

John 17: Overview and Discussion Questions

After Jesus gives what is His last sermon to the disciples, He begins to pray. This is a beautiful prayer where Jesus expresses His love for the Father, the disciples, and all future believers – His church. **Considering that Jesus knew that soon He will face death, it is striking that His instinctive response is to pray. And not merely to pray for Himself, but for those around Him.** When we encounter trials or difficult circumstances, often our first response is to panic, to rely on our own wisdom, and to think about ourselves and our own suffering. However, Jesus models a life that, when confronted with challenges, turns to God first and seeks opportunities to minister to others.

What does Jesus pray for? **The first part of His prayer focuses on His relationship with the Father.** He has done all that the Father has asked, and His mission is nearly complete. Jesus acknowledges that God the Father had given Him authority to grant eternal life to all who believe. Now, Jesus asks the Father that He would be glorified with the same glory that He had with the Father before the creation of the world. Here Jesus affirms an important aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity – that Jesus was not created by God, but co-eternal with Him along with the Holy Spirit. He and the Father are one substance, yet two distinct persons. Jesus left the glory of Heaven to be incarnated as a human man. And now He asks the Father that He would return to Heaven in glory. Jesus is referring to His Resurrection, and despite His imminent journey towards death, He looks forward to the eternal hope and glory of reuniting with the Father.

Jesus then begins to pray for His disciples. This part of Jesus' prayer shows His tender heart for the men who have accompanied Him in His ministry for the past three years.

Jesus affirms that they belong to God, and we see that Jesus intercedes on behalf of His disciples before the Father. **He prays that God may keep them and that His truth may sanctify them – in other words, that the Holy Spirit may continue to refine them in knowledge and in His righteousness.** He also prays that they may be strong and united, especially as they too will undergo persecution because they have been called out of the world. Jesus prays to the Father that they would be protected from the evil one and that they may also know His joy fulfilled in themselves. Although the disciples may have thought that Jesus was abandoning them, nothing could be further from the truth. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus equips believers in proclaiming His truth and encourages them in every circumstance by His presence and the assured hope of eternity with Him.

Finally, Jesus prays for all believers present and future. Jesus' prayer for all of us – His church – focuses on two things: that we would be one together just as He is one with the Father, and that we would also experience His glory and that we would be together with Him in God's presence. How desperately the church needs unity today! However, this unity cannot come from human striving or wisdom. Rather, Jesus says that we as believers must be one in the Father and the Son. Our own individual fellowship with God through an abiding relationship with the Son is the foundational step for true Christian unity. Imagine a church where believers put God and others before themselves, their clubs, or their doctrines. The church's mission is to share Christ's love and grace to the world and give the world a taste of heaven's beauty: what it would look like to be in fellowship with God and with each other without sin's corrupting power getting in the way. If the church fails in this essential mission, is it any wonder why so many run far away from the church?

Read the passage prayerfully a few times over and then answer the questions: [John 17](#)

Questions:

1. What does Jesus' prayer reveal about His relationship with the Father? ([v. 1-6](#))
2. How does Jesus encourage the disciples through His prayer? What encourages you knowing that Christ intercedes for you before the Father? ([v. 6-19, cf. Romans 8:34, Hebrews 4:14-15, Hebrews 7:23-25; 1 John 2:1-2](#))
3. How does Jesus express His love and desire for His church through His prayer? ([v. 20-26](#))

Application:

1. What does Christian unity mean to you? Drawing from Scripture, think about some basic principles. ([cf. Acts 2:42-47, Romans 12, Romans 14, Ephesians 4:1-6, Galatians 3:27-29, Colossians 3:1-17, Philippians 2:1-4](#))
2. How can you apply these principles in your church community?

Conclusion & Heart Prayer:

Lord, what are You saying to me? And what are You calling me to do about it?