



DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR DECEMBER 16, 2011

A PLACE TO GET AWAY

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." (Mark 14:32, NIV)

WE WERE PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO TAKE OUR YOUNGEST SON WITH US on the recent Links Players trip to Israel. Among the 40 travelers there were 40 different impressions, I'm sure, but my son was able to single out among his highlights one principal memory and lesson.

It was on the sixth day in the country that we made our way into Jerusalem, entering the city from the East, by way of what was once the Jericho road. After our first glimpse of the Old City and the imposing Dome of the Rock atop the Temple Mount, we swung around alongside the Hebrew University, then stopped above the Mount of Olives. From there, we began walking our way down the hillside until we came to the Garden of Gethsemane.

If you have been to Israel, you know that rarely are you able to walk the ground that Jesus actually walked. The ravages of time and the careless inundation of so many visitors have added layers of dirt and stone, as well as modern walls and fences.

But here we were, in a quiet "garden" of olive trees—perhaps not the same garden or the same trees that Jesus came to, but one much like it and in the historic vicinity. That's where my son learned his lesson, we might say, for he was able to recognize that what Jesus did in coming to the Garden of Gethsemane—on the eve of His death and perhaps many other times as well—was to identify a place of escape, a place where a man could shutter his windows against the storms of life. And in that place, He met with the Father.

This, my son concluded, is what we all need. A retreat. A getaway. A hide-out. We need to take the time and create the distance, separating ourselves from the things that separate us from God. This is an intentional act. Then, when we have made our way to such a place, we need to turn to the Father too, with our harshest troubles and deepest fears, knowing He can handle them when we are sure that we cannot.

The hour in the garden

Read Mark 14:32-36. How desperate was Jesus for this time with His Father? What were His words of desire? What were His words of surrender?

Where is the balance in your own prayer life between desires and surrender? How does expressing your desires before God honor Him? How about expressing your surrender?

Intentionality

Today's devotion suggests the need for intentional acts of separation from our hurried lives to meet with God. Do you recognize the need in your life to be more intentional about your committed times of prayer? How might you accomplish this? Who can help you keep this commitment?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2011 Links Players International.