

He Prayed to Lean In, Not to Be Seen

"But when you pray, enter your private room, shut the door and pray to your Father in secret. Then your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you openly."

MATTHEW 6:6

Written by Bill Perkins

There's this dream I've had more than once —

I'm running barefoot
across green fields,
or dodging defenders on a football field,
or sprinting through neighborhood streets.
I'm pushing hard,
but everything's sluggish.
Like I'm running in sand.

When I wake,
the feeling lingers.
I'm not physically tired,
but I feel stuck —
as if I'm trying
and failing
to move forward.

That's how I sometimes feel when I pray.
I want prayer to come effortlessly,
like a light-footed runner
enjoying the race.
But the sands of fatigue,
distraction, boredom,
and indifference bog me down.

And then I think of the disciples.
In Gethsemane,
even after Jesus pleaded,
"Watch and pray,"
they kept falling asleep.

These weren't strangers —
they were His friends.
Witnesses.
Believers.
More than believers —
disciples.
And even they couldn't stay present.

Maybe that's why they asked Jesus —
not the religious leaders —
"Teach us to pray."
They'd seen the Pharisees
perform their prayers
like stage actors,
seeking applause.
But Jesus wasn't like that.

He slipped away
when no one was watching.
He prayed
before the crowds could gather.
Before choosing the Twelve,
He prayed all night.
Before walking on water,
He climbed a mountain alone.
Before the cross,
He wept in a garden.

I've read the Gospels
month by month, year after year.
And this truth keeps surfacing:
Jesus didn't pray for show.
He prayed to lean in,
not to be seen.
To be close.
To be heard
by the One
who mattered most.

You may not know this about Jesus:
His praying was a leaning,
not a performance.

When I try to pray
in my own strength,
I sink.
But when I lean in —
like Jesus did —
the sand is still there.
But my feet grow lighter.