

EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Divine Intercession

John 17:1–19

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

At times, periods of silence and reflection calm our minds and provide much needed clarity and perspective. Leading up to Christ's death, there must have been many moments like this in the lives of the disciples as they took time to consider His words. We will see that in our study from John 17. Before starting this study, take a few moments to sit in silent reflection. Then turn to the Lord in prayer, inviting His presence and direction as you proceed.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

One of the best ways to begin Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* process is to read through the entire passage before beginning your study. In this case, John 17:1–19 contains a portion of a transcription of a prayer Jesus prayed prior to His suffering and death. Take a few moments to read John 17:1–19, writing down any initial thoughts or observations.

Things I noticed for the first time . . .

Things that stood out as significant . . .

Also, thinking about the setting of the biblical scene helps orient you to the place and surroundings of the event you're studying. Chuck believes that Jesus prayed this compelling prayer somewhere during the time He and His disciples

Quotable

*If His Word
is not working in us
in a life-changing
way, the world
will be. Make no
mistake about it:
dusty Bibles lead
to dirty lives
(Romans 12:2).*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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were walking from where He had just delivered the Upper Room discourse (John 13–17), down through what is known as the Kidron Valley.

This would be a good time to turn to the maps section of your study Bible and locate a map titled “New Testament Jerusalem” or something similar. Along the eastern boundary of Jerusalem, you can locate an area known as the Kidron Valley—the ravine that Jesus and His disciples would have crossed on foot. It was somewhere in that area (the ravine) where Jesus perhaps prayed the prayer recorded in John 17.



Observation: Looking at Jesus’ Prayer

In the observation process of *Searching the Scriptures*, at times it’s helpful to look for a certain category of details. For instance, in the prayer Jesus offered on behalf of His disciples, He spoke to His Father about the things He accomplished as well as the unique needs of those for whom He prayed.

Jesus Praying for Himself—John 17:1–5

With His disciples close at hand, Jesus opened His prayer by focusing His attention on His Father. Based on this passage, how do you envision Jesus’ posture in prayer?

What request did Jesus make of His Father (John 17:1)?

How many times did Jesus address God as “Father”? What emotions might you believe Jesus to have been expressing in this opening section of His prayer? Explain.



In verses 2 and 3, Jesus mentioned the basis upon which He is able to offer eternal life to His disciples and all who will follow Him. What is that basis He mentions?

If verses 2 and 3 refer to the *authority* of Jesus, what is the main point Jesus raised with the Father in verses 4 and 5?

Jesus Praying for His Disciples—John 17:6–16

Jesus turned His attention to praying for His disciples. What do you see that demonstrates His heart for these men?

How did Jesus characterize the relationship He had with these disciples and their relationship to the Father?



Jesus mentioned that He had *revealed* to His disciples something significant during His time on earth. What did He reveal to His disciples (John 17:6)?

Jesus highlighted four ways in which the disciples responded to the Father's Word (17:6–10):

- They kept the Father's Word (17:6).
- They acknowledged the Father's provisions (17:7).
- They accepted the Father's plan (17:8).
- They contributed to the Father's glory (17:9–10).

Following the listing of the disciples' responses, Jesus asked the Father for something important on their behalf (17:11–13). What did He ask of the Father?

Jesus made another compelling request in verses 14 through 16, concerning God's protection against Satan and his power. Jesus associated "the evil one" (17:15) with the influences of the world. What request did Jesus make of the Father to safeguard His disciples from both?



**Interpretation: Understanding the Purpose of Jesus' Prayer**

When looking closely at all the requests Jesus made on behalf of His disciples in His prayer to His Father, His ultimate purpose was that these men be kept safe from evil and that they be made “*holy* by [the Father’s] truth” (John 17:11, 17–19).

The word *sanctify* carries much confusion today. It certainly doesn’t mean growing a halo or taking on a glow of super spirituality. Literally, “to be made holy” means *to be set apart* by God for a specific purpose. How are we to be made holy? By the truth of God’s Word. And why are we to be made holy? So that we are useful to God. New Testament scholar D. A. Carson offers a compelling explanation:

Jesus’ followers will be “set apart” from the world, reserved for God’s service, insofar as they think and live in conformity with the truth, the “word” of revelation (John 17:6) supremely mediated through Christ . . . the revelation now embodied in the pages of this [gospel]. In practical terms, no-one can be “sanctified” or set apart for the Lord’s use without learning to think God’s thoughts after him, without learning to live in conformity with the “word” he has graciously given. By contrast, the heart of “worldliness,” of what makes the world the world (1:9), is fundamental suppression or denial of the truth, profound rejection of God’s gracious “word,” his self-disclosure in Christ.¹

**Correlation: How Does It Relate?**

Correlating the Scripture passages you’re studying with other biblical passages helps you fine-tune your interpretation. The ramifications of Jesus’ powerful prayer on behalf of His disciples continued throughout the beginning of the church and are reflected in the epistles of the apostles. Read a few examples below, and write a sentence or two about how each relates to Jesus’ prayer.

Romans 12:1–2

Galatians 5:22–25



Ephesians 4:1–3

3 John 1:4



Application: Truth Alive in Us

Jesus' prayer for Himself, His disciples, and the future generations of believers underscores three fundamental truths about the relationship between prayer and our effectiveness as His disciples:

- First, *prayer helps us keep God's glory as the first priority in every endeavor*. Jesus acknowledged that His life and ministry and all that He had accomplished on earth was to bring glory to the Father. Everything. And that's what ought to mark all followers of Jesus—an unswerving desire to bring glory to God.
- Second, *prayer helps us remember that any God-honoring endeavor will succeed because of His power, not ours*. How tempting it is to go through life relying on our own resources, wisdom, and natural ability. Yet what God desires is that we entrust our lives and endeavors to Him so that He can demonstrate His power through us (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).
- Third, *prayer causes us to look to God for success rather than to the world*. Jesus acknowledged in His prayer that the desires of the world are opposed to those of the Father (John 17:9, 11). Chuck observes, “The world is not a friend to grace; therefore, we should expect resistance, not help in proclaiming the good news. Prayer helps us remember whom to thank for success, even when the world appears to be cooperative.”²



Which of these principles on prayer strikes you as particularly meaningful? What change would you like to make as a result of what you've learned in this study?

Now, imagine yourself beside Jesus while He prayed, and join Him in your own prayer to the Father.



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for including in Your Word this powerful prayer of Jesus. It reminds me that I am not alone in my struggle to follow Him and to live a life worthy of His death and resurrection. Form in me His gracious spirit and holiness. Make me more and more like Him, and continue Your tender process of making me into a useful servant for Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 566.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on John*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 4 (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 325.



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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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