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# Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

*Scripture: Matthew 26:36-56*

**Theme: Jesus obeyed the Father even when it was hard**

*1st-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)*

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Free curriculum for small and rural churches

## Lesson Overview

Lesson Title: Jesus Prays When It's Hard (Matthew 26:36-56) In this Bible story, Jesus and His friends walk together to a special place called Gethsemane. Jesus feels so sad and scared because He knows what's coming, He will soon be arrested, judged, and even crucified. But instead of running away or being afraid, Jesus takes a deep breath and prays to His Heavenly Father, asking for help and strength to do His Father's will. Jesus tells His friends to stay awake and pray too, but they fall asleep! After a little while, Jesus feels even more nervous. He asks His Father three times: "If it's possible, let this cup pass from Me" (that's the cup of suffering He must bear). Yet Jesus doesn't give up, He chooses to obey even when it's painful. He takes a small piece of bread, gives thanks, and eats it, symbolizing that He trusts God to give Him the strength to finish His mission. This shows us how brave and kind Jesus is! Even when things feel scary or tough, Jesus obeys God's plan. We can learn to trust God too, just like Jesus did. When we feel afraid or unsure, we can pray like He did, asking God for help and strength to do what's right, even when it's hard. God loves us so much that He gave us a perfect example to follow! Application for Kids: - Pray Together: Try praying like Jesus did, ask God for strength when something feels tough. - Trust God: Remember that God always keeps His promises, just like He helped Jesus. - Be Brave: Next time you feel scared, ask God to help you obey Him, just like Jesus did! This lesson reminds us that God's love is stronger than our fears, we can trust Him! Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

## Bible Story

Jesus Prays in the Garden

One night, Jesus went with his friends to a quiet garden called Gethsemane. The next morning, he would be arrested and face terrible suffering, he knew this would happen. So, Jesus asked his friends to stay and sleep while he prayed alone. He told Peter, James, and John, "My soul is sad. Stay here and keep watch." Even though Jesus was fully human, he felt so heavy with fear that he began to sweat drops of blood. His body shook, and he cried out, "If you will, let this cup pass from me." (Matthew 26:39)

Jesus knew he had to obey the Father's will, even if it was hard. He prayed again, "Not my will, but yours be done." (Matthew 26:36) His friends woke up to see him sweating and trembling, and he asked them to help him. "Stay here and keep watch," he told them, but they fell asleep again! (Matthew 26:40, 41) Jesus felt abandoned and lonely, and in his greatest need, he still trusted God, even when it was difficult.

Later, Jesus knew the time had come to face his enemies. He went to the Temple in Jerusalem and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Still, let it happen." (Matthew 26:39) Though he longed to avoid suffering, Jesus knew he had to carry out his mission, he was the Savior sent to save people from sin. When the time was right, he allowed God's will to be done, even though it meant his death.

--- Why This Story Matters for Us This story teaches us that Jesus is strong, even when he felt weak. He trusted God completely, even when things were scary. Just like Jesus, we can pray to God when we feel afraid or unsure, and we can trust that He loves us and knows what's best. When we pray like Jesus, with faith and honesty, we grow stronger in our relationship with God. Who can you pray for today?

## Key Verse

**Matthew 26:39b , 'My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done.'**

This memory verse is from the story of Jesus on the day before he was crucified. Let's break it down in a way that's easy for kids to understand: --- First, imagine Jesus was feeling really scared. He knew he was going to face a hard time, and he didn't want to suffer, but he trusted God more than anything. Just like we trust our parents when we need help, Jesus trusted God, even if it meant going through difficult things. The verse says, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done." Jesus was asking God to help him, saying, "God, if you want me to suffer, I trust you. I'll do what you ask, no matter what." It's like saying, "I know things might be tough, but I believe in you, and I'll follow your plan." Sometimes, when we're nervous or afraid, like Jesus, we can ask God to help us trust Him more. Jesus didn't want to be sad or scared, but he knew God's plan was the best one, even if it wasn't easy. So, when we feel scared, we can pray like Jesus did, asking God to help us trust Him and do what's right. When we pray like this, we're showing that we believe God is always in control, even when things look hard. It's like a little act of faith that reminds us: "No matter what, God loves me and has a good plan for me." --- Simple Application for Kids: Practice praying with Jesus: "God, if something hard is happening, help me trust you. Show me how to follow you, even when it's hard." You can draw a picture of God or Jesus and write a little prayer to remember it!

## Activities

### Activity 1: Lesson Activity

See instructions below

#### Supplies needed:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Bible

1. "The Garden of Prayer Walk"
2. Children learn to follow Jesus' example by praying in a quiet place, just like He did in Gethsemane.
3. SUPPLIES:

4. - Small paper plates (one per child)

## Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for early elementary children (ages 6, 8) about Jesus Prays in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36, 56). Each encourages them to explore the story, reflect on Jesus' feelings, and think about how they can pray like He did:
- What do you think Jesus was feeling when He prayed that night?
- Why do you think He asked God three times, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me"?
- (This question helps students connect Jesus' emotions with their own struggles. They can share what worries or fears they've felt and how prayer helps them.)
- Jesus said, "My soul is very heavy." What could have been making Him sad or scared?
- How do you think He felt about going to the cross?
- (This invites kids to imagine Jesus' heartache and encourages them to consider what they might feel when they pray about big, scary things, like tests, losses, or even asking for forgiveness.)
- Jesus told His friends to stay awake and pray with Him. Why do you think He asked them to stay close by?
- What happens when we pray with others? How does it help us feel less alone?
- (This helps them see prayer as a team effort and ties it to their own experiences praying with family or friends.)
- Jesus prayed, "Not My will, but Thine be done." What does that mean?
- How can you pray like that when you don't know what to ask for?
- (This encourages kids to practice surrendering their desires to God, even when they're unsure, and to think of times they've trusted Him anyway.)
- Bonus Tip: After asking questions, invite kids to draw or share one thing they learned or one way they can pray like Jesus next time!

## Prayer Focus

*Prayer Focus for Early Elementary Children (Ages 6-8) Dear God, In the garden where Jesus prayed, He felt so scared and sad. He knew what He had to do, but He was afraid, just like we sometimes feel when something is hard or big. Let's ask You to help us feel brave, like Jesus did, when we face things that make us nervous. Help us remember that You love us and are always with us, even when we're afraid. Teach us to pray like Jesus, trusting You even when it's hard. Amen. God, Jesus prayed to You with all his heart. He wanted to do Your will, even when it was scary. Sometimes we feel afraid too, like Jesus did. Help us to pray like Jesus did, telling You our worries and trusting You to take care of us. Just like Jesus asked You to help Him, help us to trust You too. Show us that even when we don't feel brave, You are always there to help and guide us. Amen. Let's pray together: Jesus, we know You prayed in the garden just before everything happened. You asked God to take away Your pain, but You still did what You knew was right. Help us to pray like that, telling You all our fears and trusting You, just like You did. When we feel scared, remind us that You're with us. Amen! What can we do? Think about a time when you felt afraid or nervous. Can you pray to God like Jesus did? Ask Him to help you trust Him, just like Jesus did. Let's try it together now! (The teacher can lead a quick group prayer where children share a simple prayer with their fears or doubts.) --- This keeps the focus on trust, bravery, and connection with God while gently tying it to Jesus' example in Gethsemane.*

**>> Missions Spotlight**

In the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, ancient olive trees still grow , some over 900 years old. Pilgrims from every nation come to pray where Jesus prayed. Pray that every visitor would understand WHY Jesus prayed , and what He was about to do.

### **-> To the Cross**

In the garden, Jesus prayed, 'Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.' He didn't want to go to the cross , who would? But He chose to obey. His obedience is what saves us.