

## *A Stop by Quiet Waters*

by  
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### Prayer has No Substitute

*"So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* Matthew 26: 40-41 ESV This was the darkest night in the Lord Jesus' life, and he pleaded with his disciples to stand with him in it through prayer. Sadly all they could do was sleep. However, I can't judge them harshly because there have been many times when the Lord Jesus called me to pray and all I could do was fall asleep. You probably know what I am talking about.

Approximately 25 years ago I began taking a day away each month for prayer. This has become the most significant day of the month for me. I take only my Bible, a hymnbook, a praise and worship book, and a pad of paper. I just took my October day of prayer. I spent the first part of the morning reflecting on the above passage. As I pondered Jesus' statement to the disciples several things began to emerge. I want to share these with you so that you may be both challenged and encouraged to be more and more a man or woman of real prayer as I was.

One thing which struck me was that the disciples broke the Lord's heart that night when they failed to do as he had pleaded with them to do. Jesus needed them to pray with him but they didn't do it. Our Lord also needs us to pray as he works in our world through the Spirit, the word, and the church. There are many things which will change only if we pray as he calls us to. No matter what we are facing in life and ministry there is always at least one significant thing we can do about it, pray! This is also **the most significant** thing we can do in each situation. It is not the only thing, but it is crucial.

I also realized that prayer is a joint practice of the person praying and the Lord Jesus. The Lord both prays with us and guides us in our praying. To pray with the Lord is to pray over those things of concern to the Lord himself. As we wait on him and listen to him he will bring to us the things we are to pray about just as he did the disciples that night in the garden.

A third insight was that the consequence of being men and women of prayer assures us that we will not succumb to temptation. When we begin to pray we enter into battle with the powers of darkness and with the weakness of our flesh -- both our physical body and our weak natures. When we pray the first temptation is to give up through weakness or distraction. *"What's the use? My prayers aren't going anywhere."* *"I suddenly feel so tired, I'll just put my head down for a few minutes."* *"Oh, I forgot about ..., I've got to take care of it now."* *"I'll pray later."* We must never give in to these temptations or we will have already lost the battle. In addition, the better we learn to pray through these initial temptations the stronger we are in the Lord to resist other temptations which will come at us. This was the second reason why Jesus urged Peter to pray even though he was sleepy. He knew what was ahead for Peter.

Yet another insight was that prayer is the only answer to our daily confrontations with the enemy. We never could and never will be able to stand up to the enemy of our souls in our own strength. Had Peter prayed that night about what Jesus had warned him was coming at him he would not have given in to the attack of Satan against him through mere servant girls. Though all the disciples fled, only Peter actually denied him. Jesus asked Peter to pray for him, but also to pray on his own behalf. He knew what Peter was going to face, and had even warned him about it earlier. Peter didn't fully understand what the Lord was going through in the garden, and he was so sure of himself that he felt no real need to pray. He was tired and thought he needed sleep more than anything else.

As I continued to ponder this call to prayer I saw that to pray is to approach life the way the Lord Jesus approached it and the way our heavenly Father has instructed us to approach it. When we pray we draw close to our Father in heaven who created and redeemed us so we would know him, enjoy him, and serve him. He has told us to pray because he desires us to reach out to him so he can reveal himself to us by answering our prayers. He will respond to us when we talk to him.

Jesus taught us to pray the Lord's prayer and then went on to say that if we ask we'll receive, if we seek we'll find, if we knock the door will be opened to us. Prayer to our Father in heaven is the way by which we communicate with him, and his answers to our prayers are a primary way by which he communicates with us. As we pray we'll become more and more the men and women of God we yearn to be, and we'll see more and more of the power of God at work in our lives and ministries. This is God's way, and there is no substitute for it. Let's determine afresh that we'll be men and women of prayer above everything else, and everything else in our lives and ministries will be better and different than if we don't pray.

Peace and joy in Christ,  
Dick Germaine