



## NG Study Guide: Matt. 26:31-56 "The King's Sorrow" [8.27.17]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.

### The Study

**Thesis:** There is a struggle to remain submitted to God as pressure increases. Imagine a volleyball on top of the surface of a pool. It is easy to control the ball on the surface. The further the ball goes under water, the greater the pressure, and the ball wants to pop out. The Greek term *hupomone* (*hupo* under + *meneo* remain) relates to steadfast, constant, endurance. In the New Testament it is the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and righteousness by even the greatest trials and sufferings. It is the example of Jesus.

#### A. Jesus knows I will struggle to remain faithful [31-35]

Jesus and His disciples had just shared the Passover meal and the Lord's Supper or communion. As they made their way to the Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemane just east of Jerusalem, Jesus was hours from the cross. Jesus predicted that all the disciples would stumble or fall away that very evening because of His arrest [31]. He quotes from Zechariah 13:7 as prophecy that the disciples will scatter like sheep when He their Shepherd is afflicted. Jesus then assured them that He would be raised and would go before them to Galilee [32]. Thus, despite His imminent suffering and death He was fully Sovereign. Peter declares that even if all the others flee that he will not stumble [33]. In one sense Peter's loyalty is commendable, but most importantly it reveals foolish pride. Jesus had just foretold that *all* would stumble, and that includes Peter. Yet, somehow Peter believes that he is an exception, because of his personal fortitude. Jesus predicts that Peter will deny Him three times before the rooster crows or dawn. Peter, again vehemently asserts that Jesus is wrong and that he will never deny Christ, even if he has to die with him. And that attitude was contagious as all the other disciples affirm that they will not scatter, or deny Jesus no matter what happens [35]. It is helpful for me to remember that whenever I'm arguing or disagreeing with Jesus that I'm wrong not Him. It is our nature, like Peter and the disciples, to tend towards religious pride. **We tend to think we are more submitted to God than we likely are.** We tend to think that Christ's warnings are for others or that they are not that important to our lives and well-being. As I read this account I

wonder, “What might cause me to deny Jesus as my Lord?” It is our tendency, when the pressure intensifies, to move away from His authority.

## **B. Jesus reveals the need for prayer to remain submitted to God [36-46]**

Gethsemane means oil press [36]. When Jesus was pressed, what came out was perfect submission to the Father. The Mount of Olives had groves of olive trees, and the olives were pressed for their oil that was used for lighting, cooking, and medicine. The Passover occurs on a full moon so imagine the area lit by the moon. Jesus encouraged most of the disciples to remain while he prayed a short distance away [36]. Jesus took Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John with Him. They appear to be His three closest friends. They were the only disciples with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration [Mt. 17:1], and at Jairus’ home when Jesus raised his daughter from the dead [Lu. 8:49]. Each of these special encounters with Jesus was intended to encourage them, strengthen their faith, and prepare them as disciples who would influence others. And Jesus began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed [37-38]. Jesus is contemplating taking the sin of the world upon Himself [2Cor. 5:21]. In His sorrow, Jesus seeks the support and prayers of His friends. Jesus goes a little further and falls on His face in prayer to His Father [39]. Mark tells us that Jesus prayed, “Abba” which would be our equivalent of papa or daddy [Mk.14:36]. Jesus prayed, “if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” The cup refers to the suffering of becoming sin for us. The essence of Jesus’ prayer is, “If there is any other way for mankind to be reconciled to God let it happen, but Father I’m submitted to your will.” In the most intense pressure, beyond anything that we could imagine, Jesus prays to be strengthened to remain under His Father’s authority. It was to save us from our sin, by taking the penalty we deserved, that Jesus came into our world [Mt.1:21, Jn. 12:27]. Then He found Peter, James and John sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? How humbling, especially after Peter’s bravado that he would never fail Jesus. How humbling for me to contemplate how many times that Jesus has thought of me, and thought couldn’t you pray with Me for one hour. **Jesus exhorts them to watch or be spiritually alert and to pray or they would enter into temptation [41]. The temptation is to deny Jesus, not His existence, but His Lordship or authority in your life.** The power to overcome that temptation is recognizing your dependence upon God through prayer. Our flesh is weak, and we need God’s Spirit to strengthen us to overcome [41]. Then Jesus returns to prayer and seeks to be strengthened to submit to the Father’s will in this most difficult of circumstances [42]. Jesus found the disciples asleep a second time, and for a third time, He repeats his prayer [43-44]. Finally, Jesus found the disciples asleep a third time and He woke them because the hour of His betrayal had come [45-46]. Jesus shows us the necessity of prayer through His example, and His exhortation. We see a lifestyle of intimate and intense prayer that prepares Jesus for this greatest challenge. We don’t want to limit our prayer life to crisis management, but regularly recognize our dependence upon God through prayer.

## **C. Jesus remains faithful in the greatest trials and sufferings [47-56]**

Judas betrayed Jesus, and a large mob with swords and clubs sent by the religious leaders came to arrest Him [47]. The signal to identify Jesus was a kiss from Judas [48]. Thus, Jesus looked like the common man. Jesus refers to Judas as “friend” because Jesus loved Judas despite knowing that he is betraying Him [50]. Matthew tells us that one of the disciples drew his sword to protect Jesus. John tells us that it was Peter, and his courage is commendable. Jesus intervened, and healed the wounded servant’s ear. Jesus reminds His disciples that His way was not by force. Violence begets violence [52]. He could summon an army of angels, the greatest fighting force imaginable [2 Ki.19:35], if He desired to fight, but He had come as prophesied to give His life not to fight to preserve it [54]. **Jesus had the ability to avoid His suffering, but submits to the Father’s will.** The mob fulfilled what the prophets foretold [Is. 53:12]. And then as Jesus predicted all the disciples fled [56]. All of this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled [56]. I look at Jesus and realize how my prayer life needs to grow. I want to heed His warnings, follow His example, and avoid the pain to myself and others that I influence that result from denying Him. I want to be faithful to my God.

## **Study Guide Qs**

**Q1. What might be some circumstances that would cause Jesus' followers to struggle to remain under His authority? Consider in the personal, marriage, family, career, calling, and community realms.**

**Q2. What have you learned about prayer from this study? How would you like to apply what you learned to your life?**

**Q3. Plan to spend more time than usual praying with your group this week. At the conclusion let people share how they felt about the experience.**

**"Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)**

**1. This week, spend an hour praying. Journal about your experience. What did you learn about God, prayer, and yourself?**

**2. Read the following passages related to prayer: Heb. 5:7, Lu. 6:12, Mk. 1:35, Lu. 3:31-32, Mt. 14:23 and Lu. 5:15-16. What do you learn about Jesus, and prayer. How would you like to apply those lessons to your life?**

**3. Read John 17. This is Jesus' longest recorded prayer in the Scriptures. Since this prayer is uttered hours before the cross it likely reflects some of the most important issues to Jesus.**

**What do you learn about prayer, and Jesus' priorities? How can you apply what you learned to your life?**

**Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:**

**1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?**

**2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?**

**3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:**

**Many students are returning to classes. Use this season to befriend and build relationships with other parents and students.**

**Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:**

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

**Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

**Leader Notes:**

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
  - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.