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GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE DEVOTIONAL

TOPIC: WILL IT BE PLAN A OR PLAN B?

Welcome to this devotion on following God's will. These Bible passages and thought-provoking questions are designed to help you engage with the Scriptures, as well as observe, understand, and apply God's Word to your life. I pray this devotion will inspire and motivate you to consider the benefits of applying the truth of each passage and growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

I took my first trip to Israel 11 years ago. Every place that we visited, God spoke to me; however, the Garden of Gethsemane is the place that had the most impact. The Garden has become my favorite place in the whole world, as each time I have visited, I have heard the Lord say the most profound words to me. It remains the one place that always impacts me the most whenever I visit.

It was one night at this same garden that Jesus decided to suffer and die for you and me. It was not an easy path to walk, and the Gospels record this in detail in Matthew 26:36-56, Mark 14:32-49 and Luke 22:39-53.

Jesus often came to the garden with His disciples to pray - and He brought them here again that night after the Lord's supper. During the supper, Jesus predicted Judas would betray Him, and that Peter would deny Him three times. On their way to the garden, Jesus told His disciples, this same night, all of them will desert Him too. Those thoughts set the stage for what came next.

They arrived at the garden and Jesus instructed His disciples to "Pray that you will not give in to temptation." He then took Peter, James and John with Him about a stones' throw away and He became deeply distressed and troubled. He explained to them "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

He went on a little further and fell to the ground. Jesus already knew the game plan - that He was to be crucified so that we may be reconciled back to God. The truth of the pain He would have to endure struck Him and He was in such agony of spirit that His sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood. He prayed that if it were possible the awful hour awaiting Him might pass Him by.

“Abba Father” he cried, “everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done and not mine.”

Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened Him. He returned to His disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter “Simon, are you asleep? Couldn’t you watch with me even one hour? Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give into temptation. For the spirit is willing but the body is weak.”

Then Jesus left them a second time and prayed “My Father if this cup cannot be taken away, unless I drink it, your will be done.” When He returned to them again, He found them sleeping.

Jesus went and prayed a third time. Saying the same thing. He came back to the disciples a third time and said “Go ahead and sleep. Have your rest. But look, the time has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let’s be going. Look, my betrayer is here.”

Jesus understood the suffering that was to come, and He began to feel the weight of the world’s sins – our sins – on Him, and the pain of separation from God the Father because of those sins. Yet right here, in that moment, Jesus chose to die for me. For you. He loved us that much.

LOOK DOWN

- Jesus expressed His true feelings in the passage below. What do these verses teach us about His perspective on what lay ahead of Him?

Mark 14:33-39

He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he became deeply troubled and distressed. He told them, “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by. “Abba, Father,”^[a] he cried out, “everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Couldn’t you watch with me even one hour?³⁸ Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” Then Jesus left them again and prayed the same prayer as before.

LOOK OUT

Even though He understood the plan, three times Jesus cried out to God for an alternative way – a plan B. However, He knew there was no other way that would free us from our sins so that we could live with Him forever.

- How do people typically respond when faced with a difficult, painful process or path ahead of them?

LOOK IN

I must admit, sometimes, I wish I never visited this Garden – because Jesus' experience here taught me that choosing plan B is always easier. At the same time, however, I'm grateful that I came here, because it reminds me of my desire to live the life God has chosen for me.

- What does it take for you to choose God's will? God's plan A for your life?

LIVE IT OUT

Many times, over the years, when I have sensed God nudging me to plan A, I have thought of this very spot in the garden, and I am reminded of what Jesus did for me. Knowing that He willingly endured pain and death, gives me the strength to choose God's will. No matter how difficult it seems, it always pales in comparison to what Jesus did for me. Each time, God has given me what I needed to lean in and choose His plan for my life.

- Take some time to reflect. Has God placed something on your heart where you know you need to seek or yield to His will and not your own? Is there a decision that you made that was a plan B decision and not God's plan A for you? Seek the Lord's forgiveness and ask Him for strength to move forward with what He has called you to.

Jesus' prayer was answered. Not by the removal of the cup, but by the strength to drink the cup; and ultimately, by His resurrection.

I pray God gives you the strength you need to choose and follow His plans, and not allow Satan to convince you to settle for plan B. For God's plans are there to prosper and encourage you and not harm you.

We close this devotion with a poem titled "Gethsemane" that beautifully captures the path Christ followed for our sake.

GETHSEMANE

*Jesus knew His time was drawing near
On the eve of that final day
With the weight of the world upon His heart
He came to the garden to pray
He alone knew His Father's will
And understood His redemption plan
And though He was truly God incarnate
Still, He was fully a man
He knew that pain and suffering
And betrayal were moments away
As He pleaded with God and wept He knew
There simply was no other way
There, in the garden, that fateful night
With the lights of the city in view
Jesus, the Son of God, considered
All that He must go through
The tears of His sorrow freely flowed
That night in Gethsemane
For He understood His path must lead
To the cross at Calvary
He was Christ, the Lord, the King of Kings
Yet, He knelt upon human knees
And willingly chose that night to die
Because of His love for you and me.*

~By Frank Carpenter