



## Week Six

# Gethsemane: Risking Temptation

**Open the Gathering with Prayer** ~ Choose your own or read Psalm 102 responsively.

**Gathering Prompt** – *choose one invitation to start connecting with each other and the week's themes.*

Invite participants to come to this week's gathering prepared to share a favourite prayer. Perhaps it is a prayer that, like Jesus in this week's readings, they pray when they are distressed or troubled. Or perhaps it is a prayer of thanksgiving or praise. Ask them what it about this prayer makes it a regular part of their spiritual life.

Have you ever witnessed or experienced a tense situation in which peace was chosen over violence? It may have been a small situation (e.g., a dispute at work or with a family member) or a larger situation (e.g., a threat of physical violence). Briefly tell the group about it.

**Overview** – *a short summary of the chapter to remind participants of the main themes.*

*Story* ~ Jesus goes to the garden of Gethsemane with his disciples. He knows that he is going to suffer and die, so he prays that, if it is within God's will, this fate will pass from him. While he is praying, the disciples fall asleep. Then, soldiers arrive and arrest him. He tells his disciples not to fight back; Jesus has accepted his fate and does not want blood shed in his name.

*Scriptural Precedent* ~ In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve faced temptation and failed. In this story, Jesus also faces temptation in a garden; however, this time temptation is overcome. Jesus' desire to flee rather than face death on the cross was overcome, and the story of God's redemption of humanity continues.

*Social Context* ~ Jesus had just shared a cup of wine with his disciples at the Passover supper. The cup he shared with them there represented a new form of community and freedom. Then, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prays to have a different sort of cup "removed" from him. The two cups are connected: the new freedom Jesus promises is only possible if he drinks from the cup of suffering and death. He chooses to drink and gives himself over to the authorities without struggle or violence.

*Significance* ~ Jesus is fully God, but also fully human. We see Jesus' humanness in the Garden of Gethsemane when he does not want to suffer crucifixion. He expresses the same emotions, fears and temptations that we experience. Yet, he chooses to trust God and empties himself out – giving up all his power and sacrificing himself for others. He does not ask anything from his followers that he has not experienced himself. What does it mean for us to give our power up for the sake of others?

**Inquiry** – *initial questions, thoughts, new ideas arising out of the reading.*

- What details about the story of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane that Levine unpacks in this chapter were new or interesting to you?
- How have these details enriched, shaped or challenged your understanding of this story?
- If you put yourself in this story, where are you? What draws your attention? What might you think / feel about what is happening?

**Scripture** – *re-read a key scripture passage together.*

Read **Mark 14:32–52** (NRSV) – the translation Levine uses in the book (p. 130–131).

AND

Read **Luke 22:39–46** (NRSV) – this gospel story is not included in Levine's book, but she references it.

**Discussion** – *questions related to the scripture passage.*

The story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane highlights the importance of prayer, especially, as Levine points out, praying for ourselves (p. 132). Compare Jesus' prayers in the garden in the gospels of Mark and Luke: What is Jesus' posture? What words does he use? What happens when he prays? What insight does Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane provide that is helpful for your own prayer life?

In the Afterword, Levine writes: "Entering the Passion means risk-taking: it means facing our fears, our failures, and our faults, and addressing them. Whom have we betrayed, condemned, denied?" (p. 142). It also means recognizing the courage we've had when we did take risks for the right reasons, like the woman who anoints Jesus. What have you learned during this study about risk-taking and its place in the life of faith?

**Living Practices** – *practices connected to the theme for participants to engage in between sessions.*

*"During Lent you have the opportunity to think about your life alongside the life of Jesus, inviting inward transformation and then outward action" (Levine, p. 13).*

*Scripture Reading* ~ Levine's book ends with the story of Jesus being arrested, but the passion narrative continues with Jesus' trial, crucifixion, death, and burial. This week you are invited to continue the practice of scripture reading you established this Lent to explore the last parts of the

passion narrative and the story of resurrection. Use some of the tools for scripture reading that you learned from this study:

- Notice with curiosity the differences and similarities between the gospel accounts: What do the gospels' unique details reveal about the themes that were important to the authors? What do we learn about Jesus and his mission by paying attention to their different perspectives?
- What other scripture verses or stories are referenced in the passage? How do they enhance your understanding of the scripture passage in front of you?
- Is there a religious, social or political context that you need to research in order to better understand the scripture passage?
- If you put yourself in this story, where are you? What draws your attention? What might you think or feel about Jesus words and actions if you were there?
- What is the risk that is being taken by Jesus in this passage? What are the risks being taken by his followers? How do these risks inform or shape your own faith?

**Close the Gathering with Prayer** ~ *Choose your own or say the Lord's prayer together.*

