

Change you can believe in: Bearing Your Burden: (Weight of the world – Gethsemane)
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Introduction

Do you ever get sleepy after a big meal? If you're like me, you do. Just about every Thanksgiving, after all the food has been eaten, and the dishes have been cleared from the table, and things settle, everyone retires to the living room. And what happens? You sit in the comfy chair, or on the sofa, you might flip on a football game. But in a matter of minutes, everyone is drowsy, eyelids are heavy, and someone is inevitably snoring. Thanksgiving dinner – it makes you sleepy.

People have often wondered what makes you sleepy? Some have believed it is caused by Tryptophan = an amino acid that causes the brain to feel relaxed. Turkey is full of it. But experts say it's not the main cause. They say all the carbs (mashed potatoes, stuffing, bread, and pie) lead the body to some heavy digestion. The average Thanksgiving dinner is about 3,000 calories, and it just bogs us down. That's what makes us sleepy.

Well, the last night Jesus spends with His Disciples before he dies is Passover, which for that day was a lot like Thanksgiving. It was a holiday devoted to thanking God for rescuing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They have all just eaten the Passover feast, and Jesus says, "Let's go out to the hillside to lay down and pray!" For the disciples That's a formula for naptime. But not for Jesus, because he knows that in a few minutes he will be arrested, and in a few hours he will be dead.

Mark 14:32-42, NIV

32They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." **33**He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. **34**"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

35Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. **36**"Abba,[\[e\]](#) Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

37Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? **38**Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

39Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. **40**When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

41Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. **42**Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

This is Jesus' crucible Hour. This is where he makes his final decision. Will he go to the cross or not? WE know what Jesus is going to do, he's going to be obedient to the Father, but that doesn't make this moment any easier. Let's consider Jesus' prayer.

Jesus takes his closest friends with him to a quiet place on the mountain, and the Bible says he was distressed, and in the deepest part of his soul, he was overwhelmed to the point of death.

Luke 22: 43An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. 44And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground

Jesus was beginning to suffer for the sin of the world. And he was under so much stress his sweat became like drops of blood. There is an actual medical explanation for this called hematomatidrosis. It is the condition where the capillaries in the forehead actually burst due to stress.

I want you to imagine this for a minute. God in the flesh, Jesus, who had been for all eternity, who was and is completely holy—experiencing for the first time ever the guilt of sin- the separation from the Father. And the enormity of bearing the guilt of every person in history, and every person who would ever live was on Jesus who had never known guilt. And that’s not all he was experiencing.

Jesus knows what else is coming in just a few minutes and hours.

- In a few minutes, Jesus will be abandoned by his friends.
- Left alone He will stand trial for sins he never committed. And they will treat him unfairly.
- He will be tortured by the Romans with a skin-shredding scourge, and crucifixion.
- He’ll experience death.
- And in a very real way, Jesus has already begun to experience the rejection/separation by the father. See God cannot be in the presence of sin, and Jesus takes on the sin of the world. You know what another name for separation from God is? = Hell

I want you to understand that Jesus can identify with us in every way. Jesus knows the burdens that we carry in life.

Hebrews 4:15, NIV, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.” – Jesus can identify with all of our human suffering.

- Jesus experienced Abandonment by his friends. We face that too. Maybe loneliness, maybe our friends leave us. We have the burden of abandonment caused by divorce. Jesus wasn’t married, and so he never was divorced, but he felt everything we can ever feel.
- Jesus knows by the trial by religious leaders what it is like to be unfairly, unjustly treated.
- He experienced torture by the Romans. And some of us carry the burden of abuse. And for those who have been abused by others, you need to know Jesus understands that pain.
- Jesus experienced Crucifixion and physical death – suffering, and dying a painful death So Jesus understands those who suffer from terminal illness, disease. He knows what that feels like. He shares your tears. He understands our burden. And he conquered the grave to give you life and hope.

Jesus knows all these things that are about to happen, and He needed God’s strength. So he prays, and he asks his best friends to pray. And he says, “Father, Take this cup!”

You need to know that our eternal destiny is wrapped up in what Jesus says here, and Praise God he finished the prayer! “But not my will, but yours be done.” He knows that the biggest burden we bear is our sin. He knows that unless he bears our burden of sin, none of us will live.

Jesus didn’t want to die. Jesus didn’t want to suffer. It’s not cowardly to want to avoid death. But God has already decided that his son would die for us, and that it’s **the only way WE can live**. So he yields to that.

Jesus experienced all those burdens we bear, including our burden of sin, and he was fully yielded to the will of God. But not so with his disciples. They couldn't even stay awake.

This has been a long week for the disciples. They've traveled back and forth to Bethany every night, which is several miles. Jesus has taught all day long. Then for the last two days they've been preparing the Passover meal. And now it's late at night, and they go into a private garden to pray for two hours. Almost anyone would be sleepy.

But one of the biggest reasons the disciples couldn't pray was they didn't recognize Jesus wanted their support. Jesus knew what was about to happen, they didn't. Jesus needed help doing spiritual battle – resisting the temptation to give up. But the disciples didn't know that was happening. They couldn't think beyond their sleepiness.

Three times, they fall asleep on him. And I think, we too are often tempted to fall asleep on Jesus. I don't mean literally falling asleep during church, or during a prayer time. But spiritually, we are tempted to abandon Jesus, or to get lazy in our walk with him.

Peter was one of the disciples who fell asleep that night, but years later, after he had witnessed Jesus raise from the dead, Peter wrote, **“7Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings,” (1 Peter 5:7-9, NIV).**

Alertness helps us bear our spiritual burdens. Spiritually speaking, there is no time to be lazy or sluggish. We need to be alert. Have you ever fallen asleep on Jesus?

- Sometimes we fall asleep through temptation – This happens when we fail to be alert to the devil's schemes.

Peter was one who fell asleep, not just in the garden that night, but later when he denied Jesus three times. After Jesus rose from the grave, he restored Peter. And I imagine Peter probably said, “I'll never fall asleep on Jesus again.”

When a Christian sins, it's usually because they have been caught off guard by a temptation they weren't prepared to resist. Being alert means taking precautions. We need to have proper boundaries for ourselves and our children and our marriage. It's too late to think about that if we're already being tempted. Staying awake means taking a look around you and your family and getting rid of the things that ensnare us in things the Bible says are sin.

- Other times we fall asleep by neglecting our responsibilities in the church.

Christians are called to serve Christ through the church.

1 Peter 4:8-11, NIV, “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 9Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 11If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

So falling asleep spiritually can also be when we fail to do the good we ought to do. We're called to serve others and share the gospel. I believe there are a lot of Christians in the church who are sleepwalkers. People who say they believe in Jesus, and they come to church, but they aren't

using their gifts to serve or to share the gospel with others. It's not that we're doing evil, but just not doing all we should. That's falling asleep on Jesus!

Jesus asked his disciples to pray that they wouldn't fall to temptation. The disciples had said they were ready to fight physically for Jesus, but on that hilltop they wouldn't fight spiritually. Have you ever participated in spiritual battle? Have you ever knelt beside the bed of your child and cried out to the Lord for them to know Jesus and be saved? Have you ever prayed through your lunch break for the co-worker or boss that doesn't know Jesus? Have you ever fasted and prayed for someone in ministry? Have you ever prayed with someone who was battling a sin or a struggle in their marriage or their work?

You see it takes one kind of commitment to physically pitch in around the church building and do chores, but it takes a different kind of commitment to engage in spiritual battle. We need to do BOTH; too many Christians do neither.

So far we've learned that at Gethsemane, Jesus began to suffer for us, and he can identify with the burdens we have in our lives. And while Jesus prayed, his disciples fell asleep. It should be a reminder to us of when we fall asleep on Jesus spiritually. We need to be alert in order to engage in spiritual warfare.

But there is something even more fundamental going on in Gethsemane. There is a deeper spiritual lesson we can learn about Jesus, and it's rooted in that place on the Mount of Olives. And instead of just explaining it to you, I want to show you...

Video – Object lesson *In this segment, Mr. Vander Laan explains that the word Gethsemane means Olive/oil press. And when Jesus goes to pray in the Garden of the Olive Press, it is symbolic of the weight of our sin squeezing out of Jesus his precious blood. In the video, we see an ancient olive press, where bags of crushed olives were placed on a base with a spout, and a large, heavy stone pillar was placed on top of the olives to squeeze out the oil. That stone pillar is called a "gethsemane," and it represents our sin in the analogy.*

**Isaiah 53:4-6, NLT says, "4 Yet it was our sicknesses and weaknesses he carried;
it was our diseases and sorrows that weighed him down.
And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,
a punishment for his own sins!
5 But he was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.
He was beaten so we could be whole.
He was whipped so we could be healed.
6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.
We have left God's paths to follow our own.
Yet the LORD laid on him
the sins of us all.**

What was the weight that crushed Jesus? What was the press that squeezed out his very blood? It was you. It was me. Our sin.

You need to decide how you will respond to what Jesus did. How will you handle the burdens in your life? How will you wash away the guilt you feel and the stains left on your heart?

**Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
29Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you**

will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy and my burden is light,” (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV).

Jesus CHANGES the way we bear our burdens. When we give our lives to Him, it doesn't mean we will no longer have a burden to bear, but we don't bear it alone. Jesus takes it. He takes the guilt, the broken marriage, the angry words, the bitterness, the lust, the greed, the slander, the gossip, and the pride, and he nails it to the cross. He takes the hurt and the shame, the frustration, restlessness and the confusion, and he nails it to the cross. It becomes his burden, and he gives you rest.

A yoke is placed on an animal to haul something like a plow or a cart. And Jesus uses that analogy to say, “let me take that yoke of sin and the troubles of life off your shoulders. I'll carry it.”

And when we do that, he gives us a new yoke. Our new yoke is a yoke of trust, a yoke of faith in Jesus and what he's already endured and done. You trade the burden of guilt for the burden of trusting in Jesus, and staying alert spiritually.

And here's the secret for everyone who has never made the choice to follow Christ: Only in giving our burdens to Him, and having faith in Him can we finally experience rest. And when this life is over, no matter how difficult it's been – no matter how much pain we've gone through – Jesus promises rest for those who trust him.

If you're ready to trust him with your life, or to make this church your church home, you come as we stand and sing.

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