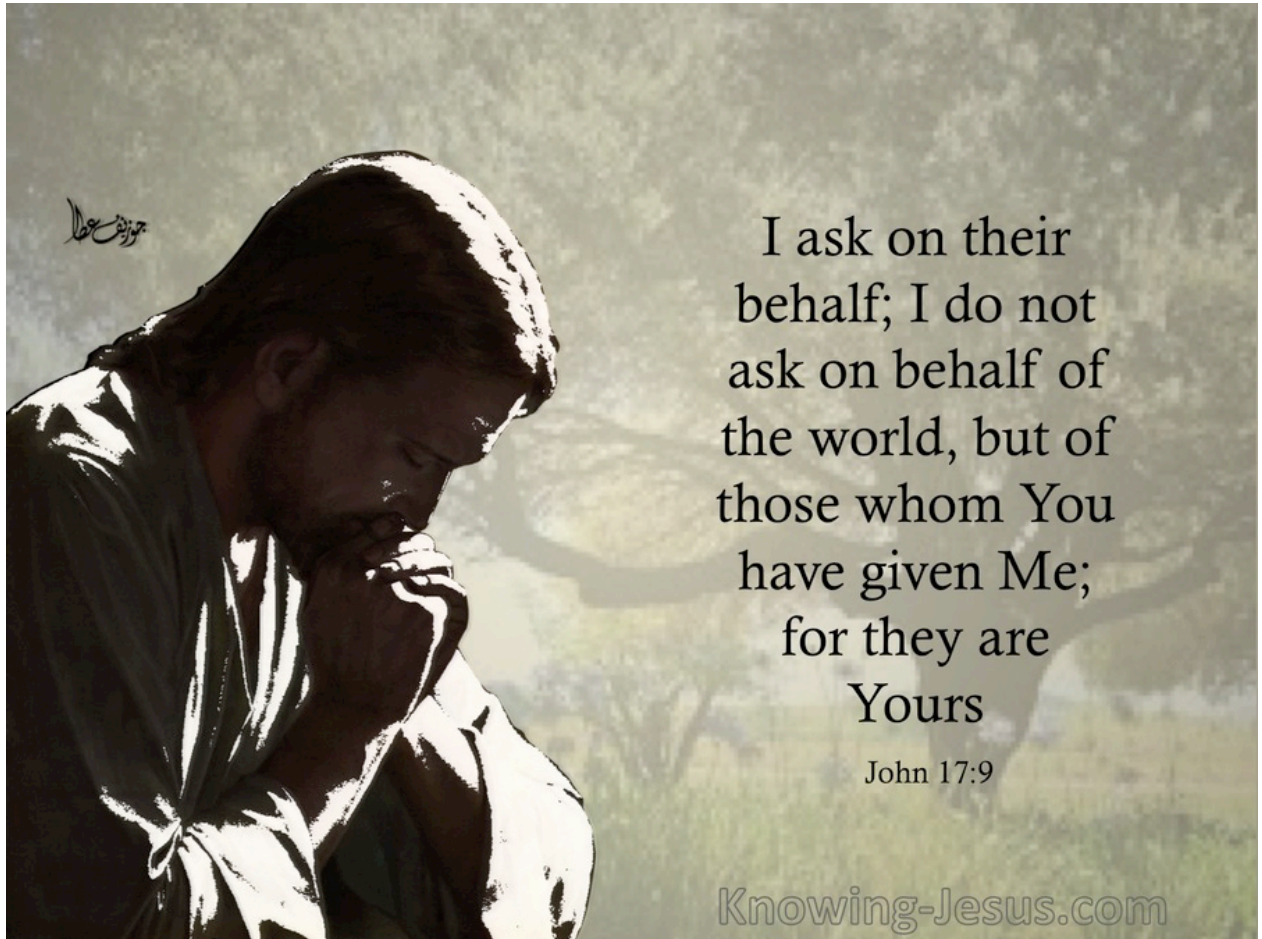


# The Prayers of Jesus



**MU Sydney Bible Studies 2019**

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## **Suggestions for using these studies**

1. Enjoy the studies. There is no test at the end. They are provided to help you grow in your relationship with our great God.
2. Make sure that each person has a copy of the study booklet you are using. Some people have hearing problems and no-one concentrates all the time, so they need a written copy of the questions to take part in the discussions. Copies of the studies can be bought from the MU Office for each person, or you may wish to buy one copy and use your church facilities to photocopy the number you need.
3. If possible it is good to hand out the studies a week or so before the day, so people have time to prepare in advance. Encourage your people to read the Bible passage a couple of times as they prepare. If you do this it is wise to have some extra copies available on the day in case some people forget to bring theirs, or extra people join you.
4. It is essential that the leader has fully prepared the study beforehand. You will find that the background notes are relevant to the answers of the questions.
5. The 'Think About' section is there to help you focus on the big issue of the study. They are hypothetical questions and there is not necessarily a right or wrong answer. Don't stress over this section, enjoy it.
6. You may need to choose a selection of questions to discuss if your group has limited time available. Choose your selection beforehand, don't simply end when you run out of time. These studies have optional questions added after the initial questions so it is easier for you to decide which questions to use if you have limited time.
7. Where you find multiple questions within the one question read all the questions first and then deal with each individual question separately. This is so you understand the bigger picture before you deal with the simpler breakdown.
8. You can increase participation by asking several people to read the Bible passages aloud for the group. This also provides a variety of voices and helps to keep people engaged with the study. Make sure you ask your potential readers ahead of time to make sure they are comfortable doing this.
9. It is generally better for discussion to sit in a semi-circle than to sit in rows. It is hard to talk to the back of someone's head, and it is generally easier to hear when sitting in semicircles.
10. If you have a large group (twenty or more), consider breaking into smaller groups of about six to ten for the discussion time. The person leading the study could do an introduction, small groups could then discuss the questions with an assigned leader for each group (who has prepared beforehand), and then all could rejoin for a conclusion time directed by the leader.
11. Another alternative for a large group, is choosing several questions that don't just need factual answers but require discussion, and asking the members of the group to discuss those questions with the person next to them. Then, if appropriate, ask if anyone would like to share their thoughts with the rest of the group.
12. All Bible readings are taken from New International Version, as found on the Bible Gateway website <https://www.biblegateway.com>

## Background to the studies

The Bible Studies this year are on the prayers of Jesus and come from a number of passages found throughout the Gospels.

Before looking at the selection of prayers for these studies I think it would be good to share with you some thoughts on prayer itself.

From Gallusz: "In essence, prayer is a means for expressing our understanding of our place in the universe, since by turning to it we acknowledge our limitations and our dependence on God....On the other hand viewed from God's perspective, prayer becomes the basic means that he uses to transform us, giving us meaning and set us free from the burdens that enslave us."(p4)

Dostoyevski: "The whole law of human existence consists merely of making it possible for every man to bow down before what is infinitely good."  
(Gallusz p.5)

Gallusz: "Bowing down to God as the 'infinitely Great One' presupposes understanding prayer, not in terms of duty or well learnt ritual, but as a privilege of communicating with him. This requires an attitude of openness and vulnerability by which prayer becomes a moment of complete sincerity. All the masks can be put aside, since in his presence we are safe to be who we are. God's unconditionality provides us with a firm basis for genuine freedom." (p5)

Yancy: "Prayer allows me to admit my failures, weaknesses and limitation to One who responds to human vulnerability with infinite mercy." (Yancy, p19)

Cullman: "'The essence of all prayer is that it is a conversation with God as the partner.' The partnership with the divine includes two fundamental aspects: welcoming his friendship and acknowledging his Lordship. Since we are not equal partners, we appear in this relationship as his friends, *children (my addition)* and he is our Lord, *our heavenly Father (my addition)*.

Overemphasising either of these two aspects leads to a distorted picture: prayer becomes too human or too divine. It will lack either awe or personal touch. Holding the two aspects in balance will keep from shallowness, but also from keeping an unneeded distance." (Gallusz, p6)

Stanford: "Our prayer life should not just be intentional or instructional (as in corporate prayer); it should also be intimate as shown in Psalm 107 28-30 "Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven." (p111)

With these thoughts in mind let's go on to look at the passages selected for study.

Prayer was a central feature of Jesus' life and therefore needs to be a central feature of our lives.

We are not going to study every prayer of Jesus but a selection of them.

Bible Study 1 will look at Jesus' prayer at the tomb of Lazarus, followed by his prayers in Gethsemane and finally his prayers from the cross.

Bible Studies 2-4 are from John 17 when Jesus prays for himself, his disciples and those people who will become his disciples after his death, the church.

I have chosen to omit the prayers of Matthew 11:25-26 and Luke 10:21, *'At that time Jesus full of joy by the Holy Spirit, said, **"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to the little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."***

This prayer followed a period of disappointment for Jesus after he had ministered to people in his own home country and they had not received his message but in their ignorance had rejected it. The prayer shows us how Jesus dealt with disappointment and how he continued to trust in his heavenly Father. In disappointment Jesus turned to prayer and praise. Jesus understands that he is doing God's will and he also understands that those who receive his message must do so as little children, believing with innocent faith in the Father. There is much more to this prayer so I will leave those discoveries to you should you wish to explore it more fully.

I have also omitted John 12: 27-33 *'Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup> **"Father, glorify your name!"** Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." <sup>29</sup> The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. <sup>30</sup> Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. <sup>31</sup> Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." <sup>33</sup> He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.'*

There is a Gethsemane feel to this prayer. The heavenly voice answering Jesus' prayer stresses its significance. The focus of this prayer is the glorification of God's name. Jesus understood that ultimately God's name would be glorified when he completed the work his Father had sent him to do, hence his reference to the 'hour'. The 'hour' in John is always a reference to Jesus' death and resurrection. The hour when God would bring salvation to his people. Again these few sentences are just a tease for you to want to investigate this prayer in more depth.

They have been omitted not because they are of no significance but simply because there is no room within the framework of the four studies to include

everything. If you want to look more closely at these passages then the books listed in the Bibliography will be of great help. I recommend that you do take some time to explore these passages.

Prayer represented a significant part of Jesus' life and his prayers give us an indication of the closeness of his relationship with his Father and his concern for his people.

We can learn much from Jesus' pattern of prayer as we have already discovered from our studies of the Lord's Prayer or the Disciple's Prayer as it should be called.

The prayers of Jesus show us the relationship that Jesus enjoyed with his heavenly Father. The intimacy and honesty that is clearly portrayed also give us a lesson in how we too can relate with our heavenly Father and live our lives as his children. We are children of God just as Jesus was a child of God therefore we too can draw as close to our heavenly Father as Jesus did. This of course is only possible because of the work of Jesus on the cross for us and for the indwelling Holy Spirit who is ever present in our lives.

I don't know about you but I do know that I haven't in the past given much thought to Jesus' incarnation and the effect it would have had on both him and his Father. We can send our sons and daughters away for education, for work, for war, for marriage or for whatever reason is necessary for them to leave us and the relationship we enjoy with them whilst they are living with us. It is sometimes a wrench but usually we can reach them in some way and remain close to them.

But God in a sense lost his son when he was incarnated as a baby, he lost the familiar and perfect physical relationship that we can only imagine. For 33 years Jesus was away from his Father, the Father who loved him dearly. The Father who had created our world with his son. The Father who now chose to lose his son in order that he might gain many sons and daughters. The cost however was enormously high.

The cost was enormously high for Jesus too. Not only did he have to suffer a cruel and lonely death but he was separated from his Father for 33 years. His only means of communication was prayer and this is probably why there are around 60 indications throughout the Gospels of times when Jesus goes away to pray, meditate or be alone with God. These are only the recorded times when Jesus was observed in prayer.

The frequency with which the Gospel writers mention Jesus praying indicates the intentionality of Jesus' prayer life. He needed to commune with his Father. He particularly needed to do this in times of crisis but we also read of him giving thanks to God and praising his name.

Jesus set aside time to pray before all his mission's critical moments (Gallusz p14):

1. His baptism, Luke 3:21
2. His transfiguration, Luke 9:28
3. Choosing his disciples, Luke 6:12
4. The first cycle of instructions concerning his death, Luke 9:18-20
5. The instructions concerning challenges to his disciples, Luke 22:32
6. Before his arrest in Gethsemane which ushered in the events leading to the cross, Luke 22:41-44

Jesus seems to pray constantly. His prayers were not always long. They were often short and to the point. They were often from his soul, the depths of his heart. One author (Stanford) says Jesus' prayers show us the very 'heart of God.' They certainly show us what was dear to Jesus' heart:

1. His concern to do the will of his Father
2. The intimacy of his relationship with his Father
3. His concern for his disciples to pray appropriately, consistently and frequently
4. His concern to be guided by his Father
5. His concern that his disciples live lives that bring glory to God
6. His concern that God's people be united as he is with the Father and the Holy Spirit
7. His concern that his disciples are safe from the evil one
8. His concern that his disciples 'know' the Father as he does
9. His concern that his disciples know the Father's love
10. His concern that we forgive those who sin against us

I'm sure I have left some things out but this list gives us some indication of how important prayer was to Jesus and how important it is for us.

Prayer is simply conversation with God. It is not hard. We just make it hard. Our sinfulness and desire to be independent of God even when we know this is a dumb way to live makes prayer hard. But you can be assured that when you talk to God he will be there, ready and waiting to hear you and to hold you in his everlasting arms, for you are his child and he loves you.

The first prayer we will look at in the studies occurred when Jesus is at the tomb of Lazarus and he prays, *"Father, I thank you for having heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."*

Jesus had delayed his coming to Lazarus to ensure it was known that he had truly died. He waited four days to ensure that according to Jewish belief hovering spirits could not make him alive again within three days of his death. If he was dead for four days then decomposition would have begun and he would be utterly dead.



This was the seventh and final 'sign' to be found in John related to Jesus' mission on earth. It was a sign that he was the giver of life and he wanted to be sure that this sign was understood as coming from God and that it was God who had sent him to deliver it. He wanted the people to know that what he did was under his heavenly Father's authority and power. This sign reveals God's purpose for the world. What seems to be a tragedy to the people present, for Lazarus was much loved, turns out to be an opportunity for God's glory to be revealed.

Matthew 26:36-46 is the version of Jesus' Gethsemane prayers we will be studying. In this prayer Jesus' humanity comes to light more clearly than in any other time during his ministry. The emotional pain he is suffering indicates his awareness of just how hard this final step is going to be for him. Jesus says, *"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death."* Jesus asks his Father that this 'cup' might be taken from him. But he also prays that God's will might be done.

It had never really occurred to me before that Jesus had a choice in this matter. That he could have chosen not to go through with his final act of salvation for us. Yet as I realised this I thought how foolish I was for never really thinking about it for Jesus is God, so of course he had a choice. This makes his action even more remarkable. Even in the depths of despair, and knowing what the cost would be for him and his Father if Jesus chose to undertake this task, he still prayed that the Father's will be done, *"Yet not as I will, but as you will."*

After finding the disciples asleep and not giving him any support he goes away after telling them to *"watch and pray so you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."* This is probably a reference to the very near future when the disciples choose to deny their association with Jesus, when they huddle together too afraid to show their faces to the world that is about to crucify their Lord.

Again he prays, *"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."* Jesus was determined that whatever the outcome, God's will must be done.

We learn much from these prayers about the disciples, about Jesus, about our heavenly Father and about ourselves. These things we will explore further in the study. If we learn nothing else we learn that in a time of dire need Jesus didn't hesitate to pour out his heart to his heavenly Father. He didn't hide, He didn't ignore him. He didn't try to solve the situation himself. He took it all to his Father in heaven. He knew from past experience that God always hears his prayers and that he would answer them. The answer may not be what he wanted but it would be according to his Father's will and it would be right.

Next we will examine Jesus' prayers from the cross. We will be using Luke 23:34, Matthew 27:45-46 and Luke 23:44-49. You will notice that in both the

Luke references Jesus acknowledges his Father, and he calls him 'Abba.' Yet in the Matthew reference and only in this reference Jesus does not use the word 'Abba'. This is the only time in the Gospels when Jesus is praying that he doesn't call God 'Abba.'

We have learned previously in our studies of the Lord's Prayer that 'Abba' was a very familiar word used by Jewish people to address their fathers. It was especially used by children and is very similar in meaning to our word 'Daddy.' It connotes a sense of familiarity, security, safety and unconditional love as well as respect and awe.

We also learn from the Luke 23:34 reference that even on the cross Jesus is thinking of his people. He actually asks for forgiveness for those who have wronged him, claiming their ignorance to what they are doing. Here he offers the ultimate example of what it means to forgive those who have sinned against us.

The cry from Jesus in Matthew 27:46 is a direct quote from Psalm 22. This Psalm starts with an anguished cry from an innocent man and ends with a note of hope.

Jesus was possibly meditating on this Psalm while enduring the cross holding on to the hope that the Psalm offered. So while Jesus cries out, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me," he continues to trust in his heavenly Father.

In quoting from this Psalm Jesus is also pointing to the hope that, those who believe in him, have regarding eternal life. The hope that we have in Jesus being the giver of life. He is pointing to the fact that he has completed the mission set before him. He has done his Father's will. He has suffered the complete desolation of utter separation from God, his Father. The Father has also suffered the same desolation, the death of his Son, the one in whom he was pleased. They lost communion with one another and Jesus experienced that absolute aloneness that we all dread. A world without God is a world that is empty and meaningless. Jesus experienced this in its absolute completeness. Yet, he still calls out to his Father in heaven, the one who would make it all right again with Jesus' resurrection.

In Luke 23:46, even at the point of death, even after he has acknowledged that his Father had forsaken him, still he calls him Abba and offers himself up to his heavenly Father, he prays, "*Father into your hands I commit my spirit.*" These words are a reference to Psalm 31:5 and reflect the faith and trust Jesus has in his Father. Even though he was wounded and near death Jesus still expressed his trust in his Father.

Callusz (p.134) states that "*by the act of committing his spirit into God's hands Jesus expressed confidence that the mission for which he had come to earth was completed.*"

Bock in Callusz (p. 134) states " *Jesus' last words are a commentary on his death but also on his life.....From first to last Jesus lived to serve God.*"

Jesus taught his people even while on the cross. In the Lord's Prayer he taught his disciples to pray for deliverance from evil and on the cross he offered his disciples an example of what to do when adversity will not go away, when evil is ever present. Jesus shows his disciples that at these times one must offer himself up to God to do his will whatever that may be. He is showing them that his God, his heavenly Father, can be trusted through all adversity even unto death.

The last three studies are on John 17, Jesus' Farewell Prayer or as it is sometimes known, Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. This is really the Lord's Prayer. The other one should actually be called the Disciples' Prayer but this is not the place to discuss that.

There are however some parallels between the two:

1. The use of 'Our Father' and 'Father'
2. 'Hallowed be your name' and God's name (17:6, 11, 12 and 26)
3. 'Your Kingdom come' and glorify your Son (17:1 and 5) which was how God's name would be glorified ie. the Father would be glorified through the earthly ministry of his Son as he brought in the Kingdom of God
4. 'Lead us not into temptation' and 'I protected them, kept them safe' (17:12)
5. 'Deliver us from the evil one' and 'protect them from the evil one' (17:15)

In the discourse before the prayer Jesus has just talked about his victory in the world. He says he has overcome the world. Then he prays.

Jesus looks toward heaven as he prays. This was a common posture for prayer at the time (John 11:41 Jesus looks up and prays at the tomb of Lazarus, Mark 7:34 when Jesus prayed and opened the eyes of the blind man). The alternative posture was to prostrate oneself as Jesus did in Gethsemane or as the tax collector did in Luke 18:13 where "*he wouldn't even look up to heaven.*"

Jewish and Hellenistic discourses often end in prayer. Jesus has just completed a lengthy discourse in John 16 where he has prepared his disciples for what is to come. He concludes the discourse as though his mission is over, as a fait accompli. His prayer that follows also assumes that his mission is completed. So he prays for himself as he goes to his Father. He prays for his disciples who will be left behind in the world. Finally he prays for those who will become his disciples in the time before he comes again, the future church.

The discourse and prayer probably occurred on the way to Gethsemane. The disciples could hear Jesus' prayer. Peter, James and John who had witnessed Jesus' transfiguration must have wondered again at his greatness. Even as he had talked about his death and even though they didn't fully understand what

he was teaching them they would have recognised the depth of his relationship with God, the trust he had in his Father, and the intimacy that he enjoyed through their unity.

The disciples would also have wondered at the heart of Jesus. They had just heard him talking about his death but now after just two sentences when he asks the Father to glorify him he goes on to pray for his disciples and the church which will follow. He prays for their protection in the world and he prays that they might experience his joy and that they might be unified in order to do the work he has set for them. But overall they would have heard his love for them even as he prepares to die. It is hard to imagine what they must have been feeling. Confusion, wonder, love, fear, awe. All tied up inside them.

As we study these prayers of Jesus I do pray that you will discover the very essence of our God. I pray that you will better understand just how much he truly loves his people because he suffered for us that we might know him. I pray that as you learn these things you might also long to discover how you might serve him in this world. Like the disciples of Jesus' day we have to live in this world even though we aren't of it. We will be challenged by the evil one who will do everything he can to prevent us from going forward in unity with one purpose, to let the world know that the Father sent Jesus to rescue his world. It is so important that we stand as one people, strong in his name, proclaiming Jesus' name and work for the world that all might know him and therefore know his Father.

Enjoy the studies!

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## **Background for Bible Study 1.**

### **Jesus raises Lazarus from the Dead**

#### **John 11: 38-44**

#### **Gethsemane**

#### **Matthew 26: 36-46**

(Mark 14: 32-42; Luke 22: 39-46)

#### **Jesus' Death**

#### **Luke 23:34**

#### **Matthew 27: 45-46**

(Mark 15: 33-41; Luke 23: 44-49; John 19: 28-30)

#### **Luke 23: 44-49**

## **Background**

Bible Study 1 will examine the prayer of Jesus before he raised his good friend Lazarus from death, Jesus' prayers in Gethsemane from Matthew and Jesus' prayers from the cross from Matthew and Luke.

To begin to understand Jesus' words and actions at Lazarus' tomb we need to go back to John 11: 1-7

*"Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." <sup>4</sup> When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, <sup>7</sup> and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea.""*

Jesus loved this family. It is thought that they were a relatively well off family as they were able to accommodate Jesus and his disciples as well as feed them sometimes. Jesus enjoyed being with them. They also had some understanding of his power and ability to heal. Hence they told him that Lazarus was very ill. I'm guessing they expected him to down tools and come quickly. Yet we know he delayed two more days before leaving for Judea, despite the fact that he loved this family.

Whether this had something to do with the danger that was near to him there or whether it was for a higher more purposeful reason we can only surmise from the text we have.

Jesus says, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

I imagine Jesus knew Lazarus would be dead before he got there. The delay was so that everyone present at the tomb would know that Lazarus had truly died. He waited four days to ensure it was beyond three days that, according to Jewish belief, hovering spirits could not make him alive again. If he was dead for four days then decomposition would have begun and he would be utterly dead.

Even when he gets to Bethany he doesn't go straight to the tomb but arranges to meet Martha and then Mary outside of their village. He first speaks to Martha and enquires of her understanding of the resurrection. Martha seems to understand but only in terms of the 'last days' when Jesus would come again to this world.

Jesus prepares her for what is to come soon and says, *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die."*

Then he says, *"Do you believe this?" Martha agrees and acknowledges Jesus as the "Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."*

How much Martha really understood we cannot say but her words have great depth of understanding contained in them. Jesus' actions in the next little while will probably not surprise her too much.

Mary then comes to Jesus and says quite clearly that if he had arrived earlier her brother would not have died. They have such amazing faith in him, this Nazarene, the carpenter, who healed the sick, made the blind see, the lame walk, the demons leave the demon possessed.

Yet did they truly know that he was the resurrection and the life as he had told them?

Those mourning with the sisters even said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man alive?"

Therefore it was important that for God to be truly glorified and for the world to understand that Jesus is God's son and that it was God who had sent him to bring in the Kingdom of God, that Lazarus be totally and unquestionably dead by the time Jesus arrived at his tomb.

So he waited four days and then told them to open the tomb. Martha expressed her concern in regard to the decomposition of Lazarus' body but Jesus reminded her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God."

Then Jesus prays, ***"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."***

This was the final 'sign' to be found in John related to Jesus' mission on earth. It was a sign that Jesus was the giver of life and he wanted to be sure that this sign was understood as coming from God and that it was God who had sent him to deliver it. He wanted the people to know that what he did was under his heavenly Father's authority and power. This seventh sign reveals God's purpose for the world. What seems to be a tragedy to the people present, for Lazarus was much loved, turns out to be an opportunity for God's glory to be revealed.

In the prayer of Matthew 26:36-46 Jesus' humanity comes to light more clearly than in any other time during his ministry. The emotional pain he is suffering indicates his awareness of just how hard this final step is going to be for him. Jesus says, *"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death."* In Luke the text says, *"being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."* This was a truly painful experience for Jesus, yet he didn't throw in the towel or complain just simply asked for another way to complete God's purpose. He still prayed, that this 'cup' might be taken from him. He also prays that God's will might be done.

Jesus had a choice in this matter. He could have chosen not to go through with his final act of salvation for us. This makes his action even more remarkable. Even in the depths of despair and knowing what the cost would be for him and his Father if he chose to undertake this task he still prayed that the Father's will be done, *"Yet not as I will, but as you will."*

In the Lord's Prayer we make the promise to do the Father's will for we actually say, "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Who do we expect to be doing the Father's will if it is not his own children?

Jesus' prayer shows us what to do and what to say when doing God's will is harder than we could ever expect it to be.

Very few of us have been asked to die doing the Father's will. Yet we still grumble and make excuses and say send her, not me, as Moses did in regard to Aaron.

Jesus is also only too aware how hard it is going to be for us. He also knows that like the disciples we are weak and when we are weak Satan appears to be at his strongest. This is when he attacks. This is why when Jesus finds his disciples asleep he tells them to *"watch and pray so you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

It is also why Jesus tells us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from the evil one," in the Lord's Prayer.

The best way to avoid the trap of Satan is to pray for protection from him.

This is also, probably, a reference to the very near future when the disciples choose to deny their association with Jesus, when they huddle together, too afraid to show their faces to the world that is about to crucify their Lord.

Again he prays, *"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."* Jesus was determined that whatever the outcome, that God's will must be done.

If we learn nothing else from these prayers we learn that in a time of dire need Jesus didn't hesitate to pour out his heart to his heavenly Father. He didn't hide, He didn't ignore him. He didn't try to solve the situation himself. He took it all to his Father in heaven. He knew from past experience that God always hears his prayers and that he would answer them. The answer may not be what he wanted but it would be according to his Father's will and it would be right. He knew his heavenly Father could be trusted, even with his life.

In Jesus' prayers from the cross in Luke 23:34, Matthew 27:45-46 and Luke 23:44-49, you will notice that in both the Luke references Jesus acknowledges his Father, and he calls him 'Abba.' Yet in the Matthew reference and only in this reference Jesus does not use the word 'Abba'. This is the only time in the Gospels when Jesus is praying that he doesn't call God 'Abba.'

We have learned previously in our studies of the Lord's Prayer that 'Abba' was a very familiar word used by Jewish people to address their fathers. it was especially used by children and is very similar in meaning to our word 'Daddy.' It connotes a sense of familiarity, security, safety and unconditional love as well as respect and awe.

We also learn from the Luke 23:34 reference that even on the cross Jesus is thinking of his people. He actually asks for forgiveness for those who have wronged him claiming their ignorance to what they are doing. Here he offers the ultimate example of what it means to forgive those who have sinned against us. Again the reference to the Lord's Prayer is very clear. Jesus' model even at the point of death is obvious to us. We are to ask for forgiveness for our sin in the context of forgiving those who sin against us. Jesus never sinned yet he still asked for the forgiveness of those who were sinning against him. They were not only hurting him, they were killing him.

The cry from Jesus in Matthew 27:46 is a direct quote from Psalm 22. This Psalm starts with an anguished cry from an innocent man and ends with a note of hope.

Jesus was possibly meditating on this Psalm while enduring the cross holding on to the hope that the Psalm offered. So while Jesus cries out, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me," he continues to trust in his heavenly Father.

In quoting from this Psalm Jesus is also pointing to the hope that, those who believe in him, have regarding eternal life. The hope that we have in Jesus being the giver of life. He is pointing to the fact that he has completed the



mission set before him. He has done his Father's will. He has suffered the complete desolation of utter separation from God, his Father. The Father has also suffered the same desolation, the death of his Son, the one in whom he was a pleased. They lost communion with one another and Jesus experienced that absolute aloneness that we all dread. A world without God is a world that is empty and meaningless. Jesus experienced this in its absolute completeness. Yet, he still calls out to his Father in heaven, the one who would make it all right again with Jesus' resurrection.

In Luke 23:46, even at the point of death, even after he has acknowledged that his Father had forsaken him, Jesus still calls God Abba and offers himself up to his heavenly Father, he prays, *"Father into your hands I commit my spirit."* These words are a reference to Psalm 31:5 and reflect the faith and trust Jesus has in his Father. Even though he was wounded and near death Jesus still expressed his trust in his Father. Our God is a God who always keeps his promises. He had promised that Jesus' would be raised from death. He had promised that through Jesus' death we would now have the possibility of a restored relationship with God as our Heavenly Father. So Jesus cries, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

Callusz (p.134) states that *"by the act of committing his spirit into God's hands Jesus expressed confidence that the mission for which he had come to earth was completed."*

Bock in Callusz (p. 134) states *" Jesus' last words are a commentary on his death but also on his life.....From first to last Jesus lived to serve God."*

Jesus taught his people even while on the cross. In the Lord's Prayer he taught his disciples to pray for deliverance from evil and on the cross he offered his disciples an example of what to do when adversity will not go away, when evil is ever present. Jesus shows his disciples that at these times one must offer himself up to God to do his will whatever that may be. He is showing them that his God, their God, can be trusted through all adversity even unto death.

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## Bible Study 1

### Jesus raises Lazarus from the Dead

#### John 11: 38-44

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. <sup>39</sup> "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days."

<sup>40</sup> Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, ***"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."***

<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

<sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

#### Gethsemane

#### Matthew 26: 36-46

(Mark 14: 32-42; Luke 22: 39-46)

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." <sup>37</sup> He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. <sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

<sup>39</sup> Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ***"My Father, (Abba) if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."***

<sup>40</sup> Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. <sup>41</sup> "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

<sup>42</sup> He went away a second time and prayed, ***"My Father, (Abba) if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."***

<sup>43</sup> When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. <sup>44</sup> So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

<sup>45</sup> Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup> Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

## Jesus' Death

### Luke 23:34

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, **"Father, (Abba) forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."** And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

### Matthew 27: 45-46

(Mark 15: 33-41; Luke 23: 44-49; John 19: 28-30)

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, **"Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")**

### Luke 23: 44-49

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, **"Father, (Abba) into your hands I commit my spirit."** When he had said this, he breathed his last.

47 The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." 48 When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. 49 But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

## Bible Study 1

### Think about:

Think about your pattern of prayer. How and when do you pray? What causes you to pray? What you expect when you pray. What is your picture of Jesus as you pray?

How does your pattern of prayer compare to what you currently know about Jesus and his prayer life?

### Read the Passages

### Bible Study Questions:

1. At Lazarus' tomb, why do you think Jesus prayed, ***"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."***
2. Jesus' prayers in Gethsemane were heartfelt and painful. Hebrews 5:7 says, *"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission."* What does Jesus example of prayer in Gethsemane teach you about asking that the hard stuff you are facing for him be taken away from you?
3. In Luke 23:34 Jesus modelled the words of the Lord's Prayer for us. Even though Jesus never sinned he still asked for forgiveness for those who were sinning against him. When do you find this hard to do and what do you do at those times?

4. In Matthew 27:45-46 Jesus is quoting from Psalm 22.

## **Psalm 22**

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?  
2 My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.  
3 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises.  
4 In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them.  
5 To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.  
6 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people.  
7 All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads.  
8 "He trusts in the Lord," they say, "let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."  
9 Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast.  
10 From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.  
11 Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.  
12 Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.  
13 Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me.  
14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me.  
15 My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.  
16 Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet.  
17 All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me.  
18 They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.  
19 But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me.  
20 Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs.  
21 Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.  
22 I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you.  
23 You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honour him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!  
24 For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.  
25 From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you I will fulfil my vows.  
26 The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord will praise him—may your hearts live forever!  
27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him,  
28 for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations.

29 All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him— those who cannot keep themselves alive.  
30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord.  
31 They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it.

What is the hope that Jesus was clinging to? What is your hope? Do you find this Psalm an encouragement? If so, why or why not?

5. In Luke 23:44-49 Jesus is quoting from Psalm 31:5. This reflects the faith and trust Jesus has in his heavenly Father. Even at the point of death he commits himself to God, his Father.

### **Psalm 31:1-5**

- 1 In you, Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness.  
2 Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.  
3 Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me.  
4 Keep me free from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge.  
5 Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.

What is your response to Jesus' words and to the Psalm? How can Jesus' words and the Psalm help you be a 'good and faithful servant'?

### **Supplementary Questions**

6. When Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me," he prayed with confidence knowing that his prayers were always heard and answered. He prayed that the 'cup' might be taken from him while in Gethsemane. This prayer wasn't answered the way he wanted it to be. Hebrews 5:8 tells us that Jesus learned obedience from what he suffered. Sometimes God says No! to our requests. How do you respond to this? What did Jesus do?

7. While praying in Gethsemane, three times Jesus returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. He admonishes them and tells them to "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. Jesus says, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." This may well have been a warning about what was to befall the disciples in the very near future. What is the lesson for us here?
  
8. What is your personal response to Jesus' prayer asking for forgiveness of those who were sinning against him?

## **Concluding Thoughts**

Trust, obedience, forgiveness and encouragement are the words that come to my mind when I dwell on the five passages chosen for this study. Jesus gave us examples of what it means to act on our trust in our heavenly father knowing that he only wants what is best for us. He did this by being obedient to God even though he asked that, 'this cup might be taken from him.'

We have learned that Jesus was serious about asking for forgiveness for those who sin against us. It was not just a throw away line in the Lord's Prayer. In fact we know there will be consequences for those of us who are not obedient in this matter, for Matthew 6: 14-15 says, *"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*

We can be encouraged through God's word as we see how Jesus was encouraged through his use of the Psalms as he faced his death, for us. Jesus used the Psalms to help him pray. So can we. The Psalms are a wonderful source of encouragement and they show us how we can appropriately cry out to God in our anguish and pain knowing that he understands us and hears us and will answer our prayers as he did for the Psalmists and for Jesus.

## Background to Bible Study 2:

### John 17:1-5

#### Background

The last three studies are on John 17, Jesus Farewell Prayer or as it is sometimes known, Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. This is really the Lord's Prayer. The other one would be better called the Disciples' Prayer.

There are however some parallels between the two:

1. The use of 'Our Father' and 'Father'
2. 'Hallowed be your name' and God's name (17:6, 11, 12 and 26)
3. 'Your Kingdom come' and glorify your Son (17:1 and 5) which was how God's name would be glorified ie. the Father would be glorified through the earthly ministry of his Son as he brought in the Kingdom of God
4. 'Lead us not into temptation' and 'I protected them, kept them safe' (17:12)
5. 'Deliver us from the evil one' and 'protect them from the evil one' (17:15)

Jesus has just talked about his victory in the world. (John 16:33b) He says he has overcome the world. Then he prays.

Jesus looks toward heaven as he prays. This was a common posture for prayer at the time (John 11:41 Jesus looks up and prays at the tomb of Lazarus, Mark 7:34 when Jesus prayed and opened the eyes of the blind man). The alternative posture was to prostrate oneself as Jesus did in Gethsemane or as the tax collector did in Luke 18:13 where *"he wouldn't even look up to heaven."*

Jewish and Hellenistic discourses often end in prayer. Jesus has just completed a lengthy discourse in John 16 where he has prepared his disciples for what is to come. He concludes the discourse as though his mission is over, as a fait accompli. This prayer clearly portrays what is on Jesus' heart at this time (as all our prayers do). His prayer that follows also assumes that his mission is completed so he prays for himself as he goes to his Father, he prays for his disciples who will be left behind in the world and he prays for those who will become his disciples in the time before he comes again, the future church.

The discourse and prayer probably occurred on the way to Gethsemane. The disciples could hear Jesus' prayer. Peter, James and John who had witnessed Jesus' transfiguration must have wondered again at his greatness. Even as he had talked about his death and even though they didn't fully understand what he was teaching them they would have recognised the depth of his relationship with God, the trust he had in his Father, and the intimacy that he enjoyed through their unity.



This prayer underlines the fact that Jesus is very aware that the 'hour' has come, the 'hour' of his glorification, for him to complete the work his Father has set for him. We have previously learned that to glorify, or hallow, the Father is to do his work. So, Jesus here asks the Father to 'Glorify the Son, that the Son might glorify you.' Jesus will glorify his Father by doing his work. His work was to bring in the Kingdom of God. The way God had deemed for this to occur was for Jesus to lose his life that we might find ours. Jesus was to glorify the Father by dying for us. The Father is glorified through Jesus' obedience to the Father and as a result Jesus too will share in the glory which he had in the Father's "presence before the world began."

It is important to remember that the Father would not be glorified if Jesus work on the cross was not acceptable. He would also not be glorified if Jesus was not restored to his rightful place in the presence of the Father's amazing and complete glory. In effect then Jesus is praying that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Carson, The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus, p202)

At the time of this Farewell Prayer though the cross is still to be faced Jesus can speak with such certainty about the outcomes of the cross because assurance of the future is grounded in the victory already won and stated in John 16:33: "But take heart. I have overcome the world." (Gallusz, p104)

Jesus reminds the Father that he has given Jesus authority over all people so that he might give them eternal life. He will give eternal life only to those the Father has given to him. So even whilst offering eternal life he does it under the Father's authority.

The eternal life that Jesus is offering is an interesting concept. First, it would not be given without Jesus' death on the cross, his resurrection and his exaltation for without these our sins would not be forgiven, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God would not have removed our sin.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit would not have been sent to convict the world of sin, its righteousness and its judgement or to generate new life in believers.

Thirdly, the Great Commission would have lost its meaning for the basis of its work was the authority given to Jesus, by the Father, to offer eternal life to those who the Father had given him.

What then is this eternal life? We tend to think of eternal life as life forever as we know it but with Jesus' physical presence. We also think of it in heaven as we worship and praise God with all the other believers who have been called to him.

In this passage eternal life is actually described as knowing God, the only true God and knowing Jesus, the one God sent into the world. So it is knowledge of God and knowledge of Jesus that equals eternal life. In Carson's words,

eternal life is best seen not as everlasting life but as knowledge of the Everlasting One. (p206) The one we will know forever as his children.

It is therefore not possible for us to choose how we will know God. For God himself has ordained how this will occur. It will only be through Jesus, the one who glorified the Father and who in turn was glorified by the Father, so that he might offer eternal life to the ones the Father has given him.

## **Bible Study 2**

### **Passage**

#### **John 17: 1-5**

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

## **Bible Study 2**

### **Think about:**

When you think about glorification in today's world what is the first thing that comes into your mind? How does this compare to your understanding of the glory of God?

### **Read the Passage**

### **Bible Study Questions:**

1. Glory is a central theme of these verses. What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you."
2. What might have been the consequences had God not glorified Jesus as a result of his work on the cross? Think about this in terms of Jesus' authority promised him by the Father.

3. The essence of this prayer is Jesus' commitment to do the Father's will. He makes this commitment to ensure God will be truly known and that eternal life might come to those who have heard his word. What do you understand eternal life to be? What does this passage say about eternal life? How does your understanding differ from the text, if it does?
4. 17:4 and 16:33 suggest that Jesus' work has already been completed yet we know he still has to suffer the cross. Why do you think Jesus was able to express himself in this way?

## Supplementary Questions

### ***The Lord's Prayer***

*Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen*

5. Think about the Lord's Prayer and this prayer Jesus prays for himself. What are the similarities between the two and why do you think Jesus might have expressed himself the way he did in 17:1-5?
6. From this passage how do you think our salvation will be worked out?

7. Jesus is praying this prayer in the presence of his disciples. If you were with the disciples while Jesus was praying this prayer what would you be thinking? Do your prayers reflect Jesus' prayers?
  
8. Jesus says in V5 "*And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.*" What do you think Jesus meant by the glory he shared with the Father before the world began?

### **Concluding thoughts:**

Jesus says, "*The time has come. Glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you.*" I'm ever so grateful that Jesus chose to be obedient to his heavenly Father. His selfless obedience has made it possible for him to give those who love him eternal life. I'm also grateful that he does this under the authority of God, the Father. For without this authority this generous gift would be meaningless. It would have no reality or value. We would still be without hope, as we were before Jesus died for us.

Let us give thanks at all times for what Jesus has done for us.

## **Background to Bible Study 3:**

### **John 17: 6-19**

#### **Background**

The disciples as they heard Jesus' prayer would have wondered at the heart of Jesus. They had just heard him talking about his death but now after just two sentences when he asks the Father to glorify him he goes on to pray for his disciples and the church which will follow. He is about to face the most humiliating and painful death possible yet he shows immense concern love and care for his disciples in the midst of this act of utter obedience.

He prays for their protection in the world and he prays that they might experience his joy and that they might be unified in order to do the work he has set for them. But overall they would have heard his love for them even as he prepares to die. It is hard to imagine what they must have been feeling. Confusion, wonder, love, fear, awe. All tied up inside each of them.

There are a number of themes throughout Jesus' prayer for the disciples and we will examine through the following points:

#### **1. Revelation and response**

*"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. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For 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."*

Jesus makes it very clear that the disciples came to him as a gift from the Father. They were always the Father's. The Father chose them and gave them to Jesus.

This is a gift that like adoption is of benefit to both the receiver and the gift itself. ie. Parents receive a child for adoption and the child receives the love and acceptance of their new parents. So Jesus received the gift of the disciples, their friendship and trust in him as God's Son but the disciples received the gift of eternal life because they believed in who Jesus is and that he came from the Father.

Carson says, "Christians often think of Jesus as God's gift to us; we rarely think of ourselves as God's gift to Jesus. God's gift of us to Jesus is for the good of the gift." (p210)

#### **2. Jesus prays for the disciples**

*"I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them."*

Jesus prays for his friends. He is concerned for them. There is a special relationship between Jesus and his disciples because they have been given to him by God. The Son and the Father share all they have. Hence Jesus is able to say, *"all I have is yours and all you have is mine."*

Jesus also says that, "glory has come to him through his disciples." This glory has come from their belief in him and from their witness to the world about him. They too have revealed who Jesus is and therefore who the Father is. They have revealed his name and therefore have revealed his character and what he stands for. This they have done while on mission, (Mark 6:6b-13)

When Jesus says he is not praying for the world, he is not saying he doesn't care for the world for surely he does. The final section of this prayer shows us that, as does his sending the disciples into the world in Mark 6:7-13. vs 12-13 says, *"They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them."* Clearly Jesus cares about the world. He is just not praying for the world at this moment.

### **3. Protection and unity through the name of the Father**

*"I 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. 12 While 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."*

Jesus is clear that he will no longer be in the world but with his heavenly Father. After his work has been completed he will return home.

Jesus is concerned however for the disciples. He is afraid the 'evil one' will trick them and take them away from him and so he prays for their protection. This protection comes from the powerful and authoritative name of the Father. God's name is powerful therefore he is powerful and this power is used to protect his people.

Jesus has protected them while here on earth and with them. He has in fact not lost a single one of them except the one who was meant to be lost to fulfil Scripture.

This is why the Psalmist can say, "Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might." (Psalm 54:1)

Jesus prays for their protection "so they might be one as we are one." He prays that they, Those who follow Jesus, might be united as the Father and the Son are united. This request implies that there is something out in the world that could break them apart, break their unity. In unity there is strength and power.

In disunity there is weakness and fear and the possibility of betrayal. In unity we can reject the wiles of the 'evil one.' As we stand together supporting and encouraging one another the world cannot attack us and win.

Unity is also an effective resource for evangelism. As the disciples stand united in faith and in the message of salvation the word of God will be heard by the nations.

It is to be noted though that their unity comes by union in God's name. Jesus prays, *"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."* They can only enjoy the unity of the Father and the Son through the power of the Father's name. Therefore the disciples must remain faithful and loyal to Jesus. Persistence in belief in Jesus and the name of God is what will keep them united and therefore powerful to resist any powers that might break them apart.

#### **4. The disciples are *in* the world but not *of* the world**

*"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it."*

Jesus says I say 'these things' while I am in the world so that they (his disciples who are listening to this prayer) may have the full measure of my joy within them.

These things probably refer to the whole Farewell Discourse of John 14-16 and his joy is reflected in John 15:9-14 *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command."*

The joy that Jesus enjoys is the love of the Father that comes through his obedience to the Father's commands. Love is the central theme here. The disciples will enjoy the love of Jesus and their heavenly Father if they remain faithful to them and share in love with one another. The joy the disciples experience is not dependent on external circumstances but from belonging to the Father. Their circumstances did not improve by deciding to follow Jesus but their assurance of belonging to the Father does give them great joy and hope for the future.



The word that Jesus received from the Father and gave to his disciples has caused the world to hate them as it also hated him. The word that Jesus has shared with them is the message of his saving works, that he is going to die for their sin, be resurrected and return to the Father. In doing this he will have saved them from their sins by offering himself as the perfect sacrifice for their salvation.

Jesus doesn't pray that they be removed from the world, but that they be protected while in the world. Some characters in the Old Testament had prayed that they be removed from their world but these requests were not granted: Moses (Num 11:13), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), Jonah (Jonah 4:3.8). Just as the Old Testament characters had work to do for God so do the disciples and this requires that they remain in the world while they do his work. Hence their need for protection from the 'evil one.'

The force of the 'evil one' is real. We are told in Ephesians 6:10-18 to be aware of the spiritual forces that work against us. This is to be taken seriously and in his prayer Jesus again reflects what he tells his disciples to pray in the Lord's Prayer. They are to pray "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one." So Jesus requests that the Father protect them from the 'evil one' for his force is real and needs to be thwarted.

Because the disciples know the truth they are now no longer of the world just as Jesus is not of the world. Because they know Jesus, they know the Father. Therefore they are distinct from the world and the world hates them. This puts them in danger from the world.

## **5. Sanctify them**

*"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."*

Jesus prays that the Father will sanctify the disciples by the Father's word, the word of truth. Knowledge of the truth will set them apart and separate them from the world. Knowledge of and belief in the truth about Jesus will make them holy as Jesus is holy, as the Father is holy. Jesus in John 14:6 declares himself to be *"the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Even though they are separate, distinctive from the world, Jesus is still sending them out into the world. They are to be reserved for service as they live in conformity with the truth, the word of revelation of the Father that is given to them by Jesus and Jesus alone.

While in the world they are to proclaim the knowledge they have received from Jesus to the world. They are to obey Jesus' command of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20: *"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples*

*of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

When you are 'sanctified' you are set apart for God, for his purpose alone. Someone who is sanctified will only do what God requires of him. He will follow the words of Micah 6:8, *"He has shown you, O man what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."* One who walks humbly with God does so in obedience to his will. His will is that his disciples share the knowledge of the Kingdom of God with the world, the truth, that the world too might know God.

One who is sanctified, is made holy, loves what God loves and hates what God hates. Jesus' disciples are to be holy as he is holy. Leviticus 11:44-45 says, *"I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves along the ground. <sup>45</sup> I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy."*

1 Peter 1:16 says, *"For it is written, 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"*

The disciples share the truth about God but the world denies this truth, they reject God's word and therefore reject Jesus, who is the word. They reject Jesus' disciples because they represent the truth they are denying.

Jesus sanctifies himself by being his Father's servant and revealing the word of truth to the world and in doing so he makes it possible for he himself to sanctify the disciples, to set them apart to do God's work in the world. He in fact sends them into the world. So they receive their holiness by being God's servants in the world.

## **Bible Study 3**

### **John 17: 6-19**

*"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. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For 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. 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11 I 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. 12 While 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.*

*13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*

#### **Think about:**

Someone said, "What a man thinks he is." what do you spend most time thinking about? What do you think about this statement in the context of those who reflect constantly on God's word and doing his will?

#### **Read the Passage**

#### **Bible Study Questions:**

1. Carson says, "Christians often think of Jesus as God's gift to us; we rarely think of ourselves as God's gift to Jesus. God's gift of us to Jesus is for the good of the gift." (p210) What is your response to this statement in the light of vs6-8?

2. Jesus says that, "glory has come to him through his disciples." How do we glorify Jesus in our day to day lives?
3. We often deny the reality of the 'evil one' or at the very least we ignore Satan's existence. Yet Ephesians 6:10-18 tells us to be prepared to defend ourselves for the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people
- (a) Why do you think we are so careless in understanding how Satan and his cohorts are at work?
- (b) What do we need to do to protect ourselves and our fellow Christians from the 'evil one'?
4. Unity is an important theme in Jesus' Farewell Prayer. If Jesus thought it important to pray for unity for his disciples, how much more necessary is it for us that we pray for unity amongst ourselves? Reflect on Psalm 133. Discuss the importance of unity amongst the believers in today's churches and the world.

**Psalm 133**

- <sup>1</sup> *How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!*  
<sup>2</sup> *It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe.*  
<sup>3</sup> *It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.*

## Supplementary Questions

5. We spend much more time today praying about our health, projects, decisions, finances, family and missions than we do praying about the danger of the 'evil one.' Why do you think this is so? What would be the consequence of not praying for protection from the 'evil one'?
6. What does it mean to be holy as God is holy? How can we show the world that we are holy and set apart for service to our Heavenly Father?
7. What does it mean to be in the world but not of the world? Think about this in terms of being called to be salt and light. Matthew 5:13-16, "*You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.* <sup>14</sup> *You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.* <sup>15</sup> *Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.* <sup>16</sup> *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*"

## Concluding thoughts:

I am eternally grateful that Jesus chose to allow his disciples to be present while he prayed at this time. For this prayer truly does reflect what is on his heart and the intimacy he shares with his heavenly Father that he promises will be the same for those who believe in him as the disciples did.

It is also good for us to know that we can read these words in the light of our post resurrection knowledge and our receipt of the Holy Spirit who indwells us and knows us and makes our prayers acceptable to God our heavenly Father.

There is so much to learn from this prayer that it is a little overwhelming but we can rest assured that the knowledge we need to be God's servants will be revealed to us. This is a great encouragement for because of this being God's servant is always going to be achievable. We just need to ask him how he wants us to be holy for him and he will show us. Micah 6:8n is of course always a guiding verse for us to hang our actions on.

Micah 6:8 *"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

## Background to Bible Study 4:

### John 17: 20-26

#### Background

This is Jesus' prayer for those who will believe through the work of the disciples. It is his prayer for the future church of which, we are a part.

Jesus was on his way to Gethsemane as he prayed this prayer. He was on his chosen route to his death and yet he is concerned for the church of the future and pours out his concerns to his Heavenly Father.

It astounds me that he could think past what he was to endure in the very near future and think of others. Not just his immediate disciples but the disciples who were to come in the future.

In Matthew 24:14 Jesus declares, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

Previously in Matthew 16:18 Jesus had declared, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

Jesus obviously foresees a future community of believers that will cover the nations of the world. In Matthew 28:19-20 he tells his disciples to "*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*" Jesus also promises them that he will be with them "*even to the end of the age.*"

The central theme of this part of Jesus' prayer is the unity of the disciples. This unity is expressed as the unity that is enjoyed by Jesus and His heavenly Father.

The purpose of this unity is so that the world might know that the Father sent Jesus into it to proclaim the truth about life. That Jesus is "the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6) in fact Jesus goes on to say in John 14: 7, "*If you really knew, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.*" Thus the unified disciples will share what they know about Jesus and that in knowing Jesus they are also revealing the character of the Father because this is manifested in Jesus because the Father and the Son are one.

Unity is also expressed in the love that the Father has for the Son and the Son has for his believers and that the believers have for one another. Unity comes only from God.

The world has tried to unite many times but has failed completely. Alexander the Great failed, the Romans failed, the United Nations is failing. It is only the unity that comes from God that can ever be successful and this is a unity that shows itself through love, through the word of truth, through grace and through holiness. God alone can unify his people to himself and his Son. This is achieved through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Counsellor, who Jesus promised to send to those who believe in him. The Holy Spirit indwells believers and convicts them of the truth that will bind them together in love so that all men might know Jesus and the father who sent him.

Jesus has given those who believe in him his glory. He has given his believers the same glory that the Father gave him. What then is this glory? It is the glory and honour that comes from doing the work of the Father.

We glorify Jesus as we obey his commands. His commands are that we love one another and that we share what we know about him to the world. This glory will unite Jesus' people and the world will know that, *"You (the Father) sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."*

There is purpose in the unity of the church and that is that the world will know that Jesus was sent that he might reveal who God is. The purpose of the Church's unity is that the world might know it was the Father who sent Jesus. The purpose of the church's unity is that the world might know that the Father loves the people of the world in the same way that he loves his Son.

The unity of the church is essential to the effective witness of the church!

Unity needs to be a driving force within the church. If the church stands united then the world will take notice of it. If it stands divided then why bother looking at the church for any sense of direction, guidance, wisdom or love?

Satan loves disunity in the church more than anything else. It serves a great purpose for him. If we can't stand together as God's people then he can creep in and cause us to question our faith. He can cause us to question the authority and wisdom of God. This is exactly how he tried to work with Jesus while he was in the wilderness after his baptism. He initially tries to tempt him in regard to the basic necessities of life - bread - in which God is our provider; He tempts Jesus in regard to his ambition - the receipt of the world's kingdoms - God requires we worship only him; He tries to come between the Father and the Son, to create disunity between them by playing on Jesus' trust of the Father. Disunity is powerful for it creates weakness, fear and lack of trust.

This concept of unity is so important to Jesus that he expresses it in all three sections of his Farewell Prayer. It is so important that Jesus expresses it on his



way to the cross. It is so important that he expresses it both as a function of how he and the Father and the Holy Spirit do their work and as a function of the Apostles and the church that is to come.

We are to be united in Christ. We are to be united in the message of the Gospel we share with the world. If we are not then the world will not hear us.

Stanford says clearly that "Jesus knows that to have a relationship with the Father and to be shaped by the Spirit, the truth and the wisdom of God, all of that is for nothing if we are not unified - of one heart and mind - first with the Father and then with one another." (p66)

Jesus prays that his future disciples will see his glory, the glory he enjoyed with the Father before the creation of the world. He wants all his followers to share in this glory, both his original disciples and all those who will follow.

This glory he wants them to see is the glory given to him by the Father, because the Father loved him, before the creation of the world, (cf vs 5 Where Jesus prays to be restored to the glory that he had with the Father before the world began).

This is also expressed in Ephesians 1:3-10, *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> **to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.** <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

Also in 1 Peter 1: 18-21, *"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. <sup>20</sup> He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. <sup>21</sup> **Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.**"*

Therefore those who share, with the Son, the delight of being loved by the Father share also in the glory to which the Son is restored in consequence of his triumphant death, resurrection and exaltation. (Carson, The Gospel according to John, p570)

In vs 25 -26 Jesus addresses God as Righteous Father. Jesus is forewarning God's judgement on the world. God's judgement on the world is righteous for the world chooses to remain ignorant of Jesus and his Father. So the world is to be condemned while the disciples are to be accepted and brought into the heavenly realm.

Jesus stands apart from the world for he knows the Father, who the world does not know. The world does, however, know that the Father sent Jesus. Jesus has also made it possible for the world to know the Father for he has shared the word and God's name with them. He has made the Father known.

Jesus thus mentions the success of his past mission, he has made the Father known to the world. This mission will be followed by his future mission. His work will not end with the cross. Jesus says he will continue to make the Father known *"in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."*

Jesus has already prepared his disciples for what is to come. He will be with them but through the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. He expresses it best in John 14:23-31a:

*"Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.*

*24 Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*

*25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

*28 "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. 30 I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, 31 but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me."*

By this continued ministry the love of the Father for the Son will extend to the disciples and future disciples and fill them. Jesus will be present in them by the agency of the Holy Spirit, the Counsellor. (Carson, The Farewell Discourse, p236)

Those who know Jesus and those who will know Jesus will not be left alone in their faith and trust in him. The church will have a Counsellor to teach and admonish and cherish and love them. The church will not be the church in isolation but will enjoy the love the Father has for his Son.

Carson says this best, "Jesus' goal is to sweep up those the Father has given him into the richness of the love that exists among the persons of the Triune God.....At the same time Jesus lives in and among his own redeemed people through the agency of the Holy Spirit, whom he bequests." (p236)

This church that Jesus prays for here is us. We are his church. We can be eternally encouraged that Jesus made this promise to his church. We can rest in the knowledge that Jesus remains in us and that he has sent the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us, to keep us united in faith as we strive to love and serve one another and to share his Gospel of salvation with the world.

## Bible Study 4

### John 17: 20-26

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **21** that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **22** I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— **23** I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

**24** "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

**25** "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. **26** I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

#### Think about:

Have you been blessed by the prayers of others as you continue to grow in your Christian walk? How do you feel when people say they have been or will pray for you? How wonderful is it to know that Jesus has prayed for us and continues to pray for us? Can you express this in a prayer of thanks?

#### Read the Passage

#### Bible Study Questions:

1. Unity is a central focus of this prayer. In many ways the church has failed to be united under God. We often stress our denominational differences with pride and arrogance. "There is no greater hope for the world than when the church is acting like....the church - just as Jesus intended." (Stanford p72) What do you think Stanford meant by this statement in relation to verses 20-23: *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **21** that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **22** I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— **23** I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."*

2. Barclay says, "The harder the task we give a student, a surgeon, a craftsman, the more we honour them. So when it is hard to be a Christian we must regard it as our glory, as our honour given to us by God." What do you think about this statement in the light of vs 22 and 23?

*"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."*

3. Burge (p469) describes the love between the Father and the Son as 'ineffable' which means it is too great or extreme to be expressed or described in words. We are loved by God with the love he holds for his Son.

(a) What is this love that the Father has given the Son that the Son now gives to his followers?

(b) How do we receive it?

(c) How do we know we have received it?

(d) What do we do with it once we've received it?

## Supplementary Questions

4. Jesus wants us to see and enjoy his glory. He also wants us to glorify him. How can we do this on a day to day basis?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Think about the church in which you worship. Think about what makes you stand together as the children of God. Think about the things that might divide you. What does your church need to do in order to stay united in Christ so that the world can know Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Jesus talks about being in the world but not of the world. He understands the 'world' to be an expression of everything that is opposed to God. Christians have to exist in this world.
  - (a) How can we do this without resorting to sectarianism, ie. living apart from the world, not associating ourselves with the world, cloistered?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - (b) How can we be different while still reaching the world with the message of salvation?

## **Concluding thoughts**

How amazing is it that we are loved by God to the same extent as he loves his Son, Jesus. Jesus also loves us in the same way the Father loves him. It is actually incomprehensible.

The only way I can come to grips with the love God offers us is to think of resting in God's everlasting arms. Secure and assured that he cares for me as no one else ever has or can.

I know his love is unconditional and doesn't depend on anything I can or will do. He just loves me for who I am, as he made me. Yet he loves me so much he sees me as a continuing project whom he chisels away at so that I grow to be more and more like Jesus.

My goal and prayer is to respond to his love by being obedient to his word and living as one who wants the world to know Jesus, and the Father who sent him, to show us our great and marvellous God.

I hope you can walk with me in this prayer and in making this your goal too.

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