

## REFLECTION GUIDE

### JOHN 17:1-26 | THE PRAYER THAT KEEPS YOU GOING

#### KEY TERMS

**Eternal life** - In the New Testament, *eternal life* (v. 2-3) refers not only to the duration, but also the quality of life that is available in Jesus. In verse 3, Jesus emphasizes the present availability and source of this life, namely, knowing God in Christ.

**Sanctify** - *Sanctify* (v. 17) means to “set apart as holy or consecrate for a purpose.” In the Old Testament, people, objects, and even days were sanctified when they were devoted to God’s service. Here, Jesus asks the Father to set his disciples apart through the truth of God’s word so that they might faithfully carry out the mission he has given them.

**One** - Throughout John 17, Jesus prays that his followers may be *one* (vv. 11, 21-23), reflecting the unity he shares with the Father. This unity is not sameness or total agreement about all things, but a shared life rooted in relationship with God. Jesus says that when his people display this unity to the world, many will *believe*.

#### SYNOPSIS

Jesus begins his “High Priestly Prayer” by speaking of glory, asking the Father to glorify the Son so that the Son may glorify the Father (v. 1). Throughout John’s Gospel, this glory has pointed toward the cross, where God’s character and saving purposes are most clearly revealed. Jesus then defines eternal life in relational terms, asking *that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent* (v. 3). In the Old Testament, to “know” God was covenant language—describing an intimate, faithful relationship (see Jeremiah 9:23-24). Jesus continues by praying for those the Father has given him. He says that he has made the Father’s “name” known to them (17:6). Just as Israel was called to be holy and distinct among the nations, Jesus prays that his disciples would be set apart for God’s purposes (vv. 17-18). Finally, Jesus broadens his prayer beyond the disciples to include all who will believe through their word (v. 20). He asks that they may be *one*, reflecting the unity he shares with the Father. Jesus closes by expressing his desire that his followers would one day be with him and see his glory (v. 24).

#### GOING DEEPER

Read Ephesians 4:1-6 and Philippians 2:1-4. Jesus prays that his followers may be *one* so that the world may believe that the Father sent him (v. 21). How do these passages help clarify what kind of unity Jesus is praying for? What practices or postures help cultivate that kind of unity within the church? How might this unity be compelling to the watching world?

#### DID YOU KNOW?

John 17 is often called Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer” because it mirrors the Old Testament pattern of a priest representing others before God. In passages like Leviticus 16, the high priest enters God’s presence on behalf of the people. In John 17, Jesus stands before the Father praying for himself (vv. 1-5), his disciples (vv. 6-19), and for future believers (vv. 20-26).

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

### **JOHN 17:1-26 | THE PRAYER THAT KEEPS YOU GOING**

#### **LEARNING THE WORD**

1. Read John 17:1-26. Make 5 or so quick observations. What is most relevant to you personally?
2. In verse 3, how does Jesus define eternal life? How does this reinforce what was said in the prologue of John 1:12-14?
3. What do we learn about the relationship between the Father and the Son through this prayer?
4. What specific things does Jesus pray for (v. 2 and 5, v. 9, v. 11, v. 15, v. 17, v. 20, v. 21, v. 24)?
5. In verses 20-21, Jesus' prayer points toward the future. How (by what means) is this prayer answered? Who all is included in this prayer?

#### **LIVING THE WORD**

6. Since Jesus prayed this prayer for *you*, how do you personally feel toward him? Toward the Father? About your responsibility in the world?
7. Reread verse 18 and consider what this means for the mission of Jesus' disciples. What implications does this have for us and for our church?
8. Verses 20-23 are sometimes said to describe "the mark of the Christian." What mark does Jesus say sets Christians apart in the eyes of the world? Why is this so important for us?
9. Jesus' prayers in verses 24-25 ought to give us unshakable hope. How can this eternal hope free you from your regular day-to-day worries?