

Overwhelmed
The Ultimate Example of Overcoming
Matthew 26:36-46

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Text Introduction: For the last three weeks we have been examining this idea of being overwhelmed. So many of you have said, “You were speaking just to me.” Well, the truth is—so many of you have said words like these that I want to remind you that you are not alone in feeling overwhelmed.

We have been reminded that some of God’s choice servants felt overwhelmed. Moses felt overwhelmed by what God was calling him to do that he cried out to God, “God, I don’t think I can do this.” (My paraphrase) Elijah felt so overwhelmed by the events of his life that he cried out to God, “I have had enough, LORD.” (Not my paraphrase—These are Elijah’s exact words.) So, we are finding comfort in that our heroes of faith felt overwhelmed.

But if the example of Moses and Elijah is not enough to encourage you, today we consider our ultimate example—Jesus. Jesus, hours before his arrest went to a garden. We listen in on His intense struggle in our text today.

Text: ³⁶ Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.” ³⁷ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. ³⁸ Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”

³⁹ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.”

⁴⁰ Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.”

⁴² Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.” ⁴³ And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.

⁴⁴ So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵ Then He came to His disciples and said to them, “Are *you* still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

Introduction: Now, as we consider the example of Jesus, two quick statements ought to be made in introduction. First, there is no way that we ought to compare our circumstances with these circumstances of Jesus. He is facing that point of being overwhelmed by the death that He is about to die as well as by the sin that He is going to

take upon Himself. The other item that ought to be mentioned is a question: If Jesus, in His humanity, needed to get alone to pray, how much more do we need these same kind of experiences.

So, it is that garden experience that I want to share with you that becomes the key to overcoming when we are overwhelmed.

In these garden experiences God . . .

1. **Calms us for the difficult experiences of our life.**

The first reason that we need these garden experiences of life is that God uses these times to calm us for the difficult experiences of life.

Several emotions mark this period of Jesus' life.

(1) Loneliness from the departure of His friends.

Some of the most chaotic times of life can also be lonely times. Even when there is lots of activity, the loneliness can be overwhelming. I recall the words of a friend at another friend's funeral. "I've never had so many people around me, but I've never felt so alone in all of my life."

(2) Closeness to His Heavenly Father.

The only good of feeling isolated from our friends is that we are drawn closer to God.

(3) Awareness of His future.

And good or bad, there is a certain comfort in knowing what is in our future.

This garden time is a time of preparation. That's why we need frequent times of being with God. These times prepare us for the struggles that might be unexpectedly coming. One other thing about these times with God—It is hard to be in worship and worry at the same time.

2. **Conforms our will to His will.**

God uses these garden times in our lives to conform our will to His will. Jesus prayed three times. There is a small change in the wording from the first prayer to the second and third prayer. Jesus moves to accepting God's will. He moves from asking, "Father, if it is possible" to "Father, if it is not possible."

3 Lessons Concerning God's Will

(1) We can be honest with God concerning His will for our lives.

(2) Sometimes God's will is difficult.

(3) We must accept God's will in our lives.

These garden times help us to sort out God's will for our lives. This time should help us hear from God. Tim Hansel in a book entitled, *When I Relax I Feel Guilty*, tells the story about two men walking in downtown New York. One is an American Indian. Suddenly, he stops and says, "I hear a cricket."

His friend laughs and says, "You are crazy."

"No, I'm sure of it." He begins to look for the cricket. He finds the cricket across the street in one lone shrub in a cement planter.

Astonished, his friend asks, "How did you do that?"

The Native American says, "It all depends on what you are listening for. Here let me show you." He then proceeded to take out some coins and dropped them on the pavement. Every eye turned toward the dropped coins.

What are we listening for? We need to get away and hear God's voice for our lives.

3. Creates in us the courage to do His will.

Note the Transformation that takes place:

Sorrow⇒ Struggle⇒ Strength

Sorrow in verse 38. Struggle in verse 39. Strength in verse 46. The garden times will move us from sorrow to struggle to strength.

Two prisoners were in a Soviet prison camp cell. One is praying. The other scoffs and says, "Prayers won't help you get out of this dreadful place any faster." Opening his eyes, the person praying answers, "I do not pray to get out of prison but to do the will of God."

3 Habits to Successful Garden Time

So, we desperately need garden time—time alone with the Father—to prepare us for the struggles that are ahead. Let me give you these three habits to successful garden time.

Prioritize your garden time. Priority results from the recognition of the importance of something. What is it that you let stand in the way with a daily alone time with God?

Plan your garden time. We plan what is important to us.

Protect your garden time.

During the Desert Storm war, Colonel William Post was charged with receiving the massive amounts of supplies for the ground forces. This included tons of food that arrived daily.

One day, the Pentagon sent Colonel Post a message inquiring about forty cases of grape jelly that were missing. Post dispatched an aide to find the missing jelly. A day or two later, he reported back that the jelly was nowhere to be found. Post sent that information on to the Pentagon and assumed that was the end of it. Wrong.

The higher ups in Washington kept badgering Post about the missing jelly. They would not be able to close the books on that month without locating those cases of jelly. It had to be found.

At this point, Col. Post sent this message to the Pentagon: “Sirs: you must decide. I can dispatch the entire army to find your missing jelly, or I can kick Saddam out of Kuwait. But not both.” He's still waiting on a reply.¹

Now, at this point, let me just talk to me for just a moment and you can listen if you want to. There is going to be constant pressure on me to get involved with searching for grape jelly that takes me from the priority of seeking the face of God. When I do, I am going to be overwhelmed.

¹ From Joe Mckeever Blog, June 23, 2005, quoted from John Avant, *The Passion Promise*.