
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read John 17.20-26. Jesus prayed for himself and then for his existing disciples in 17.1-19. In this passage, he prayed sometimes for future disciples and sometimes for existing disciples who would pass the blessings on to future disciples. Read the passage again and see if you can observe the following shifts: In 17.20, Jesus says he is praying not only for existing disciples, but for those who will come to faith through them; in 17.21, he prays for all of them, existing and future; in 17.22-23, he prays about having shared his glory with existing disciples, but then prays for unity among existing and future disciples; in 17.24, he prays for all of them, existing and future; in 17.25-26 he prays about the existing disciples, but prays at the end for a blessing on existing and future disciples.

Reflect: In 17.20, Jesus prays for those who will come to faith through the “word” of the existing disciples. What do you think that means? If the original disciples led others to faith, but then none of the new disciples continued this work, what would have happened to the Christian church? What does that imply about our need to bear witness for Christ? Prayerfully read and reflect on Matthew 28.18-20.

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read John 17.20-23. Jesus prayed that all his existing and future believers “would be one,” that they would have unity with each other just as God the Father and Jesus had unity, the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father. The Father, Son, and Spirit enjoy an absolutely perfect unity of essence, character, and will. Obviously, no group of still spiritually growing people is going to reach that perfection, but this vision is compelling. We should strive for perfect unity in our identity as believers, followers of Christ, members of the church. As husband and wife are considered “one” before God, believers should be “one” before the world, so completely identified with each other that to bless or hurt one is to bless or hurt all. We should strive for perfect unity in our purpose. This unity in identification would lead us to unity in ethics and values. We follow Christ and thus honor the entire Bible, but the summarizing commands Christ gave us can be easily stated: we are to love God with all of our being, love each other as Christ loves us, and make disciples of Christ through evangelism [sharing the gospel and baptizing new believers into the church] and discipleship [teaching believers to obey Christ, so they grow spiritually]. These become our unifying purposes.

Reflect: Unity in identity, purpose, and ethics starts with each individual, it starts with you. When you think of the purpose of your life, or even the purpose of each day, how much does the Great Commission and the Great Commandment [given above] figure into your vision? If you made these your “reason for being” [as the French say], how would that change your priorities and activities? Write one or two sentences that summarize who you are; how much of your self-identification has to do with Christ and church, and how much with other things? If you have time to keep thinking about these things, how could your church reflect better unity? Share ideas with your pastor!

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read John 17.20-23 again. In the creation, God granted to people [who were made in his image] some part of his glory, which also granted them a place of honor [glory and honor are the same word in Hebrew; see Psalms 8.5]. Now Jesus says he gives some part of his glory to his disciples [who are being remade into his image, the image of God the Father]. And he did this so that we “would be one” with each other and with them. This dual unity would prove to the world that Jesus was who he said – the divine Son of God who came from God the Father – and prove that God the Father loves us just as he loves the Son. Thus our response to the gospel should lead to our unity with God and with each other as a missional community, which would be an effective witness for Christ and the reality of God’s love and grace offered in the gospel. In previous devotions, we have talked about unity with Christ: that we remain in him by continuing to believe in him, identify ourselves with him, depend on his sacrifice and grace, submit to him, and be intimate with him; that he remains in us through his ongoing extension of transforming grace, the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, and his teachings working to change our hearts and minds.

Reflect: Can you identify any aspect of relationship with God or each other mentioned above that is a “weak link” in your life of faith? How could you work to improve that in your life?

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read John 17.24-26. The Son of God has always existed, into eternity past. And so he can say that God the Father loved him before the foundation [or creation] of the world. The Son of God enjoys the same glory as God the Father, he is fully divine, fully “one” with the Father and Spirit as the one true God, Yahweh [the name God gave himself in the Old Testament]. The existing disciples had perceived some of the Son’s glory through his miraculous signs and his character, and would perceive more through his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension back to Heaven. But neither they nor any of us who have come after could perceive his glory in full. But we all will fully perceive his full glory as the divine Son of God when he returns and renews the earth [or when we die and go to Heaven]. Then we will perceive him clearly; and Jesus looks forward to that time.

Most of the world has not known God the Father. The Father is righteous absolutely, and is righteous in his sovereign judgment on mankind. The world continues to stray from the Father and his standard of righteousness, but the Son of God knows the Father, and has made him known to the people given to him by the Father, and will continue that process of making him known to new believers until the end. As we come to faith and receive God’s grace, we receive his love and receive Christ in us, which begins our transformation to become more like Christ [the image of the Father] and less like the straying world.

Reflect: The better you know and understand Jesus, the stronger your faith will be, and so the more you will believe in his promises and teachings, and thus the more you will grow spiritually to be like him. How can you get to know Jesus better? Start with knowing about him, what should you do to better know about and understand Jesus? How could you know him better relationally, intimately? In what ways do you reflect Christ well now? How can you use that strength as testimony for Christ? In what ways do you most struggle with reflecting the world instead? How can you realize improvement in this?

Day 5

Learn and reflect: Prayerfully read John 17.1-26. What strikes you as most interesting about this prayer? Is there anything that confuses you [ask someone for clarification!]? Why would God want you to read this prayer as part of the New Testament, what is in this prayer that God would think was useful for you to know and reflect upon? Use the guide below to help you reflect on this passage.

Since we have room, here is a guide to reflecting on scripture to get more out of reading and studying it.

1. Before you read the Bible, pray. Pray that God will bless you with understanding of what you will read, and that he will choose to communicate directly with your heart and mind, and create spiritual growth in you today.
2. While you are reading the Bible, focus. Get away from noise, such as music, television, or people. Don’t allow yourself to get distracted, your eyes or your thoughts. Give God a chance to tell you something, by “listening” intently. If you want to go deeper, you should write down key verses and your own thoughts, while you are reading.
3. After reading the Bible, reflect. Spend as much time prayerfully thinking about what you have read as you did reading! Go over in your mind what you just read. Think about what God might be telling you. Is there some lesson in these verses for you? Ask yourself the following [and write down your answers if you want to go deeper]:
 - † What impresses you about this scripture and why?
 - † What does God want you to understand from this scripture?
 - † How does God want you to apply this truth to your life?
 - † What will be the long-term effects of consistently applying this truth to your life? What if you don’t?
 - † How have you been doing at applying this truth to your life?
 - † Do you know of someone who is applying this truth, so you could learn by his/her example?
 - † Knowing beliefs control your actions, what wrong beliefs do you need to change to apply this truth in life?
 - † What are you going to trust to God this week so you can better apply this truth to your life?
4. Apply what you learn, going beyond head knowledge to a changed heart and a changed life. First you have to learn what God is saying: read it and understand it. Second you have to let it change your heart: trust God on it, and let it change what you believe. Third, you have to apply it to your daily life!