

INTIMACY WITH GOD

THE POINT:
PRAYER DRAWS US CLOSER TO JESUS AS OUR HEARTS ALIGN WITH HIS.

JOHN // 17:1-5, 21-26

MEMORY VERSE

¹ Jesus spoke these things, looked up to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ² since you gave him authority over all people, so that he may give eternal life to everyone you have given him. ³ **This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ.** ⁴ I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed.

²¹ “May they 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 you sent me. ²² I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. ²³ I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.

²⁴ “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they will see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the world’s foundation. ²⁵ Righteous Father, the world has not known you. However, I have known you, and they have known that you sent me. ²⁶ I made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love you have loved me with may be in them and I may be in them.”

KEYWORDS

a. Glorify (v. 1) – A claim to deity since the Old Testament affirms that God will not give His glory to another (Is. 42:8; 48:11).

HOW CAN I DRAW CLOSE TO CHRIST THROUGH PRAYER?

I have begun to wonder if we own our smartphones, or if they own us. One of the most popular uses of smartphones is to access social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and text messaging. How big a part does social media play in our lives? On average, some 3.2 billion users spend two hours and twenty-two minutes per person on social media. *Every day.*¹⁶

Research shows that, when people give in to that compulsion to check social media, their anxiety level rises. Being connected constantly to social networks or answering texts endlessly makes it hard for them to log off. They felt obligated to keep checking in—just in case.¹⁷

Social media may build bridges between the world and us, but it also puts up walls. Too often we are consumed with our social media profiles, and we miss the most important relationships we have. We miss the joy of spending uninterrupted face-to-face time with friends and family, and we squander the opportunity to really know God.

Pray for God's Glory // John 17:1-5

Knowing God requires spending time with Him—both time in His Word and time in heartfelt prayer. Heartfelt praying is deep praying. It is going beyond the surface of merely “saying our prayers” or crying out for help during a crisis or tragedy. To really know God—to have an intimate relationship with the Lord—we must move beyond the rote and our request lists and really connect with our heavenly Father. When we go deep in prayer, we encounter His glory.

Those who have eternal life can know God intimately. Eternal life not only ensures that we will behold His glory face-to-face throughout eternity, but it makes an intimate relationship with God possible here and now.

HOW IS GOD'S GLORY SEEN ON THIS EARTH?

In John 17, Jesus' “hour” had come. In the midst of the “hour,” He prayed that even as God was glorifying Him, He would glorify the Father. God's *shkinah* glory that once resided in the



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temple, now rested in the incarnate Jesus who was dwelling among God's people (1:14). Jesus prayed that those who had been given eternal life would see that glory.

Following Jesus' example, we also are to pray for people to see God's revealed glory. It's important to note that the first thing Jesus prayed was for God to be glorified. Our desire to see God's glory is to surpass all other desires, and our first request is to be for His glory. The Model Prayer Jesus gave us to pray begins with the request: "Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy" (Matt. 6:9). We seek God's glory and honor over all else.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GLORIFY GOD IN OUR LIVES?

When we follow Jesus' example, we pray for the things He prayed for—and in the way He prayed for them. We must break free from only approaching God when we need something from Him; we must learn to pray because we need Him. We are to seek Him and not just seek things from Him.

Even as we pray for His glory, we will encounter Him in His glory. As we deepen our prayer life, praying as Jesus prayed, we experience His glory—His holiness, His authority, and His reputation. Heartfelt prayer increases intimacy with God. As we come to know God intimately, He will reveal His glory.

WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT JESUS FROM THIS PRAYER?

Pray for Unity // John 17:21-23

Jesus also prayed for unity. The believers needed unity then, and we desperately need it now. Is unity possible? Can people with different agendas, backgrounds, beliefs, interpretations, and points of view really be unified? Division and discord are everywhere. We encounter it in politics, at work, and even when we are trying to relax and enjoy a ballgame.

As long as opposing teams with differing agendas take the field, unity will be difficult to achieve. This happens at sporting events; it happens in everyday life; and if we're not Christ-focused, it can happen in the church.

Jesus prayed for unity, not conformity. What does that unity look like? It looks like the Triune God: the unity of the Father,



DIGGING DEEPER PRAYER

Prayer is dialogue between God and people, especially His covenant partners. Jesus' example and teaching inspire prayer. Significantly, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray after watching Him pray (Luke 11:1). Dialogue is what is essential to prayer. Prayer makes a difference in what happens (Jas. 4:2). Our understanding of prayer will correspond to our understanding of God. When God is seen as desiring to bless (Jas. 1:5) and sovereignly free to respond to persons (John 3:9), then prayer will be seen as dialogue with God. God will respond when we faithfully pursue this dialogue. Prayer will lead to a greater communion with God and a greater understanding of His will.

How has prayer impacted your personal walk with God?



Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus prayed, “May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you.” While the Father is not the Son or the Spirit, and the Son is not the Father or the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father or the Son, the Father, Son, and Spirit are God. God is three Persons, but one Essence. Jesus prayed that His followers would be unified in like manner. Our personalities are not to be absorbed and lost by our unity, but our self-interests will. They will have a unified purpose. Paul helped us understand what this looks like among believers:

“Make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose” (Phil. 2:2).

We can only achieve this unity when we are in God and He is in us. Jesus prayed, “May they also be in us.” When believers are connected to God—we are dwelling in Christ and He is dwelling in us—unity happens. We are in Him, and He is in us. We move beyond a surface relationship with God, into a deeper relationship in which we know Him intimately. There is no other path to unity.

The spiritual discipline of heartfelt prayer is not limited to a private quiet time. While Scripture

certainly tells of many people praying in “prayer closets,” we also find numerous accounts describing believers who gathered together for prayer. With one mind, one heart, and one purpose, God’s people lifted their prayers up to God. This was not just to petition Him for their needs, but also to praise Him and to know Him. (For an example, see Acts 4:23-31.)

Jesus shares His glory with His people—“I have given them the glory you have given me”—but this was not simply so that we would possess His glory. His glory is to lead to our unity: “So that they may be one as we are one.”

WHAT DOES UNITY LOOK LIKE IN THE CHURCH?

Pray for God’s Love // John 17:24-26

As we see in verses 24-26, when we pray like Jesus, those prayers will also include a desire to make His love known to others, so that they can experience it as well.

An eternal love exists between the Father and the Son, and Jesus’ prayer was that “the love you have loved me with may be in them and I may be in them.” His love in us spills out! We will care about what He cares about. We will care for the people He cares for. We will align

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our activities with what He is doing to reconcile the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:18-19). When we grow in knowing Him, the force that drives us will be the desire to make Him known.

Knowing God and experiencing His love motivates us to pray for those who have not yet come to know Him. When God's love runs through us, we will pray for people who need Him, but we will also tell them what He has done for us. We will pray for the salvation of people who do not know Jesus, but we will also make His name known to them. We pray for family members, neighbors, and acquaintances, but we will also show them God's love.

While Christians fail to agree on many things, we all can agree that people need the Lord. To carry out our role in "the ministry of reconciliation" (v. 18), we must be unified in our purpose. We must be unified in sharing the gospel with the people in our neighborhoods and all around the world. And when we are, we receive the joy, but God gets all the glory!

HOW HAS PRAYER DEEPENED YOUR CONNECTION WITH GOD?

DID YOU KNOW?

Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson became a national institution in her lifetime. She sang in concert halls, jazz festivals, theaters, and several times at the White House. She also sang before crown heads of Europe and at civil rights gatherings, including one on the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Despite these experiences, she was never impressed. She believed her calling was to work for the Lord and be active in the civil rights movement. For years, she had been an advocate for everyone, especially blacks. One afternoon during an event in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial, she gave her own words of encouragement by singing, "I've Been 'Buked and I've Been Scorned." Many in the crowd had become emotional, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., when she let out a guttural "Glory Hallelujah." It was at that program that he gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

DESCRIBE THE GLORY OF GOD MAHALIA JACKSON SHARED WITH OTHERS THROUGH SONG.

LIVE IT

How can you utilize the spiritual discipline of prayer to draw closer to Jesus?

Jesus prayed for us and set an example for us to follow. When we follow Jesus' example, we pray for the things He prayed for, in the way He prayed for them. As we deepen our prayer life, praying as Jesus prayed, we experience His glory. Our confidence to work in God's kingdom also increases. Heartfelt prayer increases intimacy with God.

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- Replace at least five minutes of social media time (or TV watching) with additional time spent in prayer for God's glory.
- Gather with others to spend time in concentrated prayer for unity among believers.
- Set an alarm on your smartphone for 3:16 every afternoon and pray John 3:16 over at least three people who need to know the Lord.

DAILY READINGS

1. JUST TALK! // EPHESIANS 6:18

Prayer is a conversation between you and God. No big or churchy words are necessary. Just talk. God understands the simplest to the most academic language as long as your prayer is from the heart. Start by acknowledging who He is and what He has done. From the beginning of creation until now, He has done wondrous things. Then, just open your heart. Tell Him what's on your mind. The wonderful thing about talking to God is He understands more about you than you do. Allow the words to flow without feeling any shame. Remember His love. He cares for you, and He desires an intimate relationship with you.

Just talk to God; He is worthy of your prayers.

2. EYES WIDE OPEN // EPHESIANS 1:18

Did you know prayers are effective even when your eyes are open? As a matter of fact, prayers work best when prayed with open eyes—with open spiritual eyes that is. Many of us have spiritual eyes that have been dimmed by unfulfilled requests from God, harmful life experiences, and confusion about God and His promises. Without clear spiritual eyes, we will not have the sure hope that everything will work out OK. Spiritual eyes allow us to have the complete assurance that God will be victorious in whatever we ask Him for. Those with open spiritual eyes pray informed prayers, make requests that please God, and can discern needs that are not verbally spoken.

Ask the Lord to open your spiritual eyes to all that He has to show you, so that you can pray with your spiritual eyes wide open.

3. THE A TO Z PRAYER AND BEYOND // ROMANS 12:12

There are twenty-six letters in the alphabet. Phonetically, each letter has its own voice, producing forty-four sounds. Amazingly, many of the letters of the alphabet have more than one sound,

and each find space on the human lips. These letters make up the words of our prayers. Even though some people have conditions that prevent them from hearing phonetic sounds, God hears every word. He clearly hears your powerful words of faith when you go to Him in prayer. Because of this Paul encourages us to remain hopeful despite what may be happening around you.

Don't give up, but steadfastly remain connected to God. He hears every sound you make from A-Z.

4. FOCUS ON THE HILLS // PSALM 121

Focusing might one day be placed on the endangered species list. Distractions of every type and size crowd our lives and fight for our attention. For believers, prayer times are often interrupted because of this. We receive phone calls that can lead to mindless roaming on social media apps. Then before you know it, two hours have gone by without one ounce of focus. This can impact our connection to Christ. The psalmist was not distracted. He focused on the hills as he traveled because he knew God was there. His focus was not on anything around him or even on where he was going. His focus was on his Helper.

Let us ignore distractions and not lose focus on the One from which comes our help.

5. AN AUDIENCE OF ONE // PROVERBS 16:3

Big audiences equal success. At least that's what we think! However, when it comes to intimacy with Jesus success may need to be redefined. An audience of Jesus alone means more than having the whole world rooting for you. And better than that, it means more than the whole world rooting against you. Proverbs 16:3 reveals how seeking an audience of one will bring redefined success. The psalmist promised that our plans will be established.

So commit your work to Jesus and watch your audience of One increase your success.