

SCC Small Group Discussion
Letting Go of Control – Matthew 26:36-40

Derived from a sermon on February 8, 2026 by Dr. Jeff Chandler

Getting Started:

Recall a difficult decision you had to make. What priorities or factors did you consider most heavily?

How did you have to mentally, emotionally, or spiritually struggle throughout the process? Who did you rely on for encouragement, guidance, or support throughout that time?

Searching the Scriptures:

³⁶ Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” ³⁹ Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” ⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter.

Matthew 26:36-40

1. The name Gethsemane means “olive press”, located on the Mount of Olives, nearly 200 feet above Jerusalem. How does this make it a perfect setting for the difficult decision Jesus wrestled with?

2. What “cup” was Jesus referring to in verse 39? (See Jeremiah 25:15-29) What insight does this shed on the Lord’s Supper, which Jesus and His disciples had just left?

3. Do you think it was the physical pain Jesus dreaded most, or something else?

4. Why do you think Matthew included the detail that Jesus fell facedown to pray? What does that indicate about the nature of prayer and the inward sentiment of Jesus that night?

5. Why did Jesus ask the disciples to go with him? What might Jesus have wanted them to see and learn as a result?

6. Why was it so hard for the disciples to stay awake? If they had understood the magnitude of what was about to happen, might they have acted differently?

7. How does understanding that the cross is the will of God impact the way we view the crucifixion? How does it impact the way we view Jesus' prayer in the garden?

Personal Application:

What's an area of your life where you are sensing a need to give up control and leave the outcome to God?

What did Jesus' instructions to his disciples in the garden (to remain alert with him and to pray) reveal about the way we can walk with people facing hardship or difficult choices?

Get discussion questions in word format & link to Bible App plan for this week at www.sequimcommunitychurch.org/downloads