Outreach, and The Salvation Army, or to participate in a Red Cross blood drive at the Chapel can be found [here](#).

Further Resources – Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the "Sermon Slides" link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org

"How to Spend Extended Time in Prayer" — <https://www.navigators.org/resource/spend-extended-time-prayer/>

Other Prayer Resources — https://www.navigators.org/topic/prayer/?post_type=resource