

# Jesus Prays for His People

5 Personal Prayer Requests  
from the Son of God

John 17:1-19

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# Introduction

How can you be sure that Christ cares for you? The Bible says that Jesus died on the cross for your sins. But how can you be sure that he actually cares about your life right now?

What we pray for shows what we care for. To say it another way: Our prayers reveal our cares. Sadly, I pray the most when I'm in trouble. Or when I'm in danger. Or when I'm facing something scary. We tend to draw near to God when life gets dark.

## Context

John 17:1-19 shows that Jesus also drew near to God before his darkest hour. You'll see that he prays for himself, but he also prays for his disciples. Even in his prayers he looked to the interest of others.

Our passage today is one of the most intimate and revealing stories in the entire Bible. We get a glimpse into the relationship that Jesus has with God the Father and what weighs down on his heart during the final moments of his life. It is Christ's personal prayer before his crucifixion.

## Sermon Preview

We're going to see five personal prayer requests from the Son of God. Not only will they teach us about how we are to pray, but they will tell us about how we are to live the way that God wants us to live.

Christ prays for his glory, but also for your good. These prayer requests are related to each other. I hope to help you see and feel that in his darkest hour — Christ had his heart on you.





# 1. Glorification

Jesus first prays for his glorification.

*When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “**Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.***

*“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. **All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.** (John 17:1-10)*

Glory refers to God’s splendor. It is the radiance of his holiness. It is his grandeur and majesty and what moves us to worship God. Jesus prays for glorification to go two ways. He first prays for his own glorification, and then he prays for the glorification of *God the Father*. Jesus says that he had this glory with God even before the world existed, and all who belong to God also belong to Jesus. God shares his glory with no one, so here we see Jesus making himself equal with God. Jesus is the Son of God. Since Jesus is God, it is not *wrong* for him to pray for his own glory — it is *right*. It would be *wrong* for God *not* to be glorified. So it is not prideful for Christ to claim the glory that belongs to him. It is fitting and deserved.

How did Jesus glorify God? He says he glorified God on earth by having accomplished the work that God gave him to do. This work was to manifest God’s name to God’s people. Jesus was to reveal God’s person and character. This was all done throughout his life and ministry. He taught that true, abundant, eternal life is to have a personal, intimate relationship with the Father through the Son. And Jesus says that now the *hour* has come. The hour refers to God’s sovereign timetable of sending Christ to the cross. Jesus is ready to suffer in perfect obedience for the sins of God’s people. The

cross is the climax of Christ's life. It is the completion of his life's work. His resurrection boldly reveals his glory and marks the beginning of our new life in Christ. The glory of God is Jesus Christ on the cross.

Is the glory of God the goal of your life? The way that Jesus glorified God was by doing the work that God gave him. While you must discern God's unique calling in your life, there is still work that all Christians are responsible to do. We are to love our neighbors. We are to care for the widows and orphans, the weak and the helpless. We are to evangelize. It's easy for us to get caught up in our own personal agendas and goals while forgetting about God's purposes and kingdom. One practical way to help make the glory of God the goal of your life is to *dedicate* everything that you do to God. Let's pretend you have an upcoming test at school. You can dedicate that test to God. You can study well for it because it's been dedicated to God. You can take the test in faith and trust him with the outcome. If you do well, you can thank God. If you do poorly, you can rest knowing that you gave him your best. And when others ask how you did, you can say you did well and that you thank God. Or you can say you didn't do so well but it's okay and you'll trust God to keep taking care of you. This simple act of *dedicating* what you do to God can help with making his glory the goal of your life. It's focusing your life for the fame of his name.

*To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, **so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.***  
(2 Thessalonians 1:11-12)

In this cross-reference, the name of Jesus means his reputation and his renown. It's like his glory. And God's glory is all-encompassing. As we continue to look at Christ's prayer requests, keep in mind that all of these prayer requests have the goal of his glory in mind. Christ prays for us not because we are so great but because his praying for us gives him praise. When we live out our lives, we glorify God as his prayers for us are answered. The rest of his prayer requests all serve to give him glory.



## 2. Preservation

Jesus' second prayer request is for the preservation of his people.

*And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, **keep them in your name**, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, **I kept them in your name**, which you have given me. **I have guarded them**, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*

*But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.** (John 17:11-15)*

Jesus uses the words keep, kept, and guarded. He speaks of none of his disciples being lost except for Judas as it was prophesied in Scripture. This is a prayer for spiritual protection so that they will not forsake their faith. Notice how Jesus specifically says what he does *not* ask for. He does *not* ask that God take his followers out of the world. Jesus means for his disciples to continue his ministry on earth. Christ means for us to continue waging spiritual warfare against Satan (Barclay). We are to remain in the world and bear witness to Christ (Barclay). This is where we get the true idea that Christians are in the world but not of the world. You are to be salt and light in this decaying and darkened world. Christ prays to keep you from committing evil and for his eternal kingdom. He does *not* pray that you will be kept from danger or even from death in this life. The point is perseverance. Christ intends that your faith will be kept intact.

Have you experienced trials or suffering in this life? It is important to understand early on that Jesus does not purpose to take you out of every test and difficult situation. There will be many difficult days ahead. But I want to give encouragement today to those who are truly and wholeheartedly committed to Christ: God wants you to know that he is sovereign over every circumstance – he is in total control – and he uses tests and trials for your good and for his glory. While you may not see or understand how or why your lives go the way they do, you are to trust your Heavenly Father who loves you and keeps you.

*Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, **To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:** May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. (Jude 1-2)*





If you are called, you will be *kept*. No matter what happens, and even when your heart hurts — if you are *called*, you will be *kept*. Come and trust the Son of God, the Prince of Peace, and our Good Shepherd.

### 3. Unification

Jesus' third prayer request is for unification. It's for the unity of his people.

*And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, **that they may be one, even as we are one.** (John 17:11-12)*

The goal of our preservation is unity. It's a unity that reflects the unity of the Holy Trinity. It's the unity of a common mind and purpose, an unqualified mutual love, and a sustained comprehensive togetherness in mission (ESVSB). It's a relational unity that binds believers together with each other and to the Lord (ESVSB). Another way to phrase this is that through *Christ*, we find true unifying *community*.

Where can you commit to find better community and experience greater unity in the church? Come out to Sunday School and Friday night fellowship. Share in your small groups. Join a service ministry at church. Maybe you're busy with school or clubs or activities outside of church. Maybe you prioritize your school friends more than your church friends. I dare you to make your biggest investments in belonging to the church. Unity in Christ is stronger than any shared sport. Unity in Christ is better than any marching band, colorguard, or orchestra. Unity in Christ is more true than your trusted friends and family. This call to a unified community is a lifesaver for those who are adrift in a sea of loneliness. It is a call to turn off the spotlight of exclusivity and competition in the church for the sake of unity in Christ. It is a call to come back together. You cannot be passive about this. It is not enough to just show up and leave. You need to share your life with others. Whether preaching or teaching, singing or praying, speaking or serving — active participation in the church must be intentional. Come to church ready to both give and receive. In Christ, we belong to each other and to God.

*so we, though many, are **one body in Christ**, and individually **members one of another.** (Romans 12:5)*

If you are a believer, this is where you belong. You will always have a place here, a community, and a home. The Church is not fake or flimsy. It stands on the solid rock of Christ. Unity in Jesus is more real than anything in this world.



## 4. Jubilation

Jesus' fourth prayer request is for jubilation. It's a prayer request for the joy of Jesus to be fulfilled in his followers. You can think of jubilation in the sense that it's a joy to share amongst the saints.

*But now I am coming to you, **and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.** I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. (John 17:13-15)*

Jesus is going to be with God the Father, but he does not want his followers to be depressed. He wants them to have the joy of the Lord. It's a joy that believers get to share with Christ. It's a prayer for jubilation to be spread across all Christians. Christ's keeping us is not simply to accumulate more followers and numbers, but for the actual happiness of the individual people united together in Jesus.

If you look closely, you'll see that the joy comes from what Christ *speaks* in the world. Joy in Jesus comes from his *words*. His words are recorded in the Bible, and what he is teaching us is the truth about who he is. The whole point of the book of John is so that you would believe that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). We learned that we are to be united, and this point actually clarifies and furthers that we are to be united by Christ's blood but also by his *Book*. Christians have always been committed to *teaching* and to *fellowship* (Acts 2:42). Jesus speaks directly through his word for our joy. He said this earlier, back in John 15:

***These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:11)***

When you come to church, is your joy truly anchored in Christ's blood and the Bible? Or have you let other activities replace his home in your heart? While services and programs are great at keeping us connected, true togetherness is found in the Son of God and Scripture. We love the Lamb and his laws. Worship leaders, do you care more about God being glorified or about you yourself sounding great and making good music? For those going on short-term missions, do you care more about sharing the good news or about having fun and hanging out with your friends? For those in Speaker's Tournament, do you care more about the truth you are sharing or about winning the competition and writing something compelling? In these examples, selfishness is stealing the joy that belongs in Christ. Humble yourself by sitting under the preaching and teaching





of God's Word. Go out of your way to serve and put the needs of others above your own agendas. Confess your sins and share more of your life in small groups. Get yourself out of the walls of the church and seek to win others for Christ in the world. You must decrease, and Christ must increase. God will restore to you the joy of his salvation, and uphold you with a willing spirit (Psalm 51:12).

## 5. Sanctification

While God wants us to be happy — he also wants us to be holy. In the mind of God, these two are inseparable. Deep *happiness* comes from deep *holiness*. Christ's fifth and final prayer request is for his followers' sanctification. Sanctification means to be made holy and to be set apart.

*They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.** As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. (John 17:16-19)*

In John's Gospel, sanctification is always for mission (Carson). Christ prays that we would be sanctified in the truth of the Word of God. Our sanctification in the Word is for our sending into the world (Carson).

Are you set apart and equipped for the Kingdom (Barclay)? Is your heart, mind, and character ready to do the will of God (Barclay)? In practical terms, no one can be sanctified or set apart for the Lord's use without the Word of God (Carson). The Bible is what conforms believers to the mind of Christ. Are you being sanctified in the truth of God's Word?

It's been a very busy time for my family. Our holidays were full, and we're hoping to move into our new home soon. I've found myself tired, and grumpy, and moody. You could see my attitude clearly on the outside, and my heart was also hurting on the inside. The problem was that I had been away from God's Word, and drifting around in the world. I needed to tether myself to the truth of the Bible, and anchor myself in the safe harbor of Scripture. I went to one of my favorite Bible reading plans, which is to read straight through a Gospel. I picked up Mark, and I immediately saw Jesus. If you are finding yourself spiritually dry, dive into the Bible and soak yourself in Scripture.

*The sum of your word is truth, and every one of **your righteous rules endures forever.** (Psalm 119:160)*

No matter what is happening in your life, you can be steadied by staying in Scripture. You will get a glimpse of the Everlasting God and ground yourself in eternity.



## Big Idea

We saw Christ's five personal prayer requests in our passage today. When I use the word personal, I mean it in two ways. I mean that these are personally from Jesus. They are his private prayers. And I also mean that his prayers are personal towards you. They are particularly aimed for you. So Christ's personal prayer requests are *from him* and *for you*. I want you to feel the intimacy here, the closeness of Christ.

With all of this in mind, here is our big idea: Jesus prays for his people to be protected, united, and sanctified — for their joy and for his glory.

## Challenge

Here's a challenging question: How do we know Christ's prayers will be answered? Do these prayers mean anything in terms of affecting our lives today? Will these prayer requests actually be accomplished? Does Jesus just pray hoping that God will hear him?

*The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, **but he holds his priesthood permanently**, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since **he always lives to make intercession** for them.*

*For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. **He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.** For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. (Hebrews 7:23–28)*

In the Old Testament, the High Priests were the ones who did the equivalent of praying to God. They were the *mediators* between God and man. They offered the animal sacrifices to act as an imperfect atonement for the sins of the people. But these priests were sinners themselves. They were human and would die in their sins.

The Bible says in the book of Hebrews that Jesus is our Great High Priest – the true and better priest – who bridges the gap between man and God. He himself is our sinless sacrifice and his blood covers us so we can come before

God. His life pays the price for our sins. Since Christ's sacrifice is perfect and has appeased the wrath of God — we can approach God's throne of grace. Jesus prays for us and we can be sure that God is *pleased to hear and answer the prayers* of His beloved Son.

## Gospel

What's amazing about our passage today is that technically his disciples and we were not yet saved while Christ was praying for us. Do you realize this? Christ had not yet gone to the cross to die for our sins. We were still God's enemies. We were enemies, but Christ still prayed for us. You know how I pray for my enemies? I pray that they will perish! Jesus is nothing like you and me. Our holy God has the biggest heart. The cross is proof that he meant what he prayed for:

*But God shows his love for us in that **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** (Romans 5:8)*

Christ calls us to follow his example. In Matthew 5:44, he commands us to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” The only way you can do this, the only way that I can do this, is if our hearts are transformed. You must be born again. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that he died on the cross for your sins, and that he rose to life again – you can be saved from your sins and have eternal, everlasting, abundant and true life in Jesus Christ. If your heart is moved in any way after hearing this sermon, come talk to me so I can pray with you.

## Application Questions

I gave you different applications throughout our sermon. I will do a quick summary before our conclusion in the form of application questions.

1. Is the glory of God the goal of your life?
2. Have you trusted God in trials, believing he loves you and will keep you by preserving your faith?
3. Where can you commit to find better community and experience greater unity in the church?
4. When you come to church, is your joy truly anchored in Christ's blood and the Bible?
5. Are you being sanctified in the truth of God's Word?



# Conclusion

Let's go back to the beginning again for our conclusion. I asked: How can you be sure that Christ cares for you? Here's the answer: You can be sure that Christ cares for you because he prays for you. Jesus drew near to God in prayer before his darkest hour. But get this: while we tend to stop praying once life has moved on, you might be surprised to find that Christ continues to pray for us:

*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, **who indeed is interceding for us.** (Romans 8:34)*

Jesus resurrected and is at the right hand of God *right now* — interceding for you. Jesus is praying for you right now. Christ is compelled to pray for you because he loves you. While he has moved on from the cross, he has not moved on from his care for you. He continues to pray for you, interceding for you. He is active and advocates for you in Heaven. What Christ prays for shows what he cares for. His prayers reveal his cares. He is constantly praying for you because his love for you continues. This is our Savior. This is our King. This is our Friend.

Jesus prays for his people to be protected, united, and sanctified — for their joy and for his glory. This should encourage and empower you. We can claim these prayer requests as our own as we strive to pray without ceasing. And we can be sure that when our words stop here on earth, our hearts are tethered to Christ in Heaven. Because Jesus is our Great High Priest, we can have confidence that his prayers will be answered and accomplished. You are loved and covered by the prayers of Jesus Christ. The Son of God sets his heart on you. Our Lord prays for those he loves. Jesus prays for his people.



# With Love and My Affection

I am praying for my people,  
I am praying for my own.  
I am praying for the ones  
That you selected and you chose

To be your very sons,  
To be your daughters, who-  
Adopted as your children-  
Will rule and reign with you.

I pray that they'll be holy-  
Sanctified and set apart.  
I pray that all the words I say  
Will take hold of their heart.

I pray they'll be united  
By my Book and by my blood.  
I pray that they will stand in solidarity-  
As one.

I ask that you'll protect them  
And keep their faith intact.  
I pray that you'll preserve them  
Til Heaven takes them back.

I ask that on the cross,  
They'll see my glory bright.  
I pray that they will turn from sin  
And trust my sacrifice.

And by my resurrection,  
When death will be destroyed,  
With love and my affection-  
Father, may they share our joy.

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