

Being the Answer to Jesus' Prayer: A Study of John 17

Sixteen Brief Studies in Prayer by Rick Ezell

Pastor Rick Ezell uses Wednesday night prayer gatherings to teach short lessons on prayer to his church family. He has compiled a group of these to help you teach your church family about the vital subject of prayer.

Here is a list of the sixteen studies which are on the following pages ...

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For more help in teaching your church family about prayer, you may purchase the following studies from LifeWay Christian Resources ...

- [Growing Disciples - Pray In Faith](#) by T.W. Hunt & Claude King
- [And the Place Was Shaken: How to Lead a Powerful Prayer Meeting](#) by John Franklin
- [Disciple's Prayer Life: Walking in Fellowship with God](#) by T.W. Hunt and Catherine Walker

Other similar brief studies in prayer by Rick Ezell are available at LifeWay.com

- [Praying Like Jesus: 10 Brief Studies in Prayer](#)
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- [The Power of Praying in God's Name, 12 Brief Studies of Prayer](#)

Study 1

Introduction: The Priority of our Prayers

John 17:1-26

"I'm praying for you." When I hear those words I feel a quite peace come over my soul. I know that the person who utters those words care for me. I am touched for those are tender and kind words, akin to the words "I love you."

What if Jesus said, "I'm praying for you"? How would that make you feel? You know he did say those words and he did (and continues) to pray for you and me. Jesus said, "I pray for them" (v. 9). Jesus uttered those words in what is commonly known as "The High Priestly Prayer." This prayer was prayed just before Jesus was betrayed and arrested. Knowing that his death was imminent, you and I were on his mind. How's that for love? With the world shouting that he was a failure, and death knocking on his door, he intercedes before God for you and me. How's that for compassion? His thoughts during the final moments on earth are not on himself, but on others.

This prayer is the greatest prayer every prayed and the greatest prayer every recorded. John 17 is one of the highest mountain peaks of scripture, one of the loftiest passages in the entire Bible. The words are, indeed, sacred. They reveal the heart of Jesus in a unique way.

This is unquestionably the Lord's Prayer. The prayer that we often refer to as the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) would better be called The Disciple's Prayer because it reveals the depth of human helplessness. In the prayer of Jesus in John 17, recorded by John, it reveals the height of divine sufficiency. Before Jesus faced the cross, he prayed for his disciples, then and now.

The structure of the prayer is in three parts. First, Jesus looks upward as he magnifies the Father, knowing that his work on earth is finished (vv. 1-5); then Jesus looks outward as he prays for the well-being and care of his disciples, knowing that he is sending them into enemy territory (vv. 6-19); then Jesus looks forward as he prays for the unity and holiness of the future church, knowing that the world will base their belief of God on the actions of believers (vv. 20-23).

Why did Jesus pray this prayer? Obviously he was preparing himself for what lay before him and the suffering that we would endure. But he also had you and me on his mind. He was praying for us. He knew that believers are in a war. We would face opposition as we entered hostile territory. We need his life, his words, his protection, his care, his joy, his word, his glory, his love. As a people we need to be unified and sanctified for the world to know Jesus.

With Jesus' prayer as a model, our prayers are to reflect the will of God, not our will. Jesus had a much higher purpose in mind than merely taking care of our needs and wants. Through his praying he shows that prayer's highest aim is not to get our will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth.

Study 2

Glory: Throwing His Weight Around

John 17: 1, 4-5, 22

One cannot study John 17 without addressing the subject of glory. The word *glory* and its variations is used eight times in Jesus' prayer, five times in the first section where Jesus prays for himself.

This word *glory* can be confusing. Jesus said, "Glorify you Son" (v. 2); "I have glorified You on earth" (v. 4); "I have been glorified in them" (v. 10); "they will see My glory" (v. 24). Sometimes the word is used as a noun and sometimes as a verb. What does it all mean? The basic meaning of the Hebrew word *kabod* translated glory is heavy in weight. The noun *glory* means the weighty importance and shining majesty which accompany God's presence. The verb *glorified* means to give weight to or to give honor to. "To give glory" is to praise, to recognize the importance of another. The Greek word is *doxa*, which, by the way, is where we get the term doxology. As it relates to God, it means to recognize the essential nature of his Godness that gives him importance and weight in relationships to us humans. When we glorify someone we display their dignity, their worth, their importance, their fame. And, sometimes the word *glory* as in verse 24 refers to heaven.

Jesus prays that he would glorify the Father (v. 1). Simply stated, Jesus lived to glorify his Father. He lived that God would be famous, that people would recognize the importance of his Father. Did you notice in the definition of glory the word *weight*? We often say of some people who think they are important that they are throwing their weight around. If anyone could have thrown their weight around it would have been Jesus. But instead he sought to show the importance of God. He wanted people to understand and recognize the weighty importance of God in their lives. He lived his life so that God would be glorified (v. 4).

Question: Do we pray and live so that people see the importance, the weight, of God? The sole purpose of our lives is to live in such a way that God is made known, that people see his importance. We answer Jesus' prayer by extending the influence of God in the world.

Jesus prays that he might receive glory (v. 5). This is not a self-serving request; he's simply asking to receive back what was his to begin with. Remember Jesus gave up his rights as God and became a human, in fact, a slave, and then died on a cross (Phil. 2:6-8). Jesus laid aside his preincarnate glory with the Father when he came to earth to be born, to serve, to suffer, and to die. Since his work on earth is finished, he is asking that his preincarnate glory be given to him again. The reason is that the Son might glorify the Father in heaven.

Imagine as difficult as it is what Jesus did. He left heaven became a human to die for the people he created. If you or I became an ant to save an ant hill would not even come close in comparison to the measure that Jesus went for us. If anyone could "bask in the glory" for what they had done it would be Jesus. But Jesus chooses not to bask in his glory but rather reflect that glory back to God.

Question: Do we live and pray so that so God can bask in glory? The chief end of many people, believers included, is to glorify themselves rather than God. Glorifying God is not their objective; their real goal is glorifying themselves. God is reduced to an errand boy.

Jesus prays that we will receive glory (v. 22). Jesus is asking that the same glory that God gave him will be given to us his disciples. He is praying that we will have the same kind of weight, importance, fame. That's an amazing thought isn't it? We possess the glory of God within us. There is a weight, an importance, to our beings. Not because of what we are but because of whose we are.

As believers in Christ we don't have to muster up our importance, we are important because we possess the divine nature of God himself (Romans 8:29, 2 Peter 1:4). His being resides in our being.

Question: Do we live and pray understanding that we possess the nature of God? The end result of our lives is to have the nature of God so inundate our being that people see Jesus in us. Then, and only then, do we become the answer to Jesus' prayer.

For more help in teaching prayer, consider the following resource ...

Disciple's Prayer Life: Walking in Fellowship with God
by T.W. Hunt and Catherine Walker

Helps adults learn to pray experientially - based on prayers of the Bible. Through personal, daily study and 13 weekly small-group meetings, you will discover practical truths to strengthen and deepen your prayer life. Leadership materials included. (13 sessions)

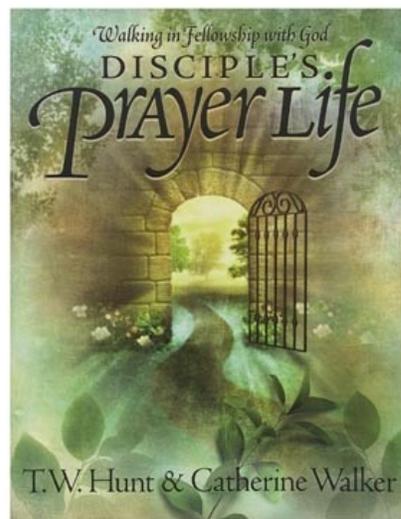
Includes twelve "Prayer Guides" including the following:

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Study 3

Knowledge: Living for Eternity

John 17:2-3

Jesus prays that we will have eternal life, which, by the way, is the foundation of the Christian faith.

Eternal life is God's free gift to those who believe on his Son. The Father has given to the Son authority over life. We saw it in creation (see John 1:2-3). We see it in his miracles (Lazarus, John 11, and the son of the widow in Nain). We see it in his statements. John 3:16, 3:36, 10:10, 11:25-26, 14:6. In essence, eternal life has been given to all, but only a few receive it. We receive it on the basis of faith and trust in Jesus alone for our salvation.

Defining eternal life is like trying to define physical life. One cannot aptly define life, so Jesus offers us more of a vivid picture of eternal life rather than a sterile definition of it. When we begin to describe eternal life we must not think of it in organizational terms but in organic terms. It is a life. A dynamic. A relationship. It is life in Jesus Christ. It comes through Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, ". . . the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)

Eternal life is determined by relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Eternal life is best determined by relationships. Four realities are present.

1. The relationship is identifiable. The relationship is with "the only true God, and the One You have sent" (v. 3). In other words, when we truly receive eternal life as God's precious gift to us, then we enter into a genuine relationship with God. Amazing, isn't it? We who are sinners and at war with God are now through Jesus Christ are brought into a relationship with the one true God.
2. The relationship is intimate. Jesus says "This is eternal life: that they may *know* You . . ." (v. 3, emphasis mine). The word *know* is a present tense verb, which means that our knowledge of God continues and continues. He is referring to a personal, intimate relationship with the living God, which grows as the years press on. The emphasis of the word *know* is not upon mere knowledge of facts. We should never undervalue knowing facts or truths concerning God, yet that his not the ultimate objective in eternal life. Eternal life is not found by just knowing facts about God, but rather by having a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. For John knowing Jesus is to be committed to him as a living person rather than to accept certain facts about him. This intimate relationship grows and matures over time by our trust, obedience, worship, prayer, meditation and study in his Word, our contemplation of God, our sensitivities to the prompting of God's spirit.
3. Eternal life is instantaneous. Notice Jesus says, "This is eternal life . . ." (v. 3). The idea of eternal life does not refer to one day going to heaven. It includes heaven, but eternal life is a present reality. "This *is* eternal life" not "this *shall be* eternal life." Eternal life demands that we see our relationship to Christ in terms of reality—that is

both present and to come. It is a relationship that is quality and quantity. It is both donation and duration.

4. Eternal life is immortal. The life that God gives implies that what he has started he will never stop. Even though we face ills, disease, and death, this life is never over for us. Our life does not consist simply in the 70 to 80 years we walk upon this earth. We go on forever in the presence of God.

The ultimate question is: Do you have eternal life? Our greatest need is not to have wonderful moral lives or an enjoyable religious experience or a good feeling about ourselves. The greatest need any person has is for eternal life through Jesus Christ.

For more help in teaching prayer, consider the following resource ...

Growing Disciples Series: Pray In Faith

by T.W. Hunt & Claude King

This revised edition of **In God's Presence**, helps believers develop intimate communion with God in prayer. Participants will learn to hear from God in prayer, respond to God through confession, praise, worship and thanksgiving, and join His work through petition and intercession. Special emphasis is given to experiencing the greater insight and authority God grants to united prayers of agreement with others.

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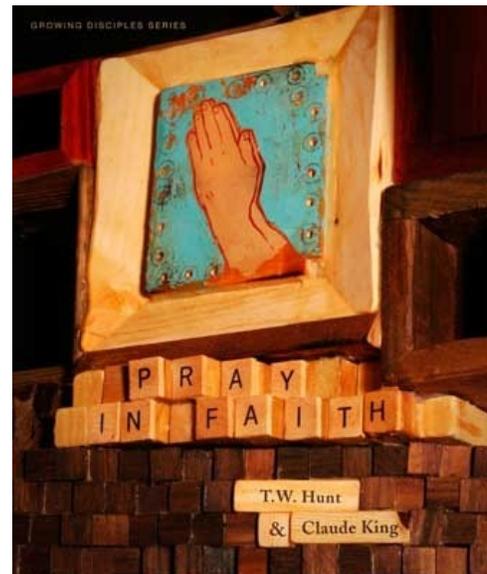
Part of the Growing Disciples series.

Workbook outline...

- Week 1: Six Kinds of Prayer
- Week 2: Developing Your Prayer Life
- Week 3: Responding Prayers
- Week 4: Asking Prayers
- Week 5: Petition
- Week 6: Intercession

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Study 4

Revelation: Manifesting His Name

John 17:6, 11, 12, 26

The idea of “name” in the Bible does not mean the label by which we are called. It is a reference to the whole person, the character and being of that person. We often close our prayers with the phrase “in Jesus’ name,” meaning we are praying with reference to his character, his nature, and his authority. Nothing in our character and nature would open up the doors of heaven for a holy God to hear and, much less, answer our prayers.

Jesus prays that we will be recipients of divine revelation (v. 6). This thought is reiterated later in the prayer, “I made Your name known to them and will make it known” (v. 26). The words *made . . . known* means to make clear or evident to the eye. The word *name* refers to the character or person of God. Jesus is stating that the character of God has been revealed to his people. And, he has been the revealer. Jesus told his disciples, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”

Long before the intensive security measures at airports today, a well-known author and speaker traveled extensively. He would carry his identification cards and travel documents in a pouch around his neck. On one occasion he left the pouch at home. The person at the ticket counter asked for identification. He did not have it and was told that he could not enter the gate and board the plane. The famous man thought for a moment went off only to return in a few minutes. He had gone to the airport bookstore bought one of his books that had his picture on the back with a bio. He showed it to the agent. The man looked at the picture on the book cover, then looked at the man standing in front of him, and then graciously allowed him to enter the gate and board the plane. Evidently the official was totally satisfied that they were one and the same person.

Jesus was the divine revelation of God. When you see Jesus you see God.

And, consequently, we are changed. No person has the character of God revealed to them and stays the same. When we see God as he truly is we humble ourselves before him, we run to him for mercy, we seek his forgiveness. We want to know him relationally.

Jesus prays not only that we will reflect this divine revelation, but also that we will be protected by divine security (vv. 11-12). Jesus wants the Father to watch over and preserve the still-impressionable disciples. The idea of keeping is like a Shepherd, who constantly observes his sheep. His eyes are on them. He knows that they need and is ready to meet those needs. The idea of the word *guarded* is a protector, who protects us from those who would seek to pervert and destroy us.

There is an interesting correlation between divine revelation and divine security. A Christian is one whom the character of God has been revealed. Divine security is extended to those “that You have given Me.” In other words, those who have responded to the revelation of God will be the recipients of God’s protection. Those he saves, he keeps. Case in point, Jesus kept the eleven disciples, but did not keep Judas, the son of destruction.

How is this protection accomplished? We are protected by his power working *in* us and working *for* us, his presence both *within* us and *without* us. "In his name" points to the constant sense of security in the revelation of God.

A story from the mission field reveals a small group of missionaries being threatened by a jungle tribe one night. They prayed, fearful of their imminent demise. Their attackers left. Months later after working this tribe some became believers. One of the missionaries asked a tribesman about that night when the tribe threatened. The tribesman said, "We were planning to attack, but when we saw the garrison of armed soldiers surrounding your campsite we withdrew." The missionary knew there was no army surrounding them, except that of the presence of God and his host of warring angels.

When we pray we are to pray both for God's presence—to be kept; and we pray for his power—to be guarded.

For more help in teaching prayer, consider the following resource ...

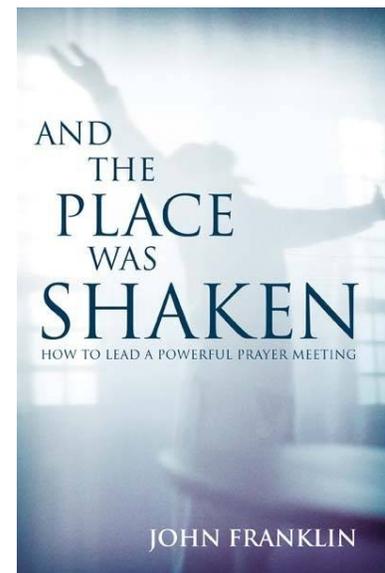
And the Place Was Shaken: How to Lead a Powerful Prayer Meeting

by John Franklin

Prayer for the church is not a casual practice but communion between Christ and His body that is as intimate as communion between a husband and a wife. And for the church, corporate prayer is not an optional ritual but a commanded expectation. However, having an effective corporate experience of prayer—whether in a large congregational setting or a small group—depends on many factors.

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Study 5

Obedience: Keeping His Words

John 17:6, 8, 14, 17

Jesus did not mince words. Obedience to Christ and his words is one of the most distinguishing marks of a Christian. Oswald Chambers stated, "Spiritual maturity is not reached by the passing of the years, but by obedience to the will of God." Obedience is the gauge of our discipleship, the litmus test of his Lordship, and the indicator of our spiritual maturity. Baptist Pastor, Peter Lord, was fond of saying, "What I believe I do and the rest is just religious talk." As Jesus obeyed the Father we are to obey Jesus (v. 4).

This prayer reveals three actions that we are to do in regard to obedience. These actions revolve around three phrases that the disciples of Jesus have been "given them Your word," "have received them (the words)," and "have kept Your word."

First, obedience begins with the attitude of the mind. Jesus prayed that we be given the Word (vv. 8, 14). This word, which is not a secret code or a hidden message, is the stated facts or truths that have been clearly recorded in the Bible. They have been given to us. This is the action of God toward us. He has given us the steps we are to take, the actions we are to follow, the life we are to live. Here, we hear the words.

Second, obedience continues with the affection of the heart (v. 8). In a sense, everyone has been given the words of God. We are living in a day of the proliferation of the gospel. People hear the gospel, but not everyone believes. We are not to be merely hearers of the word; we are to receive the word. We must move from head knowledge of the words to a heart understanding of the words. In other words, it is not enough to take the words into our minds; they have to integrate our hearts. While many hear the words, not all receive the words. The words of Jesus, the words of scripture, only free us when we receive them into our hearts. Here, we apply the words.

Third, obedience results in the action of the will (v. 6). The word *kept* implies the controlling action of obedience. It shows that obedience moves from an attitude of the mind, to the affection of the heart, to the action of the will. The whole direction of our lives is moving toward obeying Jesus Christ in all his demands upon us. That is a Christian. A Christian is not saved *because* he obeys; he obeys *because* he is saved. Here, we appropriate the words.

Let me mention two disclaimers. One, Jesus is not saying that we will perfectly obey. We have sinned; we do sin; and we will sin. But, we are to be characterized by our obedience. We are growing, maturing in our obedience. We have kept the word.

Two, neither is Jesus saying that we can claim to be Christians and live disobedient lives. We often call these people "carnal Christians," a distinction Paul never intended as a new category for Christians when he rebuked the church at Corinth for their sinfulness and immaturity (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). We cannot and must not give unregenerate sinners a chance to call themselves Christians without living like it. Faith is always evidenced by works (James 2).

How do we become the answer to Jesus' prayer?

We recognize that prayer is a dialogue, but the God we pray to is Lord. When we come to Christ we don't join a democracy, we enter a theocracy. There are no volunteers who chose; there are only servants who obey. Just as a soldier follows the commands of the commanding officer, so do believers follow the instructions of our Master—Jesus. Sometimes, unfortunately, when we pray it is as though we are discussing our options with Jesus. Genuine prayer is surrendering to his service.

We understand that prayer that does not result in action is ineffectual. True obedience will never let mere listening substitute for action. Jesus desires that we do more than share our thoughts and demands that he act when we pray. He wants us to act. Most believers are educated three years beyond their obedience. In other words, they have the training, the education, the knowledge of what needs to be done but they don't act.

Study 6

Unified: Living as One

John 17:11, 20-23

Let's not forget that Jesus prayed this prayer on the last night of his life before his death. This prayer stands as a citadel for all Christians to live unified and in harmony with one another.

How precious are Jesus' words? Knowing the end was near, Jesus prayed one final time for his followers. Striking, isn't it? With death breathing down his neck, Jesus prayed not for our success, our safety, or our happiness. He prayed for our unity, as we would fulfill his purpose. He prayed that we would love each other, as we went forward to love the world to him. He prayed for his disciples and for all those who would come to faith in Jesus Christ, becoming his followers. That means you and me. In his last prayer Jesus prayed that you and I be one.

The same unity personified in the Godhead (vv. 11, 21, 22). The unity that God desires for the body of Christ is based on a unity that already exists in heaven between the three persons of the Trinity. God does not have to manufacture unity between himself, his Son, and the Holy Spirit—they're already unified. The Godhead is the evidence of unity.

In one sense, Christians are already unified because we are a part of the same spiritual family. We enjoy an essential unity on that basis alone. Christian unity is not based on externals of the flesh but the internal working of the Spirit in our hearts, lives, and communities. God is giver of unity. The Puritan preacher, George Newton, wrote, "There is no possibility of having peace, unless God himself bestow it; unless he bow the heavens and come down, and work it in the hearts of his people. It is beyond the power of any creature to keep the saints themselves in unity and peace, unless God himself do it."

From this reality of unity, Jesus prays for unity among believers (vv. 11, 21, 22, 23). The English Standard Version translates verse 23 as ". . . that they may become perfectly one." When Jesus prays for something four times he is making a major plea. Jesus does not take unity lightly? It is of a major concern for him. It should be for us as well.

How do we become the answer to Jesus' prayer for unity?

1. Pray with integrity for unity. We want our unity to be real, genuine, in other words, not fake or pretentious. It is easy to pray for unity and be self-righteous. If we pray for unity and are at war with another believer, we are hypocritical.
2. Pray within the family, both our physical and spiritual families, for unity. Often individual families are at odds with each other. Before we pray for the church family to be unified we need to pray for unity in our family. Then, we are to pray for the church family that we will reflect the unity as demonstrated in the Godhead.
3. Pray in practice for unity. Pray together with other Christians for unity. It would be incongruous to pray for unity among God's people and do it alone. Praying together recognizes our deep need for one another.

Is the answer to Jesus' prayer of unity just so there will be harmony among the brethren or is there a deeper purpose? Of all the lessons we can draw from these verses, don't miss the most important: Unity matters to God. The Father does not want his kids to squabble. Disunity disturbs him. Why? Twice Jesus says that the reason we are to unite as believers is as a witness to a watching world. Jesus prays, ". . . so the world may believe You sent Me. . . so the world may know You have sent Me" (vv. 21, 23). The reputation of God is at stake. When Christians stand together in unity, they bear living proof of the truth of the gospel. A unified church will convince people that there is a God in heaven. Unity creates belief.

If unity creates belief, then disunity fosters disbelief. How can the world come to believe the gospel if those who already believe it are battling among themselves? When the world sees denominational leaders fighting over control, or young and old members of the same congregation dueling over worship styles, or a church splitting over the color of the new carpet, it says, "Thanks, but no thanks." When Christians splinter over frivolous and nonessential issues, observers have reason to doubt the validity of the gospel. Is it fair to say that one of the hindrances of people being drawn into evangelical churches today is the way we treat one another?

Paul Billheimer may very well be right when he says: "The continuous and widespread fragmentation of the Church has been the scandal of the ages. It has been Satan's master strategy. The sin of disunity probably has caused more souls to be lost than all other sins combined."

Could it be that unity is the key to reaching the world for Christ?

One theologian stated, "The proclamation of the gospel apart from the unity of the church is a theological absurdity." Unity is the evidence to the world that our faith is real. May unity be evident to all. When unity is present, we answer Jesus' prayer. If unity isn't experienced, how must Jesus feel?

Study 7

Protected: Staying in God's Care - Part 1

John 17:11-12, 15

Have you ever sent a child off to first grade? Off to college? Off to work in a big city? Off to war? What is foremost on your mind? Probably that they will be safe; that they will be protected; that they will be kept from harm. No longer under your watch or under your arms, you hope, no, you pray, earnestly for their safety.

Jesus is praying for his disciples—then and now. He knows he is leaving, bodily he won't be with them. He won't be the physical protector as he has been. He is sending them off on their own. He is praying as any faithful parent would for their protection. He reminds the disciples of the following realities:

First, our position is in the world (v. 11). Jesus will no longer remain in the world, but his disciple will be in the world. The word *world* in New Testament thought could mean one of three things:

- This planet we call Earth,
- The world of humanity or people,
- The world as a principle, in an ethical sense.

Obviously Jesus is saying that his disciples will live on the Earth around people. But, they are to be protected from the world values, morals, standards, ideas, and principles that are opposed to God. This "world" is a scary place. This world is different from God. In this world, the disciples could expect hatred from the world. The values, desires, aspirations of the world stood in sharp contrast and direct conflict with God himself.

But, never did Jesus instruct us to be removed from the world. He never prayed that we would be taken out of the world. We are not instructed to live a monastic life, separated and cut off from the real world. The kind of Christianity that buries itself in a monastery or a convent would not have been the kind of faith-walking that Jesus would have desired. As his followers, we must live out our faith in the rough and tumble of this world.

Second, our protector is God (v. 11). Our protection comes from our heavenly Father, God himself. This, by the way, is the only time in the New Testament that God is referred to as "Holy Father." Interesting combination of words, don't you think? *Holy* means separated, set apart. God is holy; we are to be holy. God is separated from the world; we are to be separated from the world. Here's the irony: God, the Holy Father in heaven, sent God, the Holy Son, into the World. We, his children, are to be holy yet live in the world. Or as the popular way of saying it: we are in the world but not of the world. (We will discuss this thought in greater detail later on.) Actually, we need to add another phrase to make it true: "but not out of the world either." In other words, we are to be holy while living in the world. The second word, the name *Father*, determines the essence of our protection. Our guardianship comes from the Father. He is our divine parent. The name, you recall, stands for the whole person: the character, the nature, the very essence of God himself. In the unique address, "Holy Father," we have a reminder of both aspects of God's nature: His Separateness and His Strength.

Sort of like, when as a child you felt threatened by bullies, but then your Father shows up and everything is alright. The situation may still be tense, the warring parties are present, but you feel safe with your Dad is close by. Your father is separate than the bullies—he is not one of them; and he is stronger than the bullies—he is bigger.

The role of an earthly father and of a heavenly Father is protection. His role is to protect, to guard, to keep his kids safe. It is uplifting to know that God is the sentinel who stands over our lives to guard us from the assaults of the evil.

Third, our adversary is Satan (v. 15). In many respects, it is not so much the world that we are to be protected from, as much as the executive director of the world system—Satan. Satan is the one operating behind the scenes, pulling the strings of this worldly system; he is the real threat to us. Through enticements and temptations he will use every device to prey upon our human nature and pry our hearts away from God. He “is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

We are called on to resist him. Never resist temptation but resist the temptor. To resist him, we must understand our role in the battle. John White reminds us:

His supreme object is to hurt Christ. You personally are of no interest to him. It is only as you relate to Christ that you assume significance in his eyes. . . . Now that you are a Christian his interest in you has nothing to do with you as an individual so much as with your potential for Christ's cause. Do not flatter yourself. To God you are very important. But to Satan you are nothing more than a potentially useful microbe.

Jesus knew the battle would be tough (he fought continually with Satan), the stakes are high, and, therefore, protection is needed.

Study 8

Protected: Staying in God's Care - Part 2

John 17:11-12, 15

Have you ever been in new surroundings, you were a little alarmed, but felt safe because you were with a group? Jesus is praying for his disciples—then and now. He knows he is leaving, bodily he won't be with them. But, he knows we will be together. Here are three more realities:

Fourth, our partnership is with fellow believers (v. 11). God has role to play in our protection, but we have a role to play, too. Protection comes in unity with other believers. We were never intended to fight our battles alone. There, indeed, is strength in numbers. We are to fight as a unit, a battalion of believers. The Evil One roams about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The lion always attacks those animals that have separated themselves from the pack. The devil does the same with believers. Stay close with one another; stay protected by staying in contact with one another.

Fifth, our provision is guaranteed (v. 12). The result, the promise, the provision is that we will be kept safe. Not free of trouble, or pain, or suffering, or hardship, but protected and safe. The words sound fitting to write on a police car: To protect and to keep safe. That is God's promise to us. He will protect us and keep us safe. Jesus prayed that we will be guarded by the Father and kept safe by him. How often have you found yourself in a precarious situation, but felt the strength and safety of God's presence?

Sixth, our promise is certain (v. 12). Jesus provides a promise. We will be protected. In fact, he makes the bold declaration that "not one of them is lost." Aren't those comforting words? "Not one of them is lost."

The miners that were trapped but were rescued; none have been lost.

The sailors who were taken hostage, but then were released; none have been lost.

The platoon under heavy fire but escapes to safety; none have been lost.

An exception is identified, however, ". . . except the son of destruction" (v. 12). The son of perdition. Judas. Think about it. Judas stands in sharp contrast to the ones that are kept safe by God. Judas chose to entangle himself in the affairs of the world. He was corrupted by money. "The love of money is the root of all evil." He was conjoined with the world. He was enticed by "the world, the flesh, and the devil." He chose to go it alone, living outside the protective guard of the other disciples. He was a believer in name only and, therefore, did not have the protection of the Father. The ultimate result is that not only was he not protect and kept safe; he was destroyed.

How can we be the answer to Jesus' prayer for protection? Here are a few guidelines to follow:

1. Don't get swallowed up by the world.
2. Resist Satan, not temptation.
3. Stay in close proximity with other believers.
4. Live in the light of God's presence.
5. Avoid situations and people that would bring you down.

Study 9

Delight: Overflowing with His Joy

John 17:13

Joy has ever been one of the most significant hallmarks of God's people. Joy is the product of a Christ-relationship. Yet it remains conspicuously absent in many Christians. Why? Why does the fullness of joy elude even the most committed Christians?

I love how an old British educator defined joy: "Joy is the flag which is flown from the castle of the heart when the King is in residence there." Think about that definition. Joy is the result of a relationship with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. If Jesus is King and Lord, in other words, he is in control, then what do we have to worry about. If joy is a flag that we fly indicating that Jesus is in our hearts, when we come into a room or when we are in phone conversations can people tell that Jesus is in our hearts by the joy on our face and the happiness in our voice?

Jesus prays that we will have this disposition, this attitude, this confidence in our lives. He is praying for joy in our lives. But, and this is an important question, whose joy is it?

Look closely at John 17:13 for the answer. Jesus prays, "Now I am coming to You, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have *My* joy completed in them" (v. 13 *emphasis added*). Did you notice the personal pronoun before the word *joy*? This joy that we are talking about is not ours; it is Jesus'. It is one of his gifts to us. Don't confuse ownership with stewardship. Just as in all of life, joy is a gift from Jesus. He is the source of joy. It is this joy he gives to us.

When he gives it to us, how much joy does he give? Jesus prays, "Now I am coming to You, and I speak these things in the world so that *they may have My joy completed in them*" (v. 13 *emphasis added*). How much does Jesus want us to have? "The full measure of my joy" (NIV); "They may have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (ESV). Jesus is not stingy. Like with all of his gifts to us, he wants to give in overflowing, superabundant proportions. The idea of full measure often communicated as an overflowing cup was a symbol for total satisfaction. It means, "I've got everything I need." When someone gives one a cup that is full measure or overflowing, it means that they're wasting something—water or wine. One doesn't waste water or wine in the desert unless one's got more than they need. Jesus wastes his joy on us. He wants us to have joy in a brimming over supply.

It is this joy that he gives to us. Notice in Jesus' prayer, "Now I am coming to You, and I speak these things in the world so that *they may have My joy completed in them*" (v. 13 *emphasis added*). The "they" and the "them" in this verse are the followers of Jesus. To have his joy one must be in relationship with Jesus. Only the followers of Jesus can receive the gift of his joy. Remember Jesus is praying for his disciples—then and now. Only believers can be the answer to Jesus' prayer. When we look at the totality of this prayer we see the impending result is joy. Everything that Jesus prayed for was designed to bring us joy.

The question is: do you have it? Are you experiencing Jesus' joy? If not, here's how to get it.

Live in close contact with Jesus. If Jesus is a man of joy, then get close to him. Haven't you ever noticed that certain people bring a life, an energy, a happiness, a joy to a room. Jesus was that kind of person. We have been led to believe that joy is found in stuff and things; but the reality is that joy is found a person and a relationship.

Joy comes through prayer, but don't be quick to ask for it when you pray. Joy comes in the presence of Jesus. So bask in his presence. The Shorter Catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man?" We answer, "The chief end of man is to worship God and enjoy him forever." We tend to be too quick in our prayers and too fast with our worship. Slow it down. It is in the time with God that we become joyful, and become the answer to Jesus' prayer.

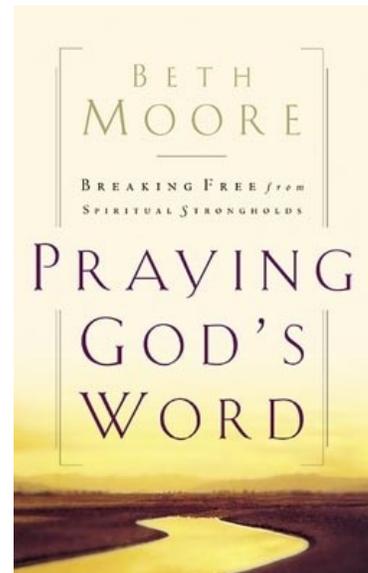
For more help in teaching prayer, consider the following resource ...

Praying God's Word: Breaking Free From Spiritual Strongholds
by Beth Moore.

How do Christians learn to practice 2 Corinthians 10: 3-5, "tearing down strongholds by captivating our minds with the knowledge of God?" Beth Moore teaches that to be set free from each and every stronghold which claims our lives, we have to replace it with the mind of Christ and fervent daily prayer.

Praying God's Word is a topical prayer guide addressing fourteen strongholds and what Scripture reveals about each issue. The Scriptures are presented in prayer form to be incorporated into the daily prayer life as a way of letting God's Word, through prayer, help you overcome the strongholds of bitterness, anger, unforgiveness, and other areas as well.

Available at <http://www.lifeway.com/shopping>



Study 10

Distinction: Being In but Not of the World

John 17:11, 14-16, 18

Is it true that “The Bible says we are in the world, but not of the world”? The answer is no and yes. No, there is not a specific Bible verse that states these words. Yes, the Bible, and more specifically Jesus, informs us of this truth. It is found in Jesus' prayer for his disciples. And, we answer his prayer when we put this timeless truth into practice. However, the statement “We are in the world, but not of the world” does not go far enough. To be exact to what Jesus was praying, another phrase needs to be added. The full statement would read, “We are in the world, but not of the world, but not out of the world.” Let's examine each of those phrases.

The first phrase has to do with our present location. We are in the world (v. 11). We are like an astronaut in outer space or a scuba diver hundreds of feet beneath the ocean's surface; we're living outside our natural element. It is possible to survive here, given that we are protected (as was discussed in a previous study), but this world is not our home. The problem for many people is that we become too attached to the world. We get caught up in the world's system and values. We become intoxicated with greed, seduced by materialism, influenced by selfishness. After a while, one can't tell the difference between a believer and a non-believer. By the way, if you can't tell the difference between the two, is a believer then a believer? This leads to the next thought.

The second phrase has to do with our powerful distinction. We are not of the world (vv. 14, 16). Jesus repeats himself for emphasis. He is reminding us that we do not belong to this world; there is a distinctive nature about our lives. We are set apart, different. The Biblical word is holiness. Holiness is not being an odd person, but being a different person. It is not displaying an attitude of “I'm better than you,” but displaying an action of “I'm different than the world.” (We will examine how this is done in an upcoming study.)

Holiness is a survival tactic for living in the world. Without holiness a believer cannot be distinguished from a non-believer. The only way to keep ourselves from being caught up in the affairs and values of this world is through a commitment to holy living. Eugene Peterson's paraphrase sums it up: “As obedient children, let yourselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God's life, a life energetic and blazing with holiness. God said, ‘I am holy; you be holy’” (1 Peter 1:16 The Message).

The third phrase has to do with our penetrating inclusion. We are not out of the world (v. 15). Jesus was not an escapist. He didn't advocate a monastic lifestyle. Disciples of Jesus are to live in the world but not be of the world but not be out of the world either. In other words, we have a responsibility to engage the culture in which we live in, without it rubbing off on us. There should be a Teflon coating to our lives. We are to face the world's system, without being swallowed up by it. We must stand with people of the world, but stand alone with Christ.

Isolation was never Jesus' plan for his disciples. Jesus intended for us to live out our faith among people, not away from them. We can't reach people unless we are close to people. We are, therefore, sent into the world. Just so we wouldn't miss it, Jesus prays to the Father, “As You

sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (v. 18). (This verse will be examined in greater detail in a forthcoming study). We are in the world, not of the world, but not out of the world, sent into the world. God loves the world. He wants us to be a part of his rescue mission to reach those people. We can't do it cloistered in holy huddles; we are to go into the world.

Jesus doesn't want his disciples to be "statutes on display" in church groups, touting their spiritual prowess to one another. We are not to become religious museum pieces. Rather, we are foot soldiers deployed into enemy territory to reach those who are far from God.

With an understanding of our role in the world, how can we be the answer to Jesus' prayer?

1. We are to be separated from sin but not isolated from sinners.
2. We are to be in the Word, soaking up truth; but we also need to be in the world, seeking the lost.
3. We are to have contact with the world, without being contaminated by the world.
4. We maintain a delicate balance between separation from the world and penetration of the world.
5. We are to pray for protection as we penetrate the world.

Study 11

Sanctification: Living Different From the World

John 17:17, 19

In the last study, we examined the concept that Christians are in the world and not of the world, but not out of the world either. In this study, we take that thought one step further: We must not live like the world. How is that possible? Jesus introduces the concept of sanctification when he prays, "Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. . . . I sanctify Myself for them, so they also may be sanctified by the truth" (vv. 17, 19). There are four aspects to the word *sanctify* that we need to understand.

Power. Power is embodied in a sanctified life. The word *sanctify*, or in some translations *consecrate*, comes from the Greek word *hagios*, usually translated holy. Its basic meaning is different or separate. To be sanctified means to be holy and set apart, completely dedicated to God, even while surrounded by a godless and hostile world.

Process. Once we understand the power of different life, next we need to understand the process of that gets us there. Sanctification refers to the process of being set apart or dedicated to God. In the Christian life there are basically three processes that sum up our entire Christian experience: Justification, sanctification, and glorification.

- Justification is the act where God deems us just because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. One scholar defined justification as "just-as-if-I-had-never-sinned."
- Sanctification is the process of spiritual maturity and the corresponding growth in believers' lives to where they become saints. It goes without saying that the sanctified person stands in sharp contrast with the world as he does not live like the world.
- Glorification is the ultimate change that Christians will experience in heaven. Here the believer will have eternal life, surrounded by and experiencing the glory of God. (Jesus prays for our ultimate glorification in verse 24.)

As we move through these processes, testifying to the changes that God is making in us, we are answering the prayer of Jesus.

Pathway. In the process, the main tool to bring about sanctification is the Bible—Gods' Holy Word. Therefore, we can call the Bible the pathway to sanctification. True sanctification comes through the ministry of the Word of God in our lives. The Bible is the homing beacon that draws us continually back into right relationship with God. And, when we step outside the boundaries that God has established the Bible becomes the cleansing agent of our lives, removing the sin and stain of a dirty world while pointing us to the life that is pleasing and honoring to God. The Bible is the line of defense. The only way to stay pure and not fold under the pressure of the surrounding world is by being conversant in and subject to God's written revelation. The Bible becomes the essential GPS system for direction and for survival in a hostile world. We must read it, understand it, apply it, and then do what it says. The Word must so inundate our lives that we will know instinctively not only the right thing to do but the upright thing to do at all time.

The Word is the pathway to spiritual power. Reading the Bible is not optional for believers who desire not to live like the world. When we follow the path: God's workers, who are full of God's Word, do God's work in the world. Interestingly, every time we read, study, meditate, and most importantly, appropriate God's Word we are answering the prayer of Jesus.

Practice. Sanctification is practical holy living to the glory of God. Sanctification is not for our personal fulfillment or benefit alone. We chose not to be like the world not only for God's sake; but for man's sake, too. We are set apart for a special task. We are separated from the world to be of service to the world. A Christianity that does not come down from the mountain top to live in the real world is a weak Christianity. Prayer that is isolated from the hurts, pains, and fears of this world is impotent. God sets us apart to, to send us out, to serve other people.

To be the answer to Jesus' prayer is to allow God to do a work in our inner world. As he works on our attitudes, our thoughts, our mindset, eventually we begin to look at the people around us differently. We see ways we can help; we can serve; we can assist. We become the hands of Jesus to a hurting world; the voice of God to people who are desperate for hope; the feet of God bring the good news of salvation.

Study 12

Commissioned: Going into the world

John 17:18

For the past few studies, we have examined the believer's role in the world. We are in but not of it; we are not out of it, but not like it either. Now Jesus turns to another imperative. He sends us out into the world (v. 18).

While this verse has been oft-quoted to spur Christians on in the work of evangelism, it is often separated from its foundation, that of sanctification. (Notice the verse before and the verse after it.) In the last study the three processes of Christian life were mentioned: Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification. Because we have been justified, we, out of gratitude and obedience, *have* a mission to carry the gospel into the world. Because we are being sanctified, we *can and must* effectively carry out our mission to the world. Because we will be glorified, we *want* others to have the assurance, hope, and reality of spending eternity with Jesus. Our salvation can never be selfish. We share to bring others the good news. Justification gives us the *right* to carry the gospel to the world. Sanctification gives us *the light and the power* to do so. Glorification gives us the *hope and result* of the efforts.

Jesus gave us the mandate to go. "We are to go as Jesus went, to penetrate human society, to mix with unbelievers and fraternize with sinners," writes John Stott. "Does not one of the church's greatest failures lie here? We have disengaged too much. We have become a withdrawn community. We have become aloof instead of alongside."

Our mission can be summed up in one word people. If I use the term *mission* in any setting other than the church, its usage is clearly understood. If the state department gives a mission to an ambassador, then he knows what he is to do. If a soldier is sent on a mission by his commanding officer, then he realizes that he has a particular task to accomplish in obedience to his commander. In the sports world, I've seen athletic teams state that they have a 'mission', to win a championship. Quite clearly, mission implies that a given person or group of people are dedicated to carry out a particular task or goal in order to honor the desires of the one who sent them. Jesus has given us a mission to go into the world. All too often the great commission becomes the great omission.

Our mission is not inside the walls of the church, but outside. R.C. Sproul described the mission to the marketplace. "The cradle of the church was the marketplace. From the preaching and public ministry of Jesus to the daily acts of the apostles, the central scene was the marketplace... The marketplace is where we belong. It is where needy people are found. It is not enough for the church to hang a welcome sign on her door. We dare not wait for the world to come to us." When we rub shoulders everyday with people who need the power and grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ we are the living and breathing answer to the prayer of Jesus.

We must realize that this sending out of the disciples is for every believer. As believers we are the messengers of God. None of us is excluded from his commission. The term *them* in verse 18 is not limited to the Twelve. It is expanded to the followers who come after the Twelve, who are

recipients of the saving grace of God. No believer is excluded; no Christ-follower is exempt, in this mission. Someone once said, "You are either a missionary or a missionary field."

An angel once asked Jesus if he had an alternate plan to the likes of you and me going into the world to share his redemptive message. Jesus replied, "No. I'm counting on them."

Study 13

Heaven: Grasping His Glory

John 17:24

Jesus has prayed for himself, his disciples, and us, his followers now. He closes his prayer by looking toward heaven. Knowing of the future glory that awaits him and not wanting to be without his friends and future followers, Jesus prays that we will be in heaven with him. The prayer comes full circle. It starts with the glory of God on earth through Jesus (v. 1); it returns to the glory of God as we join God in heaven (v. 24).

A point of clarification is needed. God's glory is seen when the nature of God is truly grasped. God's glory will be experienced in three ways: One, God gave his glory to Jesus and it was revealed in his incarnation and life (John 1:14). Two, Jesus in turn gave his glory to his followers so they might exhibit in their lives the likeness of Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). Three, God's glory can never be fully grasped on this earth; it will be completely comprehended and revealed in heaven (John 17:24).

It is to this end that Jesus prays for his disciples that they may experience or grasp the glory of God in heaven.

The prayer provides new significance to Jesus' longing. Jesus prays in verse 24 "I desire . . ." This is a very strong word that means to be steadfastly resolved or determined. In asking that his disciples be with him, he was declaring his fixed purpose. Jesus will never be satisfied until what he began on earth is completed in heaven. He will never rest satisfied until we, his followers, are with him forever in heaven. Jesus wants us in heaven even more than we want to go to heaven. When we go to heaven we are the answer to Jesus' prayer. (By the way, if we ever say to someone, "Go to Hell," we are praying a prayer that stands in marked contrast to Jesus' prayer.)

This prayer provides a new perspective on heaven. Usually we pray to keep people out of heaven. We pray that sickness will be avoided, that health will come to broken and diseased bodies, and that soldiers will not get in harm's way. By the way, Jesus only raised three people from the dead when he had the power to raise to life all those who had died. Perhaps he knew that what was in heaven was far greater than what was on earth. And, that once people saw a bit of heavenly glory they did not want to come back to this planet.

Jesus reminds us in this verse by saying "to be with Me where I am" that heaven is a prepared place for prepared people. Heaven is a real place for people who are right with God and ready to go there. And once there we will be in relationship with Jesus. It is a home not a house. It is a place of congregating and celebrating and communing.

This prayer provides a new understanding on death. Death is a gateway to glory. Charles Spurgeon, the famous British preacher, suggests that death is actually a safeguard against being stuck here on earth. Christ's prayer calls us to heaven and death is a mere passageway to experience his glory. Warren Wiersbe writes, "Every time a Christian dies, this prayer of Jesus is answered, because the soul of every Christian goes to heaven."

This prayer provides a new meaning on Jesus' return. The world as we know it will come to an end, in God's own time and in his own way. According to scripture, Jesus will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth. The dead will be raised. Christ will judge all men in righteousness. (Jesus calls God Righteous Father in verse 25.) The unrighteous will be dispatched to hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in heaven with the Lord. And, what a day of rejoicing that will be.

The fact that Jesus is coming back is a source of hope, joy, and comfort for all believers. In his return, God's glory will be visibly revealed. And, believers will be caught up in the air with him to experience his glory. These are comforting words as we anticipate "that" day. Either when we die or when Jesus returns for his church, we're headed for glory.

The prayer provides a new implication for personal change. In order, for us, his followers, to experience and grasp the glory of God in heaven, it is inevitable that we change. We cannot stay the same. The change begins internally—a change of heart by which we begin to walk with Jesus. Next, is a change of behavior—a moral change from darkness to light that becomes evident as we grow in our relationship with God. Parenthetically, we become like a "glow in the dark" figure, we have no light of our own, but after being in the presence of God's glory, we radiate the glory of Christ. Finally, there will be a physical change, from our present body into our resurrected body. That change will be necessary for us to handle the glory that lies ahead in the uncharted territory of the future.

This prayer provides a new consequence of glory. Jesus says that we will "see My glory." Remember in the Old Testament when Moses went before God to intercede for his people (Exodus 33-34).

Moses said, "Now show me your glory . . . The Lord said, "You cannot see my face, for no man may see me and live" . . . Then the Lord said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by; but my face must not be seen" (Exodus 33:18-23 NIV).

In this life we cannot see God's glory, but in heaven we will see his glory. Can you imagine the sight?

In heaven we will be with Christ, sharing his glory and living out the answer to his prayer.

Knowing that one day we who are inglorious shall be glorified, how should we pray? How can we be the answer to Jesus' prayer? May I suggest that you pray with the following thoughts in mind:

1. Knowing that life is short, pray for the best use of your life on earth.
2. Knowing that death is certain, pray for urgency in making everyday count.
3. Knowing that heaven is real, pray for understanding of its wonder.
4. Knowing that Jesus will return, pray that you are ready to meet him.

5. Knowing that change is needed, pray that most of the change will occur here on earth not in heaven.
6. Knowing that people are lost, pray for people that you love and want to be with you in heaven.
7. Knowing that time is running out, pray for motivation to reach those not yet saved.
8. Knowing that heaven is for all believers, pray for reconciliation within the fractured body of Christ.

Study 14

Relationship: Making God Known

John 17:25-26

Jesus concludes his prayer (vv. 25-26). In these verses Jesus makes no petition. He simply reports to the Father about what he has done. He makes several declarations that are important to us. They all center around the word *known* used five times. The Bible writers were short story authors, not novelists. Every word is overflowing with meaning. The use of one word five times, in my opinion, is highly significant.

The word *known* in Greek is *ginosko*. It signifies to be taking in knowledge, to come to know, to recognize, to understand, or to understand completely. In the New Testament when *ginosko* is used it frequently indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known, meaning that what is known is of value or importance to the one who knows, and, therefore, it leads to an establishment of a relationship. Such relationship is not gained by the accumulating of facts but rather through an intimate experience with the one being known. It was not merely intellectual knowledge but rather personal knowledge. In the Bible when one had sexual relations with another, the writer would state, for example, "Adam knew Eve." The word *known*, therefore, is a highly relational word, an intimate word.

Jesus declares, first, that the world (people of this world) does not have this relationship with God. Jesus prays to his Father that "the world has not known You" (v. 25). Jesus seems to indicate that there are two types of people—those in the world and those in relationship with God. Those in the world may know about God, have facts about God, but they do not have a relationship with God. In other words they have not placed a value or importance on God.

We live in a world where people do not know, recognize, or understand God. They will call the providences of God, coincidences; the miracles of God, medical marvels; the work of God, scientific achievement. In fact, the only things that the world attributes to God are cataclysmic events like hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons, and tsunamis. These are called "acts of God."

Jesus asserts, second, that He does have a relationship with God. In fact, Jesus identifies this relationship in three dimensions:

1. Intimate knowledge. Jesus says, "I have known you" (v. 25).
2. Fulfilled purpose. Jesus says, "I made Your name known" (v. 26).
3. Perpetual mission. Jesus says, "I . . . will make it known" (v. 26).

Jesus knows God. He fulfills all the characteristics of the definition of the word *ginosko*. He has taken in knowledge, come to know, to recognize, and to understand completely that God is God. Jesus has a relationship with God. He knows the value and importance of that relationship. This relationship has developed through an intimate experience with God.

But it was not enough for Jesus just to know God. He wanted others to know him, too. Make no mistake about it: one of the reasons Jesus came to this earth was to make God known. He wanted to make known the weight of God—his glory. He wanted to make God famous—so all the world

would know. He wanted to make known the character of God—that he is a Holy Father (v. 11) and a Righteous Father (v. 25). You can't read the gospels without detecting the resolve in the step of Jesus to fulfill the purpose for which he came. Nothing would distract or distance him from accomplishing the task that God had given him to do. And, that was to make God known in the world.

And, what is more compelling this purpose has become a perpetual mission. Jesus will continue to make God known in the world. It was not enough for Jesus to die on the cross and resurrect from the dead. For most of us, we would say such a sacrifice was sufficient. But not for Jesus, he will not rest content until all people know about God. He, therefore, is still at the task of extending God's fame and his name into the world.

Jesus implies, third, that we, his followers, the people he is praying for, will act on what Jesus has done. The way of Jesus will be way of us, his disciples. We will follow his example. In other words, we will be different from the world; we will know Jesus. We will know God in an intimate day-to-day relationship based on personal experience throughout our lifetime. But, it is not enough for us to know Jesus; we will tell others about him. We will engage in the world-wide mission of telling the world about God and his Son, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it is not enough for his to rest content, if we have sacrificed and work to tell one or two or given a few dollars here or there; we will join Jesus in his perpetual mission of making God known in the world until the entire world knows of God. This will be our lifetime calling.

Study 15

Love: Showing the Mark

John 17:26

In the last study, the focus was on the relational aspect of knowing God and making him known in the world. As believers, we have a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus. We know God in order to make him known. But, how do we reflect this knowledge? How do we make Jesus known in the world? Jesus added a wonderful clause to his prayer of knowing God that explains what happens to those who truly know him: “. . . so the love You have loved Me with may be in them and I may be in them” (v. 26). Out of the knowledge of God come the added benefits of an indwelling love and an indwelling presence. (We will study the indwelling presence in the next study.) One of the clearest and most powerful ways of communicating our knowledge of God is through love. It has been said, “God becomes believable as we become loveable.”

Charles Spurgeon has rightly said, “We must know in order to believe; we must know in order to hope; and we must know in order to love.” In knowing God, we know love for God is love. In knowing Jesus, we know love because Jesus is the manifestation of God's love.

Love is an important theme in John's gospel. John is known as the apostle of love. He uses the word *love* as a verb or noun fifty-six times. The word used for love is *agape*—a most beautiful word. It communicated God's unconditional love for people. This term became the standard, the mark, the distinguishing feature by which Christians were to love friend and enemy alike. It was a one-of-a-kind love that won the hearts of many people to the Christian faith.

John 13-17 is known as the farewell address of Jesus. Jesus ends this speech with his prayer for us with a message of love. But, notice how John introduces Jesus' talk, “Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1) The NIV translates it: “Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love” (John 13:1 NIV). How does Jesus show us the full extent of his love? And how do we show the full extent of our love to others?

Jesus showed us a new example of love (John 13:4-17) by washing the feet of his disciples. Jesus showed us what love looks like. He wraps himself in a towel and does the job that everyone in the ancient world would pay someone else to do if they could afford it. Love is choosing to do someone's dirty work for them. Prayer shouldn't just be uttering words about the messy needs of the world in comfortable places that insulate us from suffering. Being the answer to Jesus' prayer is about getting on our knees and getting our hands dirty in that mess.

Jesus gave us a new command to love by telling us to love one another (John 13:34). And if that wasn't enough, Jesus repeats this commandment two more times in this discourse (John 15:12, 17). Then Jesus adds a very poignant statement, “By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). Jesus gives a command with a condition. The command is to love one another. That is the mark of a Christian. But notice the word *if*—if you obey, you will wear the badge Christ gave; if you don't obey, then how will the world know about the love of Jesus. The point Jesus is making is that it is possible to be a

Christian without loving, but if we expect non-Christians to know that we are Christians, we must show the mark of love. If we are to be the answer to Jesus' prayer we are to love one another. Francis Schaeffer in his book, *The Mark of a Christian*, wrote, "In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present day culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon his authority he gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians."

Jesus issues a new submission to love by obeying his commandments (John 14:15, 21, 23). Jesus ties obedience to the commands of his word as a sign of our love for him. Disobedience and love toward the same person are incongruent. We can be the answer to Jesus' prayer by obeying his commands. And, remember, partial obedience is disobedience.

Jesus informs us of a new sacrifice to love by laying down our lives for our friends (John 15:13). The proof of our love is not in feelings, but in our actions, even to the extent of laying down our lives for Christ and for one another. The evidence of our love is not the feeble efforts of the carnal soul to promote benevolence, but a willingness to go the second and third mile in helping those who are hurting, even if it means personal sacrifice to us. Unexpected sacrifice underlies all of Jesus' teachings concerning love—the greater the sacrifice the greater the love. Christian love is an act of the will. It means treating others the way God treats us. (See 1 John 3:16-20). If we are to be the answer to Jesus' prayer we must sacrifice to help others.

Jesus warns us of a new hatred when we love others as Jesus loved us (John 15:18-19). It seems odd doesn't it, that that reaction of the world—people and system—to Christians' love is hate. Yet that is what we can expect. The world hated Jesus, the very embodiment of love. They will hate us who love as Jesus loves. As soon as we crossed the line of faith, we became marked people. We, too, embody love—the mark of a Christian; and, we are marked with a big red "X" for the world take its shots at us. When we take the name of Christian we change sides. When we go into the world, we venture into dangerous and precarious territory. We can expect to be treated wrongly for doing right. We can expect to be persecuted for showing peace. We can expect to be hated for loving.

To an unbelieving, but watching world is love, love may be the most powerful apologetic in the Christian's arsenal. People need demonstrations of love and not just communications about God if God is to be known. When true love is demonstrated people are changed. Love, hand in hand with truth, is the strongest persuasion any believer can give to a watching world. When hungry souls see radical, unexpected love in Christians they are drawn irresistibly to the Christian faith. Love is the most powerful message we can preach so people can know God.

Study 16

Presence: Glimpsing God's Radiance

John 17:26

In the last study we discovered that as we get to know God we experience and demonstrate his love—the mark of a believer. This study will focus on the fact that as we get to know God we experience his presence—the manifestation of God. It is that last phrase in verse 26 I want to underscore: “. . . and I may be in them” (v. 26). Obviously Jesus wasn't referring to some out of body experience where his body takes over our body, like one would see in a movie. He is talking about something deeper and more powerful. As we get to know God, we have the added benefit of the indwelling presence of God's Spirit residing in us.

Do you realize that you can experience God's grace without experiencing God's presence? You can have an understanding that Jesus died for your sins, and not ever have an intimate relationship with him? You can know facts and figures, dates and times, and still not really know the One who loved you first. What a shame to be saved and not really enter into the joy of knowing Christ. Sadly, people do it all the time. Our churches are full of people who know who God is but don't really know him and have never experienced his presence.

It is this encounter, this sense of God's supernatural presence that transforms duty to devotion, ritual to relationship, just another meeting to a holy gathering, and boring prayer into dynamic dialogue.

A. W. Tozer said: “The world is perishing for lack of the knowledge of God, and the church is famishing for want of his presence. The instant cure of most of our religious ills would be to enter the Presence in spiritual experience, to become suddenly aware that we are in God and that God is in us. This would lift us out of our pitiful narrowness and cause our hearts to be enlarged. This would burn away the impurities from our lives as the bugs and fungi were burned away by the fire that dwelt in the bush.”

The indwelling presence is the perpetual assurance of God's attendance and company in our lives. It is the promise that he makes to us as he prays for us in John 17.

Like a parent, he wraps his enveloping arms around us, especially if the night is the darkest and we are the most sacred. He not only goes before us; he goes with us.

When the ambulance comes, he is with us.
When we are wheeled into the ICU, he is with us.
When we are left to face the empty house, he is with us.
When the boss hands us the pink slip, he is with us.
When the check won't last the month, he is with us.

When we pray we don't have to convince God to show up, he is already present. We just need to recognize his indwelling presence and then wait for his revealed presence.

Someone once described prayer as like a little girl playing at the feet of her grandma. She doesn't have to say anything or do anything to please her grandma (who is quite content just watching her play). And the most beautiful moment is when the child starts to grow tired. She just crawls into grandma's lap to be rocked, to hear a lullaby, to feel a kiss on the forehead and the warm embrace of love.

Isn't that what we truly desire in prayer—to be the presence of the One who loves us unconditionally?