
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read John 17.6-8. This part of Jesus' prayer concerns those who had become his faithful disciples by that time. Below is the essence of what Jesus was saying.

1. God the Father is sovereign and can choose whom to give to the Son of God [Christ]; he chose to give these disciples to Christ. There was nothing about these disciples to merit their position: they were flawed and sinful people astray from God, just like everyone else, but God the Father chose them and brought them to faith in Christ. The same is true for us, we are saved by *grace*, which is an *unmerited gift*!
2. Christ taught these disciples all which the Father told him to teach, which brought glory to the Father by making the Father's name known to these disciples. Part of the work God the Father had given to the Son [17.4] was to make God known to these disciples, which Christ did through his words and lifestyle. Christ reveals God, God's character, and God's provision for salvation to us as well.
3. These disciples accepted the teachings of Christ, which is to say that they responded with faith and obedience.
4. Through the teachings of Christ, these disciples came to know that the Father and Christ share all things, that all which Christ has is from the Father, and that the Father sent Christ, the Son of God, to the Earth.

Reflect: In 17.6, Jesus said these disciples kept God's *word*; in 17.8, he said they accepted his *teachings*. In such a context, "word" might represent the whole body of teachings or the gospel. Probably it represents the gospel: the disciples were struggling to understand some of what Jesus taught, but they put their faith in him as the promised Messiah and Son of God who was sent by God the Father, and thus they had kept this "word." You will find some biblical passages difficult to understand; you will understand the meaning of others but wonder why they say what they say. Is it comforting to know that even the original disciples struggled with these things? Does that encourage you to press on with Bible study, despite these struggles? What could you do to improve your understanding?

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read John 17.9-12. Jesus was praying here for his original disciples. Because these disciples had come to faith and were eager to obey, they were following Christ, so Jesus said he was glorified in them [we can bring him glory in this way too!]. The exception was Judas Iscariot, whom God the Father and Christ chose to be a disciple, even an apostle, though they knew he would not come to faith, as part of their plan for a betrayal leading to the crucifixion [as revealed in David's prophetic words in Psalm 41.9]. Jesus called Judas "the son of destruction," reflecting his condemned state and his status as a tool of Satan [similar to the man described in 2 Thessalonians 2.3]. Below is the essence of what Jesus was saying in this part of the prayer.

1. Since these disciples belonged to God the Father and had been given to Christ, Christ had protected them from the evil attacks of Satan and the demons. They had come to saving faith through the revelation of God's name, and were protected by being "kept in God's name." While Jesus was with them, he could protect them from deception, distraction, and other temptations, so that they remained true to God the Father and continued to follow Christ.
2. Now Christ was returning to Heaven to be with God the Father, while his disciples had to remain on Earth, so Christ requested that the Father continue protecting his disciples from evil, so that they would not stray from the path of faith and obedience. Christ knew that demonic attack would intensify when his protection was removed.
3. One goal of this protection was that these disciples would enjoy unity like that between the Father and the Son. If they continued walking in the light with God [on the "top line," as we say], they would enjoy unity of purpose, ethics, and identity in Christ, while also enjoying diversity in the ways God had made them. Their relationships would be so good and their actions would be so in alignment together, that they would enjoy godly unity.

Reflect: God made each of us unique, yet gave believers a universal set of ethics, purpose, and identity. Would you enjoy being in a group where your individuality was cherished and nurtured, but you knew you all shared common goals and values? Can you see how both unity [in goals, values, and identity] and diversity [in all else] are important to the ministry God has for the church? How can we foster that type of environment better in the church?

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read John 17.13 and then 15.11. Jesus is teaching the apostles [as leaders among all the disciples], preparing them, so that even when his protection is removed, they will continue to walk in faith and obedience [top line], connected to the vine of Christ and yielded to the Holy Spirit, learning to die to self so as to live for God, and thus they will experience not only unity and intimate relationships with each other, but unity and an intimate relationship with God [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] which will result in freedom from the power of sin and freedom from the penalty for sin, all of which will bring them joy.

Reflect: Joy is not the happiness that comes from circumstances, it is a deep sense of excitement about being alive and knowing God. On a scale of 1-10, rate your level of transcendent joy. If it is not at a high level, why not? This is part of the fruit of the Spirit, a promise that derives from an intimate relationship with God on the top line. Are you being guided by your flesh instead of yielding to the Holy Spirit? Are you not walking the top line, living by faith and obedience, pursuing God's purposes and doing so in God's ways? Are you allowing the hardships of life to rob you of the joy of knowing God and being saved? What adjustments should you make? Should you ask for help?

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read John 17.14-16. As we learned in chapters 15-16, Jesus anticipates that not only will believers face demonic attack, they [we] also will be persecuted [even to the point of death] by the unbelieving world. By his death and resurrection, Christ has achieved victory over sin, death, and evil, but until he returns, Satan remains in power here, actively working against our purposes. Jesus was leaving the world to return to Heaven, but it was not his goal that his disciples also be removed from the world, rather he wanted them to be "not of" the world [not sourced in the world, not affiliated with the world] while remaining in the world as his representatives. In other words, Jesus wants us not to conform to the sinful [bottom line] ways of the world – he wants us to stand out as different by reflecting God's character and following Christ – but he wants us to shine his light *in* society, not become hermits who avoid engaging with society.

Reflect: When we accept the gospel [God the Father's "word" in 17.14] by faith, we are separated out from the world and attached to the vine of Christ, to be made suitable for God's purposes. Jesus does not want us to remove ourselves from the world, he wants God the Father to protect us from evil as we engage with the world, so that we can truly shine his light. The protection we need [and which Jesus requests] is not from physical harm, it is from spiritual harm; Jesus asks that God protect the apostles [and other believers] from apostasy [drifting away from Christ], from being tainted through temptation, distraction, deception, disunity from accusation [negative thoughts], or due to suffering. What in life most hurts your obedient walk with Christ? What in life most dampens your faith or fosters doubts and reservations? How can you receive God's protection from these things?

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read John 17.17-19. In 17.17, Jesus prays that God the Father would "sanctify" his disciples. Jesus in this instance is not talking about progressive sanctification, which transforms us into being more like Christ and less like the sinful world. Instead, he is talking about "positional sanctification": he is asking that God would consecrate his disciples, would set them apart for his own purposes. God's word is truth, and Jesus asks God the Father to fully consecrate his disciples in God's truth, by that truth. Our response in faith and obedience to the gospel is what initially sets us apart from the world for God; our continued response to God's revelation will deepen our sense of commitment to Christ and his gospel mission. That is the point of this consecration: Jesus consecrated himself through his obedient life and death [see 17.1-5; he consecrated himself for God the Father's exclusive use], so he could carry out the gospel mission on which God the Father had sent him; now he asks for the full consecration of his followers, so he can send them to pursue the gospel mission in the world as well.

Reflect: God created people to reflect his image, represent him here, and multiply his image [through raising children to do the same]. God saves people to reflect his image, represent him here, and multiply his image [through physical children and spiritual children]. In that salvation, God consecrates [sets you apart] for his purposes of reflecting his image, representing him here, and multiplying his image in the gospel mission. Do you see these as your purposes in life? Do you order your daily, weekly schedules accordingly? What should change?