



Previously in John

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- In **Chapter 16**, he warned his disciples of persecution, which would come after his departure.
- At the same time, by way of comfort, he pointed out that he had overcome the world.
- He also promised that they would receive the Holy Spirit, who would be with them permanently.

# John 17 Introduction

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*It is in prayer, costly, sustained and prevailing, that the Word of God is released through teaching and preaching. Prayer is the price of power, and the church of Jesus Christ is not likely to recover its lost authority until this basic biblical truth is recovered.<sup>1</sup>*

*– Bruce Milne, Canadian Pastor and Bible Teacher*



# John 17 Introduction

- All four Gospels tell us how much Jesus prayed.
- We might call this the (real) **Lord's Prayer**, since it is the longest prayer of Jesus that we have on record.
- For centuries many have labeled it the **High Priestly Prayer**, as in heading of the ESV Bible.
- There are three themes: glory, security, and unity.

# John 17    Key Verses

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- John 17:20-21 (ESV)

<sup>20</sup> I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

# John 17 Outline

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1. Christ's Personal Prayer 17:1-5
2. Prayer for the Disciples 17:6-19
3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

# 1. Christ's Personal Prayer 17:1-5

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- 17:1 When Jesus had spoken these words
- This prayer is connected to all that came before.
- It is, in a sense, the climax of Christ's ministry prior to the cross.

# 1. Christ's Personal Prayer 17:1-5

- **17:1** **Father** Jesus calls God “**Father**” six times during this one prayer.
- **Father** is an intimate family term – not one for a distant deity.
- But it highlights that Jesus, as Son, is distinct from God the Father – they are not one and the same.

# 1. Christ's Personal Prayer 17:1-5

- 17:1 the hour has come
- Before this time Jesus had emphasized that his hour had not yet come – now it has.
- He is about to go to the cross.
- This was his primary purpose in coming to earth.
- More than anything else, Jesus came to die in order to defeat sin and death.

# 1. Christ's Personal Prayer 17:1-5

- 17:1 glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.
- Glory is the main thing Jesus prays for himself.
- This would almost sound utterly self-seeking if we did not know it meant going to the cross.

# 1. Christ's Personal Prayer 17:1-5

- The same principle applies to us.
- **Romans 8:16-17** (ESV)

<sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

# 1. Christ's Personal Prayer 17:1-5

- 17:2-3 eternal life
- What a fascinating way to describe eternal life!
- It is, first of all, eternal or everlasting – never ending.
- It is not, however, the same old life without end.
- It is described as our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ – the title Jesus calls himself.

# 1. Christ's Personal Prayer 17:1-5

- 17:4-5 glorified, glorify, glory
- Again, it is through the cross that the glory of God is made known to a lost world.
- This is the first of the three themes of glory, security and unity.
- Now on to security.

## 2. Prayer for the Disciples 17:6-19

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- 17:11, 15 keep them
- This is the security, which Christ prays for his disciples.
- They will no longer have Jesus to look at and to follow.
- And they will have to fight off the evil one, as Judas never truly did.

## 2. Prayer for the Disciples 17:6-19

- John 17:12 (ESV)

While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

## 2. Prayer for the Disciples 17:6-19

- Here, pointing to Judas, Jesus quoted **Psalm 41:9**
- **John 13:18-19** (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' <sup>19</sup> I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.

## 2. Prayer for the Disciples 17:6-19

- 17:14-18 From these verses we understand what it means to be **in the world** but not **of the world**.
- Our connection with Jesus is what separates us from the world.
- We are sent into the world to represent Jesus much like those first apostles.
- The word “**sent**” (**v.18**) is related to the word **apostle**.

## 2. Prayer for the Disciples 17:6-19

- 17:17, 19 sanctify, word, truth
- The truth of God's word is essential to our sanctification.
- Sanctification – to be clear – is that process by which our lives are made holy.
- We might call it the process by which we are made true or by which we conform to the word of God.

## 2. Prayer for the Disciples 17:6-19

*As we read the instructions of the Bible, we are urged to obey them, and resolving to do so, with God's help, makes us grow in holiness. Being exposed to the Scriptures also exposes us to the nature of God ...*

*– Ajith Fernando,  
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka*



## 2. Prayer for the Disciples 17:6-19

*... When we spend time with God in prayer and in the Word, his nature permeates us, causing us to change without our even realizing it. <sup>2</sup>*

*– Ajith Fernando,  
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka*



## 2. Prayer for the Disciples 17:6-19

- Staying close to Jesus is what keeps us spiritually safe though we are sent into the world.
- After first praying for **God's glory**, Jesus has now prayed for the **disciples' security**.
- In this next section he will pray for the church and his focus will be **unity**.

### 3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

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- One way to look at unity (or the lack of it) is in the different Christian denominations.
- There are **tens of thousands** of identifiable Christian groups – which, let's face it, is probably too many.
- This is a formal type of unity that certainly could be better, but it might not be the best place to start.

### 3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

- 17:20 Jesus calls the church “those who will believe in me through their word.”
- Think back on 17:6-8.
- Their word – the apostles’ word – is truly God’s word.
- The first step to Christian unity has to be firmly based in God’s word – the teaching of the apostles.

### 3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

- Acts 2:42 (ESV)

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

### 3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

- 17:21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us,
- The next foundational step toward Christian unity has to be unity in the Father and the Son.
- This begins when the Holy Spirit brings born-again believers in Jesus into the very life of the Trinity.

### 3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

- Remember **John 17:3**?

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

- Eternal life is found in sharing the very life that the Father and the Son already share.

### 3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

- 17:21 so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
- The third foundational step toward unity is unity in mission.

### 3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

- Walbert Buhlmann, a Catholic missions secretary in Rome, once said what many others also believe:

*In the past we had the so-called motive of saving souls ... Now, thanks be to God, we believe that all people and all religions are already living in the grace and love of God and will be saved by God's mercy.* <sup>3</sup>

### 3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

- That view flatly contradicts **John 3:16-18**,

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

### 3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

- 17:20-21 So again, the three foundational steps toward Christian unity are,

1. Unity in the teaching of the apostles.
2. Unity in the life of the Father and the Son.
3. Unity in mission to an unbelieving world – so that the world may believe.

### 3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

- 17:22-23 These verses reinforce those main points.
- 17:24-26 And from there we will share in the glory, the life and the love of God as he has planned it.
- And he has planned it since before the foundation of the world.

### 3. Prayer for the Church 17:20-26

- Finally, unity has to start at the local level.
- There is no sense in only speaking of unity in the church worldwide or on some grand scale.
- It has to start with us right here and right now.
- This is where we become the answer to Jesus' prayer.

# John 17    What We Just Read

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# John 17    Key Points

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1. Christ prayed for
  - God's glory
  - The disciples' security,
  - The church's unity.
2. We can pray for and work toward those same things.

# John 17    Key Points

3. Unity must be based on:
  - The teaching of the apostles.
  - The life of the Father and the Son.
  - Mission to an unbelieving world
4. And it has to start with us here and now.

# John 17    A Prayer

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- Father in Heaven,
- We join with Jesus in praying for your glory, knowing that this may mean our own suffering as we share in the sufferings of Christ.
- We also pray that you would keep us and all of those believers we know connected to yourself. We have seen many walk away over the years so we pray for security and stability in our faith.

# John 17    A Prayer

- We also pray for unity in the church.
- Help us to work toward unity based on your word – on the teaching that the apostles gave us from you.
- Help us to enjoy unity found in the shared life of the Father and the Son.
- And let us express that unity in mission to an unbelieving world.

# John 17    A Prayer

- Finally help us do whatever it takes to be united with our brothers and sisters in Christ here and now.
- And we pray these things to you Father, along with Jesus Christ your Son.
- Amen

## John 17    References

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3. Quoted in, Piper, John. *Desiring God*, Revised Edition (p. 297). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. (From *Time Magazine*, 27 December 1982)