

I Pray  
April 23, 2023  
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John 17:1-26

For followers of Christ, praying for others (intercessory prayer) is both a privilege and a responsibility. It's encouraging to know someone is praying for you. It's more powerful to actually hear someone praying to the Father on your behalf. Jesus' eleven loyal disciples had that privilege of hearing Him pray aloud for them before He went to the cross. Thanks to John 17, we can eavesdrop on Jesus' prayer for Himself, His disciples, and us. This treasured text is known as Jesus' High Priestly prayer.

Hebrews 7:25 tells us Jesus *"...is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf."* Here's the point: If you have trusted Him as Savior and Lord, Jesus is constantly praying to God the Father for YOU. What a thought!

Do you wonder what He's saying in those prayers? If we want to know what Jesus asked God the Father to do for His followers, we should read His prayer in John 17. If we want a summary of how Jesus desired His followers to live when He left the earth, John 17 is one of the best! Most importantly, if we have trusted Him as Savior and Lord, we need to treasure the reality that He is praying for us right now and always!

This prayer is so meaningful let's read it in its entirety, then unpack it.

**(NLT) — 1** After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. **2** For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. **3** And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. **4** I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. **5** Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began. **6** "I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word. **7** Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, **8** for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me. **9** "My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. **10** All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. **11** Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. **12** During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one

headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold. **13** “Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. **14** I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. **15** I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. **16** They do not belong to this world any more than I do. **17** Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. **18** Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. **19** And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth. **20** “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. **21** I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. **22** “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. **23** I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. **24** Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began! **25** “O righteous Father, the world doesn’t know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. **26** I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.”

- It we outlined this prayer we might divide the sections this way:
  - Verses 1-5: Jesus prayed for Himself as He faced the cross.
  - Verses 6-19: Jesus prayed for His disciples before leaving them.
  - Verses 20-26: Jesus prayed for His followers then and now.
- Jesus prayed for Himself. Dr. R.A. Torrey wrote, “*A prayer for self is not by any means necessarily a selfish prayer.*”<sup>i</sup> We see that in these verses.
- Though He prayed for strength, His focus was on glorifying God. “The word *glory* is used eight times in this prayer, so it is an important theme.”<sup>ii</sup>
- Everything Jesus did on earth was to glorify God the Father. His death (for sinners) and resurrection were His “crescendo” of glorifying the Father.
- “*Father* is used 53 times in John 13–17, and 122 times in John’s Gospel.”<sup>iii</sup>
- John’s Gospel is Jesus centered and Heavenly Father focused.
- In verse two Jesus proclaimed His deity as equal to the Father. He also displayed His intimate and dependent relationship with the Father.
- Verse three is essential: “...[T]his is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.”
- Jesus stated that He had done what the Father had sent Him to do. In just hours He would complete that assignment. Eternal life is possible because of Jesus’ “finished work” on the cross. He did the work we could NOT do.
- Beginning in verse six Jesus prayed for His disciples. He described His disciples as a “gift” the Father gave to Him. Later, verse twenty says this prayer applies to everyone who has trusts Him as Savior and Lord.
- Here’s an important concept: Salvation is Jesus’ gift to mankind; saved followers who have accepted His message are the Father’s gift to Jesus.

- If someone you love gives you a special gift you will treasure it.
- This prayer shows just how much Jesus treasures His followers as a gift from the Father. Let's look at what Jesus asked the Father to do for us.
- In verse ten Jesus said His followers were given to bring Him glory.
- In everything we do, we should ask: *"Will this bring glory to Christ?"*
- Verse eleven: Jesus had been the disciples' protector. As left for Heaven He asked the Father for supernatural protection for them in several ways.
- Jesus prayed, *"...protect them...so they will be united just as we are."*
- Jesus followers are to be united to Him, to the Father, and to each other.
- We think of disunity between Christians as just people being people.
- Jesus considered disunity as a danger that requires the protection of the Heavenly Father. Why is unity important? What does verse 21 tell us?
- Jesus prayed that His followers should live in unity *"...so that the world will believe."* After all, why would anyone want to join a family that fights?
- Jesus had protected His disciples and (other than Judas) *"not one was lost."* He asked the Father to keep His followers eternally secure.
- Two concepts here: If we're truly saved we are saved forever. It's also clear that Jesus prayed the Father would keep His followers from drifting from the things of God. Our prayer should be, *"Thank you Father for saving me completely, help me to live to glorify you."*
- As He prepared to return to Heaven Jesus knew His followers would face a world that "hates" those who believe in His word. With that in mind He prayed we would be filled with His supernatural joy (v.13).
- He prayed for protection from the evil one (v.15). God is more powerful than Satan; so we don't need to fear Satan. Don't fear Satan, but don't be naïve about him. Here's a good prayer for us: *"Lord, help me to never underestimate the evil that Satan will deploy to make me stumble."*
- Jesus prayed we would be sanctified (set apart) through God's word (v.17). Warren Wiersbe: *"When you were saved, you were set apart for God. As you grow in your faith, you are...experiencing sanctification. You love sin less and you love God more. You want to serve Him and be a blessing to others. All of this comes through the Word."*
- In verses 21 to 23 Jesus again prayed for unity among His followers. Unity must be important if Jesus prayed for it twice in this wonderful prayer.
- In verse 23 Jesus prayed we would live in "perfect unity." How can imperfect people live with each other in perfect unity? Because we have Jesus living in us through His Holy Spirit.
- Does unity mean we don't take a stand on biblical doctrine? Most of the fighting among Christians isn't about biblical doctrine but personal preference. There's a famous quote from the 1600s: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity." Let me paraphrase that. Never compromise on biblical doctrine. Don't obsess over non-essentials. Show the love of Christ in all cases.
- If anyone ever questions the hope of Heaven, they should read verse 24.

- Jesus prayed, *“Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!”*
- Verse 24 proves that Jesus wants His followers to live with Him forever.
- Verses 25 and 26 are a promise. **25** “O righteous Father, the world doesn’t know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. **26** I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.”
- Jesus asked the Father to let His followers experience the same love that exists between the two of them. As He said in John 15:9, *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.”*

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- If you remember nothing else from this text, remember this: If you have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, He is praying to the Father for you 24/7.
- He’s praying that we will strive to know the Father through Him because of His finished work on the cross.
- He’s praying that we will glorify Him in all that we do.
- He’s praying the Father would protect us from drifting from our faith.
- He’s praying the Father would protect us from Satan’s schemes.
- He’s praying for us to experience the Father’s supernatural joy in a world that often hates who we are and Whom we serve.
- He’s praying we will grow in grace by obeying His word.
- He’s praying we will live in unity with our fellow followers, not compromising on biblical truth, but always displaying the love of Christ.
- He’s praying for us to live with Him forever when this life is over.
- Finally, Jesus prays that we would experience the love of the Father through Him and “abide” in that love.
- What a prayer list! What promises! This week, rest assured that Jesus is praying for you!

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<sup>i</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 367). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>ii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 368). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>iii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 368). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.