



## HIGHLIGHT: John 17:20-26

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<sup>20</sup>I pray not only for these,  
but also for those who believe in Me  
through their message.  
<sup>21</sup>May they all be one,  
as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You.  
May they also be one in Us,  
so the world may believe You sent Me.  
<sup>22</sup>I have given them the glory You have given Me.  
May they be one as We are one.  
<sup>23</sup>I am in them and You are in Me.  
May they be made completely one,  
so the world may know You have sent Me  
and have loved them as You have loved Me.  
<sup>24</sup>Father, I desire those You have given Me  
to be with Me where I am.  
Then they will see My glory,  
which You have given Me  
because You loved Me before the world's foundation.  
<sup>25</sup>Righteous Father!  
The world has not known You.  
However, I have known You,  
and these have known that You sent Me.  
<sup>26</sup>I made Your name known to them  
and will make it known,  
so the love You have loved Me with  
may be in them and I may be in them.



## EXPLAIN

**Leaders: Feel free to use any of the “Explain” materials to guide discussion as it is needed or to expound on a certain area of the text as it comes up during your Life Group time, but the purpose of this section is to deepen your own personal understanding of the Word. Your members have access to all of this material as well.**

The Altar of Incense was the last element of the Tabernacle before the veil to the Holy Place. Twice a day, after tending the wicks and oil on the holy lamps, the attending priest would burn a mixture of three rich and rare spices mixed with frankincense on the altar, producing a pleasing aroma that would fill the Holy Place just beside it.

The incense is a pleasing aroma to us, but it represents what is a pleasing aroma to God: prayer. As we study it, we remember the One who is constantly interceding on our behalf: Jesus Christ. In today’s passage, we see an example of Jesus’ intercession for us.

- v.20 It is amazing to consider that we 21st century believers are included in this prayer prayed by the Son of God. Because we are beneficiaries of the faithfulness of Jesus’ core disciples, the words in 17:20-26 are referring directly to us. It is one of the few instances in Scripture when something was intended directly and intentionally for us, individually.
- v.21 “As you [...] are in me and I am in you” tells us what kind of unity Jesus is referring to—a unity in which the members do not lose their identity. Being unified does not mean being *uniform*. No two people, or groups of people, may look the same, but they will each be working in their own way toward the same end: so the world may believe the Gospel of Jesus.
- v.22 Follow what Jesus is saying here: the glory that the Father gave Him, He is giving to us. This glory is the very presence of God—He once dwelled in a Tabernacle, then a Temple, then in Jesus, and finally in the hearts of those who believe. It is this glory that binds us together. To be one with God is to be one with all others who call Him Father. His glory and presence makes all the difference.
- v.24 In verse 24, Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms what His will is: that we be with Him where He is so that we may see His glory. As we work together to be unified for the cause of Christ, it is Christ’s desire for us that we see His majesty. Imagine what this would do to a group of believers: they band together for His sake, and get a glimpse of the kind of glory He was given by God. This will make the believers focus on Him even more, making the small things that divide them fade away as they marvel at the glory of their King.
- v.26 This verse is entirely in line with Jesus’ purpose on earth. In the next chapter, Jesus tells Pilate in no uncertain terms what the reason for His coming to Earth was: “To testify to the Truth” (18:37). His ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection were all parts of what His purpose was: He revealed the Father and administered the Father’s plan for those who are called by His name.



## APPLY

*Your Leader Guide will have material that the member guides do not have. The **bolded material** is what the people in your group will have, the other material is only for you to help guide discussion.*

*This guide can be as strict a script or as general a resource as the leader needs it to be.*

1. **What stuck out to you or challenged you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?**
2. **When is it easy to work together with someone? When is it difficult? When was a time you experienced or witnessed unity—different people operating together for a common goal?**

Think about team sports or musical groups. These are made up of people with individual roles, talents, and ideas, but they all share something in common: the outcome of their work. A team wants to work together to win a game; a musical group plays their various instruments to make a song. We see the same thing in ways from people working on projects together to simply navigating traffic at rush hour. Unity does not mean uniformity; it means different people coming together for the same goal.

3. **Take a moment and consider that Jesus was praying for you in John 17:20-26. How does this make you feel? According to this passage, what did He want from those who believe in Him? How do you think that understanding God's glory helps us be unified?**

The Author of life prayed for you before He sacrificed Himself for you. This is both humbling and inspiring—it refocuses our efforts and trains our eyes on Christ. As we look to Him, both individually and as a body of believers, we find that the things that separate us pale in comparison to the One that brings us together.

4. **What can make being unified with other believers difficult? If the differences are in areas like doctrine, how do we know when to put the differences aside? How does focusing on Christ help us discern the proper way to work together for the Gospel?**

The things that sometimes separate us could be as minor as personality differences or more significant things like doctrinal disagreements. As we approach reconciling differences and working together, we should be praying for discernment so that we know how and when to put our differences aside and work for the glory of our King and the spread of His Gospel. The many denominations of Christian churches aren't bad in themselves, so long as the "main things" are kept the "main things."

If your group moves in this direction, it may be worthwhile to discuss what the "main things" of biblical Christianity are.

5. **How does knowing Jesus' will for His followers—that we all be one—affect how you treat those around you? How does it inspire you to share the Gospel? How does it affect how you interact with people you might disagree with?**



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## RESPOND

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Challenge your group to answer:

- **What is one relationship in your life that will benefit from Christ's prayer for you—that those who believe in Him should be one? How can you pursue unity with those around you for the sake of Christ?**

Encourage one another through email, text messages, or coffee dates throughout the week to build up and encourage each other.

