**A Prayer of Jesus**

*Submitting to God’s Will*

*Matthew 26:36–46*

**Story/Connection:**

Like many people, I do not enjoy conflict. I can remember several times in my life when God seemed to be directing me very clearly to say something to a friend or colleague that he or she wouldn’t like to hear. One time a friend was engaging in behavior that I thought was wrong; another time a coworker hurt me very deeply. In both instances I felt God’s urging to say something to the other person.

I really, really did not want to have those conversations! But as I prayed, asking God whether he truly did want me to speak up, I continued to feel led to say something. Finally, I did. My words didn’t make huge changes in my friend’s life or in my colleague’s behavior, but I did speak honestly and, I hope, lovingly. I can look back and feel grateful that I obeyed God. I can also see that those kinds of conversations come somewhat more easily to me now because I have had some practice.

**Group Discussion**. Have you ever felt led by God to do something that you really didn’t want to do? Do you remember wrestling with God in prayer about it? Describe what you learned from that situation. Personal Reflection. If you are feeling led by God to do something you don’t want to do right now, write out a prayer that expresses your concerns about the situation as well as your willingness to try to obey. Or write out a prayer expressing your willingness to obey God even when God leads you to do something you don’t want to do.

Jesus wrestled with his Father in the garden of Gethsemane, praying his willingness to obey God. We are privileged to have a glimpse into that sacred conversation that helps us see how honesty in prayer transforms us into willing servants of God. *Read Matthew 26:36–46.*

**1.** Verses 36 to 39 lay out the characters and the setting. If you were staging this scene for a play, where would you put the people on the stage?

What kinds of props and lighting would you use?

**2.** In verses 37 and 38, what words would you use to describe the emotions Jesus is experiencing?

**3.** How does it make you feel to read about the intensity of Jesus’ emotions?

**4.** Note that Jesus prays “with his face to the ground” (v. 39). Why do you think he prays this way?

**5.** Paraphrase Jesus’ prayer in verse 39. What is he saying and why?

**6.** Sleep is often used figuratively in the Bible to represent mental or spiritual lethargy—being dull, slow or sluggish. Why does Jesus emphasize to the disciples the importance of staying alert (vv. 40–41)?

In what ways does the disciples’ sleep—their dullness and sluggishness—make Jesus’ agony more intense?

**7.** Jesus’ second prayer (v. 42) is slightly different than his first one (v. 39). Compare and contrast the two prayers.

What do you think caused the differences?

**8.** Why do you think Jesus prays the prayer a third time (v. 44)?

**9.** When you read Jesus’ words in verses 45 and 46, what tone of voice do you imagine him using?

What do you perceive to be his mood at this point in the story?

**10.** How has Jesus’ mood shifted over the course of this incident?

**11.** Jesus expresses his desire not to have to suffer and die on the cross, but also his willingness to do what his Father wants him to do. Why are both of these components important in prayer?

**12.** In what areas of your life are you most likely to need to pray a prayer like Jesus’ prayer?

*Spend some time asking God to help you come to prayer with honesty and with a willingness to obey.*

**Now or Later**

The Lord’s Prayer is the most famous of Jesus’ prayers. Read Matthew 6:5–15 and notice Jesus’ words that precede and follow the Lord’s Prayer. Which instructions of Jesus are most important for you to remember as you pray?

Read Psalm 139:1–12. Consider the comfort this psalm can give in agonizing situations like Jesus experienced in the garden. Read the psalm slowly a second time, praying the words for yourself and for anyone you know who feels far away from God.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Baab, L. M. (2010). [*Prayers of the New Testament: 8 Studies for Individuals or Groups: With Notes for Leaders*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lfgdprysnt?ref=Page.p+22&off=856&ctx=4%0a~A+Prayer+of+Jesus%0aSubmitting+to+God%E2%80%99s+) (pp. 23–27). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Connect: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)