

**HOW TO PRAY**  
**John 17**  
**By Andy Manning**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. In the year 2000, Bruce Wilkinson published a little book called *The Prayer of Jabez*. The book was wildly successful. Jabez is an obscure OT Bible figure, only mentioned in about two verses. However it says that he prayed a specific prayer to God, and that God granted his request. His prayer is found in 1 Chronicles 4:10.
  - i. Jabez called out to the God of Israel, "If only you would bless me, extend my border, let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm, so that I will not experience pain." And God granted his request.
  - ii. But the book seemed to confuse a lot of people, who thought that if they just regularly recited the prayer of Jabez, that it was sort of like a good luck charm; a guaranteed path to health, wealth, and prosperity. But that's not at all what we should learn from the book, or from Jabez's famous prayer.
  - iii. The principles of the book are very powerful and inspiring.
    1. It is okay to pray for yourself, your needs, wants, and desires; for blessing, prosperity, and protection.
    2. God hears and answers prayer.
  - iv. But we must remember that God has a different plan for each of our lives, and that He doesn't guarantee us a life of health, wealth, and prosperity. In this life we will face suffering just like unbelievers, but we will have health, wealth, and prosperity in the next life.
2. But the prayer of Jabez doesn't teach us all we need to know about prayer. It does not teach us everything we should pray for. For better instruction, we can turn to what is known as "The Lord's Prayer" in Matthew 6:9-13, where Jesus said, "Therefore, you should pray like this: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in 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. Amen (KJV)."
  - i. The Lord's Prayer is not a magical spell or incantation that you mindlessly recite in order to invoke blessing and ward off curses.
  - ii. Neither is its power increased the more times it is recited.
  - iii. Rather, the Lord gave us this prayer to teach us basic principles about prayer, and some of the essential requests that we should be making.
3. But while the Lord's Prayer is one of the best places to go in Scripture to learn about prayer, there is an even better place. John 17 contains the real Lord's Prayer, because it records an actual prayer of Jesus. It is Christ's longest recorded prayer. Some call it Christ's High Priestly Prayer, because He is acting in His role of High Priest by

interceding for us (Heb 7;24). Others call John 17 the Holy of Holies of Sacred Scripture, because it records an intimate conversation between God the Father and God the Son. If you want to learn to pray, this is perhaps the best place to look, because we can learn from Christ's actual example of what to pray for, who to pray to, and how to pray.

4. This prayer comes at the end of Christ's Farewell Discourse (a.k.a. Upper Room Discourse), His final words of instruction and encouragement to His disciples (Jn 13-17). This is just a few hours before His crucifixion. He washed their feet and taught them about servant leadership and loving one another. He told them who would betray Him, that He would die, and that Peter would deny Him. He told them He was leaving them. And so He spent time encouraging and comforting them. He promised that they would see Him again; that they would go to heaven; that He would send them the Holy Spirit. He taught them the secrets of fruitful living. He taught them how to respond to persecution. And then He prayed for them.
5. The prayer can be divided into three sections:
  - i. Jesus prays for Himself. 1-5
  - ii. Jesus prays for His disciples. 6-19
    1. 14 of 26 verses center specifically on the disciples.
  - iii. Jesus prays for His church. 20-26
    1. 7 verses on future disciples.

## **II. TEXT: John 17:1-26**

1. 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.
2. 6 "I have revealed your name to the people you gave me from the world. They were yours, you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, 8 because I have given them the words you gave me. They have received them and have known for certain that I came from you. They have believed that you sent me.
3. 9 "I pray for them. I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they are yours. 10 Everything I have is yours, and everything you have is mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I was protecting them by your name that you have given me. I guarded them and not one of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled. 13 Now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that

- they may have my joy completed in them. 14 I have given them your word. The world hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 I sanctify myself for them, so that they also may be sanctified by the truth.
4. 20 “I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. 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.
  5. 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.”

### **III. INSIGHTS FROM THE PRAYER OF JESUS**

1. The love of Christ. Christ’s love for us is revealed in three ways through this prayer:
  - i. He prayed for us.
  - ii. He expressed His desire for us to be with Him in heaven. 24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am”
  - iii. He expressed His desire for the salvation of the world. 21 “May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me.”
2. The deity of Christ. Christ’s deity is affirmed in several ways in His prayer:
  - i. He prays for God to glorify Him (1, 5). God does not share His glory with another (Is 42:8; 48:11).
  - ii. He is the source of eternal life (2-3).
  - iii. He is eternal.
    1. 5 “Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed.”
    2. 24 “you loved me before the world’s foundation”
  - iv. Everything of God’s belongs to Christ. 10 “Everything I have is yours, and everything you have is mine”
3. The distinction of Christ.
  - i. We see multiple evidences for the doctrine of the Trinity in this passage; that there is one God in three persons. Not much is said about the Holy Spirit, but there is a clear distinction between Father and son in this chapter.
    1. Verse 1: He is talking to His Father. He is not praying to Himself.

2. Verse 1: He calls God His Father. He is not His own Father.
    - a. We see two new titles for God that are only used in this chapter.
      - i. Verse 10: Holy Father
      - ii. Verse 25: Righteous Father
  3. Verse 5: Christ was with God before the world existed.
  4. Verse 8: Christ was sent into the world by the Father. He did not send Himself.
  5. Verse 23: Christ speaks of the Father's love for the Son. He is not talking about loving Himself.
4. The definition of eternal life.
- i. **John 17:3** "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ."
  - ii. Eternal life is both a quantity of existence, and a quality of existence.
    1. The quantity of existence is eternal. It means living forever.
    2. The quality of existence is knowing God. There are two aspects of knowing God:
      - a. Intellectual knowledge. Knowing who God is, and what He is like. This is truly life-changing.
      - b. Experiential/relational knowledge.
        - i. William Barclay "The Old Testament regularly uses know for sexual knowledge. 'The man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived, and bore Cain' (Genesis 4:1). Now the knowledge of husband and wife is the most intimate there can be. Husband and wife are no longer two; they are one flesh. The sexual act itself is not the important thing; the important thing is the intimacy of heart and mind and soul which in true love precede that act."
        - ii. Knowing God refers to an intimate love relationship with God, more intimate than the closest earthly relationship.
      - c. This quality of existence begins on earth the moment you begin the Christian life. We don't get eternal life when we die; we get it when we are born again in Christ.
5. The priority of evangelism. We see the importance of evangelism in two ways:
- i. Rather than take us out of the world that is hostile to us, Christ leaves us on earth to reach the world for Christ. **John 17:18** "As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."
  - ii. The purpose of several of His requests is so that the world will believe.

1. Verse 21 “May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me.”
2. Verse 23 “So that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me”
6. The priorities of God.
  - i. Not our comfort. Not our pleasure. Not our wealth. Not our fame. Not worldly success. Spiritual priorities are what are on the heart and mind of Jesus. He prays for our spiritual protection; for our spiritual growth; for our unity with each other; for our effectiveness in missions.
  - ii. Our priorities should be a reflection of God’s.
7. The relationship of the church to the world.
  - i. The Greek word for world, *kosmos*, is used 18 times in this prayer.
    1. Barclay “in John’s gospel the world stands for ‘human society organizing itself without God’.
    2. NLT Study Bible “The world consists of society that is opposed to God and His kingdom.”
  - ii. Verse 14: The world hates us.
  - iii. Verse 14: This hatred is because we are not of the world.
  - iv. Rom 12:2 commands us to not be conformed to the world.
  - v. 1 John 2:15 says to not love the world.
  - vi. James 4:4 says to avoid friendship with the world.
  - vii. James 1:27 says that true religion means keeping yourself unstained by the world.
  - viii. But in John 17:15, Jesus doesn’t pray for us to be taken out of the world, but to be protected in the world. Then in John 17:18 Christ says that He has sent us into the world.
  - ix. While we are not to become worldly, God does not want us to hide or escape from the world. Instead, He wants us to live on mission in the world. We are to be in the world, not of the world.
8. The prayer requests we must make. The prayer of Jesus teaches us the kind of requests we should be making. What Jesus prays for us is what we should pray for ourselves.

#### IV. SIX REQUESTS WE MUST MAKE

##### 1. May Your will be done in my life.

- i. This is what Jesus is praying for in verse 1.
- ii. **John 17:1** “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”
- iii. “Hour” refers to the time of Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension.
  1. Multiple times His “hour” had not yet come.
    - a. Jn 2:2 “What has this concern of yours to do with me,, woman?” Jesus asked. “My hour has not yet come.”

- b. Jn 7:8 “Go up to the festival yourselves. I’m not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.”
    - c. Jn 7:30 “Then they tried to seize him. Yet no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come.”
  - iv. By praying for the Father to “glorify” Him, He was praying for the Father to carry out His will in Christ’s death. “Glorify your Son” means “Crucify Your Son.”
  - v. The cross would bring great glory to Christ. Christ would be praised all over the world for His redeeming sacrifice. Christ’s great love for the Father and for the world would be revealed as a result.
  - vi. In this first prayer, Christ is praying for the Father to carry out His will in Christ’s life, no matter the cost.
  - vii. This echoes the prayer in Matthew 6:10 (KJV) “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”
  - viii. Jesus prayed this prayer later that same night when, as He dreaded the agony of the cross, He prayed, “not my will, but yours, be done (Lk 22:42).”
  - ix. This is part of what it means to pray in the name of Jesus. **John 14:14** “If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”
  - x. This is one of the conditions of effective prayer. **1 John 5:14** “This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”
  - xi. When we pray, we are not asking God to do our will, we are surrendering to His will.
    - 1. We are commanded to ask, so we pray.
    - 2. We are told that we must pray to receive, so we pray.
    - 3. Yet we know that our prayers must be according to God’s will; we trust that God’s will is best, and He knows what is best; we love God and want to please Him. Therefore, we pray for God’s will to be done, not ours.
  - xii. But this is more than just submitting our desires to God’s. This is more than asking for what you want, and then surrendering it to God if He doesn’t want it for you. That in itself is important. But there is more to this request. Much more. This is the full surrender of the self to God. It is saying, “Father, take my life, and do whatever you want to do, no matter what it is.” It is the total dedication of oneself to God. It is presenting your body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (Rm 12:1).

## **2. May You be glorified in my life.**

- i. Twice in verses 1-5 Christ prays for God to glorify Him.
  - 1. John 17:1 “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”

- a. This is the prayer for God to carry out His plan of the crucifixion, which would glorify Christ.
- 2. John 17:5 “Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed.”
  - a. This is the prayer to restore Christ to His pre-incarnate glory in heaven at God’s right hand, before Christ came to earth. There He will sit on the throne with the Father, and will be worshiped day and night by believers and by the angels.
- ii. But this is essentially a prayer for God to be glorified.
  - 1. When Christ is glorified, God is glorified.
  - 2. Christ is God.
- iii. Unlike Christ, we don’t ask God to glorify us; we ask God to be glorified through our lives.
- iv. The Bible commands us to glorify God in everything we do. **1 Corinthians 10:31** “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”
- v. Remember, God’s glory is the revelation of His character and presence.
  - 1. We glorify God by revealing His character and presence in our lives. We glorify God when we reflect God’s holiness, and love, and faithfulness, and forgiveness, and compassion, and wisdom.
  - 2. We glorify God by giving Him the credit for our accomplishments.
  - 3. We glorify God by praising and thanking Him.
  - 4. We glorify God by completing the work He gives us to do (Jn 17:4).

### 3. Keep me loyal to You.

- i. This request begins in verse 11, and then is explained further in verse 15.
- ii. **John 17:11** “Holy Father, protect them by your name....”
- iii. This verse has two possible translations:
  - 1. Protect them by your name (CSB). Or protect them by the power of your name. In the OT, “name” means much more than the name by which a person is called. It refers to the totality of their character. Psalm 9:10 says, “Those who know your name trust in you.” This does not mean that those who know what God is called trust in Him; it means that those who know God’s character trust in Him. So, in John 17:11 Jesus may be praying, “Protect them by your name.” Here, “name” refers to God’s power and might.
  - 2. Keep them in your name (ESV). Keep them loyal to all that You have revealed about Yourself through Christ. This is a prayer for God to help us stay faithful to Christ’s teachings and commands. To put it negatively, this is a command for God to protect us from straying from sound doctrine and holy living. To keep us loyal to His word.

- iv. Verse 15 further explains this request. **John 17:15** “I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”
  - 1. The Greek can be translated either “evil,” or “evil one,” or Satan.
- v. When you put these two verses together, both of the translations can be correct (“protect them by Your name,” and “keep them in your name.”)
- vi. This is not a prayer for protection from physical danger, or sickness, or economic downfall, or relational problems. The prayer is for God to protect us from evil, and from the evil one, so that we can stay loyal to Him and His word. This is a prayer for God to keep us in line with His word – right doctrine, and right living. This is a prayer for God to keep us from being conformed to the world, and falling in to wrong thinking and wrong living (Rm 12:2). To keep us from compromising and from disobedience. To keep us from watering down the truth. To keep us from being deceived by Satan, or by our own selfishness, pride, and covetousness.

#### 4. Grow me.

- i. The next request is found in verse 17.
- ii. **John 17:17** “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”
- iii. Sanctification is the big word for spiritual growth.
- iv. The Greek word for “sanctification” comes from the word holy. The idea is to make holy, or to set apart. It has two ideas, one negative, and one positive.
  - 1. To be set apart for God’s use. To be selected to be God’s servant.
    - a. Jeremiah was set apart to be a prophet to the nations. Jer 1:5
    - b. God told Moses to set apart Aaron and his sons to serve as priests. Ex 28:41
  - 2. To be set apart from sin. To be useful to God, we must have “the qualities of mind and heart and character which are necessary for that task.”
- v. Sanctification means growing into the person God wants you to be. It means becoming more and more like Jesus, loving God and others more and more. It means becoming more and more spiritually mature. It means growing in the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23).
- vi. The Bible commands us to grow.
  - 1. 2 Cor 13:11 “Become mature.”
  - 2. 2 Pt 3:18 “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
- vii. God’s will is for our growth.
  - 1. 1 Thess 4:3 “For this is God’s will, your sanctification.”
- viii. But here we find that it is something that we must pray for. We cannot grow in our own strength. We must pray for it.



- ix. This verse also indicates the means of sanctification. The Bible. John 17:17 “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”
- x. The ESV Study Bible makes an interesting observation. Jesus did not say that the Bible is true, but that it is truth. If it were merely true, then that would mean that it conforms to some other external standard of truth. But by calling it the truth, then Jesus makes the Bible the standard of truth by which we test and compare and judge everything else.
- xi. This is not secret at Church Acadiana. To grow in Christ, you must become serious Bible student. This means reading your Bible regularly, highlighting, taking notes at church as you listen to the sermon, reading solid Christian books about the Bible, etc.
- xii. My father and grandfather are such an inspiration to me. Both of them were saved when they were adults, and both of them were laymen, yet they both had an extensive Christian library (that I inherited). They both read and studied their Bibles deeply, and they read many Christian books. That love of Biblical knowledge has passed down to me, and I hope to pass it down to my kids.

## 5. May we all be unified.

- i. This may be the most dominant request that Christ makes. It is found in verses 11, 21, 22, and 23.
  - 1. **John 17:11** “Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one.”
  - 2. **John 17:20-21** “20 “I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. 21 May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you.”
  - 3. **John 17:22** “I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one.”
  - 4. **John 17:23** “I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one.”
- ii. Why is this request so important? Because Christ’s mission is to reach the world, and unity is essential for the task of world evangelism. **John 17:23** “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.” Christ wants the church to be unified because then it can more effectively win the world for Christ. We have to get along to get things done.
- iii. What is this unity that Christ is praying for in the church? At its most basic level, unity means getting along and working together to accomplish Christ’s mission of making disciples. This has two aspects:
  - 1. Unity means getting along. This requires love and forgiveness. We must be devoted to loving each other, and then forgiving one another when we fall short.

2. Unity means working together. We all need to embrace the mission of the church and get in the game. All hands on deck.
- iv. When we pray for our church, we must not only pray for God to help us reach the lost; we must pray for God to make us one. If we aren't unified in Christ, then we can't be utilized for Christ.
- v. Earlier Christ hinted at the foundation of unity. **John 17:11** "Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one." Do you remember what that request meant? God keep us loyal. Keep us faithful to Your word – right doctrine and right living. To be unified, we must start with being faithful to right doctrine and right living. Straying from classic orthodox teachings of the Bible will inevitably lead to division.
- vi. Christ's prayer reveals five things about unity:
  1. Jesus deeply desires it.
  2. It requires prayer.
  3. It is not natural (or we wouldn't need to pray for it).
  4. It is required for effective ministry.
  5. It starts with being faithful to Scripture in our thinking and behaving (Jn 17:11).

#### 6. May I abide in You.

- i. The last request of Jesus is found in verse 21
- ii. **John 17:21** "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."
- iii. "May they also be in us."
- iv. After praying for unity, He prays for us to be in God.
- v. D. A. Carson says that this probably alludes to the vine metaphor – of abiding in Christ.
- vi. Do you remember what the vine metaphor was all about? Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. To produce much fruit, we must abide in Christ (15:5). That is, we must maintain a close, constantly relationship with Christ.
- vii. The Christian life is not just about becoming more like Christ, or leading people to Christ. It is first and foremost about walking with Him in an intimate love relationship. Everything flows from that. Your effectiveness for God flows from your intimacy with God. Your growth in Christ flows from intimacy with Christ. Your effectiveness as a husband and father flows from your intimacy with Christ.
- viii. That's what this final prayer request is about. "Lord, help us to abide in You. Help us to stay close, and to grow closer in relationship with You."
- ix. The Christian life is all about loving God and others. How do we do that? How do we grow in that? **1 John 4:17 (NLT)** "And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect."

## **V. CONCLUSION**

1. Years ago I receive an email from someone, who said she received it from someone else. It was started on January 5, 2005, by a Father Ignacio, the healing priest of the Rosary, who has performed many miracles. The email said that you are to pray a Hail Mary, then ask God for a special favor, and on the fourth day “you will see what will happen.” The person also instructed me to not break the chain, but to forward the email to twelve people that I believe deserve justice, peace, love, health, prosperity, and well-being.
2. If you read the Bible, then you quickly find out that this is not what prayer is all about.
  - i. First, of all, we shouldn’t pray to Mary. Nowhere does the Bible tell us to pray to Mary, or show someone praying to Mary. Mary can’t help you. We pray to God in the name of Jesus.
  - ii. Second, prayer is not a magical chant. There are not magic words that you can recite and then expect a blessing. Prayer is not a vending machine where you put a dollar in and get exactly what you want out of it. Prayer is a conversation – talking to God. And God is in charge. We tell God what we want, but we know that He decides what happens next, and we submit to His leadership.
3. If you really want to know how to pray, then you turn to John 17.
4. From now on when you pray, in your private prayer time, in your prayer time with your family, with your Home Group, keep these requests in mind. These are the things we should be praying for ourselves, for our children, and for each other.