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A Prayer of Jesus

Praying for Christian Unity

John 17:1–26

Connection:

I had a significant *aha* moment the summer I turned seventeen. I had been elected treasurer of the student council at my high school, and before the school year started, I went to a weeklong summer camp with all the other new student council members. At the camp, I expected we would learn specific skills for our new roles.

The camp did offer training for the tasks we would be performing, but to my surprise, a lot of emphasis was also placed on the relationships within the student council. I was, and still am, a very task-oriented person; when I have a task in mind, I find it hard to focus on the needs of the people around me. I can remember exactly where I was sitting during a small group discussion at that camp when I had my *aha* moment. For the first time in my life I found myself thinking, *You mean relationships are just as important as accomplishing tasks? Really? And part of our role on student council is to develop good relationships with each other? Is this really true?*

Jesus' prayer in John 17 for his disciples and for all the disciples who will follow after reminds us of the importance of relationships between believers—and invites us to make that a topic of prayer as well. *Read John 17:1–26.*

1. What two primary concepts do verses 1 to 5 focus on?
2. What do you learn about both of these concepts from Jesus' words?
3. **What do you think Jesus means by the word *know* in his definition of eternal life in verse 3?**
4. What two requests does Jesus pray for his disciples in verses 11, 15 and 17?
5. **Why do you think these are the two requests Jesus makes?**

6. If you were to pick one of these prayers to pray for yourself, which one would it be and why?
7. In verses 20 to 26, Jesus shifts his focus to those who will believe through the disciples' message, which includes Christians throughout all time, including today. What is Jesus' central concern in this part of his prayer?
8. Have you seen instances where the love between Christians has helped others see Jesus more clearly? If so, explain.
9. In these verses, Jesus states directly what he wants. When you pray is it easy or hard for you to state directly what you want from God? Why?
10. How is oneness between Christians related to oneness between Jesus and his Father?
11. According to verses 20 to 26, in what ways is Jesus essential if a person wants to know God the Father?
12. If Christians all over the world prayed verses 20 to 26 regularly, what do you think might be the outcome?
13. What are the situations in your family, Bible study group, fellowship group, church or city for which you might pray for unity and love among Christians?
14. How might God want to use you to help bring about that love and unity?

Tasks

- Complete the questions above for study and clarity.
- *Spend some time praying for unity among Christians and that God would show you ways you could grow in loving your Christian brothers and sisters.*

Now or Later

- Read 1 John 4:7–12, another passage that emphasizes the love that God desires Christians to have for each other. Turn the passage in 1 John into a prayer and pray it for the Christians in your family, small group, church, neighborhood or workplace.
- Read Psalm 133, noting the ways it parallels Jesus' concerns in his prayer. Then read the psalm a second time, praying that God would make it true in your family, small group, church or other Christian community.

