

JESUS: THE SERVANT AT WORK

VOLUME THREE

STUDY ELEVEN

A Place Named Gethsemane

Mark 14:32–42

It's a wrestling match between the heart of a submissive Son and the will of a sovereign Father.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHAT do you do when someone strong in your life suddenly appears weak?

Consider these examples. A father and mother tell their children that since losing their jobs, they haven't been able to pay the bills. Now they'll lose the house. As their parents break down in tears, the children react in shock and fear as they watch the once-solid rocks of the family crumble.

In the last seconds of the championship game, a team's coach doesn't know which play to call! The coach simply stutters and stares as panic shakes the team's confidence. Or here's a particularly heartbreaking example. A church's pastor, whose faith has always been firm, announces he's no longer certain about his convictions.

When the knees of those who carried us through our weak moments buckle, we experience fear, confusion, denial, and disillusionment. We find it impossible to stand . . . as if our own legs have given way.

For three and a half years, the disciples had watched Jesus bear every hardship. He calmed a storm that threatened to capsize their small boat (Mark 4:35–41). He brought soundness to a man tormented by thousands of demons (5:1–20). He stood toe-to-toe with His critics and left them speechless (11:29–33). But suddenly in a place called Gethsemane, their strong Master seemed to collapse.

Through His ordeal, Jesus' trust in His Father never wavered, though He was experiencing deep human emotions. He was also teaching His followers valuable lessons on how to handle their own personal crises. In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll watch Jesus from the shadows and learn to pray as He prayed when we enter our own Gethsemane and our knees buckle under a weight too heavy for us to bear.



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The Bible-Teaching Ministry of Chuck Swindoll
Study 11 • Page 1

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

A Place Named Gethsemane

Mark 14:32–42



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The Lord is with you as you continue studying the earthly ministry of Jesus. Acknowledge His presence. Contemplate His goodness. Experience His strength. And receive His guidance.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The time of Christ's suffering between the Last Supper and the tomb is known as the *passion* of Christ. His passion began in an olive grove fittingly named Gethsemane, “oil press.” Luke describes its location as “the Mount of Olives” (Luke 22:39). John depicts it as a garden “across the ravine of the Kidron” (John 18:1 NASB), adding that “Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples” (18:2). In this place of crushing, an overwhelming weight of anguish bore down on Jesus.



Observation: Jesus Prays in the Garden of Gethsemane

Follow the footsteps of Jesus and His disciples to Gethsemane. Nothing in Scripture is out of order or without significance. Read carefully and slowly, observing each line in [Mark 14:32–42](#) as you prepare to answer the following questions.¹

It's about 1:00 in the morning, the day of His crucifixion. They have had the Last Supper together. He has told them to come with Him, and by the time they cross the Kidron Valley and go up the slope, they know where they're going. They've been there before. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Desire of the Master: Intimacy—Mark 14:32–33

As they arrived at Gethsemane, what did Jesus say to His disciples in Mark 14:32? Why do you think Jesus wanted “Peter, James, and John” with Him when the storm of emotion struck and “he became deeply troubled and distressed” (Mark 14:33)? How was Jesus displaying His humanity?

A Place Named Gethsemane

Mark 14:32–42

He longed for their companionship. Jesus also desired an intimacy with His heavenly Father. He wouldn't find it in the city, but He would probably find it in a place of aloneness in the garden. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Emotion of the Hour: Agony—Mark 14:34–36, 39

How did Jesus describe His emotional state in Mark 14:34? What prayer did Jesus cry out to the Father in 14:35–36, 39? Observe the name Jesus used for His Father. In your own words, describe Jesus' emotions and posture as He prayed to God.

Look at the word troubled. It means “disoriented, sheer terror striking the soul.” The tense of the verb, “to fall” and “to pray”—both in the imperfect tense, meaning “continued action.” He kept on praying and falling—stumbling through the dark. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Response of the Disciples: Complacency—Mark 14:37–38, 40–42

In the interpretation phase, we'll explore the reasons for Jesus' agony. For now, write down what you observe in Mark 14:37–38. Note the contrasts you see between Jesus and His drowsy disciples. What did Jesus say to Peter about the source of Peter's weakness? What did Jesus say to them when He returned to them the third time in 14:40–42?



Interpretation: Jesus Struggles at Gethsemane

Find out more about the place of Jesus' torment in the article “[Gethsemane](#)” in the *Encyclopedia of the Bible* at biblegateway.com. How does this background information deepen your understanding of Gethsemane? What was the significance of this place to Jesus' ministry?

A Place Named Gethsemane

Mark 14:32–42

It's believed by scholars that this garden was probably owned by a wealthy acquaintance of Jesus who gave Him the key to the gate. No garden was allowed in the city of Jerusalem because the manure that was used to fertilize gardens was considered corrupting. The little garden along the western slope of the Mount of Olives has become a place for Jesus to find refuge and refreshment.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Jesus was deeply “troubled,” “distressed,” and “crushed with grief to the point of death” in the garden (Mark 14:33–34). How would you explain Jesus’ struggle? To what did “this cup” refer? [Isaiah 51:17–20](#); [Jeremiah 25:15](#); and [Revelation 14:9–10](#) give insight into the answer.

How do [Luke 22:39–46](#) and [Hebrews 5:7–10](#) confirm Mark’s depiction of the humanity of Jesus? What do [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) and [Galatians 3:13](#) teach us about Jesus’ becoming the object of the Father’s holy wrath against sin?

The agony raging in Jesus’ soul reached its apex at Gethsemane, where His humanity recoiled at the horrors of human sin that He soon must bear. How did Jesus find peace through His struggle? How can you find His peace in your struggles?

The battle of Calvary was won in the trenches of Gethsemane, hours before He was nailed to the cross. But Jesus’ victory did not come neatly. So extreme was His travail that He needed an angel’s shoulder to lean on (Luke 22:43). So messy was His labor that His sweat flowed like blood (22:44). Yet, in His submission, He found the Father’s strength to carry Him through the suffering to come.

A Place Named Gethsemane

Mark 14:32–42



Correlation: Dealing with Our Struggles

Scripture showcases many women and men of faith who have taken their struggles to the Lord by surrendering their will to the Father's plan.

Compare *1 Samuel 1:1–20*; *Mark 14:32–42*; and *2 Corinthians 12:1–10*. How do Hannah and Paul resemble Jesus in the way they deal with their specific struggles? How does the will of God differ in the three stories? What does each of them experience as they surrender their will to the Father's plan?

Some of you know the relief that comes when a battle with God's will ends in your soul. It is the most magnificent relief a human being can experience. "I willingly submit to Your will, whatever that may be. Whatever."
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Enter Your Gethsemane

This Bible study is not just about Jesus and His Gethsemane. It speaks to your own Gethsemane—the place where you release your will and accept the Father's plan regarding your relational, vocational, personal, and spiritual struggles.

Relational struggles. It's common to face difficulties as you deal with people. You might struggle to choose a spouse or to live in harmony with the one you've chosen. You might struggle to find and maintain healthy friendships. You might struggle with difficult individuals. What specific instruction has the Holy Spirit communicated to your heart that will help you deal with a relational struggle that you're currently facing?

Some of you have unhealthy friendships that you have not brought to the Lord to ask His will about them. These friends are not doing you any good. They're hurting you as you continue to foster a relationship with them.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

A Place Named Gethsemane

Mark 14:32–42

Vocational struggles. You may be wondering, *What career path should I choose? Where should I work and make a living? What has been keeping you awake at night? How can you settle it in your Gethsemane?*

I don't know how many people say to me, "Boy, it must be sacrificial to be in ministry." I never think of that! What a privilege. My Gethsemane is over when it comes to vocation. I settled that when I said, "I accept the call." I take whatever comes in the Father's plan. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Personal and spiritual struggles. What things in your private world has the Holy Spirit highlighted to you? In what way is He challenging you to surrender? What would you like to say to your Abba Father in this moment?

Struggles are often deep and complicated. May you visit your own Gethsemane with Jesus as often as you feel confused, distressed, and troubled. May you exit this place with inner peace and divine strength, just as Jesus did.



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I surrender all to You! Let Your will be done. May Gethsemane always be for me a place of refuge and refreshment. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](https://www.insight.org/how-does-pastor-chuck-swindoll-study-the-bible)" at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org).

For the 2027 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2011, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Insight for Living
Study 11 • Page 6

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