

**Title: Be Obedient in Prayer**

**Text: Matthew 26:36–46**

**Operation Auca** was an attempt by five Evangelical Christian missionaries from the United States to bring Christianity to the (HO-Ronni) Huaorani people of the rain forest of Ecuador. The Huaorani, also known...as Aucas ('savages'), were an isolated tribe known for their violence, against both their own people and outsiders who entered their territory.

With the intention of being the first Christians to evangelize the previously uncontacted Huaorani, the missionaries began making regular flights over Huaorani settlements in September 1955, dropping gifts, which were reciprocated. After several months of exchanging gifts, on January 3, 1956, the missionaries established a camp at "Palm Beach", a sandbar along the Curaray River, a few kilometers from Huaorani settlements. Their efforts came to an end on January 8, 1956, when all five—Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Peter Fleming, and Roger Youderian—were attacked and speared by a group of Huaorani warriors. The news of their deaths was broadcast around the world, and Life magazine covered the event with a photo essay.

The deaths of the men galvanized the missionary effort in the United States, sparking an outpouring of funding for evangelization efforts around the world. Their work is still frequently remembered in evangelical publications, and in 2006 was the subject of the film production *End of the Spear*.

After the death of the men, the widow of Jim Elliot, Elisabeth, and the sister of Nate Saint, Rachel, returned to Ecuador as missionaries with the Summer Institute of Linguistics (now SIL International) to live among the Huaorani. This eventually led to the conversion of many, including some of those involved in the killing.

Did you catch that?

And I am certain that the decision for Elizabeth to go back was more difficult than we can imagine. And I am confident that she bathed this in prayer.

And once she understood God's will she pressed ahead.

*Elisabeth admitted that taking her three-year-old daughter, Valerie, along strapped to her back was 'the biggest test of faith ever'.*

*As well as the usual dangers found in jungle terrain, she had to face the possibility that the Aucas might choose to kill her and carry off the youngster.*

*In a later interview she said that, although she appreciated the kind warnings of fellow Christians, she felt that **'as long as this is what the Lord requires of me, then all else is irrelevant'**.*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation\\_Auca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Auca)

<https://www.newlifepublishing.co.uk/articles/faith/elisabeth-elliott-the-missionary-who-lived-with-the-tribe-that-killed-her-husband/>

Friends, Christians miss out on so many blessings because of fear and a lack of faith. Are you not grateful that Jesus didn't allow desperately difficult circumstances he faced to keep him from following the will of His Father? If he would have capitulated, you and I would be lost in our sin.

**Main Idea: Life Can Be Exceptionally Difficult , Talk to your Heavenly Father and Do what He Says!**

Many of you in this room are facing some seemingly insurmountable circumstances. Some difficulties that are overwhelming you, and you are just not sure what to do!

Do you know what is comforting to me? Jesus.

Jesus is our God. Jesus is our Savior. Jesus is our friend. And Jesus is our example.

And Jesus went through all the emotional struggles that you and I deal with on a day-to-day basis. And because of this, He has great empathy for us.

**Hebrews 4:15 ESV**

*<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Amazing!

And because He can empathize with us, we can appreciate and worship Him with greater fervor and passion!

But we can also look to Him as a wonderful example of how to walk through the most challenging circumstances we face. We can learn a lot from our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you remember the story, Jesus is about to die.

**Matthew 26:1-4 ESV**

*<sup>1</sup> When Jesus had finished all these sayings, <sup>2</sup> he said to his disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." <sup>3</sup> Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, <sup>4</sup> and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.*

Today we are going to explore some verses farther into this chapter (vs. 36-46)

We are going to move from the upper room where Jesus instituted the Lord's supper to Gethsemane where a very poignant scene takes place

**Show map of Gethsemane**

There are three scenes within the verses we are going to look at this morning. And I want you to notice two things.

First, I want you to notice the tremendous difficulty Jesus is facing.

Second, I want you to see how he responds to the fact that He is about to go to the cross and experience enormous physical torment.

But even more than the physical torment, He will endure something you and I cannot even fathom. Jesus is about to face the Wrath of God from His Father in Heaven.

Why? So you could be saved from eternal Hell.

Jesus obeyed God the Father to provide you the opportunity of release from your sin debt.

And this is the gospel, and we praise God for what He has accomplished for us through Christ!

But I also want you to appreciate HOW Jesus handles this difficult situation. Maybe there is something you can learn from His example as you face your own difficulties...

### **1. Are You Crushed with Grief ? Talk to Your Father in Heaven (vs. 36-39)**

Life can be overwhelming at times.

Maybe you've lost a spouse or child?

Maybe you're dealing with a sickness that will ultimately take your life.

Maybe your finances are such a mess that you can see no way to recover.

Whatever the situation, the GRIEF you are experiencing can be excruciating and overwhelming.

Jesus knows something about this level of grief...

#### **The Scene**

The Lord and his disciples have just finished with their meal, and Jesus has instituted the "Lord's Supper."

As we harmonize the gospels together, the next thing to happen is found in the Gospel of John. In the NIV Harmony of the Gospels, Robert Thomas and Stanley Guthrie call it the "Discourse and Prayers from the Upper Room to Gethsemane."

This takes place from [John 14 - 17](#)!

#### **Show map**

So basically, after Judas leaves, Jesus walks his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane and on the way, he teaches them. This is very late in the evening Thursday of the Passion week. Just so you know, Jesus was crucified on the cross Friday morning.

This helps us understand the backdrop of text we are working through this morning...

#### **Matthew 26:36 ESV**

*<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray."*

## The People

After they, the disciples of Jesus, had walked with Him on the way to Gethsemane, Jesus gave the twelve specific instructions. *“Sit here, while I go over there and pray.”*

But he didn't leave all the twelve to sit there and wait.

He took His closest earthly friends to go with Him to pray.

This speaks to His humanity. He desires to have those closest to him bear him up in prayer.

Take a look at the text.

## Matthew 26:37 ESV

*<sup>37</sup> And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.*

## The Emotion

I think this is a moving emotional picture. Sometimes we have the idea that Jesus was a cold, mission-driven man. An emotionless, otherworldly being who was here to do a job without any feeling...

No - Jesus was a man of great emotions.

Jesus received joy by pleasing the Father.

Jesus felt exhaustion because of the demands of the ministry.

Jesus was angry at the hypocrisy of the religious.

Jesus was disgusted at greed, racism, and the oppression of the poor.

Jesus was sorrowful at the effects of sin and death.

Jesus had compassion for the lost

Jesus was frustrated at the lack of faith of his followers

Jesus had empathy for the pain of others.

Jesus had a spirit of forgiveness for those who betrayed him!

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/10-real-life-emotions-jesus-expressed.html>

And when the weight of what was about to take place began to crush in, the natural, human emotions of sorrow and being troubled showed up in the humanness of the Lord.

Sorrowful - *“To be sad”*

Troubled - *“to be much distressed,” “to be very heavy”*

Jesus was very sad because the weight of what was about to happen to him was a crushing weight that troubled him greatly!

Look at verse 38...

**Matthew 26:38 ESV**

*<sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."*

Jesus wanted his friends to be there for Him. Jesus is asking his three closest earthly friends to stay away and pray with and for him.

The NET bible makes this clear...

**Matthew 26:38 NET**

*<sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, even to the point of death. **Remain here and stay awake with me.**"*

It is a reasonable request to ask your friends to pray and stay with you in your greatest hour.

Just a side note - When your friends are hurting and needing support, support them!

When they are asking you to pray for them, pray for them! Maybe even on the spot!

Asking for prayer is a humbling endeavor.

Don't blow off anyone who humbles themselves to ask for your prayer support. Also, follow up with them!

Notice what Jesus does in the next verse...

**A Talk with the Father**

While having people pray for you is important, you need when you are sorrowful and troubled, you need to go to the Father!

Good night, folks, if Jesus, who is God very God, went to the Father in a time of great sorrow and distress, perhaps we should as well?

Let's take a look at his prayer and see what we can learn...

**Matthew 26:39 ESV**

*<sup>39</sup> And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

**Notice His physical posture** – *"...he fell on his face and prayed..."*

**Notice His very human request** - *"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;*

**Notice His spiritual posture** – *"nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."* God the son is humbly submitting Himself to the will of the Father.

What crushing grief are you facing today?

- **Your Posture is important** - Fall on your face and pray...
- **Don't try and fool God** - It's okay to be human in your request...
- **Remember Your Place** - Humbly submit yourself to the will of the Father.

Remember this...

### **Psalm 43:5 ESV**

*<sup>5</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.*

**Review** - Life Can Be Exceptionally Difficult, Talk to your Heavenly Father and Do what He Says!

- Are You Crushed with Grief? Talk to Your Father in Heaven

## **2. Is God's Will Difficult To Follow? Talk to Your Father in Heaven (vs. 40-42)**

Sometimes God tells us to do things that are SO challenging. So difficult, in fact, that we may be tempted to not follow his will.

Jesus understood this well. God asked him not only to die a criminal's death on the cross but to endure His terrible wrath so you would not need to!

Back to the story...

Remember the friends that Jesus asked for support? Well, let's just say they were a disappointment...

### **The Disappointing Friends**

#### **Matthew 26:40 ESV**

*<sup>40</sup> And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour?"*

The Father is asking the Son to do something Has never done before. Experience God's wrath being unleashed on the Son for the sins of humanity!

As you can imagine, this is a stressful time for Jesus, and He asked His friends to support Him in staying awake and praying with Him.

And like friends can easily do, they failed their friend in his greatest time of need.

But Jesus, though disappointed in His friends, still takes the time to lovingly give them some sound advice - advice that we should heed today!

### **The Discerning Advice**

#### **Matthew 26:41 ESV**

*<sup>41</sup> Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Ain't that the truth!

Stay awake and pray! Be alert!

It's interesting that Jesus gave this advice to one person in particular. Did you notice who? Peter.

*"And he said to PETER, 'So, could you not watch with me one hour?'"*

And guess what, this idea ended up sticking with Peter...

**1 Peter 5:8–9 ESV**

*<sup>8</sup> Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*

Jesus' advice to Peter is imperative. Temptation is not a sin. But notice what Jesus says to Peter. *"Watch and pray THAT YOU MAY NOT ENTER INTO TEMPTATION."*

Temptation is the conduit to potential sin. It's not wrong to be tempted, but what will you do with the temptation?

Temptation can lead you to sin or scare you away from it!

**James 1:14–15 ESV**

*<sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

Jesus is warning His friend Peter because he is about to enter into the greatest TEMPTATION of his life. He will be tempted to deny Jesus three times.

Jesus warned Peter about this in the previous verses...

**Matthew 26:30–35 ESV**

*<sup>30</sup> And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. <sup>31</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' <sup>32</sup> But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." <sup>33</sup> Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." <sup>35</sup> Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same.*

Even though Peter affirmed his loyalty to the Lord, he failed. Three times he denied the Lord, his friend, during Jesus' greatest need. Why? So he, too, wouldn't face capital punishment because of his association with Jesus.

Before we move on, can you relate to Peter? I can.

After Jesus gives Peter this excellent advice, He goes back to His Father...

### Another Talk with the Father

#### Matthew 26:42 ESV

*<sup>42</sup> Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."*

Do you see a difference between Jesus' first prayer and His second?

In His first prayer, He prays...

*"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

In His second prayer, He prays...

*"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."*

Notice that he elevates his determination to obey the Will of the Father.

In a sense, in the second prayer, Jesus is resigning Himself to the fact that this was the plan from before the foundation of the earth.

He was the one who planned from the beginning to rescue people from their sins. Jesus was God's plan A, and there was no plan B.

Jesus must drink the cup of God's wrath. And He must drink every drop!

This was the will of the Father, and the Son was willing to do what pleased the Father.

Why could Jesus determine to follow the will of the Father? Because the Father can be trusted to make all things right in the end...

#### Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Jesus the Son trusts the plan of God the Father. That's why He can press ahead because of the JOY SET BEFORE HIM! What was this joy rooted in? **An eternal perspective.**

He endured because He trusted the Father's hold on eternity future and that Joy of the future, regardless of the pain at present, strengthened Him!

What are you facing today?

Whatever it is you are facing, you can endure it with the same trust in God. He will, by the power of the Holy Spirit, help you to endure the trial you are facing in ways you never thought



possible. You can and must look at this trial through the beautiful lens of **an eternal perspective!**

Yes, following the will of God can be difficult. But if it is His will is there really any risk in you following it?

What is God asking you to do? What is keeping you from doing it? Talk to your Father in Heaven and purpose in your heart to do what He asks!

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- Is God's Will Difficult To Follow? Talk to Your Father in Heaven

Jesus was determined to please the Father by obeying His will. But when push came to shove, would Jesus obey? Or would he cave like His friend Peter?

That leads to the last point I want to share with you from the text...

### **3. Is It Time to Obey God? Talk to Your Father in Heaven (vs. 43-46)**

It always comes for the Christian. The time when we have to put our faith to work and obey God. That is the reality of faith, isn't it?

#### **James 2:18 ESV**

*<sup>18</sup> But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

Our works do not save us, but we prove that we have faith by what we do.

There is no better example of this than Jesus Himself.

Jesus comes back from his latest prayer, and, surprise, surprise, his best friends are sawing logs again.

#### **Sleeping Again!**

#### **Matthew 26:43 ESV**

*<sup>43</sup> And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.*

In their defense, it was late at night...

But instead of rebuking them, He leaves them sleeping and goes to pray one more time...

Just a point to consider, friends may forsake you, and you may feel all alone, but if you are in Christ,

**"You have a friend that sicks closer than a brother." - Proverbs 18:24**

**"He will never leave you nor forsake you." - Hebrews 13:5**

You can always take it to the Lord in prayer!

**What a Friend We Have In Jesus...**

*1 What a friend we have in Jesus,  
all our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
all because we do not carry  
everything to God in prayer!*

And so, Jesus takes it to God in prayer...

**Yet Another Talk with the Father**

**Matthew 26:44 ESV**

*<sup>44</sup> So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.*

Sometimes we pray the same thing to the Lord. And that is okay.

In this case, Jesus prays again...

**"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."**

The time has come. Jesus needs to pick up the cup of God's Wrath and swallow its harsh reality.

**Jeremiah 25:15 ESV**

*<sup>15</sup> Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.*

**Psalms 75:8 ESV**

*<sup>8</sup> For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.*

Wait a minute, these verses indicate that the disobedient and wicked will drink this cup of wrath. Not the holy Son of God!

Don't you get it?

Yes, the wicked are destined to drink the cup of God's wrath for all eternity. But Jesus was willing to drink the Cup of God's wrath for you so you don't have to!

**2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV**

*<sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

This is why Christ came.

The Good News, the gospel is this...

There is a cup of God's wrath that will be poured out on you unless you ask Jesus to save you from it. How can He save you from it? Because He drank it in your place.

**Romans 5:10 ESV**

*<sup>10</sup> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

So, will you drink the cup of God's wrath for all eternity, or will you trust Christ to take care of that for you?

**John 3:16 ESV**

*<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

And let me tell you something about my Jesus, He did not shirk His responsibility. He obeyed God!

**It's Time to Obey God**

Look at the last two verses of our text...

**Matthew 26:45–46 ESV**

*<sup>45</sup> Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup> Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."*

Jesus didn't fold like Peter when the pressure hit. No! Even though he was stressed to the place where Luke tells us that He sweat like great drops of blood,

**Luke 22:44 ESV**

*<sup>44</sup> And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

My Jesus pressed ahead with the purpose of his birth and walked to the cross. He was undaunted in following the will of His Father.

This is inspiring! Our Savior's desire should inspire us to follow the will of the Father for our lives.

First and foremost, it is God's will that you be saved today!

**2 Peter 3:9 ESV**

*<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

God does not delight in the death of the wicked.

**Ezekiel 33:11 ESV**

*<sup>11</sup> Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?*

It is His will that you be saved and that you be sanctified (that is, to grow in holiness).

But this passage is so much more than simply an inspirational verse to spur you on to be obedient like Jesus.

It should also cause you to fall down and worship a God who could come up with and implement such an amazing plan to save you from eternal Hell!

Yes, this passage should cause you to WORSHIP THE LORD!

Folks, sometimes obeying God seems, from our finite perspective, not worth the pain it will cause.

But remember this, that temporary pain will pay eternal, joyful dividends!

*“Trust and obey, there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey!”*

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- Are You Crushed with Grief? Talk to Your Father in Heaven
- Is God’s Will Difficult To Follow? Talk to Your Father in Heaven
- Is It Time to Obey God? Talk to Your Father in Heaven

### **Conclusion**

Friends, the bottom line is we must pray and obey. This is the pattern set by our Savior, and it is wise for us to follow.

Jim Elliot prayed and obeyed, and it turned the world upside down for global missions.

Elizabeth Elliot prayed and obeyed and followed up with her husband’s work and reach many for Jesus!

Most importantly, Jesus prayed and obeyed, and through that obedience, provided a way for humanity to be saved from the awful wrath of God

**What do you need to do for the Lord? Have you prayed? Will you obey?**

### **Connection Group Reflection Questions**

1. What stands out to you from this record of Jesus’ prayer?
2. What can you learn about prayer from Jesus here?
3. Why is trusting God during difficult times so challenging?

4. Share a time when you had a challenge. How did you pray? How did you obey?