



Pressed Olives

Women's Ministries Bible Studies



Mesoamerica Region
2024

*"COMMAND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL THAT THEY BRING TO
YOU PURE OIL OF PRESSED OLIVES FOR THE LIGHT, TO MAKE
THE LAMPS BURN CONTINUALLY."*

LEVITICUS 24:2 (NKJV)



Welcome Friends,

Have you ever felt like you were being crushed when faced with difficult experiences? Perhaps being crushed is a strong image, but on many occasions, women feel that they're being crushed by so much brokenness, suffering, and pain. In my case, whenever I've experienced brokenness, I've prayed, asking the Lord to show me the

outcome, because He will use it for good and I believe that His purpose will be fulfilled in me (Romans 8:28).

In Leviticus 24:2 it says: "Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually." The Israelites made two types of olive oil, one was for all purposes, cheaper, and of lower quality; and the other was exquisite and fine. For the lamps in the tabernacle, the people were ordered to use only the pure oil that was very fine and that was from the first milling (or crushing) of the olives.

I can't help but see an image of Jesus in this, being crushed like an olive in the garden of Gethsemane (the place of the olive press), submitting to the Father and expressing to him: "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39b) If Jesus went through difficult processes, how much more will we go through? If Jesus continued moving forward faithfully, we can continue moving forward faithful to God too, because we have the help of the Spirit. When you have Christ reigning in your heart, you are made a new creation in God and his Holy Spirit will strengthen and guide you in the midst of any situation. There will be growth in the process (even if there are difficult moments along the way), and we can trust that God has kindled his light in our hearts so that we illuminate the world with his purity and holiness.

This series of Bible Studies for Naz Women for the year 2024, directs us to the Word of the Lord and its teachings for all stages of life so that like "crushed olives" we can continue growing towards spiritual maturity; victorious so that God may be pleased with us as we continue to do his work.

I am extremely grateful to the Lord and to a very special group of sisters from different countries on the Mesoamerica Region who have been part of this project, each contributing a Bible study, for the "Crushed Olives" series. We hope it is a great blessing to your lives.

God bless you today and always.

With Much Love,

Marta



GUIDE FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY – NDI

OBSERVATIONS	What do you observe? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What’s happening? 2. Who is the author? 3. Why was it written and to whom was it written? 4. When was it written? 5. Other details: year, location, etc. 	Look for Evidence in the Bible
INTERPRETATION	What are you Interpreting? The words of the Bible <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be faithful to the context. 2. Interpret what the original recipients understood. 3. What the Holy Spirit inspired. 4. Look for what other Bible verses say about the topic. 5. Look for background information – what verse(s) precede this verse or Biblical principle. 	Results will be one Biblical Interpretation
APPLICATION	What are you applying? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can I apply this truth to my life today? 2. This application is: personal, practical, achievable. 3. This application is the conviction inspired by the Holy Spirit. 	Can be applied in various ways



GAMES AND ACTIVITIES:

I. WORRY BOX

Objective: Identify the situations that are affecting us the most and for which we feel great concern. Share them with the Lord and pray for each other.

Materials: A shoe box or small box lined with pretty paper, sheets of paper and pencils, recorder and instrumental music, decorated basket or tray, bag with candy.

Procedure:

1. Place the sheets of paper and pencils in a nicely decorated tray or basket.
2. After welcoming the participants, show them the box and explain that we're going to call the box "The Worry Box." In it we're going to place our biggest concerns that are affecting us right now. Explain that we all go through difficult times and that many times we don't have anyone to share those worries with, much less someone to pray about them with.
3. Encourage the participants to take a piece of paper and a pencil and write their concern(s) to Jesus. While they write, play soft instrumental music in the background to encourage a relaxed and happy environment. As they finish, have them place their papers in the box.
4. Form groups of 6-8 people and give each group a bag of candy with enough for each person to have one. Give each group about five minutes to distribute the candy and, with the candy in their hands, have each person share how Jesus has sweetened their life despite the worries and problems they may currently be facing.
5. End with a prayer of intercession for all the concerns mentioned and assure participants that "our sweet Jesus cares for us and will help us with those concerns."

II. THREE QUESTIONS:

This is an icebreaker activity. Have each participant write down three interesting questions that they would like to ask a member of the group. Then give that person 3 minutes to respond.

III. BIBLE STUDY COMPANIONS:

Consider assigning or letting your participants choose a partner. These partners will continue to meet after each Bible study and studying more about the lesson. Together they can delve deeper into the Word of God; they can search for theological principles within the topics studied, and they can discover how God has spoken to each of them. Then they can share what they discovered at the next meetings.



Theme: **A Higher Purpose**

By: Rev. Sharon Víquez¹, Costa Rica

Key Verse: Psalm 138:8 (NRSVUE)

*"The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands".*

Ask the Artist

"A Purpose Driven Life"² by Rick Warren is perhaps the Christian book that has sold the most copies, aside from the Bible. This is possibly because of the intriguing title and the imperative need that human beings have to understand why they are here on earth.

Referring to the purpose of your life, the author says:

"The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose."

-Rick Warren-

- ❖ Have you ever asked yourself this question? If not, today I will do it for you; why do you think you were put on this earth?

When we look at a work of art, especially if it is abstract art, we definitely have to understand what the painter was thinking and what made him capture it on a canvas. I really enjoy listening to podcasts where song writers explain the reason why they composed certain songs. Knowing that meaning behind the painting or song, the reason it was created, gives a new perspective to what we see or hear.

¹ This lesson is part of the 6-week "Mujeres de Excelencia" study, developed by Ministerio Transformadas, founded by Rev. Sharon Víquez.

² Book "A Purpose Driven Life" by Rick Warren. Can be found on Amazon.

- ❖ Who should we ask about the reason for our existence? Who is the artist who brought this idea of mankind into being?

I hope your answer matches mine. The artist is God and only in him can we find the true meaning of life.

Read what the following verses say about the purpose for which God created you: Isaiah 43:7,10, 1 Corinthians 1:9, Ephesians 1:4-6

God created us to have fellowship with Him, to be adopted as His children, so that we may know Him and have communion with Him. He did all this before the foundation of the world.

Before the foundation of the world... WOW... He knew that human beings were going to disobey, but from the beginning of creation he had already had a plan for a solution, a way to reconcile or reunite us to him through Christ.

- ❖ What feelings do you experience when you hear this statement? "God loved you before the creation of the world."

Born with purpose.

The author Max Lucado, has a book whose title expresses very well the purpose for which we are on earth, his book is called: "It's not about me"³

"The true purpose of life is outside of us; it is in God. Certainly, in our stay in this world there are goals and objectives that we want to achieve, but our supreme goal, the reason we were put on this earth is to have communion with our creator and live for his purposes."

This is why we must be very clear when we talk about success. Success as this world describes it is very different from how God sees it.

- ❖ Could you identify the difference between the concept of success that society has and the success that we as God's people have?

When success is the purpose for life, which is what most society promote, it's includes not being left behind, it's being the first in everything and filling your life with wealth and material things. People who live their lives with success as their purpose live under this model; their lives revolve around these aspects and they manage their time, finances, talents and in many cases, they don't mind passing over other people in order to achieve their goal of prosperity, because that is their purpose, the meaning of success.

But what is the purpose of the Kingdom of God? We learn this from 3 John 1:2 (NKJV)

God's desire is for you and me to be prosperous, but what does prosperity mean to God?

³ Max Lucado "It's Not About Me". Available on Amazon

The Greek word "euodoo" means "prosperous" in 3 John. It also means: "to lead by a direct way."

For God, success or purpose in life is not summarized in the accumulation of material goods. What God wants is for you and me to walk on the right path.

We should read 3 John 1:2 like this:

Beloved, I wish that you walk on the right path in all things, and that you have health, just as you walk along the right path in your soul.

This is our purpose, this is our supreme goal "To walk on the right path", that is our mission, to walk in communion with God and let his Spirit direct us towards what is truly spiritual...doing his will.

- ❖ What reaction or emotion does understanding the term prosperity according to the Biblical concept awaken in you?

Let's personalize this sentence:

"Lord, I, _____, desire to walk on the right path in all things, just as I walk on the right path in my soul."

Dear friend, are you already walking on the right path? You have been restored to fellowship with your Father. Make the word of God your most important and significant priority so that you can cultivate a biblical mentality and assimilate its great theme "Divine Sovereignty in the Redemption of Humanity." That grace that came to us becomes the most important task that has been entrusted to us, to announce the virtues of Him who called us from darkness to his admirable light. Fulfilling this missionary work must be what takes first place in our lives. Don't close your mouth, announce the good news as you journey along the way.

Live God's Purpose

The word tells us that you and I have created to do good works (Ephesians 2:10)

- ❖ Describe what the "good works" are that God expects us to do?

It's good that we can identify in scripture principles of action that publicly show our commitment to God's divine purpose.

Let's talk about three aspects that are God's mandate for his children:

Genesis 1:28: Take Care of Creation

This passage describes what is known as the creation mandate, to care for the earth.

❖ How did sin affect how men and women care for the earth properly?

Throughout history, human beings have been poor stewards of the world that God has given us for our benefit, the psalmist said in Psalm 8, "...you put everything under their feet", but we did not know how to take care of creation. Currently, we have high levels of pollution in the air that God gives us, the ozone layer has been perforated by pollutants generated by humans, we've contaminated the rivers and deforested the mountains. We're concerned about the issue of climate change and world powers are implored to reduce carbon dioxide pollution.

All these things demonstrate that we, all of mankind, have not been responsible with the creation mandate.

Today our children are much more aware of the need to take care of the environment, much more than we were, and they are the ones who are motivating us to carry out small individual actions that can help bring big global changes.

❖ Give three concrete actions you can take to fulfill the divine purpose of being good stewards of God's creation.

I hope you can put these practices into action. Romans 8:19-23 tells us that "*creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.*" These small actions can cause big changes. All of creation expects us to fulfill the mandate that God has given us to protect it.

Matthew 22:36-40: Love God And Your Neighbor

LOVE GOD. Fulfilling the great commandment begins with loving God, putting him in his rightful place, at the center of our lives. Everything revolves around him.

Jesus was clear that his purpose on earth was to glorify the name of his Father. Therefore, God's purpose for us is exactly the same, to give Honor to God and continually remember that the Christian life is about exalting the glory of God, not that God exists for us, but that we exist for HIM.

This command from God has a second part to it, a call to love our neighbor. Our neighbors aren't just those who love me like I love them, but "neighbor" includes those who I don't necessarily like or who don't like me.

❖ Share with us how this statement affects the way you should relate to those who don't like you or who you don't like.

❖ Read 1 John 4:20. How does this passage challenge you?

These verses tell us that the life of the believer is about showing love to others, it's not about self-love, which is so limited, but about the love of God. Is this kind of love possible?

❖ What does Romans 5:5 teach us?

God has equipped us for this task. Let's look at the things we have been blessed with, according to Galatians 5:22.

Matthew 28:19-20: Live The Great Commission

We fulfill our divine purpose when we journey through life recognizing God's lordship over us, being good stewards of his creation, and loving God and loving our neighbors. This is living the gospel.

This reminds me of the phrase attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi that says:

"Preach the Gospel at all times and if necessary, use words."

There is a third command given by God to his children, which is part of the purpose for which we have been redeemed and for which we are on this earth, to live out the great commission, to make Christ-like disciples.

The gospel is a lifestyle we shout to the world, sharing our faith with others, who not only listen, but see us live out the Word of God, when they see us live out God's love in our lives.

A life that lives God's purpose supports the proclamation of the gospel. We live in a time that demands that we live our lives in agreement with the bearer of the message of hope.

We bear witness to our faith through selfless service, through acts of kindness. Perhaps you mentioned this at the beginning of the lesson when I asked you what the "good works" are we were created for.

Dear friend, your acts of kindness are an opportunity for evangelism. Someone may stop and ask you why are you doing this? And this will be a wonderful opportunity to bear witness to who you are, to your purpose, to your faith.

❖ Have you had this happen to you? Have you had an experience where someone asked you why you were doing something? Did you take advantage of that opportunity to share your faith? Please tell us what happened.

It's Not About You

We have explored together that our time on this earth has purpose, and that purpose is about God and being His representatives in our world. When we focus on living for His Glory, He allows our personal goals to align with His will.

Don't forget, He told us:

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well."* Matthew 6:33

Are you ready to make God's purpose for you, your purpose? and say like Paul:

*"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.
The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me."* Galatians 2:20

I'm sure you won't regret it if you end by saying:

"The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me..."

Psalms 138:8 (NRSVUE)

Theme:

TAKE UP MY CROSS

By:

Marena González Ortíz

Key Verse:

Matthew 16:24

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'"



Prayer:

Dear God, Today I thank you for a new morning and for another day of life. Thank you because you have chosen me and made me your daughter. Thank you for the works you do in me and for transforming me into a new person. Today I ask you to continue doing your work in me and in my heart. I open my mind and my heart to what you have to tell me through today's Word. Take away everything that is not yours and edify my heart. I want to learn more about you and your Word. I love you and adore you with everything I do and with everything I am. In your name I pray, Amen.

Introduction:

In the Gospels, we see countless people who had a great desire to follow Jesus. Many admired the way he spoke or the way he treated people, while others were amazed at his miracles. However, not everyone wanted to follow Jesus for who He really was. Not everyone wanted to follow Jesus, the King of kings, the Son of God. For this reason, Jesus firmly established what was required to be his disciple. Whoever fulfilled this requirement would be a true and faithful disciple of Jesus.

Context:

While with his disciples in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus had a conversation with his disciples in which he asked them a very important question: *"Who do you say I am?"* Peter answered him: *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"* Jesus showed himself to the disciples in a special way. After that, Jesus takes a moment to predict his coming death to the disciples. He explained to his disciples his mission and purpose as the Messiah, Son of the living God and this purpose was to die on the cross. His disciples were alarmed and horrified, believing that the things Jesus said were ridiculous. However, Jesus taught them the following:

For Reflection:

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Jesus had already explained to them His purpose and His identity as the Messiah, but here he explains to them what their purpose and their identity as disciples was. What did the purpose of Jesus have to do with the purpose of disciples?

The Oxford Dictionary defines a disciple as "a person who believes in and follows the teachings of a religious or political leader." Jesus' mission was to save humanity from sin. Therefore, this mission required someone to pay the price of sin, which was death. Jesus was willing to die for humanity, so that we could live free of sin and cleansed by his blood. So, it was necessary for a true disciple of Jesus to follow this mission and this teaching: humanity needed to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. The mission of the disciples was the same as that of Jesus. But the crucial part of this mission was that in order to follow Jesus, they too had to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus, dying to themselves and following Jesus even with the burdens of sin and the world on them. If Jesus carried the cross that contained all the sin of the world, his disciples were to follow him carrying their crosses as well. Following Jesus makes his mission become ours. We share with Him, what He wants to do in people, and we walk with Him hand in hand. We work every day so that people will hear the Good News, carrying our cross.

What is my Cross?

When people followed Jesus, often it was because He performed miracles and because of the way He spoke. But today Jesus calls us to go beyond and follow him in a real and sincere way, taking up our cross. The cross you carry can be different things. It could be the contempt of the world, it could be an unstable family, an economic situation, studies, etc. When you carry that cross and follow Jesus, that burden becomes light, because you walk alongside Him.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:29-30) Being disciples of Jesus, lets us rest even if we are tired of the journey; even if we encounter afflictions along the way, Jesus helps us carry our burdens and accompanies us every step of the way.

Conclusion:

Jesus wants us to accompany him on his mission. That's why it's necessary that we follow Him with sincerity, willing to do what He commands us. Although it's difficult, carrying our cross and following Him is what will lead us to know Him and abide in Him, we will find eternal life. Ladies, today Jesus calls you to follow him, because that is your purpose. Today He calls you to make his mission yours and to imitate him. He will be with you, no matter what cross you carry. He walks with you even when your legs fail, and He picks you up when you can't get up on your own. No matter what situation you are going through, choose Jesus and follow Him. He already fulfilled his purpose. Now He wants to help you fulfil your purpose.

Questions:

I. Content

1. What did Jesus reveal to his disciples that his mission as the Son of God was?
2. What did the cross mean in Jesus' time? What function did crosses have?

II. Discussion

1. Identify what your cross is today. What things afflict you?
2. How can you share in Jesus' purpose?
3. How has Jesus accompanied you in difficult times?



Theme:

RENEWING OUR STRENGTH

By:

Rev. María Antonia Ponce

Key Verse:

Isaiah 40:29 "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak."

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, we approach your throne of grace, in the name of your Son Jesus, to thank you for renewing our strength, for giving us refuge in moments of fatigue, pain and tears. Please take care of the failing heart and lift up the fallen hands, straighten the tired feet so that they do not stray from your path of grace, Amen.

Introduction:

Tiredness and lack of energy are signs of fatigue, which is the result of physical and mental exertion, illness, accidents, crises at work or at home, among other causes. Fatigue can lead a human being to a state of exhaustion and unmotivated, making the person anxious and even causing depression.

Context:

The book of Isaiah was written by the prophet Isaiah himself, a major Prophet who received the call of God to go and announce to the rulers and people of God, the consequences of their sin.

Among the aspects that stand out in this book is the invasion of the Babylonians, who took the Israelites into captivity. God allowed this to happen to teach his people, and all generations to come, that God is not pleased with evil and that every evil deed has a consequence. Not only did were the Israelites taken as captives to another land, but they destroyed the Temple of God and murdered many people, leaving Jerusalem in ruins.

God detests Babylon so much that in Revelation 17:5 we read: "The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES, AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

Isaiah chapter 40 reflects the great love of God and the hope of a renewed life, where God will be the father of his beloved children.

For Reflection: (Transition Questions)

Is there fatigue in your life?

In fact, if we asked that question to any group of women, we will most likely receive a resounding "yes"; especially from those in leadership positions on whose shoulders fall the burden of leading the lost to the right path and where, in many churches, women's leadership is not well regarded. If we ask this question of the wife who is in an abusive marriage where there is mistreatment and/or infidelity; or if we ask this question of a mother who is going through the pain of having a sick child, a disobedient child, or worse still, a child who engages in sexual practices not permitted by God, then I'm sure their answer would be "yes". In such situations, we would not only see fatigue, but also pain on the faces of every woman who suffers one or more of these situations.

But when reading the scriptures that are the subject of our study, we find a ray of hope, a light in the midst of the darkness of this world. It is God's promise of a better future.

God never leaves us alone, and although it may seem that we have no more strength left to continue through the oppressive sun of the spiritual desert, the words of hope that our God gives us are like dew that refreshes our soul and makes the withered flower recover its blossom.

Many cannot get out of spiritual fatigue because:

1. They believe that they can overcome the events that come into our lives and overwhelm them on their own strength.
2. They don't express the feelings that cause them discouragement.
3. They don't ask other people for help.
4. They have forgotten God's promises.

Going Deeper:

God's message to his people was that they needed to leave the evil path they were on and avoid the consequences of sin.

In Isaiah 40:29, God takes pity on those who suffer, and gives an encouraging message, especially after the prophet has delivered so many messages of punishment to His people.

Finally, God's message arrives to these discouraged, tormented people who have no hope. They are words that restore their breath and bring with them hope of a lasting peace.

For Reflection:

The world is experiencing one of its worst times, people are living uncontrolled lives, there is sadness, loneliness, and pain everywhere, chaos is the daily bread.

Although the context in which the Hebrews live is different than ours, there is much in common: disobedience to God, idolatry, selfishness, infidelity, lies and lack of love. These are the same parameters in which love, and a reverent fear of God are measured. But just as Israel received the promise of new strength, so we have the word of our Lord Jesus Christ that lifts us up from where we are knocked down, trampled, but still alive and with prophetic words he tells us; I WILL GIVE YOU NEW STRENGTH.

Our very busy daily lives can leave us emotionally and physically tired, leading to mental and physical fatigue that limits us and makes us a puppet in the hands of the evil one, who whispers in our ears, where is your God?

Our response must be one of action, getting up and taking for ourselves the faithful word of God to his daughters, taking back hope, and asking ourselves how we can serve God in the midst of so much pain. We must put our abilities at Gods disposal and share with other women our beautiful abilities that we have hidden for fear of failure.

Beloved friends, I want you to reflect on the time you have wasted lamenting your suffering and stop lamenting. Take what our Lord Jesus Christ offers to you in Matthew 11:28-29: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Conclusion:

Beloved ladies, it is time to ask our loving Father for help; help to carry our burdens and patience to learn to wait with faith for a divine response that brings comfort, hope and tranquility to the soul.

Questions:

I. Content

1. In our Bible passage, why were God's people in despair?
2. What did the Israelites need to do to regain peace?
3. What are you facing that makes you feel like there is no hope?
4. What do you need to do to regain peace?

II. Discussion

1. Express how you feel after going through this Bible study.
2. What will you apply to your life from the things we've studied today?
3. How can it be a factor of change for your family or for the environment in which you live?

Activities:

- Have a time of prayer for the women who have expressed their pain,
- Encourage the unsaved women in the meeting to have a relationship with God and find peace.
- Make a small craft so that everyone can take home a small souvenir. Suggestion: a heart where the peace of God lives. (See the following example as an idea.)



Theme:

Pressed Olives

By:

Gladybell Rivera Pérez

Key Verse:

Leviticus 24:1-4

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually. Outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law in the tent of meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the Lord from evening till morning, continually. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. The lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the Lord must be tended continually.'"



Prayer:

Lord, thank you for Your faithfulness in our lives. Lord, while the world may reject us and devalue us, You, Lord, call us to be part of Your Kingdom and messengers of Your Word. Just like the woman at the well went to tell everyone what you told her, today, Lord, we are willing to be pressed into pure oil so we can keep Your light shining in the world. We thank you for believing in us, more than we believe in ourselves. We want to serve you. Use us even if we experience pain in the process of being prepared. We remain in Your hands in the sweet Name of Jesus, Amen.

Introduction:

A lamp is a device that illuminates small spaces. But in moments of complete darkness, it shines brightly, becoming good news and hope. When a lamp remains lit it gives us courage to continue along the path wherever the Lord wants to take us. How can we keep our lamps lit?

Context:

These verses point out the importance of tending to the lamps and ensuring that they remain lit. The process of turning a lamp on or off can be considered routine and of little importance. But, according to Derek Tidball, in his commentary "Free to Be Saints," people are commanded to bring pure oil from pressed olives to the priests so that the lamps may burn continually, from evening until morning, before the Lord. The priests had the duty of ensuring that the oil never ran out and that the wicks were well trimmed. The lamp was a six-branched candelabra, made of pure gold, placed on the south side in the holy place. God reminded them that He was the Creator of light and that even when the sun sets at night, it does not lose its power. Today we are called to keep the oil burning and light the world, we need to be "pure oil" to illuminate the path that leads others to Jesus.

For Reflection:

How can we keep the lamps lit that represent the Light and the path to Jesus?

According to verse two, it was necessary to use pure oil from pressed olives to keep the lamps burning continuously. This pure oil was produced through a very particular process; they had to be pressed or crushed and the oil collected. There were other processes to make olive oil that took away its purity. We may be going through situations that take away our strength to move forward. We could be facing a crisis, which stops us and takes away our hope. It's precisely these moments, when we are pressed, that we need to give our best to keep the lamps lit by continuing forward with the work of the Lord and lead others to know Him. Let's be that pure oil that will keep shining the light of Jesus to the world.

Keeping the lamps lit was a great responsibility. Keeping the lamps burning in the place of worship with light shining all night testified that the presence of the Lord was with them continually, keeping chaos and darkness away so they wouldn't be overtaken. In the background, the light represented the order, goodness, and stability of God. As we have mentioned, the lamp was a sacred object, full of meaning, and it needed to be tended with love and care so that people would truly understand, even in a rudimentary way, that *"God is Light; in him there is no darkness at all."* (1 John 1:5)

For Further Reflection:

Have you gone through times when you felt pressed, crushed? Even in the middle of the process, were you able to reflect light to others?

As daughters we experience the pain of being crushed when we become caregivers for our parents, with our pain transformed into love, it becomes pure oil that keeps us illuminated until the Lord calls them into His presence.

As friends: strong and sincere friendship goes through the process of being pressed producing pure oil, which will keep the bonds of friendship firm and strong.

As wives: a strong relationship goes through strong processes, just like crushed olives, which will produce pure oil, which will keep the flame of couple's love lit day and night and strengthen the family.

As mothers: we can be an example of being pressed olives. It hurts to give birth and to raise our children, so our children represent pure oil, which in turn represents hope.

Questions:

1. Why was it important for the lamps to remain lit at that time in history? How important is it today?

Discussion and application

1. Do you trust in the wisdom of the Lord and His plan for you to experience the process of being pressed like olives to keep the lamp of the Gospel burning?
2. Are you willing to put yourself in the hands of the Lord?
3. Do you think you can be part of keeping the Light of the Gospel lit where you are?

Activity:

Divide into two groups.

Group 1 – Make a list of women from the Bible whose lives were examples of being pressed like olives.

Group 2 – Make a list of women around you who have lived or are living through a process of being pressed olives to produce pure oil and are keeping the lamps lit so that others can see Jesus through them.

Discussion – Compare the results of the two lists, discuss the similarities and differences.

You can bring a snack – A transparent jelly with fruit inside. The fruit lights up the interior and shows us how light comes from inside us and shines to everyone around us.



Theme:

VICTORIOUS WOMEN IN CHRIST

By:

Rev. Irene Jimenez De Garita

Key Verse:

Philippians 4:13

*"I can do all this through him
who gives me strength."*



Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for always being with me, in each of the changes that I face as a woman, thank you because you have given me the wisdom, the intelligence, and the security of your presence to face life and each of the challenges that life brings, because I know that I can face them in you Jesus Christ, who strengthens us with your power.

Introduction:

This verse is well known to not only the Christian community, but to the non-Christian world as well. In a non-Christian setting, it has been used as a motto or phrase to repeat to encourage the achievement of vain goals or situations. For us, Christian women, it is a message of contentment, peace, and joy, which energizes our faith and certainty in Christ.

Context:

To understand the depth of this verse, it is important to analyze the context in which it was written. It's part of Paul's letter to the Philippians, a church described by Paul with great gratitude for the help he received from them. Paul encourages them, in the midst of the situation they were experiencing, to be firm in faith and united with Christ. Paul, in the letter indicates that, although he is imprisoned, the gospel continues to grow, through the power of Jesus Christ. This letter was written to encourage readers that, although we face difficulties every day, our security is in the power of Jesus who is in us and to live victorious lives amid difficulties. From this perspective, Philippians is a letter of faith and trust in Jesus Christ Regardless of who we are, or the difficulties we are experiencing, or where we come from, we understand that, with Christ, we can face everything and emerge victorious.

Transition Questions:

What has been the condition of women over time and what is it today? This is important to understand, because the majority of women today live at a disadvantage because of the men in their lives. Women are experiencing a series of very rapid changes which affect their position as a person and undermine their security, as well as their faith God. They must navigate life as women, wives, mothers, professionals, leaders, etc and at the same time, they must share life with men, whether it's a husband, father, son, co-worker, etc.

Going Deeper:

Today, women are facing great challenges of discrimination and inequality, which contradicts the way God created them. The new trends and ideas that are flourishing have permeated the unity of the couple and have put women in a position of fighting with their spouse with the desire to achieve equality, they have tried to imitate men in everything they do, in many cases, at the cost of losing her dignity as a woman, falling into the vices or dysfunctional behaviors of men.

One might think that it is okay to fight for equality, but, on the other hand, what has been seen is a power struggle between both sexes, which has brought a breakdown in the unity of the couple, as God planned and loss of integrity, and mental health. In many cases the woman losses herself, when she things she's a victorious person; becoming obsessed with materialism and favoring to spend time with others who have economic and social power.

It can also become the management of political power struggles, since women can become an easy-to-use instrument to achieve the goals of these groups. For example, the female figure is used as the image of philosophies about feminism, the concept of gender, social-political movements, etc. which use the weaknesses and/or inequalities of the female figure in comparison to men. These concepts are used by some as a basic slogan, to achieve their goals, and to obtain political or social power.

However, all that this produces in the end, is a break from living in harmony with man. God created man and woman to manage and care for all of God's creation, TOGETHER. (Genesis 1:27-28)

Have you as a woman found yourself in any of these situations, how did you resolve it?

Women, to achieve personal fulfillment, as a wife, professionally, or just as herself, need to face a series of situations, which often become a tireless struggle, feeling at times discouraged and unable to achieve their goals. We live in a world where men have achieved positions of power, exercising attitudes of discrimination and inequality towards women, making women feel like second-class people or citizen. This makes it more difficult for them to emerge and maintain firmness in themselves and the faith that they *"can do all this"* in Christ.

On the other hand, today, women suffer from mistreatment, abuse, situations of violence in their own homes, or in their work environment, their communities, and in the church, since there are religious groups that don't allow women to preach, be leaders, or pastors. In other cases, women are denied the right to study, to socialize and to develop personally so they can lead in the places where they are allowed. Most importantly, they are denied the ability to express their ideas or to give advice, whether it's valuable or not.

She is denied all these things because she is a woman, she is only granted the right to motherhood, to take care of the home and her husband, belittling the great capabilities that she has as a person. In addition, we must add the natural problems women go through in the different stages or changes in a women's body. These physical changes often bring their own crisis, which men do not understand, and men use these to devalue and ridicule women, making them feel guilty or ashamed. This is often the case with menstrual cycle days, physical changes due to pregnancy, menopause, etc., all of which are often the object of ridicule and jokes.

Women must also fight against the physical stereotypes that society imposes, like being dressed nicely, taking care of their figure, making sure they wear make-up, which are more important than their value as a person, their intelligence and wisdom, their ability to face the difficulties of life, not to mention that some also have money struggles at work because many companies tend to discriminate against women in terms of salary; still others have to take care of their homes, their children and they are assigned social roles to fulfill. All this inequality is a constant struggle for many women. To this, we must add that the struggle is greater in some places due to race, skin color, social position, economic level, age, marital status, education which are all factors that increase discrimination and inequality in women and make the journey of life a more intense and difficult struggle.

For Reflection:

Although the outlook seems very bleak, for Christian women there is an answer; she has Christ who gives her power, peace, strength, and love to change things. Psalm 18:2 says: *"The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."*

This psalm describes the God in whom woman can take refuge in, the God who gives strength and freedom to face the difficulties in her daily struggle. The God who is a refuge in the face of the storms that she has to face, who allows her to emerge victorious and take her place beside man on this earth.

Even though it may seem very easy to achieve, it's important for women to develop several things to see the power of God acting in their lives and changing the situation in which they live.

First, although many people have taken this verse, *"I can do all this through him who gives me strength"*, as a slogan for personal improvement, that is not its true meaning; they are not magical words to cling to without understanding the depth of their true meaning. These words actually speak of contentment and peace in the midst of the situation that is being experienced.

It's not a passive contentment, but rather, through this peace and contentment we can look to the future with the hope for change and with an attitude, thought, and behavior, directed towards the search for a solution, to emerge victorious. Here is where we believe deeply, totally, that with God's power we will achieve it.

When women learn this, they experience joy, security, and confidence in the power of God to get ahead of the situation. These are words of resilience, of motivation to be better, to overcome the fears, and the insecurities that their environment has produced and produces in her the power to overcome obstacles with the help of God.

But there are other parts to consider. The woman must first give her life to Christ, as Lord and Savior, with a repentance that produces a change, a new life, a life dependent on God. This decision will lead her to enter into a search for and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, through the study of the word, prayer, and generally practicing spiritual disciplines every day. In this way, her whole life will grow, overcoming difficulties and obstacles, in a successful way.

Conclusion:

"I can do all this through him who gives me strength." This is a verse that Paul lived out and it gave him peace, comfort, and security in the midst of what he lived through. Today, it is also a way of life for women of God. Ladies, hold on to this truth and you will live with joy and contentment amid your daily experiences, whatever your situation. When Jesus Christ is the Lord of your life, he will give you the strength and the wisdom to move forward as a beloved daughter of God.

Questions:

1. Content

- a. What difficulties as a woman have you suffered in the past?
- b. What difficulties do you suffer as a woman today?

2. For Discussion:

- a. Why are feminism and trends, especially those that are called "gender movements", against what the Bible says.
- b. How do these trends contradict the fulfillment of women.
- c. What change(s) has the presence of Jesus Christ produced in your life?

Activities:

Search in the Bible for instances in which the presence of Jesus has sustained the lives of men and women in the midst of adversity.



Theme: **My Cup Overflows**

By: Altagracia Nova

Key Verse: Psalm 23:5

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."

Prayer:

Lord, you are my good shepherd and I adore you. You take care of me and protect me. I confess my tendency to doubt your presence and focus on my problems instead of your blessings. Thank you for your abundance of love and care in my life. Help me to recognize that you are present and care about me, even in the midst of challenges; and to share my blessings with others. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Introduction:

Sometimes we feel overwhelmed and tired of the journey, but then we remember that we have a great and loving shepherd who guides and protects us in the midst of the storm. When the winds come and drag us along and the worries of life keep us down, it seems like we will be trampled; then God comes, with His rod and his staff, and he picks us up off the ground and lifts us up. Like crushed olives, we can overflow with oil and better serve him. Psalm 23 says that we should not fear because he will be with us, his rod and his staff will give us the encouragement we need for his mission, and he has promised us that we will lack nothing, we will be safe with him and in him.

Context:

In the Old Testament there is a story about David and Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9). David, now king, remembered the promise he'd made to his dear friend Jonathan and showed kindness to the only remaining member of Saul's family. Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, was crippled in both feet. He was brought to David's table and given the place of honor despite his limitations and the fact that he was King Saul's grandson. This story beautifully illustrates the theme of Psalm 23 and shows how God's abundant blessings can come even in the midst of challenges and difficulties. Psalm 23 was originally intended for the nation of Israel, but its universal theme makes it relevant to believers and especially women throughout the centuries.

Going Deeper:

This Psalm has been classified as a "Psalm of Faith", because the psalmist expresses his confidence (faith) in God's protection, guidance, and care. The dominant metaphor used in this psalm is God as a shepherd, an image deeply rooted in the culture of God's ancient people.

The image of the shepherd emphasizes a personal and loving relationship between God and his people and the close bond between the shepherd and his flock. In the broader context of Psalm 23, David speaks of God as a shepherd who guides and cares for his sheep; He leads them along safe paths and restores their soul. These images help us understand the verse we are looking at because the shepherd's abundant provision is beautifully presented. Furthermore, the structure of the psalm follows a pattern of movement from open pastures and still waters (verses 1-3) to the more difficult terrain of the valley of the shadow of death (verse 4) and finally to overflowing blessings and divine presence described in verses 5-6. This development emphasizes the idea that God's care and concern are constant for us in the midst of our journey, even when the circumstances of our lives change.

Understanding the historical and literary context of Psalm 23 strengthens our understanding of the powerful message of verse 5: *"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."*

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." This phrase emphasizes God's protection and care even in the face of adversity. The image of a prepared table suggests that the host is hospitable and caring. In ancient Middle Eastern culture, hospitality was a gesture of honor and welcome. In the context of Psalm 23, God's table is a reference to His loving concern for the psalmist even when he is surrounded by enemies. An invitation to the table is an honor, and it is a double blessing that it is lovingly served and prepared. This bold statement emphasizes God's sovereignty and the psalmist's faith in God's ability to provide and protect in every situation.

"You anoint my head with oil." Anointing with oil was a symbolic act in ancient Israel that signified sanctification, favor, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Kings, priests, and prophets were often anointed with oil during their consecration or appointment. It was also a sign of respect to anoint with oil guests who visited your home, welcoming them and identifying them as part of the family. In the context of Psalm 23:5, the anointing of the head with oil symbolizes divine favor and God's blessing upon the psalmist. It also refers to the special relationship between God, man, and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. On the other hand, *"my cup overflows"* illustrates the extravagance of the abundant blessings and care that God gives to His children, more than they can hold. In ancient times, a full cup was a symbol of wealth and abundance. The overflowing cup of Psalm 23:5 represents God's extravagant generosity and his desire to bless his people exceedingly. These images not only convey the idea of material blessings, but also include spiritual blessings, emotional well-being, and the sense of peace and contentment that comes from a deep relationship with God.

For Reflection:

The anointing oil in Psalm 23:5 symbolizes the presence of the Holy Spirit. Pray regularly for the guidance, wisdom, and power of the Holy Spirit in your life, and be open to how the Spirit can work in and through you. Share God's blessings with others.

Questions from Psalm 23:

1. What were David's fears? (v. 4-5)
2. How far does the Lord's guidance and protection extend to his people? (v. 4-5)
3. How does God provide for his children, even in the face of death? (v. 4-5)
4. How does God honor those he loves? (v. 5-6)
5. What did the Lord give David? (v. 5-6)
6. How did David feel about his future? (v. 6)
7. How has the Lord guided you during difficult times?
8. What do you think David meant when he said his "cup overflows"?
9. David compares the Lord to a shepherd and himself to a sheep. How do you envision your relationship with the Lord?
10. How does God "refresh" or "restore" our souls?
11. What are some of your fears? How can you follow David's example in facing your fears?
12. How has God provided for your needs in the past and how does he provide in the present?
13. How could you comfort or encourage a friend who is struggling with fear or pain (whether from illness, loss, or anything else)?

Conclusion:

As recipients of God's overflowing abundance, we are called to be channels of His blessing to others. Look for ways to bless others with your time, resources, and compassion. By sharing God's love and care with those around you, you not only enrich their lives, but you also strengthen your own experience of God's abundance. Trust in God's sovereignty and protection when you find yourself facing enemies or in a disadvantageous situation, remember that God is sovereign and in control. Trust Him to protect you and work things out for you, even when circumstances seem overwhelming. Seek God's presence and build a deeper relationship with Him. The assurance of God's care and protection in Psalm 23:5 is deeply connected to the psalmist's close relationship with God. Make it a priority to spend time with God through prayer, Bible study, and worship, and actively invite Him into your daily life. The closer your relationship with God is, the more you will experience the fullness of his blessings and care. By applying these practical steps in your life, you will be able to experience God's overflowing blessing, protection, and favor even in the midst of life's challenges and difficulties. Trust in His care, cultivate gratitude, and seek to share His love and abundance with others as you walk confidently through life with your Good Shepherd.



Theme: **A Search of the Heart**

By: Rev. Mildred Martínez

Key Verse: Matthew 6:33

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well." (NIV)*

*"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously,
and he will give you everything you need." (NLT)*

Prayer

Context: Semon on the Mount

Chapters 5-7 of Matthew (also Luke 6:20-49) are dedicated to what scholars consider much more than just another sermon, teaching, or parable of Jesus. A careful reading of these words of Jesus leads us to a kind of epitome; That is, we see the teaching personified in Jesus as the ultimate example of how to live a life according to the Heart of God. We can say that its themes show us the Way to live a life consecrated and pleasing to God, free of hypocrisy, full of love and grace and full of wisdom and discernment.

For Reflection:

Jesus touches on two topics in his sermon that are important and current in our society: worry and anxiety. We define these words as follows:

- Worry: give way to anxiety or unease; allow one's mind to dwell on difficulty or troubles.¹
- Anxiety: a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.¹

The contemporary woman works in a social environment where she often struggles with her work (in the secular world or at work), her marriage, as a single mother, raising children, as a caregiver for the sick or elderly, among others. If these concerns are not channeled in the light of the Scriptures, they can affect not only our spirit, which is central to every human being, but also our mind (emotions) and body (diseases such as depression).

Jesus said: *"...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?"* Matthew 6:25.

Going Deeper:

The first thing you must remember, beloved sister and friend, is that you are not alone. In every step of life, in every role you play, His Spirit accompanies you to give you wisdom, guidance, strength and all the resources necessary to live a full and victorious life. At some point in our lives, we are going to suffer from anxiety due to our worries. Secular and Biblical history show us some examples.

- Martin Luther King Jr.: pastor and politician in the U.S. suffered various episodes of depression in his fight against racial segregation had attempted suicide in his youth.
- Jesus said: *"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death"*; David said: *"My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear"*; Elijah asks God to take his life; Noemi asks to be called "Mara" which means "bitter" because she felt alone and lost after the deaths of her husband and sons.

In every culture, race and nation, anxiety and worry are common factors. The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 5:7 *"Cast all your anxiety on him [God] because he cares for you"*.

Beloved, Jesus cares about you. He takes care of you. You have a purpose. You are the *"...apple of his eye."*

Jeremiah 29:11 says: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

"Do not worry" (6:25) does not mean that it is bad to prepare for the physical needs of the future. What Jesus was telling us is that anxiety or worry show a lack of faith in God's fatherly love and care.

It is important to have the right attitude towards material possessions. Jesus discourages us from worrying about clothes, food, and the future which so often consume people's lives and robs them of any joy they may have. Jesus' followers must combine hard work with silent trust in God for the future. The rich should not concentrate on their riches, nor the poor on their misery.

Birds work very hard to provide for their young. They don't worry about where their next meal will come from, but instead trust that there will always be food. We know that God is the One who provides for them, just as he provides for us.

Anxiety doesn't add anything to one's life; it can't (Matthew 6:27-28). Anxiety is absolutely useless; it takes so much energy that it paralyzes us to the point of not being able to do anything. We need to recognize that while the needs of life are important, they should not become an all-consuming passion.

Even the splendor of Solomon's wardrobe is insignificant next to the simple beauty of a flower (Matthew 6:29). A flower has a very short life, but God still fills it with beauty. How much more will he provide food and clothing for the creatures who bear his image and are conformed to his heart? (Matthew 6:30-32).

He knows our needs and will always provide. Maybe he won't give us what we ask for, but he will always give us what we need. Instead of worrying, we should learn to focus on serving the Lord wholeheartedly, doing our best and leaving the rest to Him (6:33).

Practical Biblical Advice:

"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness". "Seek" implies taking action to find someone or something; It involves a continuous and tenacious effort to obtain something. What will I find in this sincere search of the heart?

1. I will find...The Kingdom of God. We must fervently ensure that the kingdom and power of God acts in my life and in that of each follower of Jesus so that with the strength of the Holy Spirit, lives may come to the full knowledge of Christ, the sick may be healed, and the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be continually exalted in word and deed.
2. I will find...His Righteousness. The joy of forgiveness, salvation, and sanctification. That which separated me from God, sin, now has "no place" in me. I'm declared "not guilty". Rebirth allows us to once again acquire the original righteousness given by God during creation and to live under the command of the righteousness of Christ. Through the Holy Spirit we can obey the commandments of Christ, have His righteousness, remain separate from the world, and show His Love to all.

Beloved, let's look towards the eternal and invisible God who is much more powerful than any problem. Let's focus on doing and accepting God's will because it is the best way to defeat worry or anxiety in the face of the many difficulties of life.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*

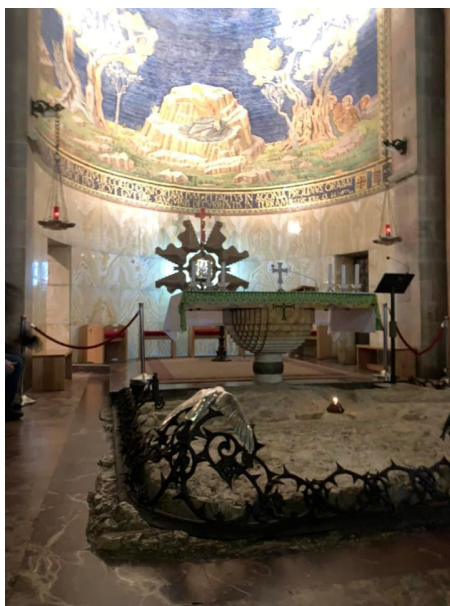
If we faithfully, and obediently, seek to fulfill this command of Jesus, *"...all these things will be given to you as well."* What are all things? It means that God will provide for our homes, marriages, children, the sick, and above all, he will provide salvation for and in our homes because we have given God first place in our lives.

CONCLUSION:

Matthew 6:34 *"...do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself"*. This is how Jesus concludes this section of his sermon. We can defeat anxiety when we acquire the art of living today in Christ. Live your day, beloved, praising God, grateful for what you have materially, but above all be grateful for salvation of your life. Jesus took your place. It means that He thought of you when He willingly laid down His life on the Cross. Let's celebrate and honor Jesus for "today" because our time is in his hands, and besides, He's already working on our "tomorrow."

Reflections Questions:

1. What is the priority of your heart?
2. Honestly, what do I love the most?
3. Honestly, what am I looking for the most?
4. What do I spend the most money on?
5. What do I spend the most time on?
6. How can I reorganize my priorities?



Theme:

Gethsemane

By: Rev. Ortencia Antonio Yevil de Yuden

Key Verse: Luke 22:40-44 (NVI)

"On reaching the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you will not fall into temptation.' He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.' An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for your triumph in Gethsemane. We cannot imagine the agony, suffering and sadness that overwhelmed you there, but we know that you were thinking of all of humanity, that's what was on your mind and heart. Thank you for choosing to do the Father's will instead of your own. Because of your decision to do the Father's will so long ago, today we can say that we are saved. Lord, help us to imitate your example. We cannot compare your bitter cup with ours, but we pray that not our will, but yours, be done. Amen.

Introduction:

Gethsemane was the place where the greatest spiritual battle was fought for humanity. In this great battle the destiny of all of us was at stake. At Gethsemane the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy was defined: *"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:4-6). In this story told by Luke we see our Lord Jesus talking with his disciples, preparing them for what would happen in a few hours, but also for the future of the church and humanity. In Gethsemane the Lord demonstrated his love for us and his submission to the Father by doing the Father's will. In this story we learn that we must put God's will before our own.

Context:

In these verses we are coming to the events prior to Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion. The Pharisees, scribes and priests had already decided to kill the Master. Judas had agreed to betray his Lord. Jesus celebrates dinner with his disciples and then they go to the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane. The word Gethsemane means "oil press." This was the location of an oil press that was used to produce olive oil that would later be used as fuel for lamps and for anointing.

Before arriving at Gethsemane, some interesting things happened that we must take into account. First is Jesus' conversation with Peter. Jesus warns his faithful apostle that the enemy, Satan, was seeking to "sift" (or test) him, indicating that Peter would be faced with a strong temptation, that he should be prepared for. However, the Master tells Peter that He has prayed for him. Peter was very shaken after he realized that he denied the Lord three times, but Jesus' prayer for him allowed the troubled apostle to recover, be forgiven, and be restored to the Lord.

On the way to Gethsemane Jesus asks His disciples to accompany Him in prayer. In deep agony and sadness, the Lord distances Himself a little from the disciples and alone cries out in prayer to the Father, as we see in the story. The moment was intense, sad. Jesus knew that the cup was bitter, because He felt the burden that weighed on Him: His disciples would abandon Him, He would be arrested, falsely accused, they would spit in His face, they would mock him, they would force Him to carry the cross and He would be hung on a cross, where He would feel abandoned by the Father. With a feeling like this it's natural to ask if another way can be found, because the way of the cross would be extremely difficult, very painful. *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me;"* it's very harsh, it's unbearable, *"yet not my will, but yours, be done."*

We can imagine two scenes during the prayer: in the first scene (*"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me"*) we see humanity falling to the ground, collapsing, apparently everything is lost, we go straight into the pit, but suddenly ... In the second scene (*"yet not my will, but yours be done"*) we see humanity rise up onto solid ground. The Master, out of love for us, submitted His will and desires to the will of the Father and with this decision He saved us and redeemed us. Glory be to His name! It should be mentioned that Luke gives us a very interesting detail: *"An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him."*

For Reflection: (Transition Questions)

What lesson(s) can we learn from the events of the Last Supper to Jesus' agony in Gethsemane?

We learn that Jesus, even in His time of greatest difficulty, never stopped thinking about His beloved disciples; His concern for them was immense. He was willing to give His life, not just for them, but for all of us. Jesus leaves us the ultimate example of what a leader is. Every leader must think first of his followers, he must be willing to be a model of dedication, of passion, of firmness in his purposes.

Every leader must be willing to comply with God's will before his own. Every leader must be an example of prayer.

Going Deeper:

- Jesus said to Peter *"But I have prayed for you."* What a privilege to know that the Lord prays for us! His prayers are very effective prayers. He is the Messiah who died for us. We see later in the story that this prayer was effective.
- Just like Jesus, we must pray for others so that they may be delivered from today's temptations.
- Jesus tells Peter *"...strengthen your brothers."* It's our duty to strengthen our brothers and sisters, to tell them that we can overcome trials if we remain in Christ. It's very important that we strengthen the brothers. We need to pray not only for those who do not know the Lord, but for those who are followers. They also need to be strengthened. We must strengthen, through prayer, missionaries, evangelists, pastors, etc. Pray for them and send them words of encouragement and strength.
- In verse 33 Peter says to Jesus *"I am ready,"* but we know that he was not ready. We must learn to be humble and listen to our leaders. We must not depend on our own strength, but on the Lord Jesus.
- Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane should serve as an example for us: *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."* We must submit our will to the Father.
- Jesus' intense struggle in the garden serves as an example for us. Sometimes Christianity is sold to us as something that is easy. As Christians we will go through difficult situations, internal and external struggles. It's these bitter cups/difficult situations that make us want to give up. Instead of denying difficulties, we must accept them, present them to the Lord and ask that his will be done.
- *"An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him."* How wonderful to know that the *"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them"* (Psalm 34:7) Also in Lamentations 3:33 he says: *"For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone."* It's not his will that we suffer, that we be afflicted or that we go through moments of anguish. But he knows that we'll learn from these trials and in the end, we'll have victory. Knowing this should bring us comfort in the midst of the suffering and afflictions that we sometimes go through.

For Reflection:

Jesus knew what God's will was for his life. He knew what his mission on earth was. He was in Gethsemane knowing what would happen to him in the next few hours. Do you know what your mission is? Are you willing to tell the Lord that His will be done and not yours? How willing are you to give your life to completely follow the Lord? How willing are you to deny yourself, take up the cross and follow Christ?

Conclusion:

In these passages we see the Lord as an intercessor, as a priest and as a lamb ready to be sacrificed. The society we live in today needs women and men who have this disposition. Someone who stands in the gap to intercede for his brothers and sisters, for the needy, for the sick, for the missionaries, for government leaders and all those who are in authority. But he also wants women willing to say, Lord, not my will, but yours, be done. Women prepared to give the best of their time, talents, and treasures to fulfil the mission that the Lord has entrusted to us. Are you one of these women?

Questions:

I. Content

1. What lessons did Jesus' disciples learn during Jesus' journey from the Last Supper to the Mount of Olives?
2. What does Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane mean to you?

II. Discussion

1. Tell us about a time in your life in which you prayed to the Lord asking that this cup be passed from you. How did you finish that sentence? What was the result?
2. What was the most shocking thing to you about this story?
3. How is the scene at Gethsemane relate to our call to holiness? Does it make sense to you?
4. How does it feel to know that there are leaders praying for you? Do you pray for your sisters and brothers?
5. How can you strengthen your sisters and brothers?

Activities:

- Recreate the Gethsemane scene.
- Form a circle(s) to pray for each other.
- Ask some of the women to write down their feelings about Gethsemane (a poem, a song, etc.) and share it with the group.



Theme: **Designed by God: Women in Action**

By: Dhariana Balbuena

Key Verse: Ephesians 2:10

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (NIV)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, open our minds and hearts to your Word. May this time of study be a great blessing, revelation and push to live without reservation a dynamic life in you, which reflects that special, unique, and distinct design in which you have created each of us. Amen.

Introduction:

Although this passage applies to all believers, today we will focus on how it applies to women. So, thinking about God's design for us, let's take what is obvious to us from this passage.

Ephesians 2:10 affirms that we are unique creations made by God, designed to carry out good works in the world. Furthermore, this passage highlights the importance of action and service in the Christian life, inviting us to live in accordance with divine purpose, putting into practice the tasks that God himself has prepared for us.

Context:

Ephesians 2:10 is a key verse in the book of Ephesians that offers fundamental insight into the relationship between faith, grace, and good works in the life of the believer. Before analyzing the verse in detail, it is important to understand the context in which it is found. Ephesians is a letter written by the apostle Paul, whose primary purpose is to instruct the church in Ephesus (and by extension all believers today). In this letter, Paul addresses topics such as unity in Christ, redemption, and how they should live as Christians in the world.

In the previous verses (1-3) Paul begins by reminding believers of their state prior to faith in Christ. He describes how they were dead in sin, following the desires of the flesh, that is, they lived and acted under the influence of Satan. But now they have new life in Christ (vs. 4-7) through the love and mercy of God, every believer is saved, not by works but by faith. Paul continues and emphasizes (8-9) saying that salvation is a free gift, not something we can achieve on our own merits. Now when we get to our verse in question, verse 10, we see that works are important, as they are evidence that we have been saved.

Let's Explore!

Have you ever felt like you don't have a clear purpose in life? Have you ever struggled with your identity? – Share your experiences.

From a young age we begin to realize that life is about decisions when we encounter dilemmas. Although we don't always know what to do, the Lord takes care of us and through his great mercy brings us to the point where we are today. Even though we will not always know exactly what is next for us, there is one constant, the Lord already thought of us, designed, and created us to do good.

"Live your life to the fullest and make a difference along the way!"

¿Are you ready to analyze our passage?

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10 NKJV)

1. We are God's workmanship or handiwork:

This verse begins by reminding us that, as believers in Christ, we are "His workmanship." This means that God has created us to be special and unique. In other words, we are his masterpieces. This fact is important because it shows us that our existence has a divine purpose.

We were created to be agents of transformation and change around us. We were created to inspire others to flourish. We were created to bless.

2. Created in Christ Jesus:

The second part of the verse emphasizes that we have been created in Christ Jesus. Our identity and our purpose are intrinsically linked to our relationship with Christ. When we put our faith in Him, we experience a spiritual transformation that leads us to be a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are formed and molded into the image of Christ as we grow in our faith.

When our life is truly connected to that of Jesus, then our connection with Him will be evident. Let's draw closer to Christ Jesus every day, let's enter into his presence throughout our everyday life, let's invite him to be part of everything we are and do. Let's be willing to be transformed completely so that every day, our thoughts, words, and actions reflect the love of Jesus.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

3. For good works:

The middle part of the verse tells us that we have been created in Christ Jesus "for good works." This means that our lives must be characterized by just and compassionate actions.

Our purpose as believers is not simply to receive salvation and then live as we want, but to live in accordance with the principles and values of the Kingdom of God. Good works are the natural result of genuine faith in Christ.

I invite you to do the following self-analysis:

- a. What attitude do you wake up with every day? Are you sure you reflect the love of Jesus to your loved ones at home?
- b. Do you make sure to express your love to those you live with every day? Spouse, children, others.
- c. What attitude do you have when you leave your house?
- d. Are you sure you notice the needs around you and are you moved to compassion, that is, do you do something about it?
- e. How about that smile you put on? Is it genuine? What about your words, kindness, and courtesy?
- f. How do you relate to your neighbors? Are you reflecting God's love to them? What about in your workplace, place of study, and any other place you frequent.

The point is that if we are full of Jesus, we will overflow Jesus everywhere. And yes, there are moments when we don't even want to smile, maybe we're going through a difficult situation full of pain or complexity and suddenly we're just tired, but beloved, even in the midst of difficult situations Jesus can be glorified.

4. God prepared beforehand:

The verse goes on to say that "God prepared" these good works "Beforehand." This means that God has planned and prepared a specific path for each of us to walk that includes doing good works. This emphasizes the sovereignty of God in our lives and how He has a unique and personal plan for each of us.

5. Put them into practice:

The last part of the verse urges us "to do" these good works (NIV). It's not enough to have good intentions; we must take actual actions that reflect the nature and character of God in our lives. These good works are a way of serving others, loving our neighbors, and glorifying God.

Having the right attitude and being in tune with God are key. So, my beloved, I invite you to live intentionally, always doing good, seeking to serve everyone without losing ourselves.

What can you do today for your neighbor? What can you do today for one of your coworkers? What can you joyfully do today to meet someone else's need?

"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Luke 6:36-38

Final Discussion:

Let's briefly look at biblical examples of women who performed good works, such as Ruth, Deborah, Mary (the mother of Jesus), and Dorcas. What can we learn from their lives?

Conclusion:

Ephesians 2:10 is a verse that reminds us that, as believers in Christ, we have been created for a divine purpose: to carry out good works that God has prepared for us. Our faith in Christ transforms us and enables us to live in a way that honors God and blesses others. This verse calls us to live a life of purpose and meaning, serving God and humanity as we walk in the good works He has planned for us.

Let's not wait for God to whisper in our ears what we should do or when to start, God has already given us His Word, he wants us to do what is good, which will bring blessing to our life and the lives of all those around us.

As Saint Francis of Assisi said:

“Preach the Gospel at all times and if necessary, use words”.

Ladies! God designed us to live in blessing, God created us to impact others with his love, God intended us to build and restore, to be agents of transformation.

Enjoy your life in Christ!

Closing Prayer:

Pray as the Holy Spirit leads.