

# Life Group Questions

March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Jesus Alone Before the Father** –Ray Harms-Wiebe – [Mark 14:32-42](#)

Thank you for your dedication to lead the Life Group. **Please review the questions, selecting any you believe will be most helpful for your group and adapting as needed.** You don't need to go through everything. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your group so that your discussion will build everyone up to love God and each other more.

## Note from Pastor Jonathan

Hey Life Groups,

Thanks in advance to all the leaders who attended the training! I'll be sending out a summary of what we covered.

Easter is approaching and a lot of new people will be coming to our church! I know our children's ministry has had a shortage of volunteers for a while. That meant babies and children were turned away on Sunday mornings. Our children's ministry leaders would love to take them, but they must maintain certain teacher-to-student ratios. That can be especially tough for people coming with their families.

I've recorded a short video to encourage our Life Group members to volunteer in the children's ministry. And for those members who don't feel called or can't serve, they can pray! Here's a link to the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd6VIWSbic>

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## Question List



1. What is Jesus going through and why?



2. What is Jesus' emotional state and how does it affect how you see Him?



3. How are we like the disciples?



4. How can we stay awake and pray?



5. How can we let people know what Jesus has done for them?

## Questions



### 1. What is Jesus going through and why?

We often focus on Jesus' physical pain and death. Growing up, we talked a lot at Easter about how He was whipped, beaten, and forced to wear a crown of thorns. We talked about how painful the nails in His hands and feet must have been. I'm sure most of you have seen visual representations of Jesus being nailed to the cross in paintings or videos.

But that wasn't the real pain Jesus was dreading.

Robert H. Stein, *Mark*

It is not the physical sufferings he will have to endure that trouble Jesus. Rather, it is that he would become sin for us even though he knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21) and a curse for us (Gal. 3:13) that we might escape the wrath of God. He feared "the" death that no one else would ever need to or be able to experience. He would experience God's wrath in order that those who believe in him would not have to face it. His cry of dereliction and abandonment, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (15:34), reveals what Jesus fears.

Look at the [Background and Commentary](#) for more information.



### 2. What is Jesus' emotional state and how does it affect how you see Him?

When I visualize Jesus praying in the garden, famous paintings come to mind like the one to the right. This is *Christ in Gethsemane* by Heinrich Hofmann. Often, we visualize Jesus being cool, calm, and collected. While the disciples panicked in the boat, Jesus was peacefully asleep. While Peter flips out and attacks the high priest's servant, Jesus is calmly in control. But here Jesus is pushed to His emotional limits.

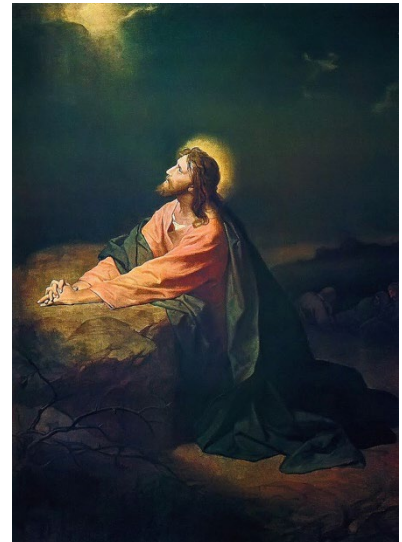
How does knowing Jesus, the Son of God, fully God and fully man experiencing such agony affect how you see Him?

Here are some possible responses:

**Gratitude.** Sometimes we think that because Jesus was fully God and knew what He was getting into, it must have been easy. Yeah, it will hurt, but He's God so He has infinite capacity. Yeah, He will die, but He knows 100% for sure that He will come back from the dead. He's had 30 years + eternity past to plan and prepare for this event (1 Peter 1:18-20; Ephesians 1:5).

But it would still hurt. Jesus wasn't just going to suffer physical death, but the full wrath of God that sinners deserved.

**Compassion.** Jesus was faced with an unbelievably tough decision. He could have given into temptation and abandoned God's plan, but He stuck the course. Jesus knows what it's like to agonize over what's going to happen. Jesus knows what it's like to dread something so much you can't help but just beg God to make it go away.



When we suffer and struggle, Jesus knows exactly how we feel because He's been there! He knows what it's like to lie on your face, pleading with God.

Hebrews 4:15–16

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. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Maybe you're struggling to break off a toxic relationship and your friends just tell you to just do it already. What's so hard? Or you have an ethical dilemma at work, but your co-workers just say just do whatever is easiest for you whether it's right or wrong. Maybe you're watching the news and you're getting so anxious and it's hard to trust in Jesus.

Whatever you're going through, Jesus knows what it's like to struggle. So, if you're struggling, don't worry. He struggled, too! And Jesus did the right thing every time He struggled, so He wants to help you, too!

**Sympathy.** In Jesus' final moments before being betrayed, arrested, beaten, killed, and punished with God's wrath, the disciples are asleep. Three times they fell asleep! All of them. I know what it's like to be let down and to feel alone, but not that badly.

### ♥ 3. How are we like the disciples?

**We sleep when we should be with Jesus.** How many of us have waited until the evening to pray? Everything is finally done. Children are finally asleep. Chores are finally done. You've showered, brushed your teeth, *and* flossed. You're in bed and now you have time to pray. As you pray, you drift in and out of sleep. "Thank you ..... Jesus ... for today ... and ... Zzzzzzzzz." If prayer was like texting, Jesus would be staring at 🗨️ all night long.

**Miss out on Jesus' heart.** The disciples knew and saw what Jesus' heart was going through. They knew He was troubled and sorrowful. But they just thought of their own sleepiness. When He was betrayed, they only thought of their own lives.

We know where Jesus' heart is today. He has a heart for the lost and spiritual babies, so He wants us to go make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). But we focus on our own needs and wants. We know that Jesus wants us to worship together as one body, but we're tempted to treat Sunday worship services like a show, only judging it by what \*I\* get out of it. We know Jesus wants all of us to love each other, but we just want others to love us.

### ♥ 4. How can we stay awake and pray?

The disciples were called to stay alert and pray. Something that I always wonder about is how come they didn't support each other. Maybe they did, but couldn't they have at least taken shifts? Or when they hear one guy snoring, they can say, "Hey! Wake up!" The vibe I get is that they're all doing their own thing. If they had kept each other awake, they could have had a chance.

So, one thing we can do is pray together. Let's keep each other accountable. Encourage each other. Share our prayer requests with each other. When one of us falls asleep, we can wake each other up. "Hey, have you been praying about this or that?" We can also take on each others' burdens.

We do this out of gratitude for Jesus' sacrificial love for us. We need to remember what Jesus did, so we can remind ourselves of the pain and suffering He went through for us. We can also remind each other of Jesus' work. Whenever we're ungrateful or taking things for granted, we can remind each other of the Gospel.

What areas in our lives are we sleeping on? Let me suggest two ways we can look at this question.

**What sins should we wake up to and pray about?** We may be physically awake, but spiritually asleep. We all have areas of sin in our lives where it's easier to ignore. But we need to wake up and "pray that you may not enter into temptation." For some of us, it may be neglecting to spend time with Jesus. Maybe it's allowing your eyes to look at the opposite sex in ways you know you aren't supposed to. Or in your marriage, you just think about what your spouse is supposed to do for you without also loving and serving them.

Confess those sins to God. Share with others so they can pray for you.

**What should we pray to wake up to do?** Are there commands that we should be awake and doing? For example, Jesus tells us to make disciples. Are we making disciples? Are we learning how to follow Jesus and teaching spiritually younger Christians to follow Jesus, too? Are we sacrificially loving our neighbors or only being polite? Are we welcoming the strangers that come into our church or are we only thinking about what we'll get?

If Jesus showed up in our lives, would He find us spiritually sleeping? Or would He find us spiritually awake and at work?

## 5. How can we let people know what Jesus has done for them?

In most religions, people need to earn God's love. They need to do good works and rituals or offer prayer and sacrifice so that they will be forgiven and rewarded. They don't know that God *already* loves them. He *already* suffered tremendously before we even asked it or deserved it (Romans 5:8). They don't need to earn God's favor.

They don't need to do enough good to make up for the bad. They don't need to do penitence or pay the price for the wrong they've done. They don't need to beat themselves up or live under the shadow of condemnation.

Jesus already lived a righteous life that was so perfect it makes up for our sinful lives. Jesus already paid the price for all our sins and suffered condemnation.

As Paul wrote,

Romans 10:13–15

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?

And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?  
And how are they to hear without someone preaching?  
And how are they to preach unless they are sent?  
As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Let's equip and send our Life Group members to go share the Good News with the world that Jesus has suffered and died for them!

We can invite our non-believing friends to celebrate Easter. When our co-workers asked what we did over spring break, we can share what we did. We can pray that Jesus would give us the strength to share the Gospel and let us know who He has in mind. We can pray for our mission teams that God would use them to expand His kingdom abroad (<https://willingdon.org/global-ministries>). We can volunteer in the children's or student ministry to teach our kids about Jesus. We can lead a Discovery group to teach new believers. We can invite our neighbors to join our Life Group potlucks or hangouts so they can see what a Jesus-filled community looks like.

## Background and Commentary

Last week's sermon was two days before Passover. In Mark 14:12-16, Jesus supernaturally knows where to arrange the Passover meal. The meal should have been a wonderful celebration, but Jesus drops a bomb on His disciples: "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." (Mark 14:18) and the disciples are "sorrowful" and wondering if they are the betrayer (Mar, 14:19). What a mood killer. During the meal, Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:22-25). He also teaches a lot more, but we're focusing on Mark.

As they're headed out after singing a hymn, Jesus drops another bomb: "You will all fall away" (Mark 14:27). Peter responds that even if everyone else abandons Jesus, Peter will not! Jesus predicts Peter's denial, but Peter doubles down. This inspires the whole crew to strongly affirm they're Team Jesus and not even death would make them leave.

Imagine the scene. "One of you guys will betray me. And when that happens, you're all going to abandon me." The disciples wonder if they'll betray Jesus while swearing they will never leave Him. This is a weird night. They're probably young men so I can imagine myself in their situation as a teenager, trying to overcompensate for my insecurity. That's probably what these guys are doing. All the boys are shouting "If I must die with you, I will not deny you!" (Mark 14:31). Their loud shouts and determined faces hide hearts full of doubt. "Of course I'll follow Jesus no matter what ... right?"

Time to put that to the test.

They get to **Gethsemane**, the Aramaic word for "oil press". The name makes sense because it's located in a garden (John 18:1) on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39). It's likely enclosed by a wall so there's some privacy. Jesus often took His disciples there when they were in town (John 18:2; Luke 22:39). Lineage has a good video about it: <https://youtu.be/BEUDWZTigSs?si=muSIDGmxsOgA9L-n>.

Jesus tells eight disciples (Judas had already left to betray Jesus) to **sit** while Jesus goes to **pray**. This isn't unusual, since Jesus often prayed alone (Luke 5:16).

He takes **Peter, James, and John** off to the side. Although He loved His disciples, these three often had special experiences the others didn't have, like being there when Jesus raises Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mark 5:37-43) and Jesus' transfiguration (Mark 9:2-9).

What would Jesus do this time? Would He do something as awesome as calming a storm or turning all the olive oil into premium wine? Would He finally reveal His plan to overthrow Rome and free God's people? Let's go, Jesus! Show us what you got!

Surprisingly, Jesus looks terrible. This isn't triumphant Jesus they saw a week ago (Mark 11:1-10). Mark really wants you to know Jesus is in *reeeaaaaally* bad shape.

He **began to be greatly distressed and troubled**. Greatly distressed is ἐκθαμβέω (ek-tham-beh-o), meaning "to be moved to a relatively intense emotional state because of someth. causing great surprise or perplexity" (BDAG) Jesus' emotional state suddenly changes to overwhelmed and emotional. Troubled is ἀδημονέω (ad-ay-mon-eh-o), meaning "be in anxiety, be distressed, troubled" (BDAG). Something is on Jesus' mind, and it's got Him shaken.

While the disciples are caught off guard by Jesus' sudden shift, Jesus tells them He's **very sorrowful, even to death**. The word sorrowful is περίλυτος (per-il-oo-pos), meaning "very sad, deeply grieved" (BDAG). It's what the rich, young ruler felt when He realized he couldn't turn down His riches to follow Jesus.

Imagine seeing your teacher/leader conquer all diseases and illnesses! Blindness, leprosy, and paralysis are no problem for Him. He's conquered the weather! He literally told a storm to chill and it chilled (Mark 4:39). Demons freak out when they see Him (Luke 4:33-34)! Can you imagine someone so powerful that even demons are scared of him? He can even bring people back from the dead with His voice (John 11:43)! He's brave enough to clear out the money changers and flip tables in the temple (Mark 11:15-19)! He's always one step ahead of His enemies, whether they're trying to outsmart Him in a debate or push Him off a cliff! He hung out with Moses and Elijah while God from heaven called Jesus His Son (Mark 9:2-8)! They've seen that nothing can stop this guy! ... But now He's so, so, so, so overwhelmed. Something is on His mind that makes Him feel like He could die.

They are caught off guard and probably give each other wide-eyed, frantic expressions while mouthing "What are we going to do?" followed by shoulder shrugs.

Jesus tells them to **remain here and watch**. Watch can also mean "stay awake" (CSB) or "stay alert" (NET). Will they stay awake and be there for Jesus? He's been there for them. Will they be awake for Him?

Jesus goes **a little farther**. The word for a little is μικρόν (mik-ron) where we get "micro." He's probably going around a corner, looking for a good spot.

He **fell on the ground and prayed**. Standing up seems to be a pretty normal posture to pray (Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:5; Luke 18:11), but there are moments when people are moved to fall on their face before God (Genesis 17:1-3; Numbers 16:22). People typically prayed out loud back then and Jesus is close by, so the disciples should hear Him pray.

Jesus prayed that **the hour might pass from him** and for the Father to **remove the cup**. Jesus being so anguished about being physically beaten and killed may be normal to us, but there are many examples

of brave followers of God who faced death without flinching. Think about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego telling Nebuchadnezzar that whether they die or not, they won't serve his gods (Daniel 3:16-18). Many martyrs have also famously stood their ground. When 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> century Christian Polycarp was about to be executed, He thanked his persecutors for letting him give his life up for Jesus.

Jesus took on our punishment. While it's true that physical death is the result of sin, that's not all we deserve. God will punish sinners with His wrath and anger (Romans 2:6-8). There will be a dreadful, eternal fate because of sin (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). But Jesus somehow took on that punishment (Isaiah 53:5). Each person deserves an infinitely painful punishment because of their sins. Jesus experienced that terrible fate. How can you squeeze an eternity of suffering into 3 days? I have no idea how it happened, but Jesus somehow went through it.

With this background, **the cup** makes sense. In the Old Testament, God drinking the cup meant suffering God's angry punishment for sin.

Isaiah 51:17

Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem,  
you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath,  
who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering.

The expression is also used in Revelation.

Revelation 14:9-11

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the **cup of his anger**, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

That is **terrifying** to think about. It's also what we all deserve, but Jesus took on Himself.

Although every fiber in Jesus is dreading the crucifixion and taking on the punishment for sin, He prayed, **"Yet not what I will, but what you will."** Luke records Jesus as saying, "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42). Jesus prayed this prayer for hours. I wonder how many ways He said the same thing.

One of my favorite songs is based on this passage: CityAlight's Your Will Be Done

([https://youtu.be/8nLXXephYRI?si=y3VT\\_6ju-YotNwg0](https://youtu.be/8nLXXephYRI?si=y3VT_6ju-YotNwg0)). I love the line "My hope was sure, when there my Saviour prayed: 'Father, not my will, but Yours be done.'" Jesus could have caved in and said no. "Hey Father, this plan is harder than I expected. Let me go back up to heaven and we can maybe draw up some new plans that aren't so painful." Or maybe, "I'm not ready. I need another week or year to prepare." But by submitting to the Father's will, Jesus opened the only way for us to be saved. If Jesus said no, we would all be doomed.

After praying for **one hour**, Jesus goes back to His disciples, sleeping. During His darkest moment yet, the disciples were **asleep**. How hard must that have been for Jesus? "Hey, I'm about to do the hardest thing in my ministry and I need you guys to stay up with me!" Right before Jesus started praying, they

were all saying how they would be willing to die for Jesus. Now they can't even stay awake for Jesus. How do they expect to stand with Jesus when their lives are on the line?

There's a line in that Lineage Journey video that stood out to me. "The sacrifice Jesus was about to give seemed so hopeless, with so few who even wanted the benefits. And His heart, which longed for sympathy in His present and future sufferings, saw little love and appreciation from those He came to save." Ouch! Jesus was about to die and suffer in the worst way possible, but so few people even wanted what Jesus was offering. His own disciples didn't even get it. And now Jesus is about to give His life up for His disciples, the disciples couldn't even do their part to pray with Him.

Waking them up, Jesus tells them to pray that they **may not enter into temptation**. This echoes the Lord's prayer: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." (Matthew 6:13). They may be willing to stand by Jesus, but their humanity (**flesh**) is weak and will cave. Therefore, they need to seek God's help.

Jesus goes back to pray **the same words**. The disciples can hear Jesus really struggling through these prayers. But when Jesus comes back, He **found them sleeping**. He goes back to pray a third time and when He comes back, they're sleeping again. They could have at least taken turns sleeping and praying.

Jesus prayed for the hour to pass, but now **the hour has come**. Judas and the religious leaders arrive right as Jesus is speaking. They had three chances to stay up and pray with Jesus, but they fell asleep each time. This was the last chance they had to spend time with Jesus before His death. They won't hang out until after the resurrection (SPOILER).

## Choose Your Next Step

**What next step will you commit to for the upcoming week (and beyond)?**

## Closing Prayer

A closing prayer is an effective way to point people back to our Loving Father as they seek to apply their new learnings throughout the week. Ask group members to share what they sense God calling them to. Pray for each other and commit to continue to do so during the week as people step out in obedience to God's leading.