

## WILLING

Mark 14:32-42

For most of us, one of the main things that causes stress in our lives is making decisions. It can be overwhelming at times. The stress that comes with making decisions can even impact our physical health in addition to the emotional damage it can do. Why do you think that it is so difficult to make decisions? My initial thought was that “uncertainty” or fear of the unknown is a major cause for the stress that comes with decision making. We hear the term “unintended consequences” used to express concerns about the uncertainty of the outcome of decisions that are made.

When we make decisions, we try to consider such things as how the outcome will affect our success in life and how the actions and results fit into our priorities. We may go through some sort of process to come up with a logical choice and even if there was not a lot of uncertainty, we could still have stress associated with making the decision.

What would you do if there is something that you know you really ought to do, but this particular thing is just so inconvenient and so costly? No one is going to make you do it; however, it really needs to be done and you are the only one who can do the job. People face such challenges in their lives from time to time. An example that we hear about occasionally is that of a person donating a kidney to someone who has experienced kidney failure. If you were doing this for a close family member then the “decision” might be the obvious choice, but the stress would still be there because of all that you would have to endure to follow through with the decision.

Nearly a week had passed since Jesus was anointed for His burial (at the home of Simon, the Leper) and many things had happened during the last week leading up to the crucifixion. As the time approached for the culmination of the earthly ministry of Jesus, He experienced major stresses that exceeded what most of us will ever have to go through. We can learn from what Jesus did during this time. In the account given to us in the latter part of the fourteenth chapter of Mark we see that prayer was an important part of the process, knowing God’s will was critical to making the right decision, being committed to doing God’s will and then actually doing what was decided were significant factors in all that He did.

### Distressed – 14:32-34

<sup>32</sup> And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” <sup>33</sup> And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup> And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.” Mark 14:32–34 (ESV)

The Passover meal had ended, Judas had left to carry out the betrayal, and Jesus had shared with His disciples critical teaching about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the Spirit in the life of the believers. He warned His disciple that (in the world) they would experience trying and troubling times; however, they should be of good cheer because He had overcome the world. Jesus then prayed a prayer for Himself and the disciples and for the church. Following this, Jesus and the eleven disciples made their way toward the Garden of Gethsemane. John wrote that they crossed over the brook Kidron to get to the grove of olive trees. As they made their way down to the valley, Jesus’ mood changed from being upbeat (be of good cheer) to a much more somber tone of despondency.

It is generally thought that the mood change was related to the realization that the iniquity of all humanity and its punishment was going to come upon Him as He bore our sins on the cross. That is an enormously heavy burden that could be said to be unimaginable and went well

beyond the natural recoil to the prospect of a horribly painful death.

When we encounter such emotionally stressful situations, our outward reactions to them are likely influenced by the circumstances and our surroundings. What can we learn from what we see in these verses with regard to dealing with difficult decisions and the accompanying stress?

As was mentioned earlier, Jesus was somewhat reserved with the larger group of disciples. After Jesus left eight of the disciples with instructions to wait, He took Peter, James and John further into the garden area with Him. He allowed them to see more of what He was dealing with at that time. These three had witnessed the Transfiguration and they had also been with Jesus when the daughter of Jarius was brought back to life. We can speculate that these three were more spiritually sensitive and perhaps had shown a greater understanding of what Jesus had been teaching them for the past three years.

In the group that we call our “friends and family,” there are multiple circles and some people are closer and more understanding than others. Jesus left eight of the disciples near the entrance to the garden and the instruction He gave them was to just “be there.” We can relate to this when we think about someone we know who may be having surgery. We may go to the hospital to be with the family. In situations like this, “being there” can be important. You may not be close enough to the family that you would be part of the group that would meet with the surgeon when he comes out to give the family an update; however, being there does help. On the other hand, Peter, James and John were closer to Jesus and He shared with them what He was struggling with at that time.

When Jesus was alone with the three close disciples, something changed in His mood or emotions. We are told that He “began” to be distressed, amazed, troubled, and weighed down. Why did it just start then? The answer lies in the complexity of our emotional makeup. Within the various circle of acquaintances we have, we interact emotionally with the various circles in different ways. The more complex the society or culture, the larger the number of different circles we may have. The ways we relate to and what we would be willing to share with the general public are different from what we might share with those in our church. What we share with our church is different from what we might share with those in our Sunday School class or small group. What we share with your small group is different from what we might share with our best friend. We don’t typically notice these differences in the normal everyday happenings. However, when there is a crisis such as a death in the family, then the differences become more apparent.

We read of this same normal human response that Jesus had. When He was alone with Peter, James, and John, He told them He was “grieved to the point of death.” He instructed them to stay where they were and to watch or stay alert.

### Surrendered – 14:35-36

<sup>35</sup> And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

<sup>36</sup> And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” Mark 14:35–36 (ESV)

Jesus then went on a little further and drew into the deepest inner circle He had. At this point He was communing with the Father and His real feelings that He could not share with anyone else came out. He was essentially saying, “If there is any other way, let’s take the alternative route.” (When we draw into our smallest inner circle, who do we find there with us?)

We have heard and we might even have said that Jesus was fully God and fully man. We have probably wondered “How does that work?” The incident described in what we just read, is

an excellent example of “the man” interacting with “the God” regarding what was unfolding to be the most important event in the history of the world.

Notice how Jesus (God, the Son) addressed Jehovah (God, the Father). It was in the intimate terms that a little child would use when approaching an earthly father. The term “Abba” is the equivalent of Daddy or Papa. Just as a little child believes that his daddy can do anything, Jesus knew that all power and authority come from God, the Father and He can do any. The uncertainty in Jesus’ prayer was not related to God’s ability to change the circumstances but it was a question of God’s willingness to change. Jesus knew the plan and knew what was going to happen if the plan was carried out. This prayer was a last minute check to see if there was any possible other way to accomplish the goal of making salvation available to mankind other than His suffering and death. There was no “plan B.”

We see here that Jesus was not locked into the plan, but he was locked into being in alignment with the Father’s will. Sometimes we get a plan or program in mind for accomplishing a particular goal and we become so dedicated to “the plan” that we may miss out on what God is doing. If we are considering our priorities, then we should have “doing things God’s way” as the top priority rather than just blind loyalty to a program that was effective some time ago.

#### Weak – 14:37-39

<sup>37</sup> And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? <sup>38</sup> Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

<sup>39</sup> And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. Mark 14:37–39 (ESV)

It seems from this account that it is possible to be with someone who is undergoing great emotional upheaval and stress and we can be either oblivious to the situation or fail to realize the significance of the situation. The three men who were literally the closest friends Jesus had on earth saw Christ’s agony in Gethsemane were so little affected that they slept.

While Jesus was praying, the disciples who were asked to watch were sleeping. This situation must have been a disappointment for Jesus. However, He probably was not too surprised. The fact that mankind had failed to be faithful in almost every situation proves our need of salvation. Even today, Jesus finds His disciples, the Church, asleep and not watching. How many people really spend an hour a day in prayer or devotion. The consequence of not doing that is clearly spelled out here: we enter into temptation.

The continuing struggle that each of us faces each day is alluded to here by Jesus. The spirit and the flesh are contrary to each other. Paul discussed this struggle in the seventh chapter of Romans. *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak* described not only what happened to the disciples as they fell asleep, but it also described the struggle that Jesus was undergoing. He wanted to do the job, the mission, that He came to do. On the other hand, He did not want to endure that intense physical and spiritual suffering that was going to be on the cross. That is why He prayed, “let this cup pass from Me.”

Even though Jesus did not welcome the suffering in the realm of the body and soul, He was not willing to let the purpose of His earthly life go unfulfilled. As He prayed we see some insight that shows us the fact that some things will not go away but we can go through them and be done with them. Sometimes the best approach to problems is just to face up to them, attack them head-on and get it behind us. Most of the time, we practice avoidance because there is usually some sacrifice or suffering involved. Even after we come to the realization of the necessity of what must be done, we need to bathe that decision in prayer so that our resolve to “do what we know must be done” will not waver. We see Jesus coming to acceptance of the

situation and then going back to confirm what He had resolved to do.

### Betrayed – 14:40-42

<sup>40</sup> And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. <sup>41</sup> And he came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup> Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.” Mark 14:40–42 (ESV)

Jesus had already prayed that He would do the will of the Father. Yet we see that He went back to pray several more times. Once the decision had been made to go with the original plan, then there was a need for more prayer. What would you think a person would be praying for after the decision has been made to do the “hard” thing or the more difficult option? The stress of knowing what was going to happen actually intensified at the point that the commitment was made. In Luke’s account, he noted that Jesus was so stressed by the burden of the situation that His perspiration was like drops of blood.

This was it! There was no turning back now. The battle for men’s souls was underway and Satan was going to be defeated by the plan God had laid out before the foundation of the world.