

PART 5 — THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE ON THE
SLOPES OF THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

ÉREMOS PLACE

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Garden of Gethsemane
Jesus spent the final
moments before His arrest
praying to His Father among
these olive groves.



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Church of All Nations

Built over the remains of a first century olive press in the Garden of Gethsemane, this church was constructed by Christians from all over the world.



ANCHOR TEXT: Please read Luke 22:39-44 for the context to this lesson.

GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

In the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life, we get occasional glimpses into His day-to-day schedule. Mark 1:35 offers one of those quick glances: "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."

Solitary. This is a translation from the original Greek word, *éremos*, which means "deserted," "abandoned," or "isolated." It conveys the image of a wilderness place, an area far off the beaten path, somewhere you wouldn't go without intentionally choosing to.

During the second half of His ministry, when Jesus was in the city of **Capernaum** on the Sea of Galilee's northwestern shore, the whole town wanted a piece of Him (Mark 1:33). This Prophet and Rabbi was changing lives, and even His touch had the power to drive out demons and disease (1:34)! Crowds gathered all around Him late into the evening, desperate to be healed (1:32).

Jesus had a long day. But even before the sun had risen the next morning, He got out of bed, went someplace quiet, and spent time alone with His Father (Mark 1:35).

At this point, Christ's disciples were still only beginning to share a life-on-life

relationship with Him. (Remember *diatribō* from Part 1?) They didn't yet know Jesus' schedule or how He prioritized His time, so they grew frantic once they woke up and realized He was gone (Mark 1:36). Already, the crowds began pressing in on them again. When Simon and the others finally found Jesus, they exclaimed, "Everyone is looking for you" (1:37). Jesus' reply was not what they had expected. "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." (Mark 1:38)

Four hundred years before Jesus' ministry, the prophet Malachi foresaw that the Messiah would come with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2). And Jesus did deliver many people from suffering and pain. But

as He spent time alone with His Father in the *éremos* place, Jesus understood His ministry's fuller purpose. Christ, the eternal Son of God, entered into our world not only to bring physical healing, but to destroy sin's separation between us and God. He came to lay down His life for the salvation of the world, and to raise up disciples who would take His Gospel to the nations. This was His ultimate work of healing.

Later, Jesus shared another *éremos* moment with His Father on a mountain about two miles from Capernaum. By this time, the number of His followers had multiplied. But Jesus still had only so many hours in the day. Which of His disciples would He pour into, so that they could then invest in others?



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Garden of Gethsemane

These gnarled and knotted olive trees east of Jerusalem are ancient, some more than 1,000 years old.

All night long, Christ prayed to His Father (Luke 6:12). By daybreak, Jesus knew with absolute certainty which men the Father had given Him to lead and mentor (6:13). He called the 12 disciples by name from the crowd that had gathered, and He began to preach His famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-2).

In that same region, when Jesus heard that Herod Antipas had beheaded John the Baptist (Matthew 14:12), He withdrew in a boat onto the Sea of Galilee. As He drifted along, bringing His grief before the Father, Christ noticed a great crowd moving along the shore (14:13). These people—numbering over 5,000—were likely followers of John. As His sadness bore heavily upon Him in the midst of His *éremos* place, Jesus compassionately entered their sorrow as well.

Just as Isaiah predicted 700 years before, Jesus was the “man of suffering, and familiar with pain” (Isaiah 53:3). He comforted the crowds, feeding them and teaching them about the Father’s heart. But in that moment, the people wanted to crown Christ as their King (John 6:15). Perhaps they had grown weary of watching their spiritual heroes turn into martyrs. They wanted God’s Kingdom to come in power, and to come at once.

Jesus knew He was the Messiah, God’s promised King. But because of His communion with the Father in those *éremos* spaces, He also knew this was neither the time nor the way that the Kingdom of God would come. Jesus dismissed the crowd, and even sent away His closest disciples, so He could be

alone once more with His Father. After coming down from that seaside hill, Jesus brought His disciples north to **Caesarea Philippi** (Matthew 16:13). There, He made the Father’s timing perfectly clear to them: At Passover, He would be nailed to a cross (Matthew 16:21). And on the third day, He would rise again victorious.

Throughout His three-year ministry, Jesus regularly led His disciples on 80-mile pilgrimages from Capernaum to the city of **Jerusalem** in Judea. They often traveled south to the capital for the recurring feasts and celebrations of the Hebrew calendar (John 2:13). The last of Jesus’ *éremos* moments recorded in Scripture took place after He and the disciples shared the Passover meal for the last time (Luke 22:14).

After the meal, the Bible says “Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him” (Luke 22:39). Notice those words, *as usual*. Not only did Christ make it a priority to get away with His Father, but He invited His disciples out to prayer retreats so consistently that it became a regular part of their lives. Scripture continues: “On reaching the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you will not fall into temptation’” (Luke 22:39-40). Catch that: *the place*. Not only did Jesus maintain a rhythm of prayer, but He had also designated a special place to get alone with God.



“JESUS WENT OUT AS USUAL TO THE
MOUNT OF OLIVES, AND HIS DISCIPLES
FOLLOWED HIM.”

LUKE 22:39



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WE ALL NEED TO FIND OUR
ÉREMOS PLACE.
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Whenever Jesus went down to Jerusalem, that special place was the **Garden of Gethsemane**. Gethsemane, meaning “oil press,” was an olive grove on the eastern side of the Kidron Valley outside the city walls. Here, olives were gathered and pressed into the precious oil used in lamps to light up the evening sky. It was here that Jesus “knelt down and prayed” (Luke 22:41), filled with such anguish that “his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (22:44).

In that moment, Jesus was being crushed beneath the weight of our sin and the holy judgment of God that would fall upon Him in our place. As He looked ahead to the cross, He prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). It might sound like Jesus was on the verge of running away, but look a little closer.

When Christ came to this final *éremos* place, He brought the men whom the Father chose for Him (John 17:6). Jesus submitted Himself to His Father’s timing and surrendered entirely to His Father’s will (17:4). What was He doing here? Laying down His life, freely and in perfect obedience (10:18). Even against the darkest darkness, His light shone bright (1:5).

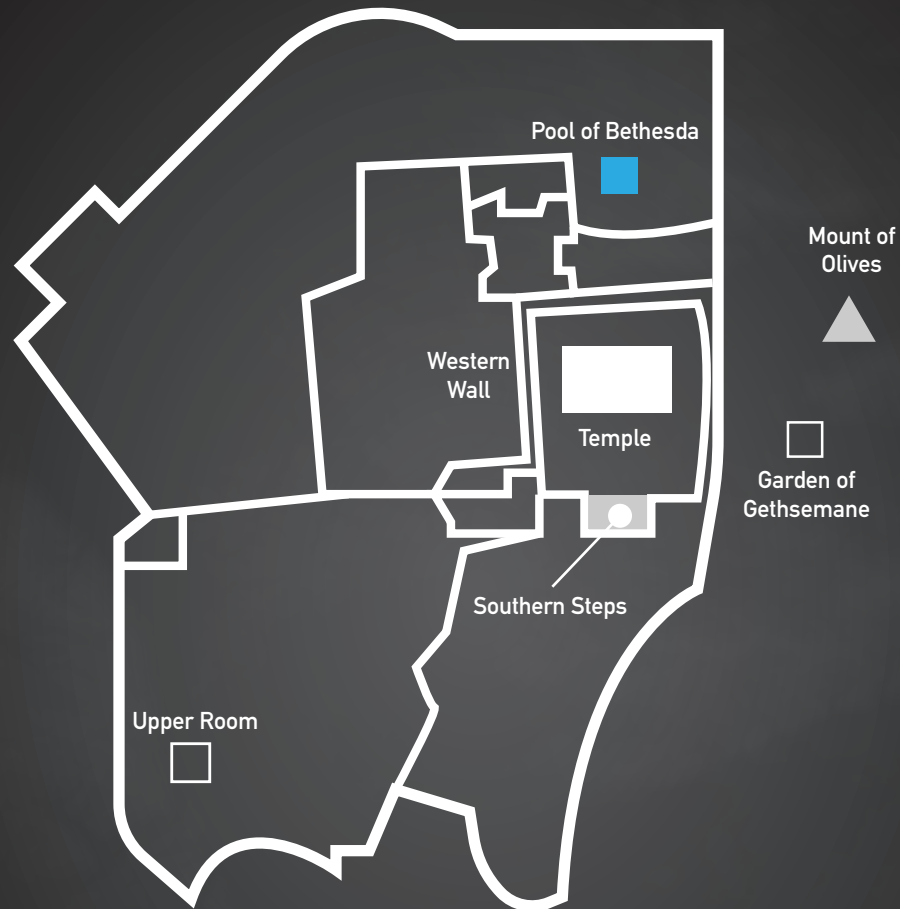
Jesus only had to look across the valley to see the temple looming over Jerusalem’s walls. There His enemies were gathering to arrest Him. He could have gone anywhere else in the city and escaped capture that

night. Instead, He prayed in the place that even Judas, the betrayer, was familiar with (John 18:2). Judas didn’t need to guess where Christ would be that night. He’d be in His usual place; He’d be praying in Gethsemane.

We will never know the excruciation that Jesus endured in the garden and on the cross—because He bore it all in our place. But all of us will face difficulties and trials in this life. Because Christ laid down His life on our behalf, we can come to God with absolute confidence, freely entering our Heavenly Father’s presence. When we’re too busy or too drained, when we have questions or need direction, when we’re in danger or in need, we can get alone with God.

**WE CAN COME TO GOD WITH
ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE,
FREELY ENTERING OUR
HEAVENLY FATHER’S PRESENCE.**

We all need to find our *éremos* place: a regular rhythm and a special place where we can open our Bibles, open our lips in prayer, and seek His “grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).



JERUSALEM IN JESUS' TIME

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- ¹ What is your *éremos* place—that special place where you meet with God alone to pray and read His Word? Do you maintain a regular rhythm of specific devotional habits?
- ² Jesus often withdrew in order to submit Himself to His Father's timing, direction, and will. Describe a time when you sought God's leading or His will. What was that experience like?
- ³ What are some distractions that keep you from getting alone with God in the *éremos* place?
- ⁴ The Garden of Gethsemane wasn't just a familiar place for Jesus—His disciples also knew it well. This was a place where He modeled devotion and prayer for them. Do you have someone in your life for whom you can model a regular rhythm of prayer and Bible reading?
- ⁵ If you could get alone with God right now, what would you ask?

🕒 EXTRA INFO

The Greek word *éremos* means “solitary,” “lonely,” “desolate,” or “uninhabited.” This word is often used to describe places such as a desert, wilderness, or lonely regions. This word is used about 50 times in the New Testament, often to describe places where God sent people in order to have an intimate encounter with Him. These were places for refinement, testing, dependence, and growth.

Jesus brought His disciples to Caesarea Philippi to tell them His Father's plan and timing for His death and resurrection (Matthew 16:21). This Roman settlement contained many altars to idols, false gods, and even demons. Jesus chose this area of confused worship to ask the question, “Who do you say that I am?” (16:15). In that same area of Caesarea Philippi, a Roman temple was built in front of the mouth of a large cave, considered by the Romans to be the gates into Hades. With this scene in the backdrop, Jesus made the powerful declaration of His reign and His Kingdom's power: “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (16:18).

Christ's dedication to getting alone with His Father is evident by how many locations He selected to retreat in prayer. Not only did Jesus choose several *éremos* places around Capernaum, where He spent most of His ministry, but He also made it a priority to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane whenever He made the 80-mile journey down to Jerusalem.

The Gospels record 33 instances when Jesus prayed. His ministry began with prayer (Luke 3:21-23; 4:1-2) and ended with prayer (Luke 23:46; John 19:30). Christ also established several rhythms of prayer: often He would pray in the morning (Mark 1:35), and sometimes all night long (Luke 6:12). If Jesus, the perfect Son of God, so prioritized prayer, how much more should we?