

The Next Step
Biblical instructions for life one word at a time

"Watch: Learning how to detect and respond to spiritual danger"
Mark 14:32-42

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ³³ He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴ "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." ³⁵ Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." ³⁷ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹ Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. ⁴⁰ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. ⁴¹ Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"
Mark 14:32-42 NIV

What a compelling story of the need to watch: to detect and respond to spiritual danger. Jesus the Christ, in his greatest hour of testing is victorious, in part because of his skill and discipline to watch and pray. Conversely, we see the disciples' failure to execute this indispensable spiritual skill, and the grave consequences that resulted. Peter would mirror each one of these failed attempts to watch with an even greater failure in denying the Lord three times. If you aspire to be faithful to God in the fiery trials of life, you must learn to watch. It is in this biblical discipline of watching that one learns to develop and maintain a keen sense of spiritual discernment; the ability to detect and respond to spiritual danger. Watching is a related spiritual discipline to waiting, but it carries an added dimension of alertness to danger. Let's explore this biblical teaching today and allow the Holy Spirit of God to teach us to watch.

1. The spiritual discipline of watching is depicted in the image of the watchman.

- Depictions of the watchtower





- Military application of watching (2 Samuel 18:24)
- Agricultural application of watching (Isaiah 5:17)
- Spiritual application of watching (Ezekiel 33:7-8)
- Unforgettable application watching (Luke 2:8-16)



2. The need for spiritual watchfulness is profound.

- The *craftiness* of Satan (*deception*; Genesis 3:1)
- The *current* of culture (*distraction*; Mark 8:36)
- The *carnality* of our natural lives (*dullness*; Mark 4:19)
- The *command* of scripture (*discipline*; 1 Timothy 4:16)

3. Here are a few practical tips for cultivating a watchful spirit before the Lord.

- *Specify* set times to prayerfully watch
 "Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?" Mark 14:37b
- *Stay* focused on what you do not know and cannot see
 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.
 The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Mark 14:38
- *Selflessly* invite God to confide his concerns with you
 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."
 Mark 14:34
- *Share* your watches with Christ
 "Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."³³ He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled." Mark 14:32b-33

God has called you to be a watchman; to develop spiritual discernment; to detect and respond to spiritual danger. God himself has built the watchtower for you but you must climb it. That watchtower where you can see with perfect discernment and crystal clear clarity is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you will discipline yourself to daily come to the cross; to climb this watchtower of our Lord's suffering, the Holy Spirit will give you discernment that is literally out of this world. In Galatians 6:14, the Apostle Paul said, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world." If you will watch and pray, God will empower you to guard your heart, your family, your church, your neighborhood, your country for the honor of Christ.