



JOHN 17

Maybe you have heard the story of a bar owner that was upset about a group of Christians that were praying around his establishment. They wanted the place shut down. The bar owner wanted them to shut up. One night the bar burned to the ground. I guess it was a moral victory for the Christian group. God had answered their prayer. The bar was gone. I'm not sure it amazed the Christians, but it sure amazed the owner.

This same bar owner then took the Christians to court alleging that they burned down his business through prayer. There was no proof that anyone had lit the fire, but the owner was convinced they did it. He contended that their prayer caused God to act on their behalf. The Christian lawyers contended that it was ridiculous to assume that God actually burned the place down because of prayer.

Now the judge had been sitting in the court room the whole time as an observer. He had listened to the facts in the case. He heard the passion of the bar owner and the defense by the Christians. He came to this conclusion. He could find

no evidence that anyone had deliberately set the place ablaze. Yet, he did find one interesting fact that both sides did not expect. The judge pointed out that the bar owner believed that God could and did burn his bar down while the Christians refuted this claim. He concluded that the bar owner had more faith than the Christians did.

Prayer is one complicated monkey. I mean seriously it is. We say we believe in it, but when an answer comes, do we accept it, believe it, or appreciate it? Let's break that down. We say we believe but then why don't we pray more often? Hold it a second Patrick I do pray a lot. Do you? I know a pastors wife that prays for good prices before she shops. Do we pray like that? I prayed for ten things in a wife and within four days I met her. That's good prayer isn't it? Did I do that for my last car? I probably didn't. Hmm, maybe I should have reversed that. I should have prayed for the car and checked under the hood of my wife first. Just kidding?

Prayer is complicated. I prayed to fix my first marriage and within a month we were split up. Is that answered prayer? The Christians prayed the bar would close down, but instead it burned to the ground? Is that answered prayer? In Airdrie we prayed that a strip club would be gone from the middle of our town. Within a year it closed down and better than that it was torn down. Did we come back the rubble and praise God? Did we even notice?

Why do we pray then? Some part of me thinks we do it because everyone else does. Every Christian leader prays in public. They always do. Is it real, for show, or just because they always have? Do we pray like that because deep down we really appreciate God? I'm sure many of us do, but I have to tell you. I'm beginning to believe most Christians pray because it's what we do and it looks saintly.

Again we do pray, I believe that, but why? Do we pray for ourselves, for others, or for heaven's sake? In church circles there are those that always seek prayer. It's like there is always something wrong in their lives. With that much prayer every Sunday how could there be so much trouble every week? Are they really being attacked by Satan, or are they just needy people looking for attention. Maybe it is something else? We tell people we will pray for them because it's the nice thing to do? Do we really believe it works? We say we believe, but deep down are we really confident with our prayer? I like to think some pray because of heaven's sake. What I mean is that they pray because Jesus did, David did, or Moses did. It's just what we do because biblical saints did.

What scares me is something that Jesus said in James 2:19 **“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder”!** And in Matthew 8 the Demons called Jesus **“the son of God.”** These statements by

the demons should make us check why we pray because even the demons believe. Wow!

Non- Christians pray when they are in trouble. They cry out for help. They say thank God all the time. Some people say the words Jesus Christ more than I do. I have had many people say “pat I don’t believe but could you pray for me”? Seems weird if they don’t believe, but really I think they want to be safe just in case. Maybe that’s why people pray, just in case God will hear, will act, or will answer. It might be better that when we pray we shudder a little, because the most powerful being in the universe is going to respond. Shouldn’t that be nervous, scary, and frightful? The demons knew that. Do we?

I believe more and more that prayer just might be the backbone of a church. The success of a church might be found in its prayer life. When a church begins in its very first days, they pray for a place to plant their church; a community to serve in; and that God will lead them. They pray for funds, people, and pathways. A lot of prayer happens when a church begins.

Sadly how many churches have a vibrant prayer ministry once they are established? Why is it that when the church does well, the prayer ministry is the first to go. I did a paper on animals in the Old Testament and it was really interesting. What I began to notice was that as the dialogue with God became less and less from Genesis to 2 Samuel and two things happened. First of all the

sacrifices stopped. Yay for the animals but boo for the Israelites. They stopped giving and repenting for their sin. The second thing that happened is that things went badly. It wasn't long before invading armies crushed the Israelite nation. Life went terribly wrong for them when prayer, giving, and the basic acknowledgement of God diminished.

It's the same with a church, as prayer goes down, financial troubles rise. They are symbiotic of each other. They go together like a hand in a glove. There is no coincidence that God says in Malachi (the last book of the Old Testament) **“Ever since the days of your ancestors you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, "How shall we return?" Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, "How are we robbing you?" In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will count you happy, for you will be a land**

of delight, says the Lord of hosts. Praying to God might be more important than you know.

I suppose Jesus liked to pray. Of course he did and still does. Today we are going to look at Jesus prayer in John 17. If you ask most pastors about prayer they will eventually turn to John 17. It is considered one of the most important places in the New Testament where Jesus prayed. Why? Well it's because in many ways Jesus sets the tone about how to pray in this chapter. Isn't the tone set with the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6? Yes Jesus did set that prayer as a template in that chapter (and we'll get to that), but what makes John 17 more significant is the relationship in the prayer. John 17 shows a relationship between God the father, Jesus, his Disciples, and the world.

This chapter covers all prayer. Prayer is more than just worship or a list of wants. Prayer is talking with God. In John 17 Jesus talks with his father deeply. It's not just Jesus mouthing words, but I can see real dialogue going on from the heart. I think Jesus wants us to pray like that to our father in heaven too. Talking with God is good for our soul. God knows us better than we know ourselves, but he loves to hear our voice and our hearts.

It's also about hearing God talk to us. It's not just with our ears but with our hearts too. There is a warm communication in our hearts between God and us. I'm

sure many of you have felt it. If you haven't, then start talking to God today. Talk with God in prayer and begin to hear his voice in your heart.

Finally, prayer is a way that we can intercede for others. Intercede means on behalf of someone; to plead their case, or mediate a resolution. Jesus spends much of this prayer in John 17 asking on the behalf of others to the Father in heaven. He is concerned for his disciples and future believers. We can pray for others that way too. It's where we raise concerns, frustrations, and praise for those around us to God, that is prayer too.

This prayer to God the father in John 17 covers all these bases and more. So let's take a good look at the prayer of Jesus. This prayer example here is not just a prayer. Jesus has spent a lot of time preparing the disciples for ministry and prayer. Like a good coach bringing his team from beginning to end of a season. In the book of John, Jesus uses certain words and themes from chapter 8 to 17 to build up to the prayer in chapter 17. He is repeating stuff over and over so that it sinks in his disciples. Let's look at some examples.

Verse 1 of John 17 **“After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you.”** Now listen to John 8:20 **“These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.”** Many times Jesus says or it is said of him “the time has

not yet come.” Jesus resists something in the first part of his life. I love John 2 and his first miracle turning water into wine. His mother presses him to change the water, but Jesus says “woman my time is not yet.”

We often want to get ahead of God but in the bible Jesus waits as we should wait. Our prayer is hasty many times. We don't take the time to wait on God. in Luke 12 Jesus says **“When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say.”** Again in romans 8 it says **“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”** I believe we need patience in prayer. Much of the time we want, but maybe in prayer it should be about what God wants and others want. Jesus knew how to wait.

Another word in the first verse is glorified. Jesus says in John 12: 22 **“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”** All of a sudden in this part of Jesus life he changes his tune. Now it's time. The word glorify is the key. It means to rise up higher than expected or to honor greatly. When Jesus said it was time something had changed. I think two things changed. In that chapter the disciples for the first time are approached by some gentile Greeks. The Gospel had crossed from Jews to the gentiles for the first time. It was at this moment that all

that Jesus had taught and all he had shown was bearing fruit in his disciples. They did not blow off the Greeks but brought them to Jesus. It was time. The second is that things had been set in motion for the cross. The time had come to leave and Jesus knew it.

Our Prayer is like that too. When is the right time to pray? Most of us say anytime, but that might be reckless. Maybe learning about God and learning how Jesus responds to his father is more important before we pray. Like I said demons believed and non-Christians do ask for prayer, but with Christians shouldn't it be different for us? I have had people ask me to pray for health, money, a job, and so on. Is God Santa Claus? No, we know God the Father is so much more. Christians need to step back and learn how to pray effectively. Jesus teaches how to do that right here in John 17.

Look at verses 2 thru 4 of our chapter today. **“since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.”** Jesus really begins this prayer with acknowledging God the father. It says in verse 2 God has “authority” and “God the father gives.” In verse 3 says “the only true God that sent Jesus.” Then in verse 4 Jesus says he will “glorify the work God the father sent him to do.”

Jesus respects his father in heaven beyond everything. He even goes father by pointing out it is God that sends, and God that directs, and it is God's work that needs doing. We are to pray like that. We should begin with acknowledging God the father in heaven as our creator, maker, and authority over us. Is it because he demands this type of praise? I say no. sometimes we give honor where honor is due. People deserve praise like a hero or a winner of a game. God the father is like that. We give him glory and honor because he deserves our respect. Listen to the Matthew 6's prayer from Jesus **"Our Father in heaven, hallowed (holy) be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."** even in that prayer Jesus begins with respect.

The second thing Jesus does in this prayer is be bold before his father. How often do we pray "if it's your will?" Jesus does not do that. He comes boldly before God and asks as if it will happen. Listen to verse 1 to 5 again **"After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed."**

Jesus does not say words like “if, maybe, will you, or can I please have.”

No, he is confident and bold in his prayer. We should be too. How do I know that?

We'll listen to more of John 17 beginning in verse 9 **“I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”**

Jesus is saying that we are given to him by God the father. He is also saying that he is inside us. then in verse 11 he says “as Jesus and the father are one” may we be one as well; one with the father, one with Jesus, and one in the church body. As one we will be able to come boldly before God and ask for anything in the name of Jesus. Why? Because Jesus did and does that’s why. We can be bold too. The problem with an energized church is not only the lack of prayer but also in the boldness of prayer. We frankly just don’t believe like we should.

Matthew 6 goes on to say **“Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.”** we read the same stuff in john 17:15 **“I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I**

ask you to protect them from the evil one.” Jesus isn’t asking God for the moon. God is not just a giver. He is our protector and sustainer as well.

Prayer to God is all about the kingdom work. Jesus always asks for the same stuff. Protect us God, provide for us God, and be with us God. Guide us, sustain us, and use us. Our prayer should first be about respecting the creator then next it should be about being bold. Yet, another aspect is asking for the right stuff. Jesus did not ask God to rescue us from Satan. No, he asked for protection. Sometimes we ask God for help, but what kind of help: to be pain free, financially secure, or healthy? Maybe we should be asking God to sustain us and guard us.

In Matthew 6 Jesus goes on to tell the Disciples to focus on others and focus on what really matters in their lives and in their prayers. Jesus actually is interesting in his prayer. In verse 9 he says he is asking on behalf of those God gave him and not the world. Some well-meaning Christians have taken that to mean the word predestination. That’s where God chose some for heaven and some for hell. That is so far from the truth. John 3:16 echoes truth “God so loved the world.” Predestination means everyone has a chance if we want it not just a handpicked few.

This prayer in John 17 is really about anyone but Jesus. How do I know that? It comes back to the words “the time has come.”

Jesus right here in chapter 17 knows he is leaving. He says so in verse 11 and verse 13. In chapter 18 of John Jesus is captured in the garden. He is about to be crucified on a cross and he knows it. This prayer of Jesus is amazing because of what he did not say. He did not ask for his skin to be saved. Instead he asks for the disciples to be taken care of when he is gone. He asks for protection over future believers in the world, not for protection over himself. That is true love.

The love of Jesus is not just a saying. This prayer emulates his love for us. Listen to verse 23 **“I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”**

In many ways our prayer should be about our love for the father, love for Jesus, and love for others. That is how Jesus prays it. If we consume ourselves with being predestinated, handpicked, and special then we lose the essence of prayer. It's never about us, but always about God the father and others. Church is not energized these days because we focus on doctrine more than we focus on love. Prayer ministry is weak in the church because in essence many Christians don't care enough for others anymore.

Are we concerned for those around us? We say we are but our actions are not cutting it in this world. Christians have a bad rap outside these walls. I feel we must admit it first. We must admit that we are concerned about our own lives far

too much. In church this is what I have heard far too often. A church leader gets up and says a prayer sort of like this. Father in heaven thanks for the sermon you gave me. Your word has touched us greatly. Please stir our hearts to give to the mission field. Protect our workers that you will send from our church. Father, if it's your will open their hearts to give generously with their money beyond their tithe.

Can you see the agenda in the prayer? Fill our hearts, fill our ministry, and fill our wallets. Where is the desire to fill the world with the love of the father? No wait a minute pat we do what we do to save souls and spread love. I'm sure you do, but your prayer is asking for stuff to get work done. It's not asking God to guide you, protect you, and glorify you in his ministry? No, it's for comfort, resources, and abilities to do what you want to do. That's not real prayer. I especially like where they ask God to have you give beyond the tithe. Nice protectionist statement. We need money but don't touch that pot of gold called the tithe. Prayer has been reduced to agenda prayer these days.

Let's go back to Jesus again on prayer. He begins with acknowledging God. He then boldly asks father to intervene in the lives of others. Jesus asks not for comfort but for rescue and protection from the evil one. He asks for his friends to be taken care of in times of trouble. Not for healing, not for money, and not for comfort. Finally in the last part of this prayer Jesus prays to the father for the world, but again not in the way you might think.

Let's read starting at verse 20 **“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one. As you, Father, 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.”** Jesus is not really praying that God will save the world is he? No, he is praying for those God will draw to him. We know this by John 6:44 **“No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.”** Jesus is again respecting the Father in heaven and praying in a correct way. Remember earlier I said there is a right way to pray that Jesus teaches us? Jesus does it right here. He isn't praying for the world to be saved. Well why not pray that? I believe this chapter answers that. It says in verse 12 of our chapter Jesus says: **“While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.”**

This is not a predestination thing. Some people will say yes and some people will reject Jesus. That is just the world we live in. J Vernon McGee says it this way. We all come to school to pass, but some will choose to fail. Where they destined to fail? He did not think so. It's a level playing field. The work is presented and some struggle, some find it easy, and some quit. What you put into it will affect what you get out. Some have to work harder than others and I know that. I

believe I have to work harder to be a good Christian than most. My past life sometimes rears its ugly head, and I have tough days. People brought up in a saintly home may have avoided certain things I have memories of. That's life. It's my choice to quit or fight to believe.

God is offering everyone life everlasting. John 3:16 isn't written "**for God so loved some of the world so that only those God hand -picked will be saved by the love of the Son.**" It is written God so loved the world that whoever believes. Whoever? Sometimes our prayer can seem like it has an agenda. We must admit that we want more than we love. 1 John 4:8 says God is love. Not people are love. We need God to love. Jesus is one with God and he continues by saying he is also one with us. We have what they have. We are love if we have Jesus in us.

A church that loves is a church drenched in prayer. We take prayer more than seriously. I took a course on prayer and the Prof was very smart about it. His name was Dr. Love. Isn't that a perfect name for a Christian prayer Professor? He said it's the 80-20 rule. Prayers in the bible are kingdom centric. They are concerned for the kingdom first. Listen to Jesus in Matthew 6 again **our father whom are in heaven hallowed ne thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** That's the 80-20 rule. We pray 80% to the kingdom glory and 20 % to our needs. That is real prayer.

Listen to verses 24 thru 26 **“Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25**

“Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Jesus is going to die and he knows it, yet his prayer is filled with love for the father and the believers not himself. Our prayer should reflect that. How about a new prayer for missions like this: **“thank you father in heaven who made us. You are our sustainer and protector. Thank you for who you are. We need you father to protect us in the days ahead. Bring you kingdom glory through us that you have glorified through your son Jesus. Where you take us we will go and we will do this in your glorious name. The world needs to know you through your word. Father we ask that you take us to them to spread your glory.”**

Prayer is not for show. It’s chit chat with God. It’s not about puffing God up to get our desires. It’s not about our comfort. It’s about the joy we have in Christ. John 17:13 **“But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.”** the joy of Christ

is in the knowing. Knowing that if we pray God will listen. If we pray God will act. The joy is in receiving from him what his will is for us. I know without a doubt that whatever he desires for us is good, awesome and wonderful. It's the character of God we pray to. The Joy Jesus speaks of is the Joy of prayer to the Father. There should be happiness and comfort in that. God is who he is and in the words of Jesus and the words of John "God is love" so let's pray for God's glorious love to spread and infect the world.