

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

September 27, 2026

In His Steps – A Stewardship Series

“Run to the Father”

Matthew 26:36-46

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The Global Methodist Church, which is our denomination at Killearn Methodist Church, has a mission statement that reads: *“The Global Methodist Church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ and spread scriptural holiness across the globe.”* As members of the Global Methodist Church at Killearn, we are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Holiness refers to nurturing those disciples to grow up to become more and more like Jesus. At Killearn we also have a mission statement that dovetails beautifully with the Global Methodist Church’s mission statement. Our mission statement at Killearn says, *“The mission of Killearn Methodist Church is to present Christ, encourage growth and holiness, and send out to present Christ.”* When people become members at Killearn and in Global Methodist Churches around the world, we make commitments to membership vows. These vows not only affirm that we are Christians but one of the membership vows asks this very important question: *“Will you be a faithful member of Killearn Methodist Church, a Global Methodist local church, doing all in your power to strengthen its ministries through your **prayers**, your **presence**, your **gifts**, your **service**, and your **witness** as Christ’s representative in this world?”*

This vow recognizes that disciples of Jesus Christ who are becoming more and more like Jesus are committed to prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Here at Killearn, we are committed to fulfilling our mission statement to making disciples and that means we exist to nurture and equip every member of this church to be fully committed to these five essential commitments of being a disciple: prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. In this 5-week sermon series called, ***In His Steps***, we see how Jesus was fully committed to prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness and how He called His disciples to follow in his steps in being committed to prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. Today, we first see how above and beyond anything in Jesus’ life, He was wholeheartedly committed to this first vow of prayers. This refers to Jesus’ close, intimate relationship with His Heavenly Father as it was regularly maintained and nurtured in the study of the holy Scriptures, as Jesus called them, and to talking with His Heavenly Father in prayer. Here is one example of this commitment of Jesus and Him inviting His disciples to follow in His steps.

Matthew 26:36-46

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and he said, “Sit here while I go over there to pray.” ³⁷ He took Peter and Zebedee’s

two sons, James and John, and he became anguished and distressed. ³⁸ He told them, “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

³⁹ He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, “My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”

⁴⁰ Then he returned to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, “Couldn’t you watch with me even one hour? ⁴¹ Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!”

⁴² Then Jesus left them a second time and prayed, “My Father! If this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will be done.” ⁴³ When he returned to them again, he found them sleeping, for they couldn’t keep their eyes open.

⁴⁴ So he went to pray a third time, saying the same things again. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said, “Go ahead and sleep. Have your rest. But look—the time has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Up, let’s be going. Look, my betrayer is here!”

JESUS’ HIGHEST PRIORITY WAS HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS HEAVENLY FATHER

We first see depicted in the life of Jesus that ***Jesus’ Highest Priority was His Relationship with His Heavenly Father***. In the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Jesus referred to God as Father over 150 times. Jesus used this kind of intimate, familial language because that was the kind of relationship He Had with His Heavenly Father. Nobody talked about and prayed to God in this kind of intimate manner like Jesus did. When the disciples heard Jesus pray and refer to God in such a personal manner, they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray just like He did. What was undoubtedly mind-blowing for the disciples was that when Jesus taught the disciples how to pray like Him, He said that they and all of Jesus’ disciples can pray just like Him and call God “Abba”, or Father. Kevin DeYoung made a great point when he said, “Most of us are probably so familiar with the Lord’s Prayer that we never stop to think what an amazing thing it is that we have this prayer. What if you had the opportunity to ask the greatest basketball coach of all time to teach you how to shoot a basketball? Or if you were able to ask the greatest chef to teach you how to cook? Or if you were to ask the greatest fighter pilot to teach you how to fly a plane? You’d be on the edge of your seat ready to hear what the expert has to say and then to put the advice and example into practice. How much more should we be ready and eager to hear from Jesus. He is much more than an expert in prayer, and prayer is infinitely more important than any hobby, skill, or vocation. Prayer is absolutely indispensable for the Christian. We can’t live without it.”

The reason Jesus came into this world is so that we can also have a close, intimate, personal relationship with God and then listen to and talk with God as Jesus did when

He walked in this world. In this passage in *Matthew 26*, Jesus is with His disciples on Thursday night, the last night of His life and He knew what was going to happen to Him on Friday. Jesus just finished His last supper with the disciples in the upper room and then Judas left to get the ball rolling of betraying Jesus. The eleven remaining disciples then left the upper room and walked with Jesus for about a half mile from Jerusalem, across the Kidron Valley, to the Garden of Gethsemane located in the Mount of Olives. This was a place where Jesus and the disciples would often go to as a retreat for rest and prayer. Jesus then invites His disciples to join Him in prayer as they probably did many times before in that sacred space. As Jesus prays, He is overwhelmed with untold anxiety and stress over what He is about to experience.

To give us insight as to why Jesus was agonizing that last night and all the way to the cross, Mark Galli writes in *Christianity Today* magazine, "How are we to understand Jesus' cry of dereliction, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' along with his desperate prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, pleading with God 'if possible, let this cup pass from me?' Here's the (question): Many mere mortals have managed to face death with more (composure) than Jesus did—Stephen, for example, just months later. Jesus knew he would rise from the dead, so why all the anguish? In his ordeal on the cross ... Christ mind-reads the mental states found in all the evil human acts human beings have ever committed. Every vile, shocking, disgusting, repulsive psychic state accompanying every human evil act will miraculously, be at once, in the human psyche of Christ ... without yielding an evil configuration in either Christ's intellect or will. Such psychic agony 'would greatly eclipse all other human psychological suffering ... Flooded with such horror, Christ might well lose entirely his ability to find the mind of God the Father.' This drives home the suffering of Christ, a suffering so comprehensively horrible that it surpasses even the physical abuse of crucifixion." Jesus knew that when He got on the cross, He would become the perfect sacrifice for all the sins of the world. Jesus, even though He was perfect, would experience hell on earth as He took upon Himself every sin of all humanity, past, present, and future. Why did Jesus do that? He suffered hell so that we would not have to. Jesus took our sins upon Himself so that we could be forgiven of our sins which would then enable us to have a close relationship with God. Jesus said in *John 17:3*, "*And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.*" Jesus suffered untold agony of being the sacrifice for the sins of the world so that we could have a close, intimate, personal relationship with God just as He had when He walked in this world in human flesh.

JESUS REGULARLY SPENT TIME TALKING AND LISTENING TO HIS HEAVENLY FATHER

What we also see in Jesus' life is that not only was His relationship with His Heavenly Father the most important commitment in His life, ***Jesus Regularly Spent Time Talking and Listening to His Heavenly Father***. From early on in Jesus' life, one of the tools Jesus used to maintain and nurture as close a relationship with His Heavenly Father as possible was through hearing His Heavenly Father speak to Him through the **holy scriptures**. As a Jewish boy, Jesus learned the scriptures in daily life from His parents and at the synagogue in Nazareth. On one occasion when Jesus was 12-years-old and he and his parents took a trip from Nazareth to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem, Mary and Joseph lost him for three days. They finally found Him in the

Jerusalem Temple listening to teachers, asking questions, and amazing hearers with his understanding. When Joseph and Mary found Jesus, this is what *Luke 2:48-49* tells us then happened, *“⁴⁸ His parents didn’t know what to think. ‘Son,’ his mother said to him, ‘why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic, searching for you everywhere.’ ⁴⁹ ‘But why did you need to search?’ he asked. ‘Didn’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?’”*

Jesus loved to hear God speak to Him through the Holy Scriptures. Later, as an adult, Jesus taught in the temple during his ministry. *Luke 21:37-38* says, *“³⁷ Every day Jesus went to the Temple to teach, and each evening he returned to spend the night on the Mount of Olives. ³⁸ The crowds gathered at the Temple early each morning to hear him.”* In the first century, they didn’t have Bibles in their homes or online as we do today. The only written Old Testament documents were scrolls of portions of the Bible that were mostly kept in the local Jewish synagogues and the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus, then, could regularly be found wherever the Scriptures were read and taught. This enabled Jesus to maintain and nurture His relationship with His Heavenly Father.

The other tool that Jesus used to maintain and nurture a close relationship with His Heavenly Father was **prayer**. There are roughly thirty-four specific instances of Jesus praying across the four Gospels. Jesus frequently withdrew to solitary places, often rising early in the morning to spend one-on-one time with God in prayer. This was a regular routine for Jesus. Occasionally Jesus would even spend entire nights praying before major decisions. Jesus prayed with the disciples and in public before the crowds. Jesus also prayed during high-stress moments like we see here in the Garden of Gethsemane and during routine ministry highs and lows. More than anything else, the Bible depicts Jesus’ prayer life as a continual state of communion with His Heavenly Father rather than only as some compartmentalized activity. Prayer was a constant rhythm for Jesus’ life where He was always praying in addition to dedicating one-on-one time with God. S. D. Gordon said this about Jesus’ prayer life, “How much prayer meant to Jesus! It was not only his regular habit, but his resort in every emergency, however slight or serious. When perplexed he prayed. When hard

pressed by work he prayed. When hungry for fellowship he found it in prayer. He chose his associates and received his messages upon his knees. If tempted, he prayed. If criticized, he prayed. If fatigued in body or wearied in spirit, he had recourse to his one un failing habit of prayer. Prayer brought him unmeasured power at the beginning, and kept the flow unbroken and undiminished. There was no emergency, no difficulty, no necessity, no temptation that would not yield to prayer.”

THE DISCIPLES LEARNED TO REGULARLY SPEND TIME LISTENING TO AND TALKING WITH GOD

As the disciples listened to Jesus’ teaching and watched and followed His example of maintaining and nurturing their relationship with God, ***The Disciples Learned to Regularly Spend Time Listening to and Talking with God.*** Jesus was the greatest teacher of some of the most difficult students. When Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane on that last night to pray, He invited His disciples to pray with Him in this most difficult time of His life. Jesus told them His soul was crushed with so much grief it felt like He was about to die. Jesus then walked a little distance from the disciples and

collapsed in prayer. After finishing praying, Jesus came back to the disciples and He found them sleeping. Have you ever prayed and quickly fallen asleep? I have countless times. Jesus sounded disappointed when He asked Peter, "Couldn't you all even spend an hour in prayer with me?" Jesus told them they need to pray so to keep themselves from falling into temptation. Then Jesus said He understands that their spirit is willing, but their human body is weak. Jesus recognized that while we may want to pray and read our Bibles with God each day, the truth is we face countless distractions that never stop pulling us away from regularly spending time listening to God speak to us through the Bible and pouring out our hearts to God in prayer. When I pray at night in bed it is a great way to fall asleep. When I am spending time alone with God reading the Bible and praying, I am often distracted by the many things I need to do that day and then I am tempted to rush through my time with God. Other times while I am praying or reading my Bible, my mind can start wandering all over the place and then I am everywhere else in my mind than with God.

One of the biggest time distractions that can quickly drain valuable time away from each day is the time we spend on social media. On a website called, *Exploding Topics* it listed the top thirty-five social media sites at the beginning of this year. **Facebook** was number one with 3.07 billion monthly active users. Tied with second place is **WhatsApp** and **Instagram** both with 3 billion monthly users. Then **YouTube** had 2.5 billion, and **TikTok** is fifth with 1.99 billion. That is just the top five of many social media sites clamoring for our attention. There is nothing wrong with participating in social media, but it can be addictive and before we know it, a big part of our day passed as we mindlessly watched reel after reel after reel. Then the next thing we know our day is over and we never spent time with God or the time we did spend was rushed at best. Mitch Finely was quoted in *Christianity Today* back in 1987, long before social media, all the streaming services, and the proliferation of what the internet has become for us today, as saying, "Remarkable as it may seem, even for today's busy-busy Christian, no valid excuse exists for not being a person of daily private prayer. In fact, I would argue, the right way to be a Christian is to pray 15 minutes a day. One can easily amend the words with which Jesus rebuked the disciples at Gethsemane: 'Could you not spare a quarter hour with me?'" I can just imagine Jesus coming to us as He did Peter at the end of a day and sadly asking, "Could you not spend a few minutes today with me?"

Jesus experienced the torment of hell when He took our sins upon Himself on that cross. Jesus did so in order that our sins might be forgiven which would allow us to have an intimate, personal relationship with God where daily we can talk with God in prayer and hear God speak to us through the holy scriptures.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *Giving Challenge* (weekly videos), RightNow Media
- *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, Timothy Keller
- *The Hole in Our Holiness*, Kevin DeYoung

Icebreaker Questions

1. When you need to talk through something important, who is the first person you tend to call—and what makes that person someone you trust?
2. What is one thing that most easily distracts you when you are trying to pray or spend time reading Scripture?

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. Jesus' relationship with His Heavenly Father was presented as the **highest priority of His life**. What evidence do we see of that priority in Matthew 26:36–46? What would it look like for our relationship with God to become a greater priority in our own lives?
2. In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, **“Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”** What makes that kind of prayer difficult? Can you think of a time when prayer helped you surrender something to God rather than simply asking Him to change your circumstances?
3. The sermon describes Jesus' prayer life as a **continual state of communion with His Heavenly Father**, rather than prayer being an isolated religious activity. What might it look like to develop that kind of ongoing conversation with God throughout an ordinary day?
4. When Jesus found His disciples sleeping, He told them, **“Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”** What are some of the distractions, habits, or pressures that interfere with our desire to spend time with God? What practical changes might help us protect that time?
5. The sermon closes by reminding us that Jesus went to the cross so that our sins could be forgiven, and we could enjoy an **intimate, personal relationship with God**. How does viewing prayer as a privilege Jesus made possible—not merely another Christian obligation—change the way we approach prayer and Scripture?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?