



THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

**LIFE GROUPS
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STUDY GUIDE
AUGUST 2021**

LIFE GROUPS

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

FW

Study of John

AUGUST 1

21

JESUS PROMISES THE HOLY SPIRIT

STUDY GUIDE

JOHN 14:15-31

AUGUST 1, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JESUS PROMISED TO SEND “ANOTHER HELPER,” THE HOLY SPIRIT, TO HIS FOLLOWERS.

WHY IT’S IMPORTANT: THE SAME SPIRIT THAT RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD DWELLS WITHIN CHRISTIANS.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: FAITH IN JESUS, THROUGH HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION, IS THE MEANS BY WHICH HIS FOLLOWERS GAIN ACCESS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Share about a time when you felt inadequate or ill equipped for a task.
- 2 Why do we sometimes feel inadequate to serve the Lord?
- 3 How can we overcome such feelings of inadequacy?

The Holy Spirit, like Jesus, is co-equal and co-eternal with God, and yet is distinct from the other two persons of the Trinity in His work. Though we often feel inadequate to be used by God for His kingdom, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to indwell believers for the express purpose of empowering us to be His witnesses. (See Acts 1:8.) Today we will see how we can find confidence to be used by God for His kingdom and glory, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 14:15-17.

- What comes to mind when you think of the Holy Spirit?
- Who is the Holy Spirit and what does the Holy Spirit do? (See John 14:26, 15:26; 16:10.)

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity; He indwells Christ-followers and is the presence and power of God in their lives. The Holy Spirit helps us understand Jesus and remember His teaching. (See John 14:26.) The Spirit bears witness to Jesus (see John 15:26) and will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and God's judgment. (See John 16:10.)

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- Why must we not think of the Holy Spirit as a power or a force?
 - Why do we need “another Counselor” to help us keep His commands? How does the Holy Spirit help us?

Jesus knows that on our own, we will fail to keep His commandments. We are sinful, and even when we try to obey the Lord, we are often not wise enough to know exactly what to do to please the Lord in a situation. Therefore, the Lord Jesus didn't leave us alone; He sent us the Holy Spirit to indwell us. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will “glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you” (John 16:14).

- When Jesus told the disciples He would send “another,” He used the word that meant another of the same kind. The counselor will be like Jesus Himself. In what ways is the Holy Spirit like Jesus?
- How is the Holy Spirit our “advocate” (v. 16)? In what ways does the Spirit help us in our walk with Christ?

The Greek word for “advocate” in verse 16 is *Paracletos*, and it is used to describe an comforter or a counselor. (See John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7.) The original meaning is “working on someone’s behalf” or “coming alongside someone.” The Counselor picked up where Jesus left off after His ascension. While Jesus physically walked the earth for a very short time, the “another” Counselor will be with us forever. He will remain our Advocate for eternity.

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force or power, but a person. The Holy Spirit is eternally God sent from the Father, by the Son to indwell believers as their Counselor, Guide, and Friend.

The Holy Spirit knows the mind of Christ because He, like Jesus, is fully God. The Holy Spirit ministers to us by reminding us of the teachings

of Christ, by convicting us of our sins, and by guiding us through the Word so we will know how to respond to everyday situations.

> READ JOHN 14:18-31.

- How does verse 18 speak to our identity as God's children?
- What does it tell us about how we should view God?

Jesus' sending the Holy Spirit is confirmation of our identity as God's children. Whereas orphans have no parents, children identify with their parents in a number of ways. On a most basic level, children take their parents' name. As children of God, we have the Holy Spirit and are called to identify ourselves solely with God. On a more personal level, we know God never abandons us. We know we will face some tough times in this life, but we also know we never have to face them alone.

- What words or phrases from verses 19-21 offer confidence to children of God?
- As children of God, we not only have a relationship with God but also a responsibility to Him. What responsibility did Jesus mention specifically in verse 21?

Obedience to Jesus is evidence of love for Him and relationship with Him. The word "if" in verse 15 suggests reality, not a conditional relationship between love for Jesus and keeping His commandments. Jesus did not link works of obedience and salvation. Rather, He emphasized keeping His commandments as the natural outgrowth of love for Him. The one who knows Jesus' commands and keeps them confirms his or her love relationship with Jesus. Those who love Jesus enjoy the reciprocal love of Jesus' Father. Jesus loves and reveals Himself to the one who loves and obeys the Father. In a relationship with Jesus, obedience validates professions of love.

- If you love Jesus, what can you expect from God? What will happen to you if you love Jesus (v. 25)?
- Why is it important that we ask the Spirit for wisdom and guidance as we study God's Word (v. 26)?

Earlier in this passage, Jesus said He would “ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate” (v. 16). Here, Jesus promised not only will the Holy Spirit abide with us, but also the “Father will love them, and we [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] will come to them and make Our home with them” (John 14:23). In 1 John 2:23, John taught that “no one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” If we love Jesus, we are in fellowship with the entire Trinity of God.

The Lord Jesus asks the Father, and the Father sends to us the Holy Spirit on behalf of Jesus Christ. This gracious action of our Lord ensures that will receive “the Spirit ... [who] brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” (Rom. 8:15). The Holy Spirit confirms to us that we are God's children and because of this, we have the ability and boldness to live as Christ calls us to live.

- Why might the disciples have needed peace after everything Jesus said leading up to this point?
- How does the Holy Spirit give us peace in troubled times?
- How have you experienced this personally?

APPLICATION

- How might reminding yourself that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you change the way you approach your walk with Christ?
- How might relying on the Spirit's power help you overcome feelings of inadequacy?
- What is one area of your life in which you need to rely on the power of the Spirit to help you glorify God?

PRAY

Close in prayer, thanking God for the gift of the Holy Spirit who has come to instruct us, remind us, and guide us in the way of Jesus.

LIFE GROUPS

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

FW

Study of John

AUGUST 8

21

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

STUDY GUIDE

JOHN 15:1-17

AUGUST 8, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: IN JOHN 15, JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES TO “REMAIN” IN HIM. WHAT JESUS WAS ASKING THEM TO DO WAS TO STICK WITH HIM AND INCREASE IN INTIMACY AND KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. THIS IS THE PATH TO OBEDIENCE AND GROWTH.

WHY IT’S IMPORTANT: BY REMAINING IN JESUS, WE GROW TO KNOW HIM BETTER AND LEARN TO OBEY.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: WE ARE ABLE TO ABIDE IN JESUS THROUGH HIS LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Who is the one person you know best? How long have you known them?
- 2 How does your deepening knowledge of that person help you understand them better and anticipate how they will respond in different situations?

Jesus invited twelve men to know Him, follow Him, and go on mission with Him. As these men grew to know Jesus better, they began to love Him more and became more willing to do what He asked them. We see this in our own lives all the time. Those we know and love the most are those we spend time with and those we seek to please. They are the people we would do anything for. As we stick with Jesus and get to know Him better, we love Him more and the fruit of that love is obedience.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 15:1-5.

- What is spiritual “fruit,” according to the Scriptures? How is spiritual fruit produced in our lives?
- How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus said they could do nothing without Him? How do you try to do things without Jesus? How has that worked out in your life?

If you told one of your friends they could do nothing without you, that would be pretty arrogant. When Jesus said the same thing to His disciples, it was freeing. Obeying Jesus and pursuing Him is difficult, and if the disciples had to do this on their own they would never succeed or bear fruit. Fruit is the evidence of faith and repentance in the life of a Christ-follower, and it cannot be produced apart from Christ. As

a branch detached from a vine will wither and fail to produce fruit, so will a disciple disconnected from the true vine. As we stay attached to the vine, we grow to know Jesus in deeper and deeper ways.

The process of pruning involves cutting away dead branches that are hindering the growth of a tree or vine. Therefore, this metaphor refers to the numerous means God uses in our lives to cut away what is dead or sinful in us so that we might grow spiritually. As disciples of Christ, pruning might include suffering (see Rom. 5:1-4), discipline (see Heb. 12:7-11), accountability (see Jas. 5:16), or correction from God's Word (see 2 Tim. 3:16-17). In each instance of pruning, it is Jesus who causes us to bear fruit as we remain in Him.

- How do our relationships change as we get to know people better?
- As you get to know people better, why does that typically come with the permission to speak truth into their lives? How does this work as we get to know Jesus and each other better?

> READ JOHN 15:6-11.

- What did Jesus promise all who remain in Him (v. 7)? What confidence and hope does this give you in pursuing Jesus?
- What is necessary for God to be pleased with you as a believer? How does the answer to this question free you from burdens and guilt?
- Re-read verse 8 and then read 1 Corinthians 10:31. How does remaining in Jesus glorify God? What changes about our lives when we do everything to the glory of God?

When the chief priority of our lives is to glorify God, remaining in Jesus will be our ultimate experience of joy and delight. As we remain in Him, His wants become our wants, and His heart our heart. When we approach God in prayer, He will give us whatever we wish because our will is aligned with His. Once we are connected to the vine in unhindered fellowship, our lives will bear much fruit because fruit is the evidence we are Jesus' disciples.

- What kind of love did Jesus have for His disciples? What kind of love does Jesus have for you?
- Read Hebrews 12:2. What did Jesus' joy motivate Him to do? What can we learn from Jesus about true joy?
- What does it mean for our joy to be full? How does remaining in Jesus make our joy complete?

Jesus had an unfailing love for His disciples—a love that drove Him to endure the cross “for the joy set before him” (Heb. 12:2). Jesus was able to see the joy behind the cross because He was accomplishing all the Father had asked Him to do. It is through this sacrifice that we are even able to abide in Jesus at all. We enter into relationship with Jesus by grace, through faith in what He did on the cross. The extent to which we enjoy our relationship with God is dependent upon how diligently we remain connected to Jesus. Continuing to pursue Him and obey Him, no matter the cost, is the path to true fulfillment and joy.

- Re-read verse 10. What is the link between knowledge, intimacy, and obedience?

- What did their relationship with Jesus lead the disciples to do? What should your relationship with Jesus lead you to do?

Knowledge, love, and obedience are deeply connected. As we know Jesus better, we love Him more and obey Him without reservation. Jesus' disciples understood that He loved them because they saw what that looked like on the cross and it led them to go all over the known world in obedience to His command. Their relationship with Jesus meant so much to them that they wanted everyone else to know Him the same way they did.

> READ JOHN 15:12-17.

- Based on these verses, what sort of relationship does Jesus want to have with those who follow Him?
- How did Jesus ask us to demonstrate our obedience to Him? How do we show Him we are His friends?

Love involves sacrifice, and the ultimate sacrifice is that of giving one's life. On the cross, Jesus demonstrated the love He had professed for His disciples. When Jesus said, "You are my friends" (John 15:14), He was emphasizing another dimension of His relationship with His disciples. Such friendship was demonstrated by carrying out Jesus' commands. Friends share matters of the heart. Friends communicate at a far deeper level than casual acquaintances. Jesus did not relate to His followers as a master relates to his servants—He related to them as beloved friends.

- When you think about obeying Jesus' command to love others as He loved us, what specific attributes of Jesus' love come to mind?

- What does this teach you about applying the gospel to your friendships?

True friends try to honor the requests made of them. Consequently, a friend of Jesus is one who habitually honors Him and obeys His instruction, specifically His command to love one another as He loved us. The command to love is a summation of the law's requirements. (See Gal. 5:14.) Love is the first virtue listed in Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit. (See vv. 22-23.)

Jesus stated that our love for others should be modeled after His love for us—"as I have loved you" (v. 12). He loves us even when we do not act lovingly toward Him. In other words, His love for us is not conditioned by our responses. He seeks our best interests all the time. We are commanded to love, whether we feel like it or not. We are to follow Jesus' pattern. How can we do that? We do that the same way we can obey any of His commands—by remaining in Him (vv. 1-5).

- Look again at verse 16. What does this verse reveal about your purpose as a follower of Christ? How do you live out that purpose in your relationships?

- What kind of fruit does Christ want us to produce? What resources has He given us to accomplish this purpose?

God wants us to love one another, to be His friends, and to keep His commands in part so that we will go out and produce spiritual fruit by applying the gospel in our relationships.

APPLICATION

- What can you do to more closely and consistently abide in Christ? How can we as a group intentionally help one another with this effort?
- What are some specific things we can ask God to accomplish through us? What step might He want us to take to accomplish this?
- How does knowing you were chosen by God to be a part of this body of believers affect the way you view the church and your involvement in it?

PRAY

Praise God for choosing to know you and love you. Thank Him for His constant pursuit of you. Ask that your knowledge and love of Jesus would lead you to obey Him in everything He asks you to do, knowing that whatever He asks is for your ultimate good and His glory.

LIFE GROUPS

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

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Study of John

AUGUST 15

21

HATED BY THE WORLD

STUDY GUIDE

JOHN 15:18-27

AUGUST 15, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: FOLLOWING JESUS OFTEN MEANS SUFFERING AND SELF-DENIAL, BUT HE HELPS US LIVE FAITHFULLY IN THE MIDST OF A WORLD THAT IS OFTEN AGAINST US.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: IF WE ARE TO FOLLOW JESUS FAITHFULLY, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE BE PREPARED TO SUFFER ALONG WITH HIM.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: BECAUSE JESUS SUFFERED FOR OUR SAKE ON THE CROSS, WE WILL NEVER BE REJECTED BY GOD NO MATTER HOW MUCH THE WORLD REJECTS US.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Name some aspects of Christianity that clash with the way of the world.
- 2 How have you experienced the reality of Jesus' words in John 15:18 that the world would hate His disciples?

Jesus began to prepare His followers for the world's forthcoming reaction to Christians. Simply stated, the world's reaction to believers parallels the world's reaction to Him. Jesus felt His followers needed to learn that the world does not value Him or His love; neither does the world value His disciples. As we confess Jesus' true identity, we are often called to suffer for Him. Yet, we can be confident that He is with us and will sustain us to the end.

Jesus is the perfect, sinless Son of God. His salvation enables people to become all that is good, right, and holy. Yet even after we become Christians, the pull of the world back to our selfishness and sin is strong. This is one of the greatest deterrents to our spiritual growth. But only when we reject worldliness and live in obedience to Jesus and His expectations can we truly show Christ to the world.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 15:18-25.

- In verse 18, Jesus stated that the world would hate His disciples. Why is worldliness (living as though one belongs to the world) an enemy of discipleship?

In the New Testament the word *world* refers to those apart from God, those with a system of values that neither acknowledge God nor recognize His teachings. If believers would partner with the world's sin, the world would love us as its own. On the other hand, when Christians live like Christ, their light exposes the darkness around them and the world hates them as a result.

- Where in your own life do you see worldliness having the greatest impact?
- How does growing in discipleship impact worldliness in your life? How, specifically, have you seen this happen?
- What is the relationship between Jesus' teaching in these verses and becoming more like Him as we live as His disciples?

To be persecuted because of Jesus' name is to be opposed because our lives reflect His character. Close association with Christ results in suffering the reproach of Christ. Jesus warned His followers to remember that and not to be disillusioned when persecution came. On the other hand, Jesus' positive statement of promise is good news. If people obeyed Jesus' teaching, they would obey His followers' teaching also. We can have confidence that some people will accept our teaching of the truths Jesus taught.

- How have you personally seen the world's hatred of Christianity or Christians increased over your lifetime? Has this hatred ever been directed toward you? Explain.
- If the world never opposes us, what does that tell us about the degree of worldliness in our lives? Explain.
- How does our reaction to those who oppose us serve as a testimony for or against Jesus' power and grace in us?

Since the world hated Jesus and His Father, it hates His followers. Believers experience antagonism from the world due to their faith and obedience to Jesus. We can draw comfort from knowing such experiences affirm our association with Jesus and our distinction from the world.

> READ JOHN 15:26-27.

- In your own words, why was Jesus sending the Holy Spirit (look back at John 14:15-27)?

- Why would Jesus' words regarding the Holy Spirit be a comfort to His disciples in the context of His warning about persecution?

- In this regard, how is He a comfort for us today?

- Why is testifying for Jesus so important in the world in which we live?

- How does focusing on this mission help us fight back against the enemies of our personal growth and discipleship?

The Spirit was sent to believers, at least in part, to empower them in testifying about Jesus. We have been given the same mission as the first disciples—witnessing about Jesus. As we confess the truth about Jesus, we move further into the life He called us to, which often includes suffering. Regardless of the sense we might get from the world, we are never alone when testifying about our Savior.

- In verse 27, Jesus said His followers will bear witness to Him. How is abiding in His love connected to bearing witness to Him?

Jesus' disciples will be known by their love for others, while the world will be known by its rejection of Jesus. He warned us of this so that we are not surprised when the world rejects us. Under such stress, hardship, and even persecution, only by abiding in Jesus will a disciple be able to withstand trials; and to these, He will send the Helper (v. 26). Jesus is the true vine; we must remain in Him so that we can withstand the harsh environment and produce fruit.

- What range of emotions do you think the disciples experienced as they heard about the Spirit and were warned of persecution?

- How does the Spirit help us be constant in our faithfulness to the calling of Christ?

Jesus warned the disciples of persecution that would come. He identified where it may come from, promised the Spirit, and then warned them. This must have given the disciples a mix of joy and fear. We also have been given the Holy Spirit, our Helper. In light of what Christ did and the gift of the Spirit, we, too, are called to testify about Christ no matter the cost.

APPLICATION

- How might you seek joy in the midst of suffering for Jesus' sake?
- What promises has God made to those who persevere until the end? (See Gal. 6:9; 2 Tim. 2:12; Jas. 1:12.)
- How might we as a group seek to encourage one another in the value of confessing the truth about Jesus in all of life, no matter the world's response?

PRAY

Ask the Lord to convict you today of the areas in your life where worldliness has the greatest influence. Pray for the wisdom and strength to take action against those influences. Pray also for the courage to join with the work of the Spirit this week in testifying about Jesus.

LIFE GROUPS

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

FW

Study of John

AUGUST 22

21

JOY IN THE MIDST OF SORROW

STUDY GUIDE

JOHN 16:1-33

AUGUST 22, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: FOLLOWING CHRIST REQUIRES LOOKING TO HIM FOR JOY AND TRUSTING THE SPIRIT FOR STRENGTH IN THE MIDST OF SORROW.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: JESUS WILL RETURN. IN THE MEANTIME, HE HAS GIVEN US EVERYTHING WE NEED TO WEATHER THE STORMS AND SUCCEED IN HIS KINGDOM MISSION.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: IT IS THROUGH JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION THAT WE RECEIVE HIS SPIRIT WHO IS OUR COMFORTER IN TIMES OF GREAT SORROW.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 What is the most difficult question you have been asked? How did you respond?
- 2 What is the most difficult question you have ever asked a parent, teacher, or mentor? How did they respond?
- 3 Does the Bible directly answer every question that comes into our minds? Why or why not?

The disciples, like us, did not always understand Jesus' teaching. In fact, sometimes it seemed to produce more questions than answers for them. In John 16, when His disciples expressed their lack of understanding, Jesus did not directly answer their question but instead addressed the sorrow at the heart of their uncertainty. While Scripture may not directly address every question that comes into our minds, it does address the questions behind our questions by giving us the answer to life's most pressing question: How can we have a personal relationship with God?

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 16:1-15.

- Why did Jesus want His disciples to know why He was leaving? How do you think they felt knowing their teacher and guide was leaving them?

Jesus wanted the disciples to be prepared for His departure. He knew His time was growing short, but the disciples did not understand Jesus would die or depart from them. They did not ask where Jesus was going because they were afraid. Jesus was talking about persecution that would come upon them; they were scared for the future and did not want to lose their teacher. Without a guide, the disciples would have been lost. They needed direction.

- How did Jesus give them hope amid their fear? Who is the Helper? What would He do?

Jesus sensed their fear and reassured them with the hope of a coming Helper, the Holy Spirit. The Helper would convict the world of sin and promote justice and righteousness.

- Why couldn't Jesus tell the disciples everything (v. 12)? What kept them from being ready to hear?
- How did Jesus describe the guidance of the Holy Spirit (vv. 13-15)? What is the Spirit's ultimate goal (v. 14)? How should knowing the Holy Spirit's goal shape our goals and purposes in life?

The disciples were already overwhelmed and fearful. Jesus knew they could not handle anymore at that time. That is why the Spirit would be their Guide, He would teach them and reveal to them God's purposes and plan. The Spirit's ultimate goal is to glorify Jesus. Consequently, our ultimate goal should be to glorify Christ in all that we do.

> READ JOHN 16:16-24.

- What about Jesus' teaching did the disciples find confusing (vv. 5-8,16-18)?
- Put yourself in the disciples' shoes. Would Jesus' response in verse 20 have satisfied you? Why or why not?
- What do we learn about Jesus from his response (vv. 19-22)? What does Jesus' response tell us about His mission?

Jesus' disciples were so perplexed about the prospect of Jesus leaving them that they could not understand His' teaching on the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus not only knew their question before they articulated it but had previously told them that they would not be able to bear certain aspects of His teaching. While we might prefer that Jesus answer their question more directly, Jesus' response addresses the disciples' deeper concern—their fear of being separated from their Master. Jesus assured them that though His death would cause them deep sorrow, their sorrow would turn to joy. Sin separates us from God but by dying on the cross for our sins, Jesus provides the ultimate answer to our deepest sorrow. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus invites us into a relationship of eternal joy with the God who created us.

- What circumstances are currently producing sorrow in you, your family, or your friends? How might Jesus' words in verses 21-22 give you hope in the midst of these circumstances?

- How might knowing we will one day see Jesus and experience joy that cannot be taken away from us change our perspective on the difficulties we are presently facing?

- Why had the disciples not yet asked for anything in Jesus' name (vv. 23-24)?

- What did Jesus tell them would happen as they asked God in prayer? How does asking God in prayer fulfill our joy?

Jesus had been teaching His disciples about the new order that will be established in the advent of His resurrection. When Jesus left to go to the Father, the disciples would be able to ask for all things in His name. If they asked according to His Will and for His glory, they would receive. When we ask Jesus for things out of a desire to glorify Him, our joy is fulfilled because we are able to see God's work in our lives. God wants to answer our prayers.

> READ JOHN 16:25-33.

Along with the joy Jesus promised would come an indescribable access to the Father through the finished work of Christ on the cross. The Father will answer prayer requests that magnify Jesus and fit into His redemptive purposes—prayer that is in His name.

- How does it affect your prayer life to know you have immediate access to the Father in prayer? How does speaking to God in prayer bring us full joy?

Following the resurrection, ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus told us He is at the right hand of God, interceding for believers. The Holy Spirit would be indwelling all believers, interceding for them to the Father. Believers have direct access to the Father as they pray in Jesus' name.

- Why do you think prayer is so important to us as believers?

The privilege of prayer is one indicator of the Father's love for His children. Jesus said God loved the disciples because they had loved Jesus and believed Jesus came from God. Their family relationship with God as Father came through their personal faith relationship with Jesus. Prayer serves as a conduit to God for our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Prayer also serves us well in our mission to connect others to Christ.

- What did Jesus predict would happen when the disciples witnessed His arrest and crucifixion (v. 31)?
- How does that relate to Christians today?

These disciples had lived most of the past three years in self-confidence. Several times, their confidence was displayed verbally, particularly in the pronouncements of Peter. But more difficult days were ahead. At the cross, they would leave their Master and after the cross, they would be scattered. But after that traumatic little while, their fear would turn to peace because they would learn how to trust the Father. In the same way, Christians today can have confidence in Christ regardless of how poorly we are treated. Indeed, our joy is still full regardless of circumstances as we look with expectation for Jesus' return.

- Jesus nearly completed His teaching in the upper room. With what hope did He leave His followers in verse 33?

APPLICATION

- What difference does trusting in God's love for you make as you try to persevere through difficult times?
- How can you rely on the Holy Spirit this week to help you endure "the little whiles" of pain, before you experience His peace?
- What steps can you take to be more aware of all that Christ has done (and is doing) for you in working all things for your good? How can we encourage each other in this area?

PRAY

Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit so that we can have a guide and an advocate to help us live lives that glorify God. Pray that God would help people in your group and people at our church to trust Christ alone to satisfy them.

LIFE GROUPS

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

FW

Study of John

AUGUST 29

21

THE PRAYERS OF JESUS

STUDY GUIDE

JOHN 17:1-26

AUGUST 29, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: CONNECTING AND SERVING STARTS WITH PRAYER FOR ONE ANOTHER.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: IN JOHN 17, WE HAVE THE LONGEST RECORDED PRAYER OF JESUS, AND IN THESE VERSES WE LEARN HOW TO PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: THE UNITY JESUS PRAYED FOR IS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 In the following situations, would you rather there be a large crowd in attendance, a small group of people, or be alone: sporting event, concert, birthday party, doctor's appointment, shopping, vacation, elevator ride, or worship?
- 2 What does this reveal about the types of experiences we like to share with others?
- 3 How do shared experiences strengthen the bonds of love and friendship?

The church exists to connect to God and multiply disciples as we serve our community and connect others to Him. Faith in Jesus is a shared experience we were never meant to live alone. We are designed to connect with others in the body of the church. Through Jesus, God has redeemed a people for Himself and for His purpose. Today, we are going to talk about how to pray for one another with the goal of strengthening our relationships with each other and with Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 17:1-5.

John 17 records Jesus' final prayer before being betrayed and arrested. This prayer is known as Jesus' high priestly prayer, because it leads up to His once-and-for-all sacrifice for our sins on the cross. This prayer reveals Jesus' own heart in prayer.

- What "hour" had come for Jesus? What does that tell us about the importance of Jesus' prayer in these verses?
- What did Jesus say is the key to eternal life (v. 3)? How does our common experience of redemption unify us as believers? How are our relationships with one another rooted in Jesus' relationship with the Father?
- What was Jesus' purpose in being glorified on earth (v. 4)? How might God glorify us in our own relationships for the sole purpose of glorifying Him?

> READ JOHN 17:6-14.

- What all did Jesus say He had done for us in these verses? What did Jesus pray for us?
- Read Hebrews 7:25. How does it make you feel that Jesus always prays for you? What kind of unity does Jesus want to see in His body of believers?

- How does the world regard us because of our relationship with Jesus (v. 14)? Have you ever experienced this personally?

These verses contain a huge number of third person pronouns (them, they) and each of these instances refer to Jesus' disciples. Jesus cared for His disciples so much that in His last act as a free man, He prayed for them. Jesus prays for us still today (see Heb. 7:25), and the Father answers His prayers. While Jesus is not here physically, He is still with us through His Spirit, which unifies us in the bonds of peace. (See Eph. 4:3.)

> READ JOHN 17:15-19.

- Jesus could have asked God to remove His followers from the sinful world we live in, but He did not. Why do you think that is?
- How does the fact that we remain in the world affect our connection to Christian community? How does it impact our connection to those not a part of Christian community?
- Jesus also asked that we be protected from the evil one. What are some ways the evil one might target our connection to one another in the church? Have you experienced anything personally?

In verses 15-16, "world" by context refers to those opposed to God's rule. Though we have been redeemed, we still live in the world. A world that sometimes is hostile toward us. For this reason, we must remain together. Though God is always with us and will never leave us, God has given us a support system in the church that He desires for us to take hold of. We do not face the world as individual Christians, but as a unified church.

- Jesus specifically addresses our being sent together in verse 18. What does it mean that we were sent into the world in the same way Jesus was sent?
- What role does accountability through community play in Christian mission?

None of us can serve God effectively by human strength and ingenuity. We must depend on God to work in us to accomplish these goals. We also must depend on the wisdom and accountability of others to help us grow. God never designed or desired for us to grow apart from the fellowship and community we find in the church. Jesus wanted us to be united in the gospel and united on mission. When we connect to one another in unity, we honor the one who saved us.

> READ JOHN 17:20-26.

- Up until this point, Jesus had been praying for His current disciples. Who was Jesus praying for in these verses?
- Upon what is our unity as brothers and sisters in Christ based? What value does that place on being unified?

Jesus shifted His prayer to those who would believe through the witness of the early disciples, meaning all Christians in the future—including the present and future church. The unity we have in the church is based on the unity in God's own person. We are God's image bearers; when we live in unity, we point others to our unity in Him.

- How did Jesus make God's name known? How do we make His name known through the community of the church?

- What impression does a loving and unified community of faith give to the world?

We model Christ's love in the world through our love for one another (v. 26). Unity is not an insignificant or marginal issue in the Christian life. The community of the church should be one of deep connection. Jesus prayed that we would be unified in His love, and when that happens, the church becomes attractive because the type of love that exists within the church cannot be found outside of the church.

APPLICATION

- In what ways is our connection to fellow Christians deeper than our connection to others who do not believe in Jesus, including non-believing family members?
- When has your relationship with other believers helped you deal with the struggles of living in a fallen world?
- What significant prayer needs exist within this group? What do we have to praise God for? How can we hold each other accountable to pray for one another and praise God for His work in our lives?
- How can you personally contribute to our unity as a group and as a church?

PRAY

Praise God for the gift of the church. Ask that our unity with one another would reflect the unity of the Trinity. Thank Jesus for loving us enough to pray for us and our unity. Pray that your unity would be a demonstration of the grace of God to the lost world.