

29. John 17

Getting started

Perhaps ask the members of your group to think about what they would pray for the group if they were leaving. Then give them 5 minutes to actually pray that pray to themselves. Then ask people to share what they prayed.

Note:

There is much gold in this prayer. I think it merits a line-by-line exploration. However, you may find your group works best with 'big picture' approach. So, you could just ask, what are the main points that come out of the three sections of this prayer, (verses 1-5, 6-19 and 20-25)? Or you may use the 'big picture' approach, and supplement that with a few questions from below. I often take 2-3 weeks to explore the depth of this prayer.

Observations and Interpretation

1. What is the context for this prayer? *[Jesus had entered Jerusalem for the last time. We have seen in him in Jerusalem at least 3 times, and he probably went to Jerusalem 2 or 3 times each year for special Jewish festivals. Jesus had shared his last meal with his closed friends. There had been a long discussion in chapters 13-16. Now Jesus prays his longest recorded pray, and also his last sustained prayer. He will then be arrested, tried and killed.]*
2. What are your first impressions of this prayer?
3. What does Jesus pray for himself in verses 1-5?
4. What is Jesus actually asking in verse 1? *[Here 'glorify' probably means 'to clothe in splendour'. Jesus prays that the horror and humiliation of the cross will be reversed. He prays that God will be glorified in what his Son does on the Cross.]*
5. In verse 2, what authority has God given Jesus?
6. How does Jesus **give** eternal life? *[We get eternal life by trusting Jesus, but focus here on Jesus' use of the word 'give'.]*
7. Who are the 'all you have given me'? *[Looking back to 3:16, it is probably all those who trust Jesus.]*

8. How would you describe eternal life? How does Jesus describe eternal life? *[To 'know' is to have a relationship that lasts for ever. The essential thing about eternal life is not how long it goes but how good it is, because it is most importantly a life in a relationship with God.]*
9. What is Jesus asking in verse 5? *[Jesus is asking that his obedience to his Father's will that he come to earth, be embodied and die, will be vindicated. And, Jesus is asking that through this, and the reconciliation of God's creation to himself, God will be glorified by having his creation the way he wants it, in perfect relation with its creator.]*
10. What shift of focus occurs as verse 6?
11. Verse 8: what happens when people receive the words of God from Jesus?
12. Verse 9: why might Jesus not pray for the whole world at this time?
13. Verse 10: what glory to God comes from Jesus' disciples?
14. Verse 11: Why might Jesus now address his prayer to 'Holy Father'? *[This phrase captures transcendence, perfection and familiarity. God has supremely revealed himself in Jesus, and this power protects them. They are kept safe in his sonship, a sonship in which God is revealed as he is.]*
15. What is the purpose or goal of the protection?
16. Verse 13: what do you think Jesus' joy may be?
17. Verse 14: what does it mean to be in the world but not of this world? *[There is a question below about what this mean for us, but you may ask it here.]*
18. Verse 17: What does 'sanctify' mean? *[Set apart for a special purpose or make perfect or holy.]*
19. How does the sanctification of Jesus make it possible for us to be sanctified? *[This is deep and multi-layered. But it at least means that Jesus' obedience in coming to earth and dying for the sins of the world is a perfect expression of his love, and that love makes it possible for us to be holy and acceptable to God.]*
20. What shift in focus occurs at verse 20? *[In verse 6-19 Jesus was praying for his disciples, although those prayers also have some direct relevance for us. Now he shifts his focus to all people who become Christians.]*

21. What picture of unity do we see in verse 21-23?
22. In what ways are our effectiveness linked to our unity? What are the implications of this?
23. In verse 24, what does it mean to be where Jesus is? *[There are probably several aspects of this. We are united with Christ as he sits in heaven. We live with Christ in us. We will live in the Kingdom of God, with Christ as our King, when Jesus returns.]*
24. How does Jesus continue to make the Father known?

Implications

1. Do you feel protected by Jesus? How?
2. What does it mean for you personally to be in this world but not of it?
3. How is our ability to do good is linked to our closeness to Jesus? *[See verse 19.]*
4. To what extent does Jesus teach and encourage in this prayer? What does this say about Jesus' commitment to us, despite what he was about to face?
5. How do you feel after being let into the prayers of Jesus to his Father, and being included in them?

Prayer Suggestions

1. Pray that God may be glorified in Jesus and in his church.
2. Pray that we may know the love of Jesus poured out in this prayer.
3. Pray that we may be united in the sense Jesus envisions here?
4. Ask that the world would know the Jesus revealed in this prayer.