

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

FREE SPIRIT

STUDENT LESSON

Praying is one of the most powerful things you can do as a believer. Not just for physical things in life, but for spiritual ones as well. Prayer can help you grow closer to Jesus and also help make an impact in the lives of others without them even realizing it. Prayer for spiritual needs is just as, if not more, important than praying for the physical things in life. Anything physical is temporary, but our spirits are eternal. Praying for our spiritual growth can help us to become firm believers in our faith. Recently I have been praying for God to give me more opportunities to share the gospel. Within the week, God gave me what I was asking for—a conversation with a longtime friend that lasted for over three hours, and was filled with lots of challenging questions for me to answer. I experienced growth in that discussion from the things I did not know.

God answers prayers, and sometimes it's a no, and that is okay. Other times it's not now, but wait until later. God knows what is best for us in the end even if we don't realize it at the moment. Sometimes we don't always pray when we should either. It is similar to when we are stuck on our homework and decide to struggle instead of asking for help from your teacher or a parent. God will present challenges in our lives, and it's important that we go to Him first with all of our needs.

In the entirety of chapter 17, Jesus is praying to the Father. Jesus prays for Himself to be glorified for the glory of the Father, and for His disciples and for all believers. In verses 6–19 Jesus is praying for the disciples, but everything He prays for is spiritual. The one thing that Jesus emphasizes in His prayer is for the disciples' protection. In verses 11 and 15 Jesus prays for their protection because He will not be in the world any longer. In verse 12 Jesus says that He kept them safe, except the one who was “doomed to destruction.” In chapter 15 Jesus had told the disciples that they will face persecution in the world and has already talked to them about physical hardships they will face. With Jesus' addition in this passage of the one who was lost, it can be implied that he means spiritual protection. Jesus also prays for the disciples to have the joy within them that He has within Himself, which is a spiritual attribute and a fruit of the spirit.

Jesus prays that they will be filled with not just any joy but the Joy of Jesus. In verse 15 Jesus prays for the disciples to stay safe from the devil, who will spiritually attack them. Finally in verses 17–19 Jesus prays for their sanctification and for their walk with Christ. In this passage, Jesus brings the needs of the disciples before God so that He can help them with their walk. In a time when Jesus knew He was going to die for our sins on the cross soon, He didn't pray for their physical needs, but for spiritual needs— the needs that are eternal.

Open it

1. What is something that you needed help with but didn't talk to your parents about?

Daily Devotions

Day 1 — Today's Theme: In the Bible

Read John 17:6–19.

2. Who is Jesus praying for in this passage?
3. Where does everything that Jesus gave them come from?
4. What are some things that Jesus did for His disciples?
5. What things does Jesus pray for the disciples?

Day 2 — Today's Theme: Take Care

Read John 17:6–11.

Have you ever seen or heard of a story of some kid saying something like, “Do you know who my father is?” Have you ever noticed the entitlement that comes along with that kind of statement? Some people use their parents, family members, or friends' names to try to strike fear into others or get what they want. If you think about it, Jesus, not only being the Son of God who literally created everything, but also being God, would have the most power in that phrase. But in this passage, Jesus uses the Father's name to pray for His disciples.

In verse 11, Jesus asks for the Father to “protect them by the power of your name.” While Jesus will be leaving this world, the disciples will remain in the world. As Jesus said in John 7:33, He will be going to the One who sent Him, and Jesus will no longer be physically present with the disciples. Jesus had to leave for the Holy Spirit to be sent to the believers for spiritual guidance, transformation, and an abiding relationship with God. So Jesus prays for their protection, through the name of the Father. Jesus knows the power of the Father's name and what it invokes.

Have you ever taken a crumpled piece of paper or a dirty sock and shot it like a basketball into a garbage can or laundry basket and yelled “Kobe!”, with the hope that by invoking Kobe's name it will help your shot go in? Unlike calling on the name of Kobe, which really doesn't add any “magic” to our shot, calling on the name of the Father actually gives us power. Here Jesus uses the “power” of the Father's name to help protect His disciples from the world. He prays for the disciples' spiritual protection, from the world and from the devil. All that Jesus is asking the Father to do is to take care of the disciples since He will no longer be present to do so.

6. How does God take care of your spiritual needs? How have you seen God take care of others' spiritual needs?

7. Why can't we always tell that God is taking care of our needs?

Day 3 — Today's Theme: God's Plan

Read John 17:12.

In football if a team is up a few touchdowns, when they play defense they do something called a prevent defense. Prevent defenses always annoyed me because when it comes to football I am aggressive. The main concept of this defense is to bend but not break. Let plays happen so time runs off the clock and the game finishes faster. In theory, you let bad things happen for the outcome to be a positive one. As a Bears fan that hasn't always worked out, but when it is done right, it works. The opposing team wastes a bunch of time off of the clock, and either can't score in time, or the ball goes back to you, and you can take a knee and end the game. While it may be frustrating to watch your defense get burned, or give up 15 yards, in the end it was for the best.

In John 17:12 there is a line that says that Judas was "the one doomed to destruction so that scripture may be fulfilled." This phrase "doomed to destruction" tells us that no matter what, it was Judas' destiny to be the one to betray Jesus. Why was it destiny for this bad thing to happen? Why does God allow bad things to happen to begin with? There are plenty of answers to that question, like free will or it's the devil, but even the devil works under God's authority. Ultimately the answer is that it is all for God's glory. God works even through the bad times.

My parents divorced when I was in 2nd grade. I was too young to do anything, but old enough to remember it all. I didn't have it as bad as others, but it still affected my life heavily and the person I am today. When my parents did divorce, I used church as an escape from it all. Through my experience at church, I learned more and grew closer to Christ. I believe that if my parents had not gotten a divorce, I may not be a Christian today. It sounds bad to say, but I am thankful to God for what He has done in my life to get to where I am today. I couldn't see it at the moment, but throughout the good and especially the bad in my life, God used it all for His glory.

8. How have you seen God work during the bad times (past or present) in your life?

9. How has God used you to help others and show His glory through you during others' bad times?

Day 4 — Today's Theme: Wants and Needs

Read John 17:13–19.

I went to an outreach event where one of the speakers shared his testimony. He started off with a story about he and his friends in college eating at a sushi place. Pay \$25 and eat all the sushi you want, but if you don't finish, it's 25 cents per piece of sushi. They ate an insane amount of sushi, but the next day, they were still hungry. They had all the sushi they could eat the day before, but were still hungry the day after. The satisfaction they had experienced was temporary. He went on to talk about how he had everything he wanted during high school. He was popular, a star athlete, went to all of the parties and did all of the things that everyone else was doing, but he still felt empty. He only looked forward to the next high, or the next party, but those were only temporary. A friend he used to party with reached out to him and shared the gospel with him, and that eventually led to him giving his life to Christ and experiencing real and lasting satisfaction.

Any satisfaction we get from the world is temporary, no matter what it is. The only place that we can receive full satisfaction in life is through Jesus. We may want stuff from the world, but what we truly need comes from Christ and God above. It is important to remember where true satisfaction comes from, because while we may be in the world, it is important to remember that we are not of the world.

Jesus does not wish for us to take ourselves out of the world, but to instead go into the world to spread His love and His Word to all unbelievers. We will be tempted by what the world has to offer. It'll look satisfying but will pull us off the path Christ has laid out for us. It will be difficult at times, and Jesus knows it. If it was easy Jesus wouldn't have bothered praying about it. When things get difficult we need to lean on the Holy Spirit to help us stay on the path with Christ. Always remember that God will not always give us what we want, but He will always give us what we need.

10. In what ways does the world try to satisfy your needs? How do those solutions fall short and leave you empty?

11. What satisfaction does Jesus offer that the world does not?

12. How can you be an example to the world about the satisfaction that Jesus offers?