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John 17:6-19

How He Prayed: Jesus Prayed for His Disciples

Jonathan M. Romig
CornerstoneWestford.com

One of the things Monica and I encourage engaged couples to do when we're going through **pre-marital counseling** with them is to make a last will and testament after they get married. Now that's kind of morbid, right? You're about to get married! But you also may die... We're not saying they should see a lawyer on their **Honeymoon**, but for sure in the first 2-3 years of marriage.

Why do we make last wills and testaments? If you die, it can make a **difficult time** much easier on your family. You create a will because you don't want the bank to be in charge of dividing up your assets. And you do want good things to happen. You want your children to receive your money or home so they can use those assets to help their families.

Last week I told you John 17 is one of Jesus' last prayers before his crucifixion and death. This is kind of like Jesus' **last will and testament**. In it, we see him saying what he wants for his disciples. He doesn't leave them his **carpentry business** or say who can have his **cloak and staff**. Instead he asks three things (three **petitions**) for his disciples. Jesus prays that his disciples would be:

- 1) Not at odds, but as one.

John 17:11b ...Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. (NIV®)

- 2) Not of it, but in it.

John 17:15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. (NIV®)

- 3) Not swept away, but set apart.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. (NIV®)

There is so much in John 17 I'm narrowing our message down to these three things Jesus specifically prays for his disciples. Now **why** should you care about what Jesus prayed for his disciples? The Bible says Jesus is our **intercessor** (Rom 8:34). So if Jesus prayed this 2,000 years ago for his disciples **back then**, he's probably praying something very similar for you 2,000 years later **right now**. What is Jesus praying? First, Jesus prays for us to be...

Not at odds, but as one.

John 17:11b ...Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. (NIV®)

Jesus prays the Father would **protect** their **unity**—“so that they may be one as we are one.” How are the Father and Son unified? Earlier Jesus described his relationship with his Father.

John 14:10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. (NIV®)

All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.

Jesus is **spiritually unified** with his father. They're **distinct persons** but **one God**. His Father lives in him and he lives in his Father. Now he's praying for a **similar** unity for them. "Father, may they be one as we are one? Would you live in them and do your work through them?" It's as we are **with** our heavenly Father in **relationship** with him that we become unified **with** believers who are also **with** him. The key word is "with." That's what Christianity is, going through life day by day with Jesus and the Father.

This is why Jesus prays, "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your **name**, the name you gave me..." It's God's **true name** that unites us with each other and the Father. Earlier in **verse 6** when Jesus says, "I have revealed you" in the original Greek it's, "I have revealed your name." Why does God's name matter? When God reveals his name, he reveals his **identity**, which means we can **know** him (Ex 33:19).

The right **name** can both reveal and unify. I have a lot of friends who are **pregnant** right now. They tell us about naming their babies. The story can go like this. "If we have a boy, I want to name him **Jackson**, but my husband wants to name him... **Lancelot**." This is important because a name can shape the direction of a child's future. Will he be the popular **cool kid**, Jackson? Or will he get **made fun of** and attacked with **broomsticks**, Lancelot?" But the story doesn't stop there because after reading through a thousand baby names, a husband and wife somehow manage to find the right name **together**. But we don't know what that name is, because they won't tell us. A name brought them from a point of **disunity** to **unity**. It's through this final name that they will one day be in a **relationship** with their child.

How much more significant, and powerful, and God-revealing is the **name of Jesus**? Did you know the name Jesus means "**Yahweh saves**?" (Matt 1:21). Yahweh is the Old Testament name of God. Jesus is Yahweh who has come to save his people from their sins. Jesus reveals God's **identity**. Does the name of Jesus unify us? Are we not at odds, but as one, because of the name of Jesus? When we're tempted to go our own way, remember the name Jesus.

Let's **compare** two **similar** sentences.

- A. "**I want my way.**" — This sentence is the source of almost every conflict. Why can't I agree with my wife? I want my way. Why do I disobey my parents? I want my way. Why can't I get along with my coworkers? I want my way. Why do I dislike liberals or can't stand conservatives? I want my way. Why am I so upset about the decision those Christians made? I want my way. I want my way leads to strife and hurt and a bad witness. So is there another way? Here's a second option...
- B. "**I want the way of Jesus.**" — This changes everything. How I view conflict and disagreement. When I can't agree with my wife, I want the way of Jesus, so I humble myself. When my parents make me upset, I want the way of Jesus, so I choose to obey them even when I disagree with them. When I'm having a hard time at work, I want the way of Jesus, so I put others before myself. In politics, I want the way of Jesus, so I love those across the aisle. Those Christians made a decision I disagree with, but I want the way of Jesus, so I walk forward in faith.

As a church, let's **pray** for each other. "Father, help us resist wanting our own way and instead want the way of Jesus. May we do this by wanting a relationship **with** you." *Jesus prays for us to be... not at odds, but as one.* What else did Jesus pray? Second, Jesus prays for us to be...

Not of it, but in it.

John 17:15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. (NIV®)

First Jesus wants us to be **unified**, but he wants us to be unified in a certain time and place, in the **world**.

Tim Brister explains being in the world this way:

Christians are in the world in the sense that they occupy the same space, go to the same markets and interact in the same society as non-Christians. They are not people who form their own sub-cultures or ghettos to avoid the world. They recognize where God has placed them and do not run from that reality. They are relatable, accessible, and approachable to those in the world in normal, ordinary ways (e.g., friend, neighbor, coworker, classmate, teammate, etc.).¹

So we're called to be in it, but not of it. We're to continue to **believe** and **obey** the teachings of Jesus just like the first disciples (John 17:6, 8). How will the world feel about this? *The "world" is all those who reject the message and teachings of Jesus Christ, and so they will reject us.*

John 17:14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. (NIV®)

We find two priorities of Jesus here: **1)** that we would live and be in the world, but **2)** that the world would not control or **define** us. The **good news** is that Jesus will use us to rescue some from the world.

John 17:20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, (NIV®)

As a Christian, I think this is one of the **hardest** things we're called to do. We're called to not just know Christians but to form **meaningful relationships** with non-Christians, but at the same time be willing to **be rejected** for Jesus as we share the truth of his message, believing that he will rescue some.

I don't know about you, but I struggle with this. I want friendships. I want to be loved by the people on my **frontline** (my non-Christian friends), but I also want them to know Jesus. I can think of a **dozen times** over the last two year where I could have been more **bold** about my faith or what I believe as a follower of Jesus, and I didn't take it because I was **afraid** of what they might think. I guess it's my prayer that Jesus would be honored in this struggle, and that for every **dozen failures**, he would give me **one success**.

I have a name for what this feels like, being in the world but not of it—**messy discipleship**. *Messy discipleship is when I risk getting dirty for the sake of Christ.* Messy discipleship is when you go to your non-Christian friend's party, even though you know there will be lots of **drinking**, just because you want to spend time with them. Messy discipleship is when you form friendships with **universalists** who assume you believe the same things they do and you first ask them questions about what they believe. Messy discipleship is inviting your **gay neighbors** over for dinner even though your kids may say something awkward. Messy discipleship is being willing to **eat and drink with sinners** and not caring what other well-meaning Christians might have to say about you (Luke 7:34).

Messy discipleship brings us to our **knees** as we realize we're probably not doing it right. **Clean discipleship** allows us to wash our hands of the whole thing, "I know I'm not of the world because I'm **not in the world.**" But who are we counting on for our **righteousness** (our right standing before God) by living that way? Ourselves. In messy discipleship, **you** have to rely completely on Christ's justification of you, his forgiveness of your sins and his granting of righteousness, for your right standing before God. And we have to pray, just like Jesus, that the Father would keep us **safe** from the the **evil one** because we're on his turf.

¹ Brister, Tim. *How Christians Live in Post-Christendom*. Published June 29, 2015. <http://timmybrister.com/2015/06/how-christians-are-to-live-in-the-world/> Accessed 11/30/17 via Ed Stetzer Christianity [Morning Roundup 7/14/15](#).

It's as we struggle to be faithful that we **grow** to be more like Jesus Christ. This leads me to Jesus' third petition, that the Father would sanctify us. Jesus prays for us to be...

Not swept away, but set apart. (John 17:17-19)

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. (NIV®)

To sanctify means “**to set apart.**” In other words, Jesus is praying that the Father would differentiate his disciples from the world, making them more like **Jesus**. So let's **summarize** so far. Jesus is praying **for us** to be **unified** through our **relationship** with the Father as we go out into the **world**, and that as we're in the world we would **stick out** as different. It's like he's praying for the Father to pick us up and set us on top of a big **boulder** in the middle of a **raging river**, and that we wouldn't be swept away.

Aren't we going to drown in the **torrent**, slip in the **mud**, or get lost in the **darkness**? We'll be fine because we're standing on the boulder—the **word of God**. We're on **solid ground**. We're in the **light**. Jesus gave his **disciples** the truth of God and they believed (John 17:8). Now Jesus is praying that as we go into the world, we **hold fast** to this truth. If we want to hold fast in today's world, we have to hold onto the **Scriptures** and the teachings of Jesus no matter what.

Jesus uses this combination of holding fast to his word while being in the world to **sanctify** us. If we look at verses **15-19**, we jump back and forth between the world and sanctification. In v**15-16**, Jesus talks about being in the world, then in verse **17** he talks about being sanctified, then he goes back to the world in verse **18** (“I have sent them into the world), and then back to sanctification in verse **19** (“For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”). *There is a close connection between being sent and being sanctified. It's as we're sent, and have to cling to God's word, that we become set apart by Christ.*

If you believe that the best way to grow in holiness is to read God's word, but stay far away from the world, you need to **repent**. You need to confess that you may have been reading God's word but you haven't been obeying it. The Father doesn't want us to **retreat**, he wants us to **risk** ourselves for the sake of **redemption**.

We **risk** ourselves for the lost because **Christ Jesus** risked himself for us. At **Christmas**, Jesus left his Holy Father in heaven to enter into our mud, our darkness, our torrent. He allowed himself to be **swept away** so that three days later he could **sweep away** our sins. At the **cross**, he bore our **disunity**, our **worldliness**, and every time we've ever given into the world's **peer pressure**. He takes all that away and offers us perfect unity with the father, **out-of-this world righteousness**, and a rock we can stand on that will never be moved.

As we think about everything Jesus prays for us, and we can pray for each other, may this be our prayer too.

As we're with the Father, let's pray to stand out in the world.

A couple weeks ago a friend at my **gym** asked me why I became a **pastor**. I told her I wasn't happy doing bank examination, which is what I did before, and that I felt **God** called me to become a pastor. She thought that was cool, but I wasn't super happy with my answer. Because in our world, “God” could mean anything. I wish I'd said, “Christ called me to pick up my cross and follow him” or something like that...

Then I asked her, “Do you know any other pastors?” She said no, and another woman said no too, and a third woman said she loved her universalist unitarian pastor. That's when I realized that I was the only pastor most of the people at my gym know. I hope you'll all have a **similar realization**—that you are likely the **only** true follower of Jesus your coworkers, friends, and classmates know. *Jesus has placed you where you are so you can tell them about him.* Like me, you probably struggle to be bold, which is why we need to remember we're not alone. We're **with** the Father. *As we're with the Father, let's pray to stand out in the world.*

Pastor Jonathan Romig wrote and preached this message for the people of Cornerstone Congregational Church. Click here to listen to more sermons or click here to read our story.