

EXPERIENCE THE LAND AND THE BOOK

When Jesus Stopped to Pray

John 17



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The hardest work we can do is “knee” work. We’ll find anything else easier to do than pray. Yet Jesus not only told us that we “ought to pray and not to lose heart” (Luke 18:1), He showed us by praying Himself. After the last meal Jesus shared with His disciples but before the soldiers came for Him in Gethsemane, Jesus let us eavesdrop on His talk with the Father. Often called the High Priestly Prayer, John 17 is one of the most remarkable and longest intercessions in all of God’s Word. From it, we can learn how to pray and get a glimpse into Jesus’ great love for us.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. The Southern Steps—the Holy Place Where Jesus Prayed

During their last meal together, Jesus told His disciples that it was time for Him to go, but He encouraged them with the promise that He would return (John 14:1–3). After the meal, they all left the Upper Room.

The streets were deserted as they made their way toward the Kidron ravine en route to Gethsemane, as was often their practice. Somewhere on the way, Jesus paused. Perhaps He leaned up against a building near the temple where the torches burned all night at Passover, or maybe He sat on the southern staircase leading to the Temple Mount; either way, He let His disciples enter with Him into prayer.

2. Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer (John 17)

Jesus’ prayer is a wonderful study in simplicity because it divides nicely into three sections:

- **His prayer for Himself (17:1–5)**

As Jesus began His prayer, He asked God to bring Him glory through what would come in the following hours. He had enjoyed glory with the Father in heaven in eternity past, and He longed to have that same glory again—but He had to get there by way of death. And by His death, both Father and Son were glorified.



Quotable

*Jesus deliberately
chose not to take us
out of the world,
but to protect us
through it.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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- **His prayer for the disciples (John 17:6–19)**

Jesus spent most of His time praying for the protection and sanctification of His disciples. Jesus entrusted His disciples to His Father's care with several requests:

Jesus asked His Father to *insulate* the disciples (17:15–16): Jesus didn't ask the Father to *remove* the disciples from the world; He wanted the world to observe and be touched by them.

Jesus asked His Father to *sanctify* the disciples (17:17–19): He prayed that they would fulfill the purpose for which they had been set apart.

- **His prayer for all believers (17:20–26)**

Beginning with those first followers of Christ, generation after generation of people have believed in Christ "through [the disciples'] message" (17:20 NIV)—including our own generation.

Jesus asked for *unity of belief* (17:21–23). Jesus asked not for uniformity or unanimity but unity—a unity like God's, the kind of unity that exists between the Father and the Son (17:21–22).

Jesus asked *that we would one day be with Him* (17:24). Heaven is not only a place; it includes a person. We will see our glorious Savior face-to-face (1 Corinthians 13:21).

Jesus prayed for our *relationships* (John 17:25–26). Jesus prayed that His followers would love with the love modeled by His relationship with His Father—love that is demonstrated, reaches out, grows, and is expressed. We love like this through the amazing power of the Holy Spirit.



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LET'S LIVE IT

Jesus' prayer reveals three contrasts. First, on His way to suffer and die, He had us on His mind. Second, though He was leaving the world, He deliberately chose to leave us *in* the world. Third, His plan for the church is not uniformity or unanimity—but unity.

Prayer is easily talked about, wonderful to aspire to, yet often left undone. Today, rather than just discussing the good that prayer does, let's actually do it!



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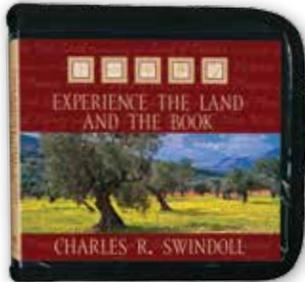
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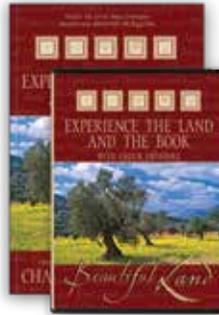
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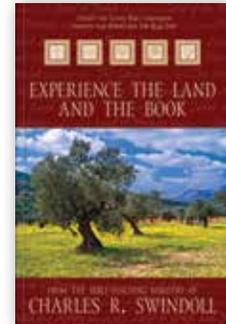
Tools for Digging Deeper



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