

Daily Discipleship

Seventh Sunday of Easter (B) – John 17:6-19

The Path of Discipleship: *Rooted in Prayer*

Focus Question: *How does being rooted in prayer help you walk the path of discipleship?*

word of life

“I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.” John 17:9 (NRSV)

Read John 17: 6-19

Before Jesus faces his arrest, trial and crucifixion, Jesus prays an extensive prayer on behalf of his disciples. If you have not read this prayer by Jesus recently, take time to read all of John 17. It provides a glimpse into the heart of Jesus and his priorities.

1. *What does it say about Jesus for him to spend time in prayer at this point in his life?*
2. *What is your overall impression of his prayer?*

The section of the prayer found in John 17:6-8 appears to be a continuation of a conversation between Jesus and God. Jesus has fulfilled his purpose. He has made known God’s name and words to the individuals whom God provided to him. Certain ones have heard and believe that Jesus has been sent by God.

3. *How well do you think the plan of God worked during the life of Jesus?*
4. *Would you have expected more people who witnessed the teachings and ministry of Jesus to have come to faith? Why or why not?*

The focus of Jesus’ prayer shifts to include his followers. He knows the struggles of this world and the difficulty of keeping on the path of discipleship, so he prays on their behalf. He doesn’t include the whole world but focuses on those who have connected with him. Jesus is about to die, but he pauses for prayer on behalf of others. Isn’t that so like Jesus?

5. *Why do you think it was important for Jesus to hold his disciples in prayer?*

Jesus reminds God that these followers were given to Jesus by God. The link between “mine” and “yours” becomes solidified in a single unit of “ours.”

6. *What is Jesus trying to address in this part of the prayer?*

The prayer becomes a petition for protection for the followers of Jesus. Jesus is not as concerned about protecting his disciples against the powers of the world, but he desires to protect them from divisions among themselves. This is a prayer for Christian unity. Jesus experiences complete joy when all of his followers are united as one.

7. *What makes it so difficult for Christians to get along with each other?*
8. *How do you think non-Christians view the divisions?*

Jesus recognizes that his disciples live in the world but are not of the world. Thus, followers who desire to stay on the path of discipleship are going to need assistance, especially when they are sent to bear witness to Jesus. It is not an easy path. Jesus prays deeply on behalf of his disciples.

9. *How does it feel to have Jesus pray for you?*

word among us

Jacob knelt beside his bed and began his prayers, “Now I lay me down to sleep. . .” His mother watched from her rocking chair as she began her own prayers for her beloved son. Her prayer was a mother’s prayer as she prayed for God’s protection for him. Slowly, her head began to shake back and forth as she pondered all the ways her son might be harmed. These were tough times to try to follow Jesus. She continued to pray long after Jacob had drifted off to sleep.

1. *Who in your life needs a prayer for protection?*

Take a moment to pray. Allow the Spirit to open your heart, voice, and spirit.

2. *How often do we simply stop activities to pause for prayer?*
3. *What restricts us from praying on behalf of others?*

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how pray, he taught them the Lord’s Prayer. (Matthew 6:9-15; Luke 11:2-4) The words of the Lord’s Prayer reflect the priorities the disciples of every age are to have. The prayer in John 17 is an extensive prayer spoken by someone preparing for his own journey to death. It reflects his priorities.

4. *What can you learn about Jesus through his prayer?*
5. *How does his prayer compare and contrast to your prayers?*

Jesus prays for the unity among his disciples to be like the unity between Jesus and God. That’s a powerful image. Take a moment to imagine what Christians might do if we were linked as closely as Jesus and God. Of course our link would need to include the Holy Spirit, the one who empowers.

As Christians, it is important to reflect on divisions among believers. In the over 2000 years since Jesus lived on earth, there have been times of significant conflict and splits. Even within congregations, there can be strife and divisions.

6. *Have we totally failed at this prayer petition to be one?*
7. *What tends to divide Christians from other Christians?*
8. *What might we do to live the prayer for unity spoken by Jesus?*

The disciples are sent out into the world to be witnesses. Jesus is well aware that his disciples (including us) will be hated by the world. Some may die a martyr’s death. Others will be rejected and persecuted. Thus, Jesus prays earnestly for his followers.

We can learn much from this prayer in our own prayer life. Take time to note how much of the prayer has to do with Jesus and his own challenges.

9. *How much time does Jesus spend in praying for others?*
10. *What can we learn from this prayer of Jesus?*

Prayer

Mighty God, continue to protect us as we walk the path of discipleship. Unite us with others of your disciples. Amen

Dig Deeper

Mark 14:32-42

last word

This week, take the opportunity to publicly pray for unity among Christians.



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/dailydiscipleship

7 Easter (B) Page 2 of 2