

Daily Discipleship

John 17:20-26

Prayers of Discipleship *To Pray as Jesus*

Focus Question: *How do I pray as Jesus?*

word of life

[Jesus prayed:] “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.” John 17:20 (NRSV)

Read John 17:20-26

The setting of chapters 13-17 in the Gospel of John is the final supper of Jesus with his disciples. Overall, the theme is love as Jesus urges his followers to love one another. Jesus reminds them to stay in his word and allow the Holy Spirit to guide them to love. Take a moment to skim through John 13-17.

1. *Why does Jesus keep repeating this theme of love?*
2. *How might love define Christians?*
3. *What is the message to those outside the church if Christians do not love each other?*

Jesus concludes his discourse with a prayer. It is often called the “high priestly prayer”. We learn much about the priority of Jesus as we listen to him praying. One might expect his prayer on the night he was betrayed to focus on his own pending death and sacrifice. Instead, this prayer totally focuses on his beloved disciples.

Take a moment to read John 17:6-11. Jesus prays for protection for his disciples. Once more, he appears not to be concerned about his own well-being and protection. Like a good priest, he intervenes on behalf of those with special needs – his own disciples. It is not clear if his disciples are even aware of their need for protection and strength. But Jesus knows their needs and prays on behalf of others.

4. *Why do his disciples need protection?*
5. *Why is Jesus so concerned for his disciples?*

The climax of the prayer begins in John 17:20 when Jesus prays for unity for his followers. The phrase “that they may all be one” is a dream to be realized as the disciples stay in the word and allow the Holy Spirit to bring them together. The witness of Christian unity is a convincing testimony to a watching world.

6. *When have you witnessed unity among Christians?*
7. *What does disunity within a congregation or Christianity teach?*

Jesus also prays on behalf of those who do not yet believe but who may be converted to belief due to the witness of his followers. Consequently, this is not only a prayer of a concerned teacher, but also an evangelist. He prays people will be transformed by the positive witness of his followers and be drawn into the community of faith and a relationship with God.

8. *How often do you hear a prayer for those who do not yet believe?*
9. *What happens to us as we pray on behalf of those who do not yet believe?*

As Christianity has spread throughout the world to diverse cultures and lands, this prayer for unity continues to be an ongoing petition. This is true within any congregation. Jesus sees God receiving glory as unity among Christians is lived out.

10. *Where do you see the prayer of Jesus being lived out in the world or in your local community?*

word among us

The themes during this spring *Daily Discipleships* have lifted up prayer. As disciples who strive to follow Jesus Christ, how do we call upon God in prayer to help us live as disciples on a daily basis? How does God's word compel us to pray? What do we include in our prayers? Do our regular prayer routines need to be revisited and given new life? How is the Holy Spirit infusing vitality into our spirits through our prayers?

These are just some of the questions prompted by the spring sessions. Prayers during the spring have included serving God alone, finishing one's work, learning to be patient, dwelling in God's grace, and learning to love Jesus as well as others. Thus, it seems timely and appropriate that the final session before we enter into the Pentecost season encourages us to pray like Jesus. We conclude with words prayed by Jesus in his high priestly prayer.

1. *What does it mean to pray like Jesus?*
2. *How would you evaluate your own prayer life?*
3. *What might Jesus say about your prayer life?*

Jesus' compassion for his disciples is clear as he prays on their behalf. Not only does Jesus pray for their protection, but also for their unity.

4. *How united are the Christians you know?*
5. *Do we still need to be praying this prayer of Jesus?*

Take a few moments to review other prayers of Jesus, including:

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-15; Luke 11:2-4)

Jesus' Prayer at Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-42)

Besides these prayers, Jesus also taught his disciples about prayer. Take a few minutes to think about Jesus and his teachings on prayer. Glean wisdom from his own prayers during difficult times in his own life.

6. *If Jesus were to offer a seminar on prayer, what would he teach?*
7. *If we modeled our prayer life after Jesus, what would it look like?*
8. *How might we strengthen our prayer life?*

Jesus prays on behalf of his disciples, but it is not clear if the disciples are fully aware of his concern. Not only that, Jesus prays for those who do not yet believe. His own time was short on this earth. He entrusted his ministry to the disciples and their witness. No wonder, he prays for the Holy Spirit to come and encourage his followers. No wonder, he prays for unity.

9. *Take a few extra moments to end this session in prayer. Pray for unity and for those who do not yet know God. Listen to God.*

Prayer

Mighty God, we pray on behalf of those who do not believe in you. We pray for unity among your followers. Help us to witness to your love as we learn to extend love to each other. Send your Holy Spirit to keep us connected to your word and your ways. Amen.

Dig Deeper

John 17

last word

Pull out your church directory of names.
This week pray for each by name.



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2007 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/evangelism/dailydiscipleship

5/20/07 Page 2 of 2