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# Sunday School Lesson

TOPIC:

## “Jesus Prays for His Followers”

John 17:6-21

**VERSE DISCOVERY: John 17:6-21 (KJV, Public Domain)**

### Prepare

- Jesus prayed in depth for His followers, including you and me. He connected with heaven to personally cover every believer with specific requests that would help them and strengthen them for the mission they had to complete while they are still in this world.

Jesus was preparing for His exit from this natural world. Everything He had to accomplish on the earth was coming to an end with the cross and the grave before Him. What would become of these men who gave up all to follow Him, and for those who would follow later? They would still be in the world working the works of the ministry long after He departed, and they needed prayer.

- Ask, *If you could talk to Jesus right now, face to face, what would you ask Him to pray for?* Jot down ideas on the board. Some prayers may be general, and some may be very specific, but every concern of every believer is important to Jesus. Even if God doesn't answer each prayer the way we want, take comfort in that fact that Jesus personally prayed for and He sits in heaven still interceding on your behalf (Romans 8:34).
- As a lead into this lesson, if you can, find an old land line phone for demonstration purposes. Today, we're so used to seeing and using everything cellular and wireless that we forget or don't know about these. These phones are connected by wires, that transmit through other wires, that travel down many lengths of even more wires, until it arrives at its destination to make a phone call. (Doing an internet search on phone history and the specifics that don't include wires could prove helpful and fun).

If you don't have one of these (landline phone) in your house, your parents or others can probably describe the ones they had. You couldn't walk around freely in your home or outside with one of these. You had to stay where the connection was in order to talk to other people. When Jesus prayed for His disciples and for us, He had an automatic connection with the Heavenly Father that wasn't dependent on wires or anything else to get His prayer through. Because of His relationship with the Father, He knew He heard Him.

We have a relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ. Jesus prayed while here on earth for everyone who believes, and as stated above, He is still interceding for us today. Let's learn more about Jesus' prayer by getting into the lesson.



## Explore – Full Lesson Available on pages 5-13

Although this lesson has many verses to cover, I have broken it up into two major themes: “They Have Believed,” and “I Pray for Them.” Make no mistake, dear friends, trials and tribulations will come. Hard times and adversity will rear its ugly head at one point or another in life. But knowing that we are covered in a special way does something wonderful on the inside. A sense of peace and calm begin to outshine any raging storm or storm of life that tries to capsizize your faith and send you in a frenzy, if you fall into these two categories.

To be a part of God’s family amongst those who believe, and to have the Lord Jesus Christ mention you specifically in prayer – oh, the feeling is unreal. When He prayed, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word,” He was specifically mentioning you, and He was specifically mentioning me.

He has seen faith working in your life when you answered the call of His invitation to accept Him as Savior. He has seen that you, like the original disciples, have believed that He is the one and only true Son of the Living God. Therefore, He prays.

No matter what you are facing, be encouraged that your Savior, who loves you so much, has prayed for you and continues to petition heaven in benefit of you. You are not left alone in this world. You are not left to drift through life wondering if you matter to anyone. You mattered to Jesus then, and you still matter to Him today.

## Activities

- Knowing that Jesus included future believers (you and me) in His prayer for His disciples, how does that make you feel? How does it encourage you to cover others in intercessory prayer as well? Use the **Adult Journal Page** to regard your thoughts. Children can write a prayer for someone they would like to intercede for in prayer using the **Kid’s Journal Page**.
- Younger students can draw a picture of Jesus praying for His followers in the **Draw the Scene** section found on site. Don’t forget to write some of the words Jesus prayed in the available blank space.
- Younger students can put together a **Cup/Tin Can and String Phone**. Do an internet search for specifics of how to create and its working of one of these “phones” for students to make. Explain, we use phones and other devices to connect and communicate with one another but isn’t it wonderful that all Jesus had to do was use His voice to pray a special prayer to the Heavenly Father for us. Allow students to decorate their phone as they like. You can even include the memory verse from the lesson in the design.



- Alternate activity sheets such as **Word Search, Crossword, and more** can be found on site for those who just want to work with printed materials.

## Review

- Commit to memory the base verse from the lesson: ***“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine,” John 17:9***
- Fill out the review sheet provided (page 14)

## Life

Throughout this coming week, keep the bold truth that you have been prayed for by Jesus Himself before you. Every time a situation or adverse circumstance arises, remind yourself that who you are in Christ and that He has covered you personally in prayer, and is still interceding on your behalf. Take a proactive approach in building your faith in this area by posting with sticky notes or index cards reminders around your home and/or space that you have been prayed for by Jesus Christ.

Do you have a Christian friend who is experiencing a down moment in life? Make them a homemade note card reminding them too that Jesus has covered them in prayer as well.



TOPIC:

## “Jesus Prays for His Followers”

John 17:6-21

### VERSE DISCOVERY: John 17:6-21 (KJV, Public Domain)

*Jesus prayed for His followers. That’s a statement all by itself. The power of prayer is not just for an individual but to also share and to beseech God on behalf of others.*

*When Jesus prayed for His disciples it showed a personal love that He possessed for them that worked so closely with Him and followed Him these three years during His public ministry. It shows the real love and concern the Savior of the world had/has for His followers. In His prayer, He poured out His plea for protection and help that the work is not hindered, and His disciples would be able to stand strong.*

*Jesus’ prayer for His disciples has become one of the most loved and quoted prayers in the Bible. Before His death, He could think of no better way to spend His time than to cover His people in prayer.*

### “THEY HAVE BELIEVED”

**John 17:6-8 “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.”**

Going up to verse one of this same chapter, I see the most amazing picture: “Jesus... lifted up his eyes to heaven.” There stands one of the most beautiful moments in time where we are allowed to see into the depths of Jesus’ prayer. The King of all of creation is bowed in humility, but with assurance of hope, focuses heaven’s attention on His people.

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**“I have manifest thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest me.”** Jesus showed them, God. During His ministry, through His words and His deeds, He showed them, God, as they had never seen or experienced before. At one point, Jesus explained, “All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you,” (John 15:15). He made God known to them.

He showed them the love of God when He healed their sicknesses and diseases and looked on them with compassion because they were as sheep with no shepherd (Matthew 9:35-38). He showed the mercy of God when He forgave the woman who was caught in adultery and prevented her life from being taken (John 8:1-11). He showed the peace of God when He stilled the raging storm (Matthew 8:23-27). He showed the caring nature of God by raising the widow of Nain’s only son from the dead (Luke 7:11-17). He showed the holiness of God by driving out the moneychangers from the Temple (Matthew 21:12 and John 2:15). He showed the authority of God by driving out demons and putting the devil in his place (Matthew 4:1-11; Matthew 8:31; Matthew 16:23; Matthew 17:14-18). **“I have manifest thy name unto the men which thou gavest me.”** Jesus showed them what the name of God was all about by showing them what the nature and character of God were all about.

These men who experienced these wonderful things with Jesus; whom God gave to Jesus, were taught the word and **“have kept thy word.”** In prayer, Jesus testified to the Father on the faithfulness of His followers. They hold on to His teachings and treasure and cleave to what has been passed down to them through Jesus. The psalmist said, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee,” (Psalm 119:11). They **“kept thy word!”**

**“Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.”** The disciples believed with all assurance that everything Jesus has done and taught has been directly related in His relationship to His Father. At one point during His ministry Jesus said, “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak,” (John 12:49; see also John 5:19 & 7:16) and the disciples have the understanding of this. “Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein,” (Hosea 14:9). What Jesus taught them **“they have received”** because they **“have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.”**

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What Jesus lived out before them, and what they heard and received through all of His teachings caused a chain reaction of belief to stir in their souls. They could've done as many others who witnessed His works and sat under His words, which is walk away. Treating Christ like a spectator sport or just the newest thing to hear about, and then move on back to your normal life and routine.

No, not these faithful followers. They took in everything and couldn't help but to believe that Jesus was sent by none other than the Father from above. They held on to that belief with everything in them (which we will really see play out in the book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament story).

One day, as Jesus was teaching some pretty hard sayings that confused and offended some, many stopped following Him that day and walked away. Jesus asked His twelve that were with Him, "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:67). In response to that question, Peter spoke up for these followers of Christ and said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And *we believe* and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God," (John 6:68-69; emphasis mine). They believed what He taught. They believed what He lived. And yes, they believed that He was sent from the Father because Peter pointedly stated they were "sure" that He was the Christ, the Son of God. Although one would betray Him (John 6:70-71), the rest lived their life in faith and belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Therefore, He prays a special prayer for them.

### "I PRAY FOR THEM"

**John 17:9-12 "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee, Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled."**

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**“I pray for them: I pray not for the world.”** Make no mistake, God loves the entire world: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” (John 3:16). But here, Jesus’ prayer focused specifically on His followers. They are special people with a special mission: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,” (1 Peter 2:9), and they needed the Lord to intercede in prayer on their behalf.

Intercession is going to God on behalf of someone else. These men would be responsible for carrying the life-saving gospel message to the world. Some may not receive it as they did. As a matter of fact, Jesus once told them, “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake,” (Matthew 24:9). The mission would not be easy, and they needed prayer. Therefore, Jesus interceded!

**“I am glorified in them.”** While Jesus had some devoted followers who loved and respected Him, there were many who did not. Often Jesus was verbally attacked and put down by the leaders and those who couldn’t understand His mission and ministry. But these men, who have adhered to and kept the word; who latched onto and accepted Him as Teacher and everything, are living in light of what has been revealed to them, and through them Jesus is **“glorified.”** Honor is brought to Him through their life and ministry in the kingdom of God.

If a parent is called into a conference regarding their child, there can be a moment of hesitation. Not knowing what the conference will bring forth the parent will cautiously enter in. Seated in front of the teacher you begin to hear stories of achievements and accomplishments; tales of good reports and it absolutely blows your mind. You feel exceptional and elated as a parent because of the good traits and nature exhibited; because of the good works that are being exposed in your child. Jesus once said, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples,” (John 15:8). In the same way, that child’s actions cause the parents to feel honored and lifted, when we follow Christ with all diligence, we bring glory and honor to His name.

**“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world.”** By the time we reach the second verse of the next chapter in the book of John, Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane and the process of the betrayal of Judas is underway. The horrific events that

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would culminate in our ultimate salvation get underway, and physically, Jesus, for a time, is taken from this world, leaving these men whom He's praying for behind.

Jesus prays, **"I come to thee, Holy Father, keep them through thine own name."** They needed help. They needed help from heaven. They needed guidance. They needed protection. They needed to be kept or preserved. The world is harsh, especially against Jesus and His followers. John 15:18 states, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." They needed help to maintain a steady course forward; to get through it all; therefore, He called on the **"Holy Father"** to help **"keep"** them.

**"That they may be one, as we are."** Adversity and trials people face tend to bring in discord and division. Jesus once taught, "If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand," (Mark 3:25). Though Jesus taught this against the enemy, the same principle applies in every area of life. Division of any kind makes the foundation weak, and in turn, the building will come crumbling down.

Jesus prayed for oneness for His followers. Unity mattered to Jesus during His earthly ministry: "For he that is not against us is on our part," (Mark 9:40); and it matters as the Church continues: Paul prayed, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Jesus knew that if His disciples would ban together as one, they could impact the world in a positive way, leading many to believe in Him. Vice versa, if divisions and contentions prevailed it would not work to draw people to Himself, to His kingdom message; rather, it would repel.

Even in the Old Testament, David recognized the importance of unity among the brethren. He wrote, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore," (Psalm 133).

This kind of unity that Jesus is praying for can only be accomplished on a spiritual level; one that bonds each disciple together through the Spirit.

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Twice in verse 12 Jesus states that He has **“kept”** them. As a careful Shepherd of His flock, He states, **“None of them is lost.”** While with them He tended His sheep; He cared for them and protected them against the wolves and enemies that sought to ravenously destroy His work in these tender lives.

All **“but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.”** All points of ministry that He had to fulfill, according to prophecy or **“scripture,”** had to be completed; even the parts that would lead to His death. This included the one who traveled with Him in His band, **“the son of perdition,”** His betrayer. “The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born,” (Mark 14:21).

**John 17:13-16 “And now come I to thee: and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”**

**“That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”** In a few hours, the world of the disciples would change dramatically. Their friend, their Teacher, their Savior would be put in chains and arrested, and they the disciples would be scattered leaving Him alone to face His accusers.

Where would the joy be when all seems lost? When they’re huddled together behind closed doors in fear, would there ever be a time of rejoicing again? Jesus prepped them prior to this and let them know, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full,” (John 15:11).

The cross and the process of dying on the cross were ugly, but the results that would come from the cross were beautiful and brought joy to the heart of our Savior. That’s why the Bible encourages us by saying, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross...” (Hebrews 12:2). So, He prayed that His disciples would **“have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”**

The ministry would be rough at times, but we see Jesus’ prayer fulfilled after the apostles received a beating from the Sanhedrin. The Bible tells us, “They departed from the presence

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of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name,” (Acts 5:41). They carried the joy of Jesus with them through the hardship of the ministry.

**“The world hated them.”** Jesus knew the opposition they would feel because he endured the same. If the Teacher is attacked, the students will be attacked as well, (compare Matthew 10:24-25).

In John 15:19 Jesus stated, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

There are many animals in the animal kingdom that are very territorial. If you don’t look like them, act like them, or smell like them, they don’t want you around and you are not accepted into their herd, clan, family, or what have you.

This is true of the world’s system. In Christ we are made new and not to be conformed to the world (see Romans 12:1-2). We stand out from the world’s system as disciples of Christ and those of the world do not like that.

Jesus prayed, **“Keep them from evil.”** Don’t take them **“out of the world;”** but keep them! Their message is lifesaving. Their lives are testimonies. Keep them!

**John 17:17-19 “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”**

**“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”** Previously, Jesus taught, “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you,” (John 15:3). That word **“sanctify”** is akin to “holy” which means to be separated or set apart. The psalmist asked, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” (Psalm 119:9a). His own answer was, “By taking heed thereto according to thy word,” (Psalm 119:9b). Following God’s word will help to keep you.

**“I have sent them into the world.”** At other points of time in His ministry, Jesus sent the disciples out on mission trips, so to speak. He sent them to heal, set free, and preach the kingdom of heaven (see Mark 6:7; Matthew 10:1 and Luke 10:1). Before His ascension, He will again instruct them regarding The Great Commission (see Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15). Their lives are not to be filled with mindless idleness. They are men on a mission. As

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the Father has sent the Son to complete His mission on earth, so the Son sends His followers to do the same.

**“For their sakes I sanctify myself.”** One day when Jesus came to Nazareth He entered the synagogue and began reading from the book of Isaiah where it said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,” (Luke 4:18). After reading some more He closed the book and proclaimed, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears,” (Luke 4:21).

Jesus’ purpose has always been to go to the cross and lay down His life. He didn’t need to be cleansed from sin, but He was set apart with a mission to redeem mankind from their sins; therefore, He said, **“I sanctify myself.”**

Prior to this Jesus let it be known regarding His life, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father,” (John 10:18). He was purposely set apart for this and He declared, **“I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”**

Jesus set Himself apart as the ultimate sacrifice for His disciples and for us, **“that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”**

**John 17:20-21 “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”**

Jesus’ prayer was not just laden with concern and intercession for His current disciples, but for all of us who have come to Christ throughout the generations that followed. Jesus prayed for each and every one of us also. How about that? Jesus prayed for you, and Jesus prayed for me. We are not only covered under His blood, but we have been blanketed by His prayers. How awesome is that!

His prayer, at this point, once again focused on unity, **“That they all may be one.”** Paul made this plea, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the

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vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, *forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, On God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all,*” (Ephesians 4:1-6, emphasis mine).

Being “**one**” is a powerful number! Oneness in the body of Christ can impact the world like nothing else can and turn this place upside down “**that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.**”

Jesus prayed for His disciples and Jesus prayed for you, too. We who have believed are covered by the prayers of Christ that we might go out into the world and help others believe also.

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