

SMALL GROUP RESOURCE

Jesus In Gethsemane

By Sally Shanks

PRAYER

“Father we thank you for the faithfulness of Jesus your Son, who shared every weakness, every temptation we face, and is able to empathize with us”.

READ

Mark 14: 32-41

KEY THEMES

1. *The humanity of Jesus: we can become so accustomed to seeing Jesus in his divinity that we lose sight of his humanity.*

Jesus in his humanity desperately wanted the ‘cup’ to be removed: the cup not only of suffering, but of the sins of all humanity with their crushing weight. He desperately didn’t want to go to the cross He desperately didn’t want to drink the cup the Father was offering him.

Dr. Martin Luther King wrote about this passage : “We have so often projected Jesus so far into the divine realm that we have forgotten about his humanity. Jesus not only experienced the glow of the divine, but also the tang of the human. And Jesus there, with his human nature, cries out, “Save me. I don’t want to die. Take this cup from me.”

For Discussion:

Jesus makes a powerful choice when he says to the Father “not my will but yours be done. ” Was Jesus ‘free’ to choose to “drink the cup”? What do we learn about his relationship with the Father from this passage?

2. *Our tendency to ignore our own human limitations and human needs- sometimes stuffing them down for years. What happens when life’s circumstances mean we ‘hit a wall’ where we can no longer do this?*

We will all experience ‘dark nights of the soul’ , as Jesus did in Gethsemane.

- Times when we experience the death of a someone close.
- Times when we make choices that we deeply regret.
- A deep desire that remains unfulfilled.
- Times we feel betrayed by someone , or deserted by someone.
- Losses: a job , a friendship, our health.

In all these we want to say to God- “take this cup from me”. We can experience a dryness or loss of joy in our relationship with God. Times when our faith does not seem to “work” any more. We feel we don’t know where God is, what he is doing, where he is going, how he is getting us there, or when this will be over.

3. *Checking in on our emotional health: Jesus show us in the garden that expressing our feelings honestly in troubled times is not a sign of weakness but of humanity and humility.*

Pete Scazzero wrote his book *Emotionally Healthy Church* after going through his own 'dark night': he calls these experiences "the Wall".

Scazzero was a frantically busy pastor who found it harder and harder to balance the demands of his ministry with the need for quality time with God or with his wife and family, until his wife Geri confronted him with her decision to quit the ministry unless there was a radical change.

This couple went on a brave journey of self-discovery – wanting to uncover why there was such a disconnect between the exhaustion and resentment they were feeling, and the abundant life that Jesus offers. You can find them on their website, *emotionally healthy discipleship*.

In a nutshell, they found that when they paid greater attention to really caring for their own emotional, physical and spiritual well-being, and when they addressed some of the unhelpful patterns of relating they had learned in childhood, they were revitalised in their love for God and for people.

FOR REFLECTION

Have someone read out the following questions, repeating each one twice. You may wish to close your eyes, or take a note in your phone or on a sheet of paper.

Ask yourself, with each question, "Am I like this fairly often? Or seldom?"

1. When I become anxious or feel like I have too much to do in too little time, I stop and slow down to be with God and myself as a way to re-centre.
2. I set apart a twenty-four-hour period each week for Sabbath-keeping – to stop, to rest, to have fun, and to be with God.
3. I am regularly able to say no to requests and opportunities rather than risk over-extending myself.
4. When I go through a disappointment or a loss, I reflect on how I'm feeling, rather than pretend that nothing is wrong.
5. I am intentional at working through the impact of significant events from the past that have shaped my present.

Take turns sharing one thing that came up for each one of you from these reflection questions, and pray for any need that emerges.