

The Son's Intercession

Scripture reveals that prayer was an integral part of Jesus' life. He often prayed for Himself and for others (Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21, 6:12, 9:29, and 23:46). In chapter 17 John records the only extended personal prayer of Jesus to the Father. Here we acquire a most unusual glimpse into the holy and divine relationship where the heart of the Father and Son is on display and the interworking between the Father and the Son is clearly expressed. As we study this awe-inspiring prayer let us ask God, as did King David, to *create in us a clean heart* for we are standing on "holy ground."

In this lesson we will be **reading through John chapter 17** several times. Each time you will be asked to observe different aspects of the prayer. In your first "read through" notice the *personal nature* of the prayer in verses 1, 5, 11, 21, 24 and 25 and the change in Jesus' posture as He begins to pray (17:1).

1. What do you see as the significance of Jesus addressing God as His Father?

In John's gospel the concept of *glory* is substantially significant. In Jesus' prayer to the Father the thought of *glory* is also prominent. John utilizes the terms *glory* or *glorify* in two distinct ways. **a)** The majesty and splendor due God alone (see Isaiah 42:8). **b)** The second meaning of glory is rightly described in Philippians 2:5-11. When someone takes on the lowliest of lowly services for the sake of another it unveils one of the most splendid revelations of "real" glory.

2. **Read chapter 17** again, this time looking for all the "glory" words. Pay close attention to the context in which each term is used. After the verses below, tell which definition of glory you think is being expressed and why.

17:1-

17:4-

17:5-

17:10-

17:22-

17:24-

Read through chapter 17 another time, identifying the specific requests Jesus asked of the Father. You may have noticed that Jesus' prayer consists of three parts in which He was praying for three distinct groups. Collectively, He made seven requests: 17:1, 5, 11, 15, 17, 21-23 and 24.

3. In the sections below specify who Jesus was praying for and what He was requesting from the Father.

17:1-5-

17:6-19-

17:20-26-

In John chapter 17 the verb "to give" is used repeatedly. Throughout John's gospel "life" is expressed as God's good gift. Our God is truly a God Who gives and gives and gives. Woven into these *giving* expressions is an intensified disclosure of the intimate inter-personal relationship between the Father and the Son. Here we are drawn still deeper into the Divine circle of joy and intimacy of God Himself.

4. **Read and meditate** on chapter 17 once again. From the perspective John provides what new insights do you come away with regarding God and the unique relationship of the Father and the Son?

5. What would you have Jesus ask the Father to do for you?

Personal Reflection: In this intimate prayer amid the Divine, Jesus reveals one of the clearest definitions in Scripture of eternal life (John 17:3). Here we are led to understand that the essence of eternal life is *to know* (personally, experientially and progressively) "the only true God and Jesus Christ" whom He sent. In our spiritual journey Jesus wants believers to enter into the joyous relational communion that the Son has had with His Father from before the world began. Pause to reflect on your spiritual journey. Do you *know* the only true God and His Son, Jesus Christ? If so, what are some ways that can serve to advance your *knowing* Him more intimately so as to further your "oneness" with the Father and the Son?

The deepest desires of the heart of God are expressed openly by Jesus as He prays for the men gifted to Him by the Father in this sublime high priestly prayer (verses 6-19).

6. What confirmations in verses 6-8 fueled Jesus' confidence before His Father as He prayed for His disciples?

Jesus, knowing that in the next 24 hours He would be separated from His sheep, prays with bold confidence in His Father for their care and protection.

7. In what would the fearful and soon to be scattered disciples base their security (17:11-12)?

Note: "The power of Your Name" denotes the whole revealed character of God.

8. According to verse 11c why would their protection be so critically important?

The hostile world would present a troublesome challenge for the disciples and could jeopardize their faith and unity. Jesus knew that for them to be in the world and yet not of the world, their *sanctification* would be necessary (John 17:17). (The word *sanctify* means to "consecrate" or set apart from evil and make holy to God for His service and purpose.)

9. By what means were the disciples to be sanctified (verses 14-17)? Consider also Hebrews 4:12. From these verses briefly explain your understanding of the process of sanctification.

10. Can you give an example of God's sanctifying work in your life?

11. How would Jesus sanctify Himself and how would His sanctification benefit the disciples (verse 19)?

In verse 20 Jesus broadens His prayer from the Eleven to encompass *all* who would follow and believe in Him as a result of the disciples' witness.

12. Compare John 17:11c with 17:21-23 and tell what selfsame petition Jesus prayed for on behalf of His future disciples as well as His original disciples.

13. The model of *oneness* is both exemplified and encouraged by God the Father and the Son to believers. What is the purpose of unity and why is unity such a compelling witness?

14. Do the various Christian denominations prevent our oneness in the Father and the Son and in one another? Why or why not?

15. From verses 23-26 describe the role of love in the process of unifying God and believers.

Amid the Christian church today are elements of human weakness which might invite division. It is truly humbling and inspiring however, to experience the supernatural manifestations of Godly unity despite ourselves.

16. What are some practical steps God is calling you to take in order to foster greater unity among the Christians in your circle of worship and service?

17. What have you personally learned from Jesus in His prayer in John chapter 17?

Our prayer is not merely making conversation with God. It is joining the conversation that is already going on in God. It is being invited to participate in the relationships of intimacy between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is an eternal dance already in full swing and we are caught up in to it. Prayer is allowing ourselves to join the dance and experience the movements, the constant interplay of the Persons of the Trinity. – *Martin Smith*