

Growth Hour Study & Discussion Guide

2/23/2020

John 17

Engage

In John chapter 17, Jesus is voicing a prayer for his disciples; both the ones following him physically in that day, and those following him still today. He is, in many ways, calling out a legacy that those who are redeemed would strive to live up to, until his return.

Let's pause and think for a moment about legacy – your legacy. Who comes behind you, and if you could voice a prayer for them in their hearing, what would it be? What would you call out for their lives, be they a child, a spouse, a neighbor, or friend?

Discuss

1. When Jesus says in v. 1 that “the time has come” what is He talking about?
2. What does v. 2 tell us about the way in which God saves? Why is this comforting?
3. How does Jesus describe eternal life in v.3? Why do you think Jesus described eternal life that way?
4. What profound truths do vv. 5 and 17 reveal about who Jesus is?
5. List all the things Jesus declares he has done for the disciples and all the things he prays for the disciples (vv.6-19). Discuss the significance, and the encouragement we get, from each point. What has Jesus done for the disciples? What does Jesus pray for the disciples?
6. Who is Jesus praying for in vv.20-26 and what does He pray for?
7. How important is unity within the Christian church? Explain your answer.
8. Who is the one who will ensure that God will continue to be revealed (v.26)? Why is this encouraging for the church as it continues the mission of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus?

Study

Jesus' Prayer for Us: John 17

The intimate Upper Room experience concludes with Jesus' prayer. This is a prayer for us, His people in the world. “I will remain in the world no longer,” Jesus said, “but they are still in the world.”

Jesus had described the world's hostility that we will face. Now what will He ask for us? What is His deepest desire?

Glory (John 17:1–5). Jesus first spoke to the Father about Himself, thus giving us a model. “I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do.” This work finished, God would lift Jesus to His presence again and give His Son the glory that “I had with You before the world began.”

We live in the world now, but this world is not the end! The end for us, as for Jesus, is glory in the very presence of the Father. The word “glory” speaks literally of brightness, splendor, radiance. Expanded to denote the majesty and sublimity of God, it carries a sense of magnificence and splendor. In the verb form it means more than “to praise or honor”; it means to “clothe in splendor.”

With Jesus’ work on earth finished, He returned to the Father to be clothed again with the splendor that was His from eternity past. For Jesus, life in this world had a purpose. Christ lived to reveal and to glorify God. But life in this world was only a momentary experience for Christ.

How good to know that for us as well, life in this world is only a momentary experience. Like Jesus, we will be lifted by the Father when our work here is accomplished. Then we too will be clothed in a splendor like Jesus’ own. While we are on earth we may never know the glory God intends for us, but one day we will see Jesus, and then, “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Our destiny is to be clothed with our Lord in splendor.

Manifest Your name (John 17:6–10). What is the work God has for us on earth? To be “great”? To be noted evangelists? To be famous teachers? To be known and respected by all? Hardly. God wants a very simple thing, which every believer, no matter how humble, can share in fully. *God wants us to manifest (make known) His name.* We have received Jesus’ words (v. 8) and believed in Him. Now we are to live out those words on earth. The quality of our lives is what will make plain to those around us the character of God. Each of us can brighten the world around us by reaching out to others with a grace and love that are like God’s own.

Sanctified (John 17:11–19). Christ then prayed that God will guard us while we live in the world’s hostile environment. “My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one.” He asked that we be sanctified by God’s truth, that is, that we will be set apart to a holy way of life, and then “sent into the world” (v. 18). We are to not only witness to, but are to personally experience Christ’s joy as we become more and more like Him. And we have Jesus’ added promise that He consecrates Himself to aid our growth in godliness.

Reproductive (John 17:20–26). Jesus then emphasized the fact that He was not praying just for the 11 disciples, but for “those who will believe in Me through their message.” You and I, and our local fellowships, along with all believers throughout the centuries are included in this great commitment of Jesus and His Father to all who belong to Them.

The society of those who belong to Jesus is a community that grows in love and then multiplies. Jesus is still reaching out, through you and me, to rescue men and women lost in sin.

There is, of course, one source and one source only for the strength we need to live a God-glorifying life. This is our union with Jesus Christ. Jesus lived in union with the Father, drawing on Him for strength and power. As we are “brought to complete unity” with Jesus and the Father, then the world will know that Christ has sent us and that He loves us still.

♥ **Link to Life: Youth / Adult**

Ask each group member to read through Jesus’ prayer, and underline specific requests. Then each is to determine one way that he or she can be an answer to Christ’s prayer this coming week.

Then as a group work through the verses and phrases each person has underlined, to develop a shared understanding of what Christ has prayed for.

Finally, go around the group and ask each to share how he or she can personally be an answer to Jesus’ prayer this week.

TEACHING GUIDE

Prepare

Use Jesus' prayer as a model as you pray for your group.

Explore

1. Launch class with a debate on the greatest danger to a Christian from the world: is it conformity to the ways and attitudes of the world, or a withdrawal from the world (a separation or isolation), which keeps us from having an influence on people around us and on our society? See "link-to-life," for hints on how to set up and conduct the debate.
2. Or make a copy of the italicized sentence in the commentary. Do your group members agree or disagree with this strong statement of a need for Christians to be involved in the world? What do your members think the author is asking for? (Ask for illustrations of good and bad involvement.) And, how are your group members currently acting out this kind of positive involvement that Jesus called for?

Expand

1. Living in the world is a constant challenge. Divide your group in halves to study John 15:18–16:33. One group will look at the problems, the other at the resources God has provided. See how to guide this activity by looking at "link-to-life."
2. Or study Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. You may want to begin with a minilecture, emphasizing the importance of living in union with Jesus (see *overview*). But then involve your group in an inductive study of this prayer, as suggested in "link-to-life."

Apply

Ask each person to write a prayer for his or her children (present or future) reflecting one important thing learned in this study.

Then share the prayers, by offering them to God.¹

The Lord's Prayer (John 17:1–26)

The passage.—If any words of Jesus deserve to be called "his prayer," these would merit that title. "He lifted up his eyes to heaven" (v. 1). This is his prayer for his people, his church—then and now.

It is noteworthy that on this last night, in three places, Jesus was in prayer: at the supper, here, and in Gethsemane. In the quiet and deserted street of the old city, by the light of the moon, Jesus and his disciples stood still and hushed. He addressed God as his Father. The burden of the prayer was that God should be glorified. To do that, the Son must be glorified (v. 1)

Special points.—"Glorify" is an important word. To us it means to make great. To Jesus it meant to reveal the true character of someone. In the New Testament the word always involved the manifesting

¹ Richards, L. O. (1987). [*The teacher's commentary*](#) (pp. 748–749). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

the purpose of something in keeping with its nature. A peach, then, is the glory of a peach tree. The ultimate purpose of the seed and the bloom is to produce the fruit. There is no other way for a peach tree to be “glorified” except to produce peaches. Jesus came to fulfil God’s design.

In the entire prayer, this was Christ’s only personal petition. It related only to the purpose of the Father to redeem men by the cross. Jesus wanted his own “glory” to be in that purpose (v. 3). And as the time of death approached, the whole redemptive plan of God drew close to realization. All sacrifice was now to find its true meaning.

Jesus had a keen awareness of his mission (v. 4). He declared that he had “finished” his work. It is the same word he would utter on the cross. It reflected in him utter satisfaction. There was no failure or incompleteness of his assigned mission. Jesus called it his “work.”

In apparent anticipation of the events of the morrow, Jesus remembered his nearness to God in the beginning (v. 5). One’s mind is immediately taken back to the first verse of John. How clearly the author saw the divinity of Jesus. So, it is obvious that the cross was not the end. It was a climax. For one who is God there would be a return to that status after his release from the imprisoning flesh.

One of Jesus’ petitions was for the oneness of his disciples (v. 11). In the sentence he referred to God as “Holy Father.” It is the only instance in the New Testament of this excellent address to God in prayer. The high ideal of “that they may be one” is modified by a condition: “as we are.” The basis for unity of believers is obviously to be found in like natures with one another. This was the case in the identical natures of Jesus and God. A basic harmony is required. And the kinship must be with the Father, not of human agreement.

Truth for today.—The close of the prayer from verse 15 sets forth Christ’s high expectancy of us. He asked that we not be taken out of the world. There is no escape for us from the perpetual task of changing sons of evil to sons of God. This clear statement is always a warning to Christians.

We are to be *in* and *with* the world, always touching it, always changing it. But we are not to be of its nature. Our spirit must prevail; not the world’s. This is the call to apartness, not to aloofness. No glory comes to Christ by reason of our isolation. Jesus prayed for us to be *in* the world. It is our job to stay there!²

² Allen, J. P. (1972). [John](#). In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The teacher’s Bible commentary* (pp. 682–683). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.