

John 17

Intercession

PREFACE

God's Word contains the answers to all of life's problems and needs. As we apply God's Word to our daily lives, the Holy Spirit strengthens us, our faith grows, and our lives are transformed.

But for many the bible is a complex book, to huge to tackle.

By selecting important chapters of the Bible (20 from the Old Testament, 20 from the New Testament) and focusing on them, I hope to encourage you to get into God's Word. To help accomplish this, I have prepared a visual memory aid for each key chapter. J The aids are purposely *weird* in order to increase retention. Each aid has three elements:

1. The *book* of the Bible
2. The *chapter*
3. The *theme* of the chapter

By studying the memory aid several times and focusing on it, you will recall the image and consequently the book, chapter and theme.

Remembering these key chapters will enrich your daily life. It will also help you to relate God's Word to others. As you write greeting cards or speak with people, you will be able to apply God's Word directly to their problems or needs.

At times, you will be unable to speak directly to a person. Send them a Key Chapter booklet! They are designed for sharing!

Each Key Chapter booklet is presented in the same format:

1. *Background* for the chapter
2. *Key verses* of the chapter
3. *Thoughts on* the theme of the chapter

Bible classes and small study groups will find the third section helpful for discussions. The *thoughts* will provide a variety of applications upon which to reflect.

God will not let his Word return void (Isaiah 55:11)!

He will bless you abundantly as you meditate on his Word (Psalm 119:48)!

He will enable you to be a blessing to others as you spread his Word (Genesis 12: 2-3)!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Paul R. Schroeder

Explanation of the Memory Aid

1. The BOOK of the Bible:
Think of a Tractor: *John Deere* = **JOHN**
2. The CHAPTER:
The *number* of people in the church = **CHAPTER 17**
3. The THEME:
Jesus' hand (nail print) "lifting up" the church to show his *intercession* =
INTERCESSION

JOHN 17: BACKGROUND

John was very close to Jesus and knew him well (John 21: 20, 24). John was present when Jesus went to Gethsemane to pray (Mark 14:33). He was present when Peter's mother-in-law was healed (Mark 1: 29-31). He was present at the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mark 5: 35-37). He was present on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:2).

John's gospel was written last, near the end of the first century. Already false teachings concerning Christ's deity had arisen. John wrote to refute strongly such false teachings and to give a first-hand, true account. His goal was that readers would be led to believe in the deity of Jesus (John 20:31). In every chapter the deity (as well as the humanity) of Christ is affirmed. John quotes five witnesses who declare the divinity of Jesus: John the Baptist (1:34); Nathanael (1:49); Peter (6:69); Martha (11:27); Thomas (20:28); and he himself makes the same confession (20:31). Under divine inspiration, John records for us the many events, teachings, and miracles in the life of Christ.

John also recorded (in chapter 17) the beautiful prayer of Jesus for his church. The longest recorded prayer has been called The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus because he intercedes to his Father on behalf of his people.

KEY VERSES OF JOHN 17

Verse 2

For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

In Jesus Christ *is* life eternal. He gives it away as a gift.

Verse 3

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

This is life eternal: Believing in Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Jesus have crossed over from death to life (John 5: 24).

Verse 5

And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Jesus is one with the Father. They existed together, with the Spirit, before the world began—three divine persons, yet one God.

Verse 8

For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

Again, the believer trusts that Christ has been sent from the Father.

Verse 9

I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

Jesus prays for us! He intercedes before the throne of the Father. He is our High Priest, speaking in our behalf.

Verses 11, 14-15, 21-23

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. 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.

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. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

[I pray] that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

As Christ prepares to ascend (return) to the Father, he prays for our protection since we still will be in the world. Strengthened by God's spirit, Christians will support and encourage each other. He intercedes for the unity of his flock. (See John 10:16).

Verse 13

I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

Christ desires joy for his people. The joy comes through what Jesus says, hi Word. (See Key Chapter booklet Philippians 4: Joy).

Verse 17

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

It's a simple fact: *God is truth*. God declares you holy and transforms your life by the Word.

Verses 18

As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

The Great Commission in its simplest form.

Verse 20

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.

God's Spirit uses the proclaimed Word to convert people and bring about faith and obedience. (See Romans 16:26).

Verse 24

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

Jesus longs for us to be in heaven with Him. (See Key Chapter booklet *John 14: Heaven*). The verse also refers to the eternalness (deity) of Jesus.

Verse 26

I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

God's love for us is known through the Word. Through that Word Jesus gives himself to be present in our lives. (See Colossians 3:16). His presence in our lives through the indwelling Word produces love for God and for all.

THOUGHTS ON INTERCESSION

Day 1

Jesus knew we would have problems in this world. He acknowledges that in his final words before his prayer (John 16:33). But notice that even then he ends with a Gospel word of comfort and hope.

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John 15, which describes Jesus as the vine and believers as the branches, also focuses on the unity Christ desires for his people.

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The three persons in the Trinity and their *unity as one* God is indeed a mystery beyond all human comprehension. Yet, all three are involved in bringing us to faith in the one God. We know Christ and the Father only through the Word and the gift of faith from the Spirit. God's gift of his Son, and the faith to believe in him, both come from God.

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In Christ, we (his church) are to be one in thought, purpose, will, and action (Philippians 2:5).

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The Holy Christian church is *one*—accomplished only through Jesus Christ, who makes us brothers and sisters thorough faith in him. The earthly form of the church has been sadly splintered and divided. I sometimes wonder, because of our sin, whether it will ever be possible to have a physically united church on earth. I think not. How unfortunate. The one church exists—it's just invisible to the eye. The one, true church of Jesus is all who believe in him. Christ prayed for Christian unity so that the world would believe that the Father had sent him (John 17: 20-21).

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Christ's prayer was fulfilled by his own suffering, death, and resurrection. The church is one. We are his body. (See Ephesians 4: 3-6, 1 Corinthians 12: 12-13). We demonstrate our oneness by showing love to one another (John 13: 34-35).

Day 2

An old couplet poses a thoughtful question about our individual responsibility in presenting the “image” of the church to the world: What sort of church would my church be if every member were just like me?

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Six times in his prayer Jesus refers to his being sent by his Father. We hear that theme throughout John’s gospel. It is mentioned 40 more times. Salvation is God’s gift to us.

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John 17:5 speaks of the eternal preexistence of Christ. (See John 1: 1-2; Colossians 1: 15-18).

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In his prayer, Jesus asks the Father to give to those who believe in him

- Protection from evil (vv. 11,15);
- Unity (vv.11, 21-23);
- Joy (v. 13);
- Sanctification—being set apart for God’s work (vv. 17-19);
- Reunion with Christ, to see his glory (v. 24)

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John 17:10 refers to the divinity of Jesus. He and Father are one. Any believer could say, “All I have is yours”; but on God could say, “All you have mine.”

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The one doomed to destruction was Judas (see Acts 1: 16-20). God foreknew that Judas in his freedom would betray Jesus and also hang himself.

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The book of Acts tells us about the early history of the church formed at Pentecost. Notice both the fact and the manner in which the New Testament church emphasized and displayed its unity (Acts 1:14; 2:1, 46; 4:24, 32; 5:12).

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When a congregation is caught up in strife and division, not much good will be accomplished to God’s glory. What James says in James 3:16 is true: *For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.*

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Day 3

To be sanctified is to be made holy. When the Holy Spirit used the Word of God to produce our faith, he set us apart to do God's work and to give him glory. True, we are still in this world, but not of it (John 17:16).

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Unbelievers do not know God because they do not believe in Jesus. Believers know God because they trust in Jesus as God's Son, sent for their salvation. The ability to believe in Jesus is God's gift of faith. He has opened our eyes to see. (See Key Chapter booklet *Romans 8: Salvation*).

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To be set apart from the world (sanctified) does not mean to isolate ourselves from people forever. That would make the Great Commission impossible.

Yet, we all have need to get away at times. Christ himself went off for periods of prayer and refreshment. I have visited many monasteries, both here in the United States and abroad. Some monasteries I have visited have been extremely remote, such as Mar Saba and St. George in Israel. I have also had the privilege of seeing St. Katherine's at the foot of Mount Sinai. I wrote sections of this booklet while on retreats at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, MN.

While I enjoy the privacy, quiet, prayer, discipline, and fellowship of believers at monasteries, I am unable to accept seclusion as a way of life. People cannot believe if they do not hear the Word, and they cannot hear if someone does not tell them (Romans 10:14).

It is necessary to come down from the mountain and go back to the mission of reaching the world (Luke 9: 28-36). We have the example of Jesus and his disciples. After their periods of seclusion and prayer, they returned to ministry and witness to people.

As Billy Graham pointed out, mountains are for inspiration, but fruit is grown in the valley.

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Day 4

Those who are sanctified by Christ will be glorified with Christ. Sinners washed clean in his blood will share his glory eternally. (See Key Chapter booklet *John 14: Heaven*)

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Christ doesn't pray for our speedy death. There is work for us to accomplish in the spreading of the Gospel to the world. That's the primary reason for us to remain on earth (John 17:18).

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Christ knew why he had been sent to earth (John 17:18);

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The very essence of heaven is to be with Jesus. His glory will fill the new heavens and earth (Revelation 21:23). The angels cannot behold his glory without covering their faces (Isaiah 6:2).

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Ignorance of God is the darkness that engulfs the world. Jesus is the light; he is the way to God (John 14: 1-7; 17:3).

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It's positively amazing! The Father loves us as he loves his Son. That is grace beyond comprehension (John 17:23).

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In the prayer Christ prays for

- Himself (vv. 1-5);
- His disciples (vv. 6-19);
- All believers (vv. 20-26).

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Jesus was obedient to his Father even unto death. Jesus would return to the fullness of God's glory as he rose from the dead, ascended, and once again took his place at the right hand of the Father (John 17: 4-5; 1 Peter 3:22). Our faith and obedience gives glory to God (2 John 6).

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This prayer was the last occasion of Jesus' dialog with his disciples before he faced his suffering and death. There is no note of personal fear or despair. His concern was for his disciples.

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Day 5

Christ is our advocate. He intercedes for us (Romans 8: 33-34).

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Romans 12: 1-2: Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

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Disharmony in the church disfigures the body, the body of Christ.

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1 Peter 2: 9-10: but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

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Hebrews 3:1: Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.

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Hebrews 10: 19-23: Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

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1 Timothy 2:1: I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.

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