

Called as the Intercessor

Bible Background • JOHN 17:14-24

Printed Text • JOHN 17:14-24 | Devotional Reading • 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-7

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will EXPLORE Jesus' intercessory prayer for His disciples, LONG for Jesus' prayer to be answered more fully in their lives and the church, and PRAY for others and work for unity in the body of Christ.

In Focus

The idea came from a pamphlet Anthony picked up somewhere called "The Power of 30 Days." The pamphlet presented a simple way to deal with problems and trials we all face: Choose a prayer partner and every day for 30 days you and your partner come together in prayer and present the need to God. Anthony discussed the idea with his wife and they agreed to come together each day and pray that God would do something about the drug house on the corner of their block. As they prayed, they continued to raise awareness of the problem among their neighbors and village officials. They knew God would provide the perfect solution to the dangerous activities that house promoted. Three weeks into their prayer vigil, the drug house burned down. No one was hurt, but the building was burned down so the city had to demolish the remaining structure.

Anthony and his wife were so overjoyed with the results of their prayer experiment that they shared the news with their church. Soon others were joining in the "Power of 30 Days" prayers and many people were reporting miraculous results. In the cases where God had not yet moved, the participants reported a renewed vitality in their prayer lives. Some people who previously did not pray often had started praying regularly.

Prayer does, in fact, change things. When we communicate our love, gratitude, and needs to our heavenly Father, He is moved to act on our behalf. In today's lesson, we will examine Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer" for His followers.

***"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word"
(John 17:20, KJV)***

KJV

John 17:14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

NLT

John 17:14 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!

People, Places, and Times

God as Jesus' Father. Jesus' relationship with the Father is unique because He is the eternal Son of God. Jesus expressed His unique intimate relationship to God by referring to Him as "Abba" (Mark 14:36). Abba is an Aramaic word that denotes a warm sense of intimacy. On several occasions, Jesus spoke of God as "My Father" (Matthew 7:21; 10:32; 16:17). The personal pronoun is expressive of their relationship. The claim that Jesus had a unique Father-Son relationship with God was shocking to the religious leaders of Jesus' time. His claim not only violated their traditions, but the Jewish leaders understood that Jesus was making Himself God's equal.

The World. In the New Testament specifically, the Greek word kosmos (KOS-mos) carries a variety of meanings. In some verses, it carries a positive denotation of all humanity (John 3:16: “the world”). John most often uses it to refer to the realm of sin and human affairs in alienation and opposition to God (1 John 4:5; 5:19). John declares the nature of the world is ruled by lust and pride and dominated by Satan, God’s enemy. The world’s system has an inherent hatred toward God. In the end, the world and its wares are passing away. However, those who believe in Christ and obey God’s Word will abide forever (cf. 2:8).

Background

The prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 is commonly called “The Lord’s Prayer.” However, that prayer is actually a model for the prayers of believers. The true Lord’s Prayer is the prayer of John 17. This is Jesus’ farewell prayer for His disciples. In the prayer of Matthew 6, Jesus explains what His disciples should desire for themselves. In the prayer of John 17, Jesus petitions God on behalf of His disciples. Jesus and His disciples had just finished eating the Passover meal. And “Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father” (from John 13:1).

Jesus gave the disciples their final instructions. He told them of the coming betrayal, going to the Father to prepare a place for them, and the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 13-16). After completing His final teaching, called the “Upper Room Discourse,” Jesus offered up His longest recorded prayer, called the “High Priestly Prayer.” The prayer was likely prayed in the presence of the disciples either in the Upper Room or on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane.

If you could only give one last prayer for your children or another group you lead, what would you pray for them?

At-A-Glance

1. The Believers’ Protection
(John 17:14-16)
2. The Believers’ Sanctification
(vv. 17-19)
3. The Believers’ Unity (vv. 20-24)

In Depth

1. The Believers’ Protection (John 17:14-16) In this final prayer before His Passion, Jesus petitions God for His followers. The Lord realizes that His earthly ministry is drawing to an end. Soon He will return to His rightful place in heaven. So He commits His followers to the Father’s care. Jesus affirms that He has completed part of His mission already: He has given the disciples the Father’s Word. Jesus Himself is the Word of God. By His teaching, preaching, and His holy presence, He has imparted the Father’s Word to His followers. Although believers are separated from the world, Christ does not expect us to withdraw from the world. Instead, He asks that we be protected from the world’s evil influences. The “evil one” is Satan, the devil, who always seeks to drag people away from God. Though the disciples will be in the world, they belong elsewhere (namely heaven), just like Jesus Himself. Their allegiance and citizenship have changed to the kingdom of heaven.

2. The Believers' Sanctification (vv. 17-19) Jesus' second petition is for sanctification: "Sanctify them through thy truth" (v. 17). To sanctify means to set apart for God and His holy purposes. Every believer has been set apart to carry on the work of Christ (v. 18). Each Christian has been appointed some divine task and equipped to carry it out. God sent Jesus with a specific mission to enlighten all humanity that involved a great deal of courage, prayer, and self-sacrifice. This is exactly what He expects from us, exactly what He has prepared and personally "sanctified" us for. Jesus set Himself aside from all defilement and resisted all temptation so that He could successfully carry out His spiritual responsibility. He did this so that others "might be sanctified through the truth." The truth is God's active Word that must be obeyed. Jesus in His incarnation was God's truth personified (14:6) and all of His followers know the truth (8:32) and abide in it (8:44). For their sakes, He has consecrated Himself as a living sacrifice and stood in the gap on our behalf.

How have you sanctified yourself to God's purpose? How do you manifest that promise in everyday life?

3. The Believers' Unity (vv. 20-24) This prayer can be summed up as a desire for a unity that would mimic the unity that Jesus has with the Father. Up to this point, Jesus has focused His prayer primarily on His disciples. Now He looks to the future and prays for the universal church throughout the ages. The Father and Son provide the best example of Christian unity (John 17:21). Christians will find themselves united with each other as they unite with Christ. The glory of Christ unites Christians with Him. Our common salvation unites us as one and serves as a sign to the world that Christ came from God and lives within us. Jesus asks that the unity of believers would show the world that Jesus was sent by the Father and would cause the world to believe in Him as Savior. All believers should join with Christ in praying that God be glorified and that believers everywhere be protected, sanctified, and unified.

How has the lack of unity in the Church, the body of Christ, contributed to why the world has not been convinced of the Gospel?

Search the Scriptures

1. What did Christ ask God to do to protect believers from the world's evil system? (v. 17)
2. Aside from His disciples, whom else did Jesus include in His prayer? (v. 20)
3. What does Jesus want His followers to see when He brings them to heaven? (v. 24)

Discuss the Meaning

1. Jesus prays for believers to be one with each other. How is this made possible? And how do we maintain unity as the church?
2. Is the church currently a unified witness of Christ? Why or why not?

Liberating Lesson

Many of the problems in our communities could be better addressed by a united effort on the part of God's people. What effect might such unity have on crime, immorality, and social ills?

Application for Activation

This week select a community or church problem that you want God to answer. Then choose a prayer partner. You and your partner will spend at least ten minutes each day praying for this problem. Be prepared to report back to class next week with your experiences.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do?

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned?

Say It Correctly

Aramaic. air-ah-MAY-ik.
Gethsemane. geth-SEH-muh-nee.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Prayer for Peter in Prison
(Acts 12:5–11)

TUESDAY

Pray for a Successful Ministry
(Romans 15:22–33)

WEDNESDAY

Pray for Inner Strength and Power
(Ephesians 3:14–21)

THURSDAY

Pray the Prayer of Our Lord
(Matthew 6:7–13)

FRIDAY

Pray for Your Abusers
(Luke 6:22–33)

SATURDAY

Pray to Avoid Trials
(Luke 22:39–46)

SUNDAY

Jesus Prays for His Disciples
(John 17:13–24)