

John 17:1-12
December 7, 2025

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What does it mean to you that Jesus prayed for His disciples, the Church, and now for you?
[Let people engage]

Transition: Today’s text follows the Last Supper in which Jesus gave a warning to His disciples that those who are in the world will come against them. They are trying to absorb the message that they would face great loss and even death. He comes to them with His private lessons and hope. He then transitions to a passionate and personal prayer, called the “High Priestly Prayer” where He prays for the Disciples, His mission, and His Church to be.

Today, we’re reading the first half of Jesus’s prayer for His disciples. Let’s put ourselves in the shoes of the disciples and how you might have felt had you listened to Jesus pray over you. What parts of Jesus’s prayer encourages you? Do you hear anything that concerns you? Reassures you? Let’s begin.

BOOK:

Jesus Prays for Himself

17 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ²For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

⁶“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸For I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Jesus is still praying for us! He is our Chief Priest who intercedes for us. Just as he prayed over His disciples before His crucifixion, He now sits at the right hand of God praying that we will be in unity, or one, with Him and the Father. But how Jesus prays for us is a model for how we can engage personal prayer with Him:

- We should pray for unity among believers and work towards harmony and love within our own church community and avoiding division.
- We should pray for other believers regarding their needs, growth, and protection.
- We should pray for those who are spiritually lost. Jesus desired for the world to know that God sent Jesus. This can be a motivation for us to share our faith and testimony with others.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 367-370). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

THE PRAYER OF THE OVERCOMER

John 17 Intro

Most scholars who have sought to harmonize the accounts in the four Gospels have the Lord Jesus praying the prayer of John 17 in the Upper Room after He had finished His instructions to the disciples. Then He and the disciples sang the traditional Passover psalms, left the Upper Room, and headed for the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus had been accustomed to meet with them and pray (see Matthew 26:30–46 and Mark 14:26–42).

Whether He prayed it in the Upper Room or en route to the Garden, this much is sure: it is the greatest prayer ever prayed on earth and the greatest prayer recorded anywhere in Scripture. John 17 is certainly the “holy of holies” of the Gospel record, and we must approach this chapter in a spirit of humility and worship. To think that we are privileged to listen in as God the Son converses with His Father just as He is about to give His life as a ransom for sinners!

No matter what events occurred later that evening, this prayer makes it clear that Jesus was and is the Overcomer. He was not a “victim”; He was and is the Victor! “Be of good cheer,” He had encouraged His disciples; “I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). The word world is used nineteen times in this prayer, so it is easy to see the connection between the prayer and John 16:33. If you and I will understand and apply the truths revealed in this profound prayer, it will enable us to be overcomers too.

The progression of thought in this prayer is not difficult to discover. Jesus first prayed for Himself and told the Father that His work on earth had been finished (John 17:1–5). Then He prayed for His disciples, that the Father would keep them and sanctify them (John 17:6–19). He closed His prayer by praying for you and me and the whole church, that we might be unified in Him and one day share His glory (John 17:20–26).

Why did Jesus pray this prayer? Certainly He was preparing Himself for the sufferings that lay ahead. As He contemplated the glory that the Father promised Him, He would receive new strength for His sacrifice (Heb. 12:1–3). But He also had His disciples in mind (John 17:13). What an encouragement this prayer should have been to them! He prayed about their security, their joy, their unity, and their future glory! He also prayed it for us today, so that we would know all that He has done for us and given to us, and all that He will do for us when we get to heaven.

In this prayer, our Lord declares four wonderful privileges we have as His children, privileges that help to make us overcomers.

We Share His Life (John 17:1–5)

Our Lord began this prayer by praying for Himself, but in praying for Himself, He was also praying for us. “A prayer for self is not by any means necessarily a selfish prayer,” wrote Dr.

R.A. Torrey, and an examination of Bible prayers shows that this is true. Our Lord's burden was the glory of God, and this glory would be realized in His finished work on the cross. The servant of God has every right to ask his Father for the help needed to glorify His name. "Hallowed be Thy name" is the first petition in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9), and it is the first emphasis in this prayer.

"Father, the hour is come," reminds us of the many times in John's Gospel when "the hour" is mentioned, beginning at John 2:4. Jesus had lived on a "divine timetable" while on earth and He knew He was in the will of the Father. "My times are in Thy hand" (Ps. 31:15).

The important word glory is used five times in these verses, and we must carefully distinguish the various "glories" that Jesus mentions. In John 17:5, He referred to His preincarnate glory with the Father, the glory that He laid aside when He came to earth to be born, to serve, to suffer, and to die. In John 17:4, He reported to the Father that His life and ministry on earth had glorified Him, because He (Jesus) had finished the work the Father gave Him to do. In John 17:1 and 5, our Lord asked that His preincarnate glory be given to Him again, so that the Son might glorify the Father in His return to heaven.

The word glory is used eight times in this prayer, so it is an important theme. He glorified the Father in His miracles (John 2:11; 11:40), to be sure; but He brought the greatest glory to the Father through His sufferings and death (see John 12:23–25; 13:31–32). From the human point of view, Calvary was a revolting display of man's sin; but from the divine point of view, the cross revealed and magnified the grace and glory of God. Jesus anticipated His return to heaven when He said, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4). This "work" included His messages and miracles on earth (John 5:17–19), the training of the disciples for future service, and most of all, His sacrifice on the cross (Heb. 9:24–28; 10:11–18).

It is on the basis of this "finished work" that we as believers have the gift of eternal life (John 17:2–3). The word give is used in one form or another in this prayer at least seventeen times. Seven times Jesus states that believers are the Father's gift to His Son (John 17:2, 6, 9, 11–12, 24). We are accustomed to thinking of Jesus as the Father's love gift to us (John 3:16), but the Lord affirms that believers are the Father's "love gift" to His beloved Son!

"Eternal [everlasting] life" is an important theme in John's Gospel; it is mentioned at least seventeen times. Eternal life is God's free gift to those who believe on His Son (John 3:15–16, 36; 6:47; 10:28). The Father gave His Son the authority to give eternal life to those whom the Father gave to the Son. From the human viewpoint, we receive the gift of eternal life when we believe on Jesus Christ. But from the divine viewpoint, we have already been given to the Son in divine election. This is a mystery that the human mind cannot fully understand or explain; we must accept it by faith.

What is "eternal life"? It is knowing God personally. Not just knowing about Him, but having a personal relationship with Him through faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot know the Father apart from the Son (John 14:6–11). It is not enough simply to "believe in God"; this will never save a lost soul from eternal hell. "The devils [demons] also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). Our Lord's debate with the Jewish leaders (John 8:12ff) makes it clear that people may be devoutly

religious and still not know God. Eternal life is not something we earn by character or conduct; it is a gift we receive by admitting we are sinners, repenting, and believing on Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

The Father answered His Son's request and gave Him the glory. There is in heaven today a glorified Man, the God-Man, Jesus Christ! Because He has been glorified in heaven, sinners can be saved on earth. Anyone who trusts Jesus Christ will receive the gift of eternal life. Because we share His life, we are overcomers; for we also share His victory! "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). When you were born the first time, you were born "in Adam" and were a loser. When you are born again through faith in Christ, you are born a winner!

Satan has tried to obscure the precious truth of the finished work of Jesus Christ, because he knows it is a basis for spiritual victory. "And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11). Don't let Satan rob you of your overcoming power through Christ's finished work.

We Know His Name (John 17:6–12)

Christ has given His own eternal life (John 17:2), but He has also given them the revelation of the Father's name (John 17:6). The Old Testament Jew knew his God as "Jehovah," the great I AM (Ex. 3:11–14). Jesus took this sacred name "I AM" and made it meaningful to His disciples: "I am the Bread of Life" (John 6:35); "I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12); "I am the Good Shepherd" (John 10:11); etc. In other words, Jesus revealed the Father's gracious name by showing His disciples that He was everything they needed.

But the Father's name includes much more than this, for Jesus also taught His disciples that God—the great I AM—was their Heavenly Father. The word Father is used 53 times in John 13–17, and 122 times in John's Gospel! In His messages to the Jews, Jesus made it clear that the Father sent Him, that He was equal to the Father, and that His words and works came from the Father. It was a clear claim to Deity, but they refused to believe.

In the Bible, "name" refers to "nature," because names so often were given to reveal something special about the nature of the person bearing the name. Jacob was a schemer, and his name comes from a Hebrew root that means "to take by the heel," i.e., to trip up, to deceive (Gen. 25:26). The name Isaac means "laughter" (Gen. 21:6) because he brought joy to Abraham and Sarah. Even the name Jesus reveals that He is the Savior (Matt. 1:21).

"I have manifested Thy name" means "I have revealed the nature of God." One of the ministries of the Son was to declare the Father (John 1:18). The Greek word translated "declared" means, "to unfold, to lead, to show the way." Jesus did not instantly reveal the Father in a blaze of blinding glory, because His disciples could not have endured that kind of experience. Gradually, by His words and His deeds, He revealed to them the nature of God, as they were able to bear it (John 16:12).

The emphasis in this section is on the safety of the believer; God keeps His own (John 17:11–12). Our safety depends on the nature of God, not our own character or conduct. When He was

on earth, Jesus kept His disciples, and they could depend on Him. “I kept them in Thy name” (John 17:12). If the limited Savior, in a human body, could keep His own while He was on earth, should He not be able to keep them now that He is glorified in heaven? He and the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, are surely able to guard and secure God’s people!

Furthermore, God’s people are the Father’s gift to His Son. Would the Father present His Son with a gift that would not last? The disciples had belonged to the Father by creation and by covenant (they were Jews), but now they belonged to the Son. How precious we are in His sight! How He watches over us and even now prays for us! Whenever you feel as though the Lord has forgotten you, or that His love seems far away, read Romans 8:28–39—and rejoice!

Our security rests in another fact: we are here to glorify Him (John 17:10). With all of their failures and faults, the disciples still receive this word of commendation: “I am glorified in them.” Would it bring glory to God if one of His own, who trusted in the Savior, did not make it to heaven? Certainly not! This was Moses’ argument when the nation of Israel sinned: “Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, ‘For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?’ ” (Ex. 32:12) Certainly God knows all things, so why save them at all if He knows they will fail along the way? Whatever God starts, He finishes (Phil. 1:6).

God has provided the divine resources for us to glorify Him and be faithful. We have His Word (John 17:7–8), and His Word reveals to us all that we have in Jesus Christ. The Word gives us faith and assurance. We have the Son of God interceding for us (John 17:9; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14–16). Since the Father always answers the prayers of His Son (John 11:41–42), this intercessory ministry helps to keep us safe and secure.

We also have the fellowship of the church: “that they may be one, as we are” (John 17:11). The New Testament knows nothing of isolated believers; wherever you find saints, you find them in fellowship. Why? Because God’s people need each other. Jesus opened His Upper Room message by washing the disciples’ feet and teaching them to minister to one another. In the hours that would follow, these men (including confident Peter!) would discover how weak they were and how much they needed each other’s encouragement.

The believer, then, is secure in Christ for many reasons: the very nature of God, the nature of salvation, the glory of God, and the intercessory ministry of Christ. But what about Judas? Was he secure? How did he fall? Why did Jesus not keep him safe? For the simple reason that Judas was never one of Christ’s own. Jesus faithfully kept all that the Father gave to Him, but Judas had never been given to Him by the Father. Judas was not a believer (John 6:64–71); he had never been cleansed (John 13:11); he had not been among the chosen (John 13:18); he had never been given to Christ (John 18:8–9).

No, Judas is not an example of a believer who “lost his salvation.” He is an example of an unbeliever who pretended to have salvation but was finally exposed as a fraud. Jesus keeps all whom the Father gives to Him (John 10:26–30).

We are overcomers because we share His life. There is a third privilege that enables us to overcome.

Blum, E. A. (1985). *John*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 330-332) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

1. Jesus' requests for himself (17:1–5)

Following the symbolic washing of the disciples' feet (13:1–30) and His private instruction of the apostles (14–16), Jesus prayed. This prayer in John 17 has been called “the Lord’s high-priestly prayer,” and “the Lord’s prayer.”

Jesus had ended His teaching of the disciples with a shout of victory: “I have overcome the world” (16:33). This was in anticipation of His work on the cross. Throughout His ministry Jesus’ work was done in obedience to the Father’s will (cf. Luke 4:42; 6:12; 11:1; Matt. 26:36). As He turned again to His Father, He prayed first for Himself (John 17:1–5), then for His apostles (vv. 6–19), and finally for future believers (vv. 20–26).

17:1. **Jesus** could approach God in prayer because of Their Father-Son relationship. He began His prayer with the word **Father** (cf. Matt. 6:9) and used that word three other times in this prayer (John 17:5, 21, 24) as well as “Holy Father” (v. 11) and “Righteous Father” (v. 25). **The time**, Jesus said, **has come**. The divine plan of redemption was at God’s appointment. Several times before this Jesus’ time had *not* come (2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20). But now it had arrived (cf. 12:23; 13:1).

Jesus then prayed, **Glorify Your Son** (cf. 17:5). This request for glorification included sustaining Jesus in suffering, accepting His sacrifice, resurrecting Him, and restoring Him to His pristine glory. The purpose of the request was **that** the Father would be glorified by the **Son**, that God’s wisdom, power, and love might be known through Jesus. Believers too are to glorify God (v. 10); in fact, this is the chief end of man (Rom. 11:36; 16:27; 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14; cf. *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Question 1).

17:2. The words, **You granted Him authority over all people**, indicate that Jesus’ prayer request was in accordance with the Father’s plan. The Father has ordained the rule of the Son over the earth (cf. Ps. 2). So the Son has the authority to judge (John 5:27), to take up His life (10:18), and to **give eternal life to all those** whom the Father gave Him. Five times in this prayer Jesus referred to His own as those the Father gave Him (17:2, 6 [twice], 9, 24).

17:3. **Eternal life**, as defined here by **Jesus**, involves the experience of knowing **the only true God** through His Son (cf. Matt. 11:27). It is a personal relationship of intimacy which is continuous and dynamic. The word **know** (*ginōskōsin*) here in the present tense, is often used in the Septuagint and sometimes in the Greek New Testament to describe the intimacy of a sexual relationship (e.g., Gen 4:1, “lay”; Matt. 1:25, “had ... union”). Thus a person who knows God has an intimate personal relationship with Him. And that relationship is eternal, not temporal. Eternal life is not simply endless existence. Everyone will exist somewhere forever (cf. Matt. 25:46), but the question is, In what condition or in what relationship will they spend eternity?

17:4–5. Jesus’ prayer for Himself was based on His completed **work** (cf. 4:34)—**I have brought You glory** (cf. 17:1)—which assumed His obedience to death (Phil. 2:8). Even though the Cross was future, it was a certainty. He repeated His request for a return to His pristine **glory** with the Father (cf. John 17:1) based on the certainty of the finished work on the cross.

This “work” the Father **gave Him to do** is one of five things in Jesus’ prayer which the Father “gave” the Son: (a) work (v. 4), (b) believers (vv. 2, 6, 9, 24), (c) glory (vv. 5, 24), (d) words (v. 8), and (e) a name (vv. 11–12). The Son, in turn, gave believers God’s words (vv. 8, 14) and God’s glory (vv. 22, 24).

2. Jesus’ intercession for the apostles (17:6–12)

Jesus prayed for His disciples before He chose them (Luke 6:12), during His ministry (John 6:15), at the end of His ministry (Luke 22:32), here (John 17:6–19), and later in heaven (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). This prayer of intercession reveals Jesus’ concern and love for His apostles.

17:6–8. The little flock of disciples was given by the Father to the Son (cf. vv. 2, 9, 24). They had been separated **out of the world** (“world” occurs 18 times in this chap.: vv. 5–6, 9, 11 [twice], 13, 14 [thrice], 15, 16 [twice in the Gr.], 18 [twice], 21, 23–25). This separation was by the electing work of the Father, in which the apostles had been given as a gift to Jesus Christ (cf. 6:37). With the words, **They have obeyed Your Word**, Jesus praised His disciples for responding to the message of God in Jesus Christ. The disciples were not perfect, but they had the right commitment. Their faith in Jesus was a trust in His union with the Father (17:8). This faith in Jesus was manifested in their obedience to His words because **they believed** in His divine mission (cf. 16:27).

17:9–10. Christ’s prayer (in vv. 6–19) was particularly for the Eleven, though it applies to all believers (cf. v. 20). At this point He was **not praying for the world** in its hostility and unbelief. This prayer is for two things: (a) the disciples’ preservation (“protect them,” v. 11) and (b) their sanctification (“sanctify them,” v. 17). The world is not to be preserved in its rebellion or sanctified in its unbelief. Jesus prayed this request because of God’s ownership of them by creation and election (**they are Yours**). Jesus’ words, **All I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine**, reveal His claim to unity, intimacy, and equality with the Father.

In the old economy, God dwelt among people and showed His glory. In Jesus, God’s glory was displayed (cf. 1:14). Then Christ’s disciples glorified Him: **Glory has come to Me through them**. And now in the Church Age the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son (16:14) and believers are also to glorify the Son (Eph. 1:12).

17:11. Jesus would soon depart to the Father and leave His disciples **in the world**. **They** had to stay in the world to carry out God’s plan in spreading the good news of redemption and in planting the church. With the formation of the church, the history of the world has become, in a sense, “a tale of two cities”: the city of God and the city of man.

Since the disciples would be **in the world**, Jesus prayed for their protection. The hostility against God which fell on Jesus would now fall on the tiny band of apostles, and subsequently on many of Jesus’ followers. Jesus, in calling on His **Holy Father**, pointed up God’s distinction from

sinful creatures. This holiness is the basis for believers' separation from the world. He would **protect them** from the sin and enmity of the world **by the power of His name** (cf. Prov. 18:10). In Bible times a person's name stood for the person. (In John 17:6, 26 the NIV translates the Gr. "Your name" by the word "You.")

Why did Jesus pray for their preservation? It was to promote the unity of the believers, patterned after the unity of the Father and the Son: **so that they may be one as We are One** (cf. vv. 21–22). The unity here seems to be that of will and purpose. By being protected from the world they would be unified in their desires to serve and glorify the Son.

17:12. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus took care of the flock entrusted to Him by the Father. But Judas was an exception. He is here called **the one doomed to destruction** (lit., "the son of perdition"). Judas was never a sheep and his true character was finally manifested (cf. 13:11; 1 John 2:19). He was a "dead branch" (cf. comments on John 15:2, 6). Judas did what he wanted (he sold Jesus). Yet he was an unwitting tool of Satan (13:2, 27). Even people's volitionally free acts fit into God's sovereign plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:28). Thus Judas' betrayal of Jesus **fulfilled** (i.e., filled up in a larger sense) the words in Psalm 41:9 about David's betrayal by his friend.

White, J. E. (1998). *John*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (p. 485). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

High-priestly Prayer (17:1–5)

Here we have the beginning of the longest recorded prayer of Jesus (17:1–26). Many interpreters have called it Jesus' "high-priestly" prayer. In the first section of the prayer, Jesus noted that the cross would bring glory to Himself, for it was the will of God and the means of salvation for all who would believe.

Praying for Disciples (17:6–12)

Most of this portion of Jesus' prayer is devoted to the welfare of the disciples. Jesus prayed specifically for their protection in the area of unity (17:11), emphasizing again the importance of the unity of the body of Christ, the church. This is not organizational unity but interpersonal, relational unity.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). John 17:1-12. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.