BIBLE STUDY HELPS

TITLE: JESUS PRAYS FOR TRANSFORMATION [Adjusted Title]
TEXT: John 17:9-26 [EXPANDED PASSAGES FOR STUDY]

TARGET: SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Jesus' prayer for believers reminds us how our lives should be transformed by Him.

LOOK UP: FOCUSING THE GROUP

In Advance: Gather the following items for the illustration suggestion: Bring a powdered drink mix packet that is used in bottled water. Bring a bottle of water.

Illustrate (Once most have arrived): Pour the powdered drink mix into the bottle of water in front of the group.

Ask: Is this still water since I poured the drink mix into it? What is different about it now that the powdered drink mix has been added? How does this illustrate what Jesus does in believers. (Transforms us into something new).

When a powdered drink mix is added to a bottle of water, it doesn't quit being water, but it is transformed into something different and is used for a different purpose. When individuals receive Christ, His Spirit comes into them and transforms them and gives them a different purpose. But this transformation is not to be used for our own personal experience, but we are to, in turn, seek to transform our culture. We are "mixed" into a culture that needs to become new in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

This is why believers are left to live in this world after they make a commitment to follow Christ. We are transformed and we are to seek to transform others through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. But this isn't an easy task.

Jesus knew this and this is why, in chapter 17, He prays for His current and all future disciples.

After Jesus explained to His disciples the role of the Holy Spirit in chapter 16, He ends with His "Farewell Discourse" in John 16:29-33:

> *25 "I have spoken these things to you in figures of speech. A time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. 26 On that day you will ask in my name, and I am not telling you that I will ask the Father on your behalf. 27 For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. 28 I came from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father." 29 His disciples said, "Look, now you're speaking plainly and not using any figurative language. 30 Now we know that you know everything and don't need anyone to question you. By this we believe that you came from God." 31 Jesus responded to them, "Do you now believe? 32 Indeed, an hour is coming, and has come, when each of you will be scattered to his own home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. 33 I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world."*

Jesus' question in 16:31 challenged them to face the looming reality of all they would face when He would go to the cross. He told them they would desert Him; even so, His Father would be with Him. He reassured them that, even though they would experience suffering in this world, in Him they could have a deep sense of well-being knowing the Father would be with them. He urged them to be courageous because He would be victorious; therefore, they would be victorious.

Chapter 17 is another transition and contains Jesus' longest recorded prayer that has been called His "High-Priestly Prayer." This designation points to Jesus as our Great High Priest and to the intercessory nature of His prayer.

Chapter 17 also places Jesus approximately 48 hours away from death. He has spoken so much to His disciples; yet there was so much more He could have said. They have been told He is leaving, the Holy Spirit is coming, and they will face difficulties. They have taken in so much information. Fortunately, He promised them that Holy Spirit would help them understand things more fully. But now, He turns His attention to offering up a prayer to the Father on their behalf.

Jesus first prays for Himself in John 17:1-5. He asked the Father to glorify Him so He would glorify the Father. Jesus wanted His coming crucifixion and resurrection to reveal God's redemptive character marked by love and grace. Jesus also asked that His death and resurrection give undeniable evidence He was God's Sent One.

Then, beginning in John 17:6, Jesus turns His attention to praying for His disciples. He says this to His Father regarding the disciples in John 17:6-8*:*

> *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.*

As Jesus continues to pray, we will see His desire and concern for all who are transformed by Christ, especially as they seek to transform the world in which they live. Jesus makes specific requests regarding what all disciples will face as they live these transformed lives.

(Refer to the powdered drink mix in the water). Just like the specific ingredients in powdered drink mix that transforms the water, there are specific ways in which Jesus transforms us. Jesus' continued prayer reveals the ingredients that must be present in one who is in an authentic relationship with Christ.

LOOK IN: UPACKING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Direct Option: Imagine your life is like that bottle of water. Read silently John 17:9-26 and consider what Jesus desires to "pour into you" so that you will be transformed. Prepare a list of things Jesus prayed to be "mixed" into the lives of believers so that they could be transformed and so that others might be transformed.

Listen Option: Turn to John 17:9-26 in your Bibles. Listen and follow along as I read Jesus' prayer for His followers. Identify words or phrases that describe what Jesus desired to see "poured into" the followers so that they could be transformed and so that they could see others transformed?

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.

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.

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."

There are three broad areas in which Jesus focused His prayer – Protection, Sanctification, and Unity.

PROTECTION

Ask:

- In what ways did Jesus pray for His disciples' protection? What did the disciples (do we as believers) need protection from, based on this passage and from our own personal experiences?
- How did Jesus ask God to protect them?

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There are multiples dangers the early believers and we face. Jesus points out some of those dangers when He prays that they avoid dissension among themselves, dangerous circumstances, and the demonic influences from the "evil one." Notice that He prayed they would be protected by the name that God had given Jesus. Jesus was referring to God's power with this statement. He and the Father were one and God Almighty could protect them from anything. This was demonstrated in how Jesus' disciples were protected while He was with them except for Judas because he was not a true disciple as Jesus pointed out during the Passover meal.

Discuss: How can Jesus' words help us feel protected, knowing all the dangers we face in the world today?

Jesus also prayed for them to be sanctified.

SANCTIFICATION

Because the disciples would remain in the hostile environment, Jesus asked the Father to *sanctify them*. The term *sanctify* comes from the same root word as "holy." Both words mean to be separate from the world and set apart for God. The verb form indicates action that makes one holy or separate. It acknowledges dependence on the Father to do something we cannot do for ourselves.

One way God sanctifies believers is through His *word* which is *truth*. The world and the devil constantly try to deceive believers into disbelieving and, thus, disobeying God. To keep them from the evil one, Christ followers need to be set apart for God.

Discuss: How are believers set apart by the Word of God?

The Word reveals the mind of God. As you read the Word, you are led to set yourself apart for a particular ministry and for holy living. We can serve Him only as we know His Word and are obedient to it.

2 Timothy 3:16 describes how the Word of truth sanctifies us: *"All Scripture is inspired by God[a] and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."* Through its teaching, the Word shows us how to live and what to believe. By rebuking us, God through His Word, charges us to "get back on the right path." In correcting us, the Word shows us where we have sinned and missed the mark. Then the Word trains us for righteousness—it teaches us how not to fail in the same way again but to prosper in godliness. The goal is so that we may be complete (sanctified) and equipped for good works while in this world.

The disciples were not of the world because Jesus was not of the world. Even so, He *sent them into the world*. Their mission was not to embrace worldly lifestyles or values, but to share the transforming gospel of Christ. Jesus was sending them in the same manner as the Father had *sent* Him *into the world*.

Discuss: What kind of challenges do you face as you try to live in the world but not be a part of this world? What can believers count on if they choose to live by God's Word?

Living in the world while not becoming like the world is difficult. When we strive to live according to standards and principles given in God's Word, we may face criticism, be accused of many things, be looked down upon, be shunned, be fired from jobs, and so much more. This is why Jesus prayed not only for them to be sanctified but that they would be protected as their lives were transformed.

This leads to the final ingredient needed in a transformed life: Unity.

UNITY

Ask: Everyone in the group share where you grew up? What brought you to this church? What kind of job do you have? What hobbies to you have? Do multiple people in this group act or think exactly the same way?

This is the amazing miracle of Christ's transforming power! People who are totally different from one another can *be made completely one* through the indwelling Christ. The word *completely* does not mean believers are united in every way. It simply reflects a fulfillment of purpose. We are unified through our relationship with God in Christ, as we surrender personal agendas to His greater mission of salvation.

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Jesus repeated the goal of Christian unity: that *the world may know* Him and experience His love and salvation. Through our loving relationships, we testify that Jesus is God's Son. Believers receive the testimony that God loves us with the same perfect love He has for the Son.

Consider:
- Is unity harder or easier today? Explain your response.
- If we don't seek to be unified, what could this say about our personal relationship with Christ?
- Considering your own life, the way you live, and the choices you make—How does your life reflect the oneness Jesus prayed for?
- Are we willing to set aside those things that create disunity so our unity will reveal Christ and His love for the lost world?

Christian unity does not mean approval of all actions. Nor does it necessitate conformity or uniformity. It does require Christians to love one another in a way that honors our Lord, demonstrates His love within us, and demonstrates the powerful transforming redemption that takes place through salvation.

Jesus' prayer for unity was done on the very night of His arrest; Jesus was thinking of and praying for them and for us. If we could remember this, it would make petty arguments, selfish agendas, or ugly disagreements seem less important. We as believers honor Jesus when we behave in ways that show our unity with Him and with other believers.

LOOK OUT: LIVING OUT THE TARGET

Notice that Jesus was not just thinking about those early disciples as He prayed but was thinking about future believers. He was praying for us too! If we are saved, we are among *those who believe* in Christ *through their word*. Jesus looked down through the centuries and saw multitudes of people who would read the Scriptures, hear the apostles' testimony about Jesus, and believe in Him. Jesus interceded for us that night, and He continues to intercede for us (Heb. 7:25). He wants us to experience the same spiritual blessings that He voiced for the apostles.

As this session comes to a close, consider how you should respond to Jesus' prayer?
- What do you need to do so that you can understand more fully what it means to be protected by God?
- In what ways does your life demonstrate that you are continuing to be sanctified by the transforming power of God's Word?
- Do your attitude and actions toward other believers demonstrate a unity that proclaims the gospel to a lost world?

Illustrate: Refer back to the bottled water that had the powdered drink mixed into it. Is pouring the drink mix in the water enough to mix the water with the drink powder? What must you do to mix it up? What happens if you don't shake it for a while?

When you add powdered drink mix to a bottle of water you have to shake it up. If you wait too long, the powder can settle to the bottom, and you have to shake it up again. Perhaps you were shaken up as you considered Jesus' prayer today. Hopefully what you learned and considered will lead you to continue to live under the protection of Jesus' through living a sanctified life that is demonstrated by the unity we have as believers.

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