



# This is Eternal Life

John 17:1-26

On the night before his death, Jesus told his disciples many things (*John 13:31-16:33*). After he said these things, “he looked toward heaven and prayed” (*17:1a*).

## *Jesus Prays for Himself*<sup>1</sup>

□ Read John 17:1-5. Jesus prays for the Father to glorify the Son (i.e., Jesus) so that the Son may glorify the Father.<sup>2</sup> Jesus has brought glory to the Father by completing the work he was sent to do. Though yet to happen, Jesus’ work includes his sacrificial death.

1. What does Jesus say about “eternal life”?<sup>3</sup> (*17:2-3*)



## *Jesus Prays for His Disciples*

□ Read John 17:6-19. The Father took the disciples “out of the world”<sup>4</sup> and “gave” them to Jesus (*17:6*); and Jesus “gave” them eternal life (*17:2*). These words speak of God’s grace. But the disciples are responsible for their own actions. They have obeyed God’s word,<sup>5</sup> accepted Jesus’ words as God’s truth, and believed that the Father sent Jesus (*17:6-8*).

□ The disciples can know the Father because Jesus has revealed him (*17:6*).<sup>6</sup>

□ Jesus is leaving the world, but his disciples will remain in the world (*17:11*). They are “in the world” but they are not “of the world” (*17:14, 16*). They belong to God (*17:9*), *not* the world, which has beliefs, values, moral standards, attitudes and behaviors that are opposed to God.

2. What does Jesus pray for his disciples? (*17:11, 15, 17*)

□ Jesus prays for his disciples’ protection (*17:11a, 15*). He prays that the Father will “keep them in [His] name” (*17:11a, ESV*) and “protect them from the evil one” (*17:15*). As “children of God” the disciples will be spiritually secure in this world even though “the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (*1 John 5:19*).

<sup>1</sup> Jesus does not ‘pray for himself’ like we usually pray for ourselves. He prays for God’s glory as only he can pray.

<sup>2</sup> The ‘glory of God’ may be defined as the splendor or magnificence of God’s unique and perfect essence. To ‘glorify God’ is to honor God or direct attention to His glory. However, in this context, when Jesus prays, ‘Glorify your Son,’ he is asking the Father to restore him to ‘the glory [the Son] had with [the Father] before the world began’ (*17:5*). Jesus can make this request only because he is God in human flesh (*1:1-2, 14*). However, he does not ask just for himself. He asks in order ‘that [the] Son may glorify [the Father]’ (*17:1*). The glorification of the Son is not limited to his resurrection and ascension/exaltation, but also includes his sacrificial death (*13:31-32*).

<sup>3</sup> ‘eternal life’ (*zōē aiōnios* – ‘life pertaining to an age’) – It is the ‘life of the age (*aiōn*) to come,’ which is endless. Thus the adjective *aiōnios* means ‘without end, everlasting, or eternal.’ However, ‘eternal life’ is not mere endless existence. It’s life in union with the only true, eternal God, who is the Source of life and blessing. It is the ultimate quality of life. It’s the resurrection life of Christ. Thus ‘knowing God’ (in personal relationship) *is* eternal life (*17:3*). ‘Eternal life’ begins when a person enters into personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup> ‘out of the world’ does not mean ‘physically out of the world,’ but they no longer belong to the world.

<sup>5</sup> Their obedience was far from perfect, but they had generally responded with trust and commitment.

<sup>6</sup> ‘revealed’ – from *phaneroō* – to manifest, to make visible, to make known. Jesus later says to God the Father, ‘I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known’ (*17:26*). ‘The only way to know God is through the revelation he has made, and he has revealed himself in his Son. It is not possible to know God in any way that we choose. We must know him in the one whom he has sent, namely Jesus Christ’ (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 638).

- ❑ Jesus also prays for his disciples' continual unity (17:11b) and sanctification (17:17). In this context, "sanctify" means "to set apart" for God and his service. The Father has already "set apart" the disciples by taking them "out of the world," but sanctification is also a process.<sup>7</sup>
  3. What does Jesus say is needed for his followers to be sanctified (made holy)? (17:17)<sup>8</sup>
- ❑ Jesus says, "I sanctify myself" (17:19). Jesus sets himself apart to do God's will, which at this point means his sacrificial death. He does this "for them." Jesus dies not only to save his followers, but also to set them apart for God's service (17:18-19). As Jesus (*the sanctified One*) was sent, he sends his disciples into the world (13:20; 15:26-27; 20:21).

### *Jesus Prays for All Believers*

- ❑ Read John 17:20-26. Jesus prays for all those who will believe through the disciples' message (17:20) which includes believers today! Jesus prays that "all of them may be one" and "brought to complete unity" (17:21-23).

4. Many people talk about "unity" today. What kind of "unity" is Jesus praying for? What is the *basis* of it?<sup>9</sup> What can we do to experience it?



5. What are the results of this unity? (17:21, 23)

- ❑ Jesus earlier said, "I am not praying for the world" (17:9). But his concern for the world is seen in his prayers for his followers. He prays for their unity "so that the world may believe" the truth about Jesus, and see God's love in the community of believers (17:21, 23).
- ❑ Jesus continues to pray about glory (17:22, 24). As Jesus' followers, we share in his glory as we follow his path of glory. His path of glory was humble service. His path went through the cross. As believers, we need to "take up our cross and follow him" (Mark 8:34-36). And one day, we will see the fullness of his glory... "for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

### *The Life & You*

- Do you desire eternal life? Jesus said, "this is eternal life: that [you] may know the Father" (17:3). We know the Father only through faith in Jesus, who makes Him known. Jesus is the giver of eternal life (17:3, 25-26). Do you need to trust in Jesus and follow him?
- As a believer, is it evident (clear) that you are not "of the world?" Is it evident that you are "set apart" for God and his service? Is it evident that you are "one" with God and other true believers? Jesus' prayer is God's will. Read John 17 and each day offer your life to Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> 'sanctify' (*hagiazō*) can also be translated 'make holy (*hagios*).' As believers, we have already been 'made holy' through the sacrifice of Christ (*Hebrews 10:10*), but we are 'to be holy in all [we] do' (*1 Peter 1:15*). We are to 'live holy and godly lives' (*2 Peter 3:11*) and offer ourselves to 'to righteousness leading to holiness' (*Romans 6:19*).

<sup>8</sup> They are sanctified 'by the truth – [God's] word is truth' (17:17). The 'truth' (*alētheia*) is God's revelation. The 'truth' is supremely revealed in Jesus Christ (*John 14:6*). After Christ went to the Father, he sent the Holy Spirit to guide his disciples into all truth (16:13). Today, we have 'God's word' embodied in the pages of the Bible. To be sanctified, we must learn to live according to the truth of God's word.

<sup>9</sup> People today promote a 'unity of tolerance' or 'unity of love.' But Jesus is praying for a 'unity in God' (17:21). This unity among believers is based on unity with the Father and the Son. This unity is based in God's revelation – the truth. Believers are to be one in purpose, one in love, living in joint submission to God's word.

<sup>10</sup> Following Jesus involves effort, but we cannot truly follow Jesus on effort alone. We need to continually offer our lives to Jesus, and rely on the Spirit to transform and empower us. We cannot 'bear fruit' apart from the Vine.