

DAILY BIBLE READINGS - Week of March 1, 2020

THEME: "Garden of Gethsemane"

SUPPORT

Sunday Read Matthew 26:26-36

"Then came Jesus with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." The Garden of Gethsemane may well have been the place where Jesus experienced the most challenging moments of His life up until that time as well as the most precious. It was very challenging because He was on the brink of His arrest, mock trial, and crucifixion, the most dreadful experience a human being could have. And yet it was very precious because it was time spent with His Heavenly Father to whom He submitted in a very special act of surrender to the will of God that was prophesied way back in the Garden of Eden. I find it interesting that Jesus asked some of His disciples to accompany Him to the Garden. Our Savior wanted emotional support for this most difficult of all experiences. He did not necessarily take them along for their prayer support because he went ahead to pray alone. He did not really want them to stand guard because He could have called on angels for protection if that is what he wanted. But He apparently did want them around, and in a way He had some emotional support for this most difficult assignment. But, although He brought some along with Him to the Garden for His time with His Father, He wanted to be alone to speak privately. Maybe we should take from that a lesson that it is sometimes good for us to go to prayer in solitude. It is far easier to unload in greater detail if there are no others around. Yes, it helps to know that there are others to provide the support we all need, but quality time alone with God is good!

TIME ALONE

Monday Read Matthew 14:22-23

"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, He was there alone." The time alone in the Garden of Gethsemane was not the only time Jesus got alone to pray. There are other instances detailed in the Gospel accounts of His getting apart to meet with His Father alone. One such incident is this account in the Gospel of Matthew. In this account where Jesus chose to get alone to pray, He had just fed the five thousand men plus women and children after having spoken to that crowd of people. He had sent the disciples away on a ship to get to the other side, and then got alone to speak with His Father in heaven. After that time alone, He decided to join with the disciples who were at sea as He had commanded them to do. In that voyage to the other side, the disciples were experiencing some trouble because of the turbulent waters due to a powerful wind. That time alone with His Father in prayer was preceded with the miracle of feeding the huge crowd and followed with the miracle of walking on water and allowing Peter to do the same. That is, Peter could do the same as long as he kept his eye on Jesus. When he took His eyes off Jesus, he experienced fear to the point of panic. So we can learn at least two things: it is good to get alone to pray and it is imperative to keep our eyes on Jesus! That is power!

PERSONAL DIRECTION

Tuesday Read Psalm 37:1-5

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him: and He shall bring it to pass." This instruction given to us by the psalmist is the key to a meaningful life with eternal purpose. We all have our own ideas as to what we would like to do with our lives, but it is far more important to know the will of God for our lives. That will of God may be the living out of our childhood dreams, or it can be in a totally different direction. Our heart should be to know and to do the will of God, because He created us in our mother's womb with a plan in mind. Each person is unique, a masterpiece of God born with the personality and skills that God intended while He was forming the baby during that nine months in the womb of the mother. The 139th Psalm details that amazing personalized act of God. Now each person is created with a will of his or her own, and more and more desires enter the mind of an individual during those years of childhood and adolescence. Each of us learns

what we like and dislike and perhaps we form an opinion of what we want to do in the way of a career. The question is whether or not we want to seek the will of God to see what He had in mind when He brought us into His earth. If we seek His will by prayer and obedience to His Word and follow His lead, He surely will show us! **PRAYER OF SUPPLICATION**

WednesdayRead Luke 11:1-4

"Give us day by day our daily bread." In our time alone with God where God has our undivided attention, one of the things for which we should pray is that God will meet our needs. That is an appropriate prayer every morning as implied by this model prayer given by our Lord to the disciples and to us by virtue of the fact that it is in recorded Scriptures. It is proper to ask God to meet our physical needs, and it is important that we ask God to feed our spirits by our reading of His Word. We eat breakfast to feed our bodies, and we read Scriptures to feed our souls and spirits. If we neglect to read the Word of God, we will become spiritually weak, not a good idea in this evil world. Every time we read the Bible, we are blessed with spiritual nourishment. Not to feast on the Scriptures will leave us vulnerable to the devil's diversions and deceptions. Not only do we need God to supply our needs for proper physical and spiritual nourishment, we need God to supply wisdom in making the many personal decisions with which we are faced. Having our minds fed with spiritual truth gained by reading God's truth will effect our thinking, and there are times when God supplies a direct answer!

MENTAL STRESS

ThursdayRead Proverbs 3:5-6

"Lean not on your own understanding." We all come to those times when there seems to be no good way to turn, that what we face may be more than we can handle. That is stress! Jesus faced some pretty difficult circumstances, not the least of the prospect of being hung on a cross to die. And that after a hostile screaming crowd telling lies upon lies to degrade Him, the most noble, kind, and loving person that ever walked on planet earth. We read in Hebrews 4:15 that He was *"touched with the feeling of our infirmities."* Our Savior suffered mental anguish more than anyone ever! Perhaps the greatest stress of all was there in the Garden of Gethsemane where we read this about the heavy heart of our Lord in Matthew 26:37-38: *"And He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."* Stressed out and emotionally drained, He looked to these friends for support. He can identify with us when we are stressed put beyond what we can imagine. It is then when we must trust our God rather than trying to figure things out, and we have that great promise: *"He will direct our paths."* When all seems hopeless, our God is still in control!

DIFFICULTIES

FridayRead Acts 14:19-23

"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." The Lord Jesus made it very clear that the Christian life is not a walk in the park; there will be difficulties. The truth is that the Christian faithfully serving our Savior will have many hurdles to cross. The Christian is a soldier in the army of Christ battling the most formidable enemy ever: Satan and his evil forces of demons. We are warned to stay on the alert in I Peter 5:8: *"Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."* Now he will not wake up a sleeping Christian, but he will surely work hard to give faithful servants of God a tough time. The good news is that we are assured of a victory, as Jesus promised in John 16:33: *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* The greatest joy comes after the toughest battles. One of the pet strategies of the adversary is to try to get divisions among Christians. The devil is most effective in deceiving Christians, not by doing evil, but by getting them out of focus in the Christian duty.

SUBMISSION

SaturdayRead James 4:6-10

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The key for the victorious Christian life is submission to God and obedience to His Word. His way is perfect, definitely superior to any plans we may have that would be different from His. This is particularly true in light of the fact that the rulers of the darkness of this world are in a spiritual war against God and His people. God has given us the armor to fight off this most powerful of all enemies, and has assured us that we will have victory by our faith in Him. The imperative is that we submit to God. It is the Spirit of God and the Word of God that provides the power to fight the good fight of faith, and it is a fight! The devil is deceptive! The devil is divisive! And that is one of his key strategies, to get God's people to fight among themselves. Submitting to God is to love one another, especially to those of the household of faith. Jesus set the example in fighting spiritual war when He was confronted personally with the devil as recorded in Matthew 4. It is noticeable that His strategy in fighting off the advances of the adversary was to quote Scriptures, the sword of the Spirit. By doing that He won! We can too!