

April 25, 2010 by Steve Brandon



# What Does Jesus Pray For?

## John 17

1. Glory (verses 1, 5)
2. Protection (verses 11, 15)
3. Sanctification (verse 17)
4. Unity (verses 21, 22, 23)
5. Presence (verse 24)

In our exposition of the book of Hebrews, we ended last week on Hebrews 7:25, which says, "Therefore, He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." This verse describes the current role of Jesus Christ. He is a priest, who is praying for us all the time. In fact, this is what Jesus lives for. "He always lives" for this. This is His full time job; He gives full attention to it.

Last week, I asked this question of the verse, "What is Jesus praying for?" Before last week, I had never really thought much about this. But, I do believe that we have an answer to this question. It is found in John 17. So, I decided that we would take a one week break from Hebrews to look at John 17, where we have recorded for us a prayer of Jesus. In this chapter, we can see what Jesus prays for. J. C. Ryle has said that this is "the most wonderful prayer that was ever prayed on earth." [\[1\]](#)

So, turn in your Bibles to John 17. Above this chapter, my Bible reads, "The High Priestly Prayer." This is a common title given to this passage. It records a prayer Jesus prays on behalf of others. Now, technically, this prayer wasn't made during Jesus' current role as high priest (as Heb 7:25 describes). Hebrews 7:25 pictures Jesus in heaven at the right hand of God, interceding for us. But, John 17 has Jesus upon the earth, before His death, praying for His disciples. And yet, I do believe that these things are still prayed today by Jesus. I don't believe that the heart of Jesus changed from His time on earth to His current time in heaven. His heart has always been one of love for His disciples. He wants the best for those who trust in Him.

You can see this in the chapters leading up to this prayer. You get a great sense of Jesus' tenderness. He serves them by washing their feet (John 13). He comforts them by promising His return (John 14). He counsels them on how to live (John 15). He promises to send the Spirit when He leaves (John 16). And now in John 17, Jesus prays for His disciples.

To be sure, we won't have time this morning to exhaust this prayer. J. C. Ryle said, "He that reads the words spoken by one Person of the blessed Trinity to another Person, by the Son to the Father, must surely be prepared to find much that he cannot fully understand. ... There are sentences, words, and expressions, in the twenty-six verses of this chapter, which no one probably has ever unfolded completely." [\[2\]](#)

All we can do is focus on one aspect of this prayer. I want to focus our attention upon the specific prayer requests that Jesus makes in this prayer. There is much in this prayer that describes Jesus' mission: what He has accomplished, what He desires to see. There is much in this prayer that describes Jesus' disciples: what Jesus did for them, how they came to faith. As a result, there will be much that we leave out. But, surely, this morning, we will see enough.

As I read the prayer, I want for you to look for Jesus' specific prayer requests. They may be prayers for Himself. They may be prayers for His disciples that walked and talked with him upon the earth, like Peter, James, and John. They may be prayers for those who would believe in the future (like us).

Note that the application this morning isn't so much that we might pray the same things that Jesus prayed. This isn't a prescriptive prayer. If you want to know the things that you should pray for, you should look to the Lord's Prayer, as found in Matthew 6. Do we know that prayer?

Matthew 6:9-13

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name,  
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,  
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever.

The Lord's Prayer teaches us to praise God, seek the kingdom, and for help with our physical and spiritual needs. However, as we work through Jesus' prayer in John 17, I don't believe that anything that Jesus prayed would be beyond us praying for these same things. These are the things that Jesus wanted. They are the things that we ought to desire as well. But, I think that the primary application for us this morning is a bit more direct. These words in John 17 express the heart of our great high priest. Our hearts ought to resonate in the same way. And so, the things that Jesus prays ought to be the same things that we seek for our own lives.

These are the things that are top burner for Jesus. These are the things that ought to have top focus in our lives as well. As we read, listen for the specific prayer requests.

John 17

Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

The first request that we see Jesus praying for is ...

1. Glory (verses 1, 5)

Look at verse 1, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You." This is a prayer for glory. Jesus prays for His own glory. He prays for the glory of God. These two glories are related. Do you see it? He's praying for His own glory, that God, the Father, may be glorified.

On the one hand, this appears to be a very egotistical prayer. We ought not to pray this for ourselves, "God, glorify me!" Jeremiah says, "Are you seeking great things for yourself? Seek them not" (Jeremiah 45:5). And yet, for Jesus, such a request is entirely appropriate. The reason why it's appropriate comes a few verses later.

After a bit of discussion about His authority (in verse 2) and eternal life (in verse 3) and the work that Jesus did upon the earth (in verse 4), Jesus essentially repeats the prayer in verse 5: "Now Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." Our focus this morning will cause us to skip over verses two through four. But, in His following prayer for glory, Jesus is praying that He might return to a place of glory that He enjoyed before He came to earth. In fact, Jesus enjoyed this place of glory even before the world was created!

On the one hand, you can see that all that Jesus is asking for is to be restored to His former state. Seated with the LORD in glory. And yet, on the other hand, the request is even bigger than that. It's not merely that Jesus wants it the way that it was. Rather, through His life (and upcoming death and resurrection), Jesus wants something more. He wants to be restored to His former state, having gone through everything that took place on the earth.

You can see this in verse 1, when Jesus says, "Father, the hour has come." Now, had we the time to chase this phrase through the rest of the book of John, we would see that this phrase, "the hour," is used often in the book of John. Jesus is constantly telling those around Him, "My hour has not yet come." He said this to His mother (John 2:4), and His brothers (John 7:6, 8).

Jesus constantly talked about "the hour that is coming" (John 4:21; 5:25, 28). John said that the crowds couldn't seize Jesus, because "His hour had not yet come" (John 7:30). But, now, Jesus says, "the hour has come." By this phrase, Jesus is referring to His death, burial, resurrection, and exaltation. Jesus is referring to the time when He would fully reveal Himself for who He is. He is the Messiah, coming to save Israel and be killed for it.

John 12:23-24

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

And this is what Jesus did. He died and fell into the earth. And now, Jesus is praying that His life would bear much fruit, for Him to be restored to glory with His father, and for Him to be worshiped by the untold millions who have come to faith in Him. This is Jesus' prayer. He wants to be glorified by all who have come to faith in Him!

The application for us is clear. We aren't to pray this for ourselves. Rather, we are to worship Jesus and give Him glory for His saving work in our lives.

But, it is entirely appropriate to pray to God that He would glorify Jesus Psalm 34:3, "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together." Jesus will be given glory and honor throughout all eternity. Two verses will suffice:

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

"To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever" (Rev. 5:13).

Jesus prays for ...

2. Protection (verses 11, 15).

Not protection for Himself, but for those who have come to believe in Him. Jesus knew that He was soon to die. The hand of protection was soon to be lifted from Him, because His hour had come (John 8:20). The Father would soon abandon Him upon the cross (Matt. 27:46). But, Jesus also knew that His disciples would need much protection from the evils that would come upon them.

In verses 6 through 10, Jesus describes how He came to earth and manifested Himself to His disciples. He describes how they believed in Him. Again, our focus this morning will cause us to skip over these verses quickly. Following these verses, Jesus prays, ...

John 17:11

I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.

Here's the prayer of Jesus, "keep them in Your name." That is, "keep them trusting in You." "Keep them believing in You." "Keep them abiding in You." Isn't this a strange prayer? Isn't this what we do?

The only way for this prayer to make sense is to believe that we are dependent upon the Lord to maintain our faith and our integrity and our trust in Him. Now, I believe that you can't lose your salvation. But, the reason why I believe it is not because we have power in and of ourselves to keep ourselves saved. Rather, I believe it because God has that power to keep us saved. Jesus is pleading for the Lord to "keep them in your name." Hebrews 7:25 tell us that He is "able to save forever." Jesus did that while upon the earth.

John 17:12

While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

Judas fell away because Jesus didn't protect him. But, now, Jesus is leaving and He wants His disciples to be protected. And they need protecting, but He is no longer able to protect them Himself.

Don't think that you will ever be able to stand on your own. Paul warns, "Therefore let he who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Do you remember when Jesus said to His disciples, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered'"? (Matt. 26:31). None of the disciples would believe it. Peter was so brash as if to say, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away" (Matt. 26:33). But Jesus, knowing the frailty of the disciples as well as the certainty of the Scriptures told Peter, "Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times" (Matt. 26:34). Still unfazed, Peter said, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You." (Matt. 26:35). And all of the disciples were saying the same thing (Matt. 26:35). Matthew said, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You." Bartholomew was saying the same thing. James and John were saying the same thing as well. All of the disciples were saying it.

I trust that you know the story. When the crowds came to arrest Jesus, "all the disciples left Him and fled" (Matt. 26:56). Now, to the credit of Peter, he remained on close enough to watch Jesus from the courtyard. Yet, before the rooster crowed, Peter denied him three times, just as Jesus had warned. Such is the picture of our lives when we trust in our own strength.

The disciples were clueless as to their own strength. Don't you follow in their example. But rather, trust the Lord to guard you and protect you. May it be your constant prayer, "Jesus, keep me in Your name." We need guarding and protecting, because we live in the world. Look down at verse 14, ...

John 17:14-16

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

This is a word for us at Rock Valley Bible Church, a church that's filled with home schoolers (not exclusively, but mostly). Notice again what Jesus says in verse 15, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one."

There are two ways to take verse 15. One way is to believe that Jesus is going to keep you and guard you from the evil one, so, you engage yourself freely in the world. You mix with the people of the world. You are entertained by the things that the world is entertained by. You read the same things that the world reads. You watch the same things that the world watches. You do the same things that the world does. After all, Jesus requested not to take us out of the world. The danger here is that the world can so easily influence us and we actually become engrossed in the world. That's not good.

The other way is to pull yourself away from everything in the world. You look at the world and say that it's all bad. So, you exclude yourself from being with anyone but Christians. You cut off newspapers and cable television and movies from your home. You only read Christian literature. The danger here is that you miss the first half of Jesus' prayer request, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world." This is where the danger lies for many of us. We cut it all off. We seek our "holy huddle".

I would encourage you to live in the tension of verse 15. Be in the world, but not of the world. Realize that you are in the world. Realize that Jesus wants us in the world. Verse 15, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world." Verse 18, "I also have sent them into the world." And to some extent, you are called to engage the world, just like Jesus did. But never get to the point where you love the world. John tells us, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world" (1 John 2:15). So, live in the tension. But, realize that Jesus is praying for us to be protected as we are in the world.

Jesus prays for  
3. Sanctification (verse 17).

Sanctification is the struggle with the world. The world pulls one way and God calls us another. Walking in God's ways is the path of sanctification. Jesus here prays for our sanctification. Look down at verse 17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." In other words, Jesus wants a pure church. He wants those who believe in Him to follow Him. Such is the will of God for all who believe. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, "This is the will of God, your sanctification."

When God gave counsel to Israel, He said, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." (Lev. 19:2). When God saves us, He begins a process to purify us. Jesus is praying for that process. Some see great progress in sanctification. Others see slow progress in sanctification. But, all believers see some progress. Notice here the process by which this sanctification takes place: it takes place through the word of God. "Sanctify them in truth; Your word is truth" (verse 17).

We use detergent to clean our dishes. We use Windex to clean our windows. We use liquid Drano to clean our drains. We use Lysol to clean our garbage cans. We use soap to clean our hands. We use shampoo to clean our hair. We use toothpaste to clean our teeth. So, also, we use the Word of God to cleanse our lives.

It works like this, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word" (Psalm 119:11). In His truthful Word, God instructs us how to live. And the Bible is filled with commands about how to live. It tells us how to worship. It tells us how to love each other. It instructs in the ways of parenting. It teaches us how to live in harmony with one another. It teaches us the core attitudes that we ought to have. It teaches us the way of wisdom.

But, the Bible isn't merely commands and obedience to the commands that produces sanctification in our lives. That's not it at all. If that's your perspective of the Bible--as a big rule book--then you are a bit misguided.

Joshua Harris put it in perspective. He wrote, ...

A. J. Jacobs makes a living being a human guinea pig. He puts himself through offbeat, strange life experiments, then he writes about them. Once for an article in Esquire called, "My Outsourced Life," Jacobs hired a team of people in Bangalore, India, to live his life for him. They answered his e-mails, called his co-workers, argued with his wife, and read bedtime stories to his son. His first book was about the year he spent reading the entire encyclopedia Britannica in a quest to become the smartest person in the world.

A more recent book entitled The Year of living biblically follows a similar pattern. It's the story of how Jacobs attempted to follow every rule in the Bible as literally as possible for an entire year. You should know that Jacobs is an agnostic. "I am officially Jewish," he writes, "but I'm Jewish in the same way the Olive Garden is an Italian restaurant. Which is to say: not very."

Jacobs started his experiment with a visit to a Christian bookstore in midtown Manhattan. He needed to purchase a Bible and supplemental study tools. A soft-spoken salesman named Chris helped him sort through the different sizes of Bibles and linguistic options. Then he pointed out a unique Bible version for teenage girls that was designed to look exactly like a Seventeen magazine. "This one's good if you're on the subway and are too embarrassed to be seen reading the Bible," said Chris. "Because no one will ever know it's a Bible." Jacobs' response is one of my favorite lines in the book: "You know you're in a secular city when it's considered more acceptable for a grown man to read a teen girl's magazine than the Bible."

Jacobs left the store with two shopping bags filled with Scripture. He then proceeded to read through the entire Bible in four weeks. As he read, he wrote down every rule or direction that he came across—big and small. That included obvious ones like the Ten Commandments and “love your neighbor” but also lesser known Old Testament laws for diet and ritual cleanliness. His goal was to take the Bible at face value, as literally as possible, and put it all into practice.

As you can imagine, the outcome was often hilarious.

For example, because the book of Leviticus says men should leave the edges of their beards unshaven, Jacobs stopped shaving. Within a few months he looked like a lost member of ZZ Top. He stopped wearing clothing made of mixed fibers. He played a ten-string harp. He refused to shake hands with women who might be ceremonially unclean because [of their monthly cycle] ... Possibly his most outlandish activity was his attempt to stone adulterers. He accomplished this by trying to fling tiny pebbles at strangers without their noticing. Evidently Jacobs assumed that just about any New Yorker is an adulterer.

His book is a gimmick, but it also raises serious questions about what it means to live by the Bible. Do growing a beard and playing a harp equally living biblically? ... Is the Bible just a bunch of archaic rules and rituals that have no meaning in our modern world? [\[3\]](#)

A few pages later, Harris quoted from Sally Lloyd-Jones regarding how we should look at the Bible. Her comments are very good. She wrote, ...

Now, some people think the Bible is a book of rules, telling you what you should and shouldn't do. The Bible certainly does have some rules in it. They show you how life works best. But the Bible isn't mainly about you and what you should be doing. It's about God and what he has done.

Other people think the Bible is a book of heroes, showing you people you should copy. The Bible does have some heroes in it, but (as you'll soon find out) most of the people in the Bible aren't heroes at all. They make some big mistakes (sometimes on purpose), they get afraid and run away. At times, they're downright mean.

No, the Bible isn't a book of rules, or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a Story. It's an adventure story about a young Hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It's a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne—everything—to rescue the ones he loves. It's like the most wonderful of fairy tales that has come true in real life!

You see, the best thing about this Story is—it's true.

There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them.

It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story. And at the center of the Story, there is a baby. Every story in the Bible whispers his name. He is like the missing piece in the puzzle—the piece that makes all the other pieces fit together, and suddenly you can see a beautiful picture. [\[4\]](#)

Obviously, archaic rules and rituals aren't the way that we are sanctified in truth. Rather, the way to be sanctified in truth is by grace. Titus 2:11-12 says, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensible, righteously and godly in the present age.” Did you hear that? God's grace teaches us how to pursue sanctification.

This is how the Bible works. All of the commands flow from the gospel of grace. Everything that we do flows from the gospel. Or, as Elyse Fitzpatrick says (as my wife has reminded me many, many times), “The imperatives are always preceded by the indicatives.” That is, the Bible always predicates what we do on what God has done. In other words, it's God's work first, and we respond to Him.

For instance, Ephesians 4:32 tell us to, “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Our actions (the imperatives) are grounded first of all upon God's work (the indicatives). God has been kind to us in forgiving us of our sins. So likewise, we ought to be kind toward others. The next verse works the same way, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Ephesians 5:1). The imperative (to imitate God) is based on the indicative (that we are beloved children).

And when you think of the realities of the grace of the gospel, Jesus Christ came into the flesh and lived a perfectly pure life. Yet, we in our sin crucified Him. His crucifixion became the means through which we have been cleansed of our sin. By his sacrifice, He purchased a sinful people for Himself. In dying upon the cross, He redeemed us from our sins by His blood. We who deserved nothing gained everything. As you come to grasp these things, you will not be compelled to live for God from a list of rules and requirements (as A.J. Jacobs attempted to do). Rather, you will be liberated to love and serve the Lord out of delight and joy.

Jesus prays for ...

4. Unity (verses 21, 22, 23).

This comes up several times in this prayer. Let's begin in verse 20, ...

John 17:20

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

We need to stop here and pause for a moment. Do you realize what Jesus is saying here? He's saying, "I'm done praying for my 11 disciples who are here before Me, who I have known in the flesh. But now, I'm focusing my heart and attention upon those who will believe in Me through their missionary endeavors." In other words, Jesus is praying for the church all down through the ages, which at this point, wasn't even in existence, which means that these words apply directly to Rock Valley Bible Church. Jesus prayed 2,000 years ago for us at Rock Valley Bible Church.

Now, if that doesn't stir your soul, nothing will. This is the prayer that Jesus prayed for us!

Well, what does He pray? His request comes in verse 21, "That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." This is a prayer for unity. It's a prayer for unity among the household of God. And in many ways, fundamentally, this is a call for us to love each other.

When Jesus boiled the law and the prophets down as far as He could go, He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength" (Matt 22:37) and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:39). I believe that Jesus is praying that this would indeed be the case among those who believe. We are to have a mutual love for one another. And, when that takes place, there will be unity. As Paul said, "Put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity" (Col. 3:14). Do you want to see unity? Then, put on love.

But, I believe, the unity goes deeper than merely loving one another. Jesus is praying here for a real, genuine unity among believers that's deeper than anything external. Rather, He's praying for a "Trinity unity." "Even as You, Father are in Me and I in you" (verse 21). Perfect harmony. Perfect love. Perfect unity.

We are talking here about an organic unity among believers. That's deeper than a common interest group. That's deeper than flesh and blood. I don't know quite how to describe it other than to talk about various types of unity that exists in our world, which only approximate this unity. The older I get, the more amazed I am at the number of organizations that you can involve yourself with. You pick something that you like to do, and certainly, there are organizations that gather together people. Those who like to play soccer can play on a soccer team. Those who play a musical instrument can play in an orchestra or in a band. Those who like sewing quilts can join a quilt guild. Those who homeschool their children can join a co-op. Those who like to build model railroad tracks and join such a group. Those who like to fly kites can join a kite-flying club.

In fact, I remember witnessing an assembly of the "Red Hat Society." It's a women's organization that gets together and does things together. On occasion, they wear a red hat, with a purple outfit. Our family was eating at a restaurant, and along came some 25-30 women, all decked out in red hats and purple outfits. It was pretty wild!

And there is a unity in the midst of such organizations that is powerful. All of the people come together with a common goal. A team seeks to win games. An orchestra seeks to put on a quality concert. A sewing guild helps to share resources and knowledge. The Red Hat society helps women to have a good time together. But, their unity often stops outside of the particular interest. This isn't the unity that Jesus was praying for in John 17. He was praying for a deeper unity than a social organization.

There is a unity of a family. The family lives together. The family eats together. They share bathrooms. They share clothes and bicycles and household duties. And a family also shares DNA. Brothers and sisters look like each other. But, the unity that Jesus prays for is deeper than family. He's praying for a Trinity-like unity among believers, where there is essence and harmony in all things. There is a love. There is a sharing. There is a bonding. There is affection. It's not that we are all the same, but there is harmony and peace.

I do believe that the early church modeled this greatly, as they were with each other, day after day for mutual encouragement and love.

Acts 4:44-47

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people

Do you know anything about this type of unity? Is it your practice to give of your resources to other believers? You see a need and you give? Is it your practice to take something of your own and give it to someone else who has a need? Do you know anything about the day by day continuing together with one mind with other believers? Do you share meals with others? Does that take place for you? Are you doing life together with those beyond your family? Does that take place for you at Rock Valley Bible Church? Are there people here with whom you have such a unity? A Trinity-unity?

When unity takes place, oh it is sweet!

Psalms 133:1-3

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
For brothers to dwell together in unity!  
It is like the precious oil upon the head,  
Coming down upon the beard,  
Even Aaron's beard,

Coming down upon the edge of his robes.  
It is like the dew of Hermon  
Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;  
For there the LORD commanded the blessing--life forever.

Isn't it sad that one of the places in all the world where disunity is most visible is within the church? I hear or church-splits often. But, I have never heard of a quilting-guild split. I have never heard of a soccer-league split. Now, there's a reason for that. The call of the church is a much deeper unity than any earthly organization. It's a call to complete love for one another. It's a call to complete devotion to one another in all matters of life.

Sadly, I know of dis-unity among believers. I have experienced it. I have been the cause of it, much to my own pain. Trinity-unity is difficult, because we are all sinners in need of grace. The only way that genuine unity takes place is when grace abounds with and toward each other.

Perhaps this is why Jesus prayed for this. He knew of its difficulties. Do you realize that Jesus prayed for this three times? It came up once in verse 21. It comes up again in verses 22 and 23, ...

John 17:22-23

The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

We see it: "Trinity-unity." Verse 22, "That they may be one, just as we are one." Verse 23, "I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity.

This prayer for unity has a purpose. The purpose is world evangelization. Look at verse 21: "that the world may believe that You sent Me." Look at the end of verse 23: "that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me." Unity among believers has an evangelistic effect upon the watching world. When those without Christ look on to the church, and can see its unity, it makes a powerful effect.

When unbelievers witness the love, they may say something like this to themselves: "There is no way that such people could love each other so much. There is something else going on. I want to see it. I want to understand it." And so, they inquire. And what does the church say? "Do you want to know why we love each other? We love because He first loved us. God's love for us is immense. We were sinners, deserving God's wrath and hell. But, God loved us with a crazy sort of love. Why? We don't know. But, God loves us as much as He loves Jesus Christ, who lived perfectly and who deserves all of that love. How can we not love those whom God loves? That's why we love each other."

Isn't this exactly what verse 23 says, "that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me." In other words, our love for one another is a testimony to the world that God has loved us with the same love that He has for Jesus. Should people see that, it can have a changing effect upon their souls.

Those in the world are hurting so badly, that they may easily say, "I want some of that love!" And so, they are brought to Jesus. This is the mission of the church: to show the reality of Christ's love in us in such a way that the world would see and believe. Elsewhere, Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Perhaps one of the greatest deterrents to the church impacting our world boils down to one easy thing: we don't love each other. In so doing, we don't put God's love on display. And thus, we have only a weak impact on our society.

## **5. Presence (verse 24).**

In verse 24, Jesus says, "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

Are there people in your life who you like to be with? One of the things that takes place at Rock Valley Bible Church which is so enjoyable to me is "kid's swap." Rare is the Sunday that I come home with all of my children after church. And rare is the Sunday when I have only my children in my home. Why is this? My children (and others in the church) scheme together to be with each other, because they want to be with each other. Catch this. Jesus wants to be with us!

Now is a time of separation. Husbands and wives, do you know the pain of separation? Wives, do you know the times when your husband is away on a business trip? You long for a reunion, right? Husbands, do you know the times when your wife is away with her family dealing with some family matter? You long for a reunion, right? Catch this, Jesus is anticipating reunion!

Earlier in the evening, Jesus had said to His disciples, "Where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3). Why does Jesus desire for us to be with Him? So that we may see His glory! And in this, His prayer has come full circle, that we may see His glory.

May we embrace and pursue the things that Jesus prays for. (1) glory; (2) protection; (3) sanctification; (4) unity; and (5) presence.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 25, 2010 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

---

[1] J. C. Ryle, Expository thoughts on John, Volume 3, p. 219.

[2] Ibid. p. 188

[3] Joshua Harris, Dug Down Deep, pp. 53-55.

[4] Sally Lloyd-Jones, The Jesus Storybook Bible,