

Lesson 7

Jan. 18, 2026

Jesus Interceded for His Own:

Jesus prayed that we would be one with Him as He is one with the Father.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

In John 17, Jesus' heart is revealed through His prayer at a pivotal moment in His ministry, as He prepares for the cross. His words show His compassion for His disciples and all future Christians. The prayer tackles six key themes: the Son's glorification, the revelation of God's word and work, protection for His disciples, sanctification by God's truth, their unity through the Spirit, and their eventual reunion with Him in eternity. This chapter emphasizes Jesus' redemptive purpose and His priorities for His believers: spiritual maturity, Christian unity, and unwavering hope in eternal life through Him.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Following the washing of the disciples' feet at the Last Supper, Jesus began what is known as His "farewell discourse" in John 14 through 16. In these chapters, Jesus further discussed His plans to depart from His disciples, and He prepared them for life without His physical presence. Amazingly, Jesus said that His absence would be for their good (John 16:7). Although He would no longer be with them, the Spirit would come to dwell within them, the Spirit would come to dwell within them. In chapter 17, Jesus turned His attention to the Father. While John does not record Jesus' plea, "Let this cup pass from Me" (Matthew 26:39), John 17 can be viewed as viral backdrop leading to that moment in the Garden of Gethsemane.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. TO BELIEVE THE FATHER SENT JESUS: John 17:1-10.

- A. Jesus Prays for Himself (1-5)
- B. Jesus Prays for His Disciples (6-10)

2. TO REMAIN PROTECTED AND SANCTIFIED: John 17:11-19.

- A. A Prayer of Protection (11-14)
- B. Sanctified by the Truth (15-19)

3. TO LIVE IN UNITY WITH CHRIST: John 17:20-26.

- A. Jesus Prays for All Believers (20-23)
- B. A Glorious Reunion (24-26)

DISCUSSING THE LESSON

1. TO BELIEVE THE FATHER SENT JESUS: John 17:1-10.

A. Jesus Prays for Himself, John 17:1-5

Jesus realized His earthly mission was coming to a close, declaring, “Father, the hour is come” (v. 1), acknowledging the arrival of the appointed time for His sacrificial death on the cross. Instead of a moment of defeat, Jesus saw the cross as the ultimate triumph – both an expression of God’s boundless love and the realization of His redemptive purpose. He linked this crucial “hour” to His glorification. This “glory” likely included both the expression of His love and obedience through His death and His return to the divine glory He shared with the Father “before the world was” (v. 5). Jesus’ prayer reveals His complete submission to the Father’s plan while affirming the significance of His mission: to glorify God through His sacrifice and to reclaim His eternal glory following His resurrection and ascension.

Jesus’ request for glorification was not rooted in pride or vanity but in His ultimate purpose of glorifying the Father (v. 1). He accomplished this by providing eternal life for those the Father has given Him (v. 2). Notably, Jesus defined eternal life in a way that contrasts with common perceptions of heavenly rewards like pearly gates or golden streets; instead, He described it as knowing “the only true God, and Jesus Christ” (v. 3). This knowledge is not merely intellectual but requires an authentic, life-changing relationship with God. Therefore, experiencing eternal life hinges on knowing God the Father and Jesus as the Messiah sent to redeem the world. Eternal life begins at salvation but continues in Heaven with all the Biblical promises about the eternal Kingdom.

B. Jesus Prays for His Disciples, John 17:6-10.

If the first part of the prayer emphasizes glorification, the second focuses on revelation. Having witnessed the glory of God “before the world was” (v. 5), Jesus came as the Messiah to reveal God’s ways and character on earth. Verses 1-5 focus on Jesus, but verse 6 shifts attention to His disciples. At one time, these men were part of “the world” (v. 6), referring to their general sinfulness and lack of understanding, but “now they have known” (v. 7). If knowledge of the Father and Christ is a prerequisite for eternal life (v. 3), then Jesus seems to say that, through His teaching, His disciples have been prepared for what awaits them. God called these specific men out from the world, and they received God’s word, kept His word, and believed the Father had sent His Son, Jesus (v. 8).

Despite moments of weak faith, unwise remarks, and partial understanding of His teachings, the disciples accepted Jesus as the One who “came out from [the Father]” (v. 8), demonstrating their faith in His teaching and their belonging to God: “They are Yours” (v. 9 KNJV). Unlike those in the world who rejected Him and therefore could not belong to God, Jesus prayed specifically for those chosen by the Father – those who, through their belief in Him, acceptance of His words, and obedience to His teachings, now brought glory to Him and the Father (v. 10). Remarkably, this is the first instance where Jesus acknowledged that His disciples glorified Him, revealing the life-changing power of their faith and commitment to God through Christ.

Jesus yearned for His disciples to cultivate a deep, personal connection with the Father, revealing that the true treasure of eternity is not found in worldly possessions but in the joy of knowing our Creator. As we draw near to Jesus, reflect His character, and follow His ways, our relationship with God the Father flourishes, allowing us to experience profound blessings. By delving deeper into the life of Jesus and living in obedience to His teachings, we also have the privilege of glorifying God’s name. Our lives, transformed by His presence, become a testimony to His greatness, magnifying His glory in everything we do.

2. TO REMAIN PROTECTED AND SANCTIFIED: John 17:11-19.

A. A Prayer of Protection, John 17:11-14.

Jesus continues praying for His disciples. In verses 11-19, Jesus makes three petitions to the Father, seemingly prompted by the fact that He would soon depart from this world. Jesus recognized that even though He would be leaving, His disciples would remain in the world after His departure. Therefore, His first petition was this: “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me” (v. 11). In other words, Jesus prayed for their protection based on the holy, mighty name of God. And continuing in verse 11, the purpose of this request was that His followers would experience the same kind of unity He enjoyed with the Father.

During the days of Jesus’ ministry, He faithfully protected His disciples, having “kept them” in the Father’s name (v. 12a). None were lost. None were swayed by the ways of the world, except for “the one doomed to destruction” (v. 12b NIV), which is a reference to Judas Iscariot, who would betray Him. Yet, the sin of Judas did not indicate any lack in Jesus’ authority or character. Rather, God foreknew Judas would be lost, so the Scripture would be fulfilled (perhaps referring to Psalm 41:9, which Jesus referenced in John 13:18). While keeping them in God’s name, Jesus delivered the message of God to them all (17:14). Because they believed and received it, they would require God’s protection. In the same way that Jesus was not of this world and would soon be crucified. He knew His disciples would be despised and persecuted for following Him. In verse 13, however, we see this was not a lament, for in their suffering, they would still experience the joy of the Lord that comes from doing the Father’s will and obeying all that Jesus commanded.

B. Sanctified by the Truth, John 17:15-19.

In verse 15, Jesus made His second petition, “Keep them from the evil one” (NKJV), referring to the ongoing activity of Satan, which, up to this point in John’s Gospel, is tied to the plot leading to Jesus’ death. Even with the assumption that Satan would shift his focus to Jesus’ disciples after His departure, Jesus did not pray for their removal from the world and transition to paradise. Instead, His prayer emphasized their endurance and commitment to continuing His mission on earth, as He reiterates in verse 16, “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (NKJV), highlighting their distinct purpose and alignment with Him rather than with worldly systems.

In verses 17-19, Jesus presented His third petition: “Sanctify them by Your truth, Your word is truth” (NKJV). Sanctification is commonly understood as being made holy through the Spirit and the truth of God’s Word. However, as Jesus already affirmed in chapters 13 and 15, His disciples had been cleansed by the word He has spoken to them. Thus, here, sanctify seems to take on a broader meaning, signifying Jesus’ desire for God to set the disciples apart for a unique purpose and mission. After all, Jesus had “sent them into the world” (v. 18) to execute the work the Father had given Him to do. Jesus set Himself apart “for their sakes” (v. 19) to do the Father’s will and eventually laid His life down for them. Through His self-giving act, the disciples were not only purified from sin but also consecrated as His appointed witnesses, prepared and commissioned to continue His mission in the world.

While most of us do not actively experience the threat of persecution on account of our faith in Jesus, there is still comfort in knowing that Jesus intercedes on our behalf. There is a real spiritual enemy who seeks to devour us, but Jesus has prayed and continues to pray for our protection. As a result, even during trials, we can experience “the joy of the Lord,” which is our

“strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). Our duty then is to walk in the victory won for us by Christ Jesus and, being set apart for Kingdom impact, continue to shine a light in the darkness.

3. TO LIVE IN UNITY WITH CHRIST: John 17:20-26.

A. Jesus Prays for All Believers, John 17:20-23.

Jesus turned the attention of His prayer from the disciples to all Christian believers for all time. These are those who believe in Jesus because of the Gospel preached by Jesus’ followers. Jesus asked, “that they all may be one ...that they also may be one in Us” (v. 21a NKJV). Jesus may be alluding to His prior statement that He has many sheep, both Jews and Gentiles, but He also foreshadows the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who would come after Jesus’ ascension. Although the converts would come from different backgrounds, have diverse customs, and speak different languages, all those who believe in Jesus can be unified through the power of the Holy Spirit, dwelling in unity with the Father and the Son.

The purpose of such unity is “that the world may believe You [the Father] sent Me [the Son]” (v. 21b NKJV). Our unity within the body of Christ (or lack thereof) affects our witness to the world. If God’s people do not live in unity, it inevitably hurts our witness to the world. The love of the Father is not restricted to the Son but is also available to those who believe in the Son. Furthermore, the world can know the love of the Father when it is lived and expressed by each of Christ’s followers. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

B. A Glorious Reunion, John 17:24-26.

Jesus concluded His prayer with one more petition, which is expressed in two parts. First, Jesus desired to be reunited with His disciples someday. After His glorification (His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension), Jesus prayed that they would “be with Me where I am” (v. 24 NKJV). Second, Jesus desired for His disciples to see Him in full glory. The disciples were well-acquainted with the humanity of Jesus. At the cross, those present would see Him bleeding and take His last breath. But after His glorification, Jesus desired for His disciples to witness the eternal glory He shared with the Father “before the foundation [creation] of the world” (v. 24) – that they might see Him as He truly is.

Jesus said He had already granted His disciples the same glory bestowed on Him (v. 22). This signifies that, through their relationship with Him, the disciples were brought into unity with the Father. They experienced the Father’s love, performed signs and wonders through Jesus’ authority, and ultimately would share in Jesus’ future glory. This statement reflects the Savior’s steadfast confidence that His prayers would come to fruition. As Jesus concluded His prayer (vv. 25-26), He emphasized His profound knowledge of the Father, His obedience in revealing the Father to the world, and His unwavering determination to continue testifying to the Father’s love. Even while facing His impending death on the cross, Jesus remained fully committed to His mission, ensuring that His disciples comprehended and experienced the love of the Father through Him.

Christian unity, though often appearing out of reach in a world marked by divisions – be it through church splits or growing racial and political tensions – is still attainable. While widespread discord can be discouraging, the solution lies in a foundational principle: True unity begins with

each person striving to align their life with God. By making this personal commitment, we contribute to dismantling divisiveness and take meaningful steps toward fulfilling Jesus' prayer for oneness among His followers. Collective harmony begins with individual faithfulness, paving the way for the unity Christ envisioned and prayed for us.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Christ has invited us to participate in His mission of love to redeem the world. Let us align ourselves with the heart of the Father and recommit to loving one another at all times.

MINISTRY IN ACTION

If you feel you have offended someone, seek wisdom to preserve unity in that relationship. Conversely, ask God to help you forgive and find peace if someone has offended you.

WORKSHEET

A Crucial Question Regarding a Blind Man

Told Only in The Gospel by John is the account of Jesus' healing of a man who was born blind (9:1-12). The fact that this man was blind from birth evoked a crucial question by Jesus' disciples: "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (v. 2 NKJV).

On Two Other Occasions When Jesus Had Healed, He strongly suggested that the disabilities of those He healed were caused by their sinning (see Mark 2:1-12; John 5:1-14). But in this instance, Jesus stated plainly that this man's blindness was not the consequence of his sin or the sin of his parents (John 9:3).

While It Is Obvious That Sinful Habits And Behaviors can destroy a person's health and well-being, not all suffering, disease, and disability are the result of sins committed by a person.

The Most Amazing Part of the Disciples' Question Was, "Who sinned, this man that he was born blind?" (v. 2 NKJV). How could this man have sinned before he was born, causing him to be born blind? People do not sin before they are born.

The Jews In Jesus' Time had been exposed to the thinking of people who believed in reincarnation, and that the consequences of sins from a previous life could be carried forward into their next life. However, Jews have never believed in reincarnation, and neither have Christians.

Jesus Stated Emphatically That This Man's Blindness was not caused by this man's sin nor the sin of his parents. The cause Jesus gave for this man's blindness was surprising: "that the works of God should be revealed in him" (v. 3 NKJV).

This Blind Man Jesus Healed was persecuted and excommunicated from the synagogue for boldly testifying of Jesus' healing power (9:13-34), and he became a believer in Jesus the Son of God (vv. 35-38). Thus the works of God were revealed in him (v. 3).

The Praying Savior

Our great model for prayer is Jesus Christ. Dwight L. Moody said, “Jesus Christ never taught His disciples how to preach, but only how to pray.”

Our Lord’s prayers are alluded to or quoted eighteen times in the Bible. In His prayers, we see thankfulness, intercession for others, obedience, and surrender to the Father’s will. We should pray because Jesus placed such inestimable value on prayer in His life. Prayer was to Him as natural as breathing.

Answer these questions based on Jesus’ prayer in John 17:

- 1. How did Jesus bring glory to the Father while He was on earth (v. 4)?**
- 2. What did Jesus not ask on behalf of His disciples, and what did He ask for (v. 15)?**
- 3. What is the connection between being sanctified and being “sent” (vv. 16-18)?**
- 4. List two requests Jesus made on behalf of all believers (vv. 23-24).**
- 5. How should Jesus’ prayer here influence how we pray?**