

# Jesus in the Garden – Talking to God

## John 17

*The activity for this week's lesson is choosing a specific psalm and using it to help guide your prayers. It can be placed wherever it works best for your context.*

### Introduction

*Leader Says:* We all have people in our lives who know us very well. Think for a moment of who in your life could tell how you're doing completely based on how your body language or an answer to a simple question.

Now think of how you interact with them. The tone of your voice is probably informal. You say what you are thinking. You probably don't interact with them the same way you would a teacher or a stranger.

Now think about what your prayers sound like. Do they carry a more informal tone like when you talk with someone who knows you? Or do they sound more like you're talking to a stranger? Or maybe you're sitting here thinking, '...outside of the prayers I listen to at church, I don't really pray...' Just to be clear, there isn't a "wrong" way to pray. Prayers can vary widely, but God will still hear every prayer said in His name. In our Bible story for today, we're going to look at one of the final recorded prayers of Jesus. As we dive into this passage from John, I just want you to think about this question: What do my prayers sound like? How does Jesus give us an example for prayer here?

### Bible Exploration

*Leader Says:* To set the stage a little bit: we are now entering Jesus' final days on earth before He was crucified. Everything in Jesus' life is starting to get very intense, very fast. He had just finished the Last Supper and washing the disciples' feet. Jesus knows what is coming next and, like He has done multiple times before, He goes off and prays. He brings a couple of disciples along and asks them to keep watch. Jesus enters the Garden of Gethsemane to have a very honest conversation with his Father. Let's dive in

Read John 17:1-5

There are some Bible translations that break down chapter 17 into three sections: prayers for himself, prayers for the disciples, and prayers for all believers. As you would expect, Jesus, prays for himself the least and spends most of the time praying for others.

As Jesus prays for himself, we see that Jesus is essentially saying, "Well. I came to this earth, I did all that you told me to do. I showed who you were. And now I realize it's time for me to join you again so that it was like it was at the beginning of time."

As we read, it's important to keep in mind that Jesus knows everything that is about to happen. He knows the suffering, the pain, the mockery, the ridicule that awaits him over the next 24 hours. Yet, at that moment, He does not hesitate to do what He came to earth to do and die on our behalf. Jesus always had our restoration and salvation on His mind. But before the journey to the cross begins, Jesus spends time in prayer for His friends and the people who He came to save.

Read John 17:6-19

We were designed for community. Look at the beginning of Genesis. God saw that Adam needed Eve. Humans weren't meant to do life alone. Over the course of Jesus' earthly ministry, the disciples weren't just individual men who followed Jesus, but they became close, personal friends. They broke bread together, traveled together, and did life together. Jesus knew that these men would continue to teach and heal in His name. Jesus also knew that these men would be mocked, ridiculed, and even persecuted. Jesus just wanted to make sure that they could build the community around Jesus together with the Holy Spirit's help.

Quickly discuss with the person next to you: Looking at how much of this prayer is spent praying for his friends and praying for others, what does this teach us about what Jesus valued?

Read John 17:20-26

As Jesus wraps up this prayer, he prays for everyone. Now, looking at John 17:21-23, it can get a bit confusing. Let's break it down verse by verse so we understand who/what Jesus is praying for:

John 17:21 Jesus wants us to be one/united with each other in the same way He and God are one. He wants us to be in/connected to/united with Himself and God because in that way the world will believe that God sent Jesus.

John 17:22 God gave Jesus glory and Jesus passed it on to us, his believers, so that we may be united just like He and God are united.

John 17:23 Jesus in us, and God in Jesus, so that we, His followers may be perfectly united, and because of that the world will see that

- a) God sent Jesus, and
- b) God loves us the way He loves Jesus

To sum it all up: Jesus wants everyone to know that God has sent Him and be united in Jesus' love and salvation. We are united through God in our faith, and we can take live that unity so the world may know Jesus' name. God loves us and gives us gifts and brings us together as one. With that final prayer, Jesus ends his prayer and rejoins the disciples who were keeping watch and begins his journey to the cross.

## Application

*Leader Says:* We can never be done learning about Jesus and all He did during His time on earth. He taught about who God is and what He will do/has done for us. He showed us our need for a Savior as well as mercy and grace. He got down and washed the disciple's feet and told us to go and do likewise.

One thing we can look at is how Jesus modeled the importance of prayer. We see it throughout the gospels and the entire New Testament. Jesus gives us certain words in prayers like the Lord's Prayer and he models other prayers for us to hear. Most importantly, Jesus' prayers remind us that God wants to hear from us.

Prayer can be an intimidating thing, especially in public. You don't want to say the wrong thing or sound like a fool in front of God or others. Maybe you don't pray as much as you should because you find it hard to concentrate and you become easily distracted. But prayer shouldn't be unapproachable or scary. Instead, prayer should be this time where you get to talk to your Heavenly Father.

God knows your life and your heart. In prayer God gives you opportunity to lay your burdens at your feet, knowing and trusting that He will carry them with ease. With a God who knows all things, we can be honest in prayer with just like Jesus was in the garden. We can also focus our prayers on not just ourselves, but on others who need God's help.

It's possible that you might need some prompts to help you pray and that's ok! We're going to spend some time looking at three different Psalms of prayer. The prayers have different tones so you can pick the one that best fits where you're at in your life right now. First, you'll read them a couple of times. Then you'll underline words or phrases that stick out to you. Finally, you'll take that Psalm and put it in your own words as a prayer to God. This is sometime between you and God. After a couple of minutes, we'll break up into small groups before coming back together for our closing activity

*Feel free to change up the flow of the evening. If you'd rather do small group and then during the normal reflection time, work in some time with the Psalm, that's great! Do whatever works best for your context.*

## Small Group Discussion

1. What's difficult about prayer? (Encourage honesty)
2. How can the Holy Spirit help us to pray regularly and with the right focus?
3. Look at this same prayer in the other gospels: Matthew 26:39, 42, 44, Mark 14:32-36, and Luke 22:39-46. Which gospels are the similarities and what are the differences?
4. Thinking through the Psalm activity. What was easy about it? What was hard about it?
5. If you were Jesus, what would be going through your mind as you prayed that prayer in the garden?
6. Share highs and lows and pray as a group

## Closing Activity

*Leader Says:* Let's spend some time on our own pondering or journaling the same three questions we've been looking at:

1. What does this story reveal about God?
2. What does this story reveal about me?
3. How does this story prompt me to pray?

If you need a refresher on the story, spend some time looking through John 17. Then after the time is up, we'll close in prayer.

*After reflection time,* as you head into this week, be mindful of what your prayers look like. Look for new opportunities to pray. Remember: God just wants to hear from his children. Let's pray.

Dear God,

God, we thank you for being the God who is always ready to listen. Remind us to come to you in everything and with anything. There will be times where we know that we need to pray but we're not sure exactly what to pray. God, remind us that when we're in those places, that we trust the Holy Spirit to intercede on our behalf. Always remind us we don't have to hide from you because you already know our hearts and our world.

In Your name we pray,

Amen.

## Prayer Psalm Options

### Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin!  
For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you may be justified in your words  
and blameless in your judgment.  
Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.  
Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,  
and you teach me wisdom in the secret  
heart.  
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit.  
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.  
Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God,  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your  
righteousness.  
O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.  
For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would  
give it;

you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will  
not despise.  
Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
build up the walls of Jerusalem;  
then will you delight in right sacrifices,  
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

### Psalm 13

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?  
How long must I take counsel in my soul  
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?  
How long shall my enemy be exalted over  
me?  
Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;  
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of  
death,  
lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"  
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.  
But I have trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.  
I will sing to the Lord,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

## Psalm 139

O Lord, you have searched me and known me!  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from afar.  
You search out my path and my lying down  
and are acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.  
You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is high; I cannot attain it.  
Where shall I go from your Spirit?  
Or where shall I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there!  
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!  
If I take the wings of the morning  
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me.  
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light about me be night,"  
even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light with you.  
For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother's  
womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully  
made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.  
My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes saw my unformed substance;  
in your book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.  
How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
If I would count them, they are more than the  
sand.  
I awake, and I am still with you.  
Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!  
O men of blood, depart from me!  
They speak against you with malicious intent;  
your enemies take your name in vain.  
Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?  
And do I not loathe those who rise up  
against you?  
I hate them with complete hatred;  
I count them my enemies.  
Search me, O God, and know my heart!  
Try me and know my thoughts!  
And see if there be any grievous way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting!