

Close to Jesus

Matthew 26:36-41 "Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*." Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? "Watch and pray, lest you enter

into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Today, with the emphasis on equality without responsibility, it might surprise some of us when we discover that Jesus didn't treat all of His disciples exactly the same.

Certainly He loved all of them, but Peter James and John occupied a unique place in His heart.

Obviously He saw something in these men which required His special attention.

Yes, there was a difference.

For instance, of the twelve disciples, only Peter, James and John enjoyed the privilege of seeing Jesus' transfiguration.

And in the passage before us, these three men were much more involved with Jesus'

agony in the garden than the rest of the disciples.

It was both a privilege and a responsibility.

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Now there's no doubt that all of the disciples were quite worn out both physically and mentally when they arrived at the garden.

That evening, in the upper room, they had witnessed some very disturbing revelations.

For instance, Jesus told them there was a traitor in their midst, and then there was that shocking news about His departure.

But He also strengthened and encouraged them.

For the first time He assured them that they were His friends, not merely servants.

And out of the Passover feast that they were very familiar with, He instituted a new ordinance, which He said would be in remembrance of Him.

I wonder what they thought about that.

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So then when they arrived at the garden, they must have been both physically and emotionally drained.

However, for most of them, this quiet retreat would be a most welcome place of recuperation.

The only responsibility Jesus placed upon them was to *sit here* "**while I go and pray over there.**"

And I don't suppose it really mattered if they dozed off from time to time.

But for Peter, James and John, the situation was quite different.

As Jesus led them deeper into the garden,
they noticed a change taking place.

Their Master **"began to be sorrowful and
deeply distressed."**

And then, the One they had always looked
upon as their tower of strength, said---
**"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even
to death."**

And then He asked them to **"Stay here and
watch with Me."**

And it was understood that He wanted them to
watch and pray.

However, He hadn't asked them to pray for
Him, although I'm sure He would have
appreciated that.

He asked them to pray *with* Him.

Certainly each one of these three disciples
would be facing their own crisis, even
though they didn't realize it yet, and He
wanted their fellowship in prayer.

He would lead and they would follow, and together they would pray through to victory.

And not only were these disciples involved spiritually, but they were involved physically.

You see, they were about a stone's throw away from where Jesus would be praying. And depending on how dark it was, they might have actually seen Him fall prostrate on the ground.

And even if they couldn't hear what He was saying when He cried out "**--- if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me,**" they must have recognized the anguish in His voice.

So, yes, they were very much involved. Well, for the first few minutes they were very much involved before they fell asleep.

No, it wasn't very long before Jesus had lost them.

And when He discovered that fact, He was not very pleased.

"What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?

"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak."

And really, that was His real concern, wasn't it?

He was concerned lest they enter into temptation.

So He had directed them to the only resource that never fails.

Yes, even in this time of His personal testing, Jesus' concern was for His sheep.

But **"the flesh *is* weak,"** and they were just too tired.

So, while Jesus prayed through to victory,
they slept through to defeat.

And on that very evening, their loyalty
would be tested and found wanting.

And I'm afraid Peter would lose big time.

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Well, that's what being a friend of Jesus is
all about.

It's an unbelievable privilege, and one we
don't deserve, but it does make certain
demands on our lives.

First of all, we must be *obedient*.

No, we don't have to obey our other friends,
but we do have to obey Jesus.

As He told His disciples, "**You are My
friends if you do whatever I command
you.**"

And we have to accept the fact that Jesus'
enemies will be *our* enemies.

That's just the way it is.

John 15:18 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

And so each of us must decide, and I think on a daily basis, just how close we want to be to Jesus.

Are we willing to share His reproach as well as His blessings?

I hope we are.

And as time goes on, and as we get to know our Saviour a little better, we will find the greatest blessing of all is just being close to Jesus.