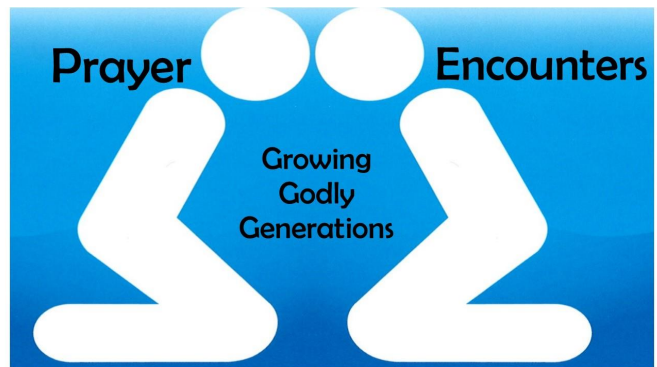


name

Welcome to Prayer Encounters!

In some sense this will be a study but is meant to be more than that. Hopefully it will be more like a laboratory to learn and grow in confidence to not only talk about prayer but to actually pray! Each “Prayer Encounter” will introduce a reflection on the topic of prayer through various Scriptures. One central Scripture passage will be the basis for each reflection – that of Jesus’ prayer found in John 17.



In addition to each session there will be an “ENCOUNTER” reflection to respond to God and in your time with Him. You may do this on your own or you may decide to share with others for encouragement and accountability. A notes page is included with each session.

PRAYER ENCOUNTER CONTENTS

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PRAYER ENCOUNTER 1 Overview

Read John 17:1-26

In John 17, Jesus knows He is going to die on the cross. It will be the most trying struggle He has ever faced as He will experience pain, suffering and ultimately death. Before His arrest and crucifixion, He gathers His closest friends and prays. To Jesus, prayer was His lifeline. He needed to spend time talking to God. Even more, He valued the support of His friends and disciples.

Jesus was not only preparing Himself but He also had you in mind. He knew this would be recorded for our benefit to understand about prayer and follow in His example. He knew we would face struggles and trials and we would need to understand where to turn.

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:15-16

For believers today, encountering God in prayer is like having a conversation with a loved one over a meal. It is meant to be intimate and yet simple. When Jesus prayed, He did so as Son to Father. This shows that prayer is not merely a religious act but an expression of an authentic relationship. It was natural for Jesus to look up and begin a discussion with His Father.

- ✪ What has been a trying struggle for you, especially lately?

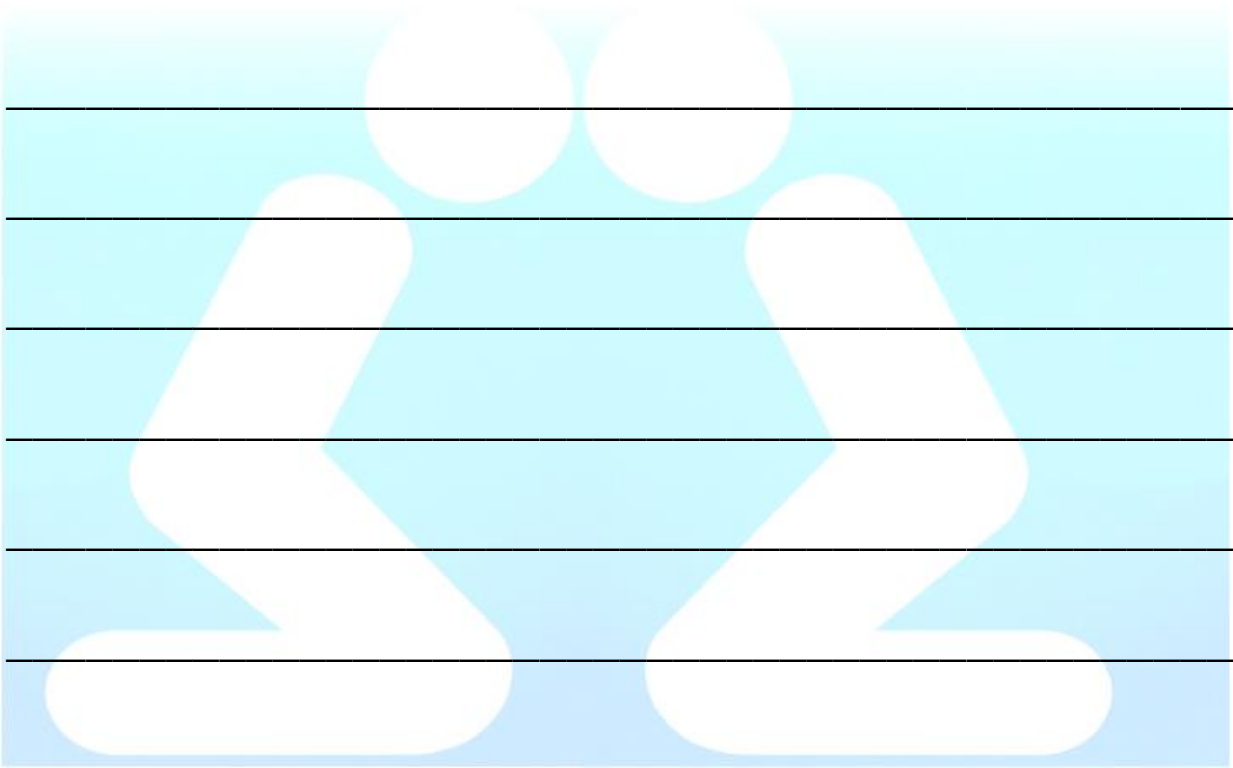
- ✪ Is your focus and eyes downward/inward/outward on your circumstances or are they lifted upward toward God in heaven? Do you understand the difference?

- ✪ Spend a few moments in prayer talking or writing out to God your thoughts, feelings and hopes. You can do this individually or join to pray with and for others.

- ✪ Read Matthew 6:25-34. What does Jesus offer as an alternative to anxiety? How does this specifically apply to your life?

- ✪ ENCOUNTER: What is the main point God is teaching you through this Encounter?

PRAYER ENCOUNTER NOTES



PRAYER ENCOUNTER 2 Glory

Read John 17:1-5

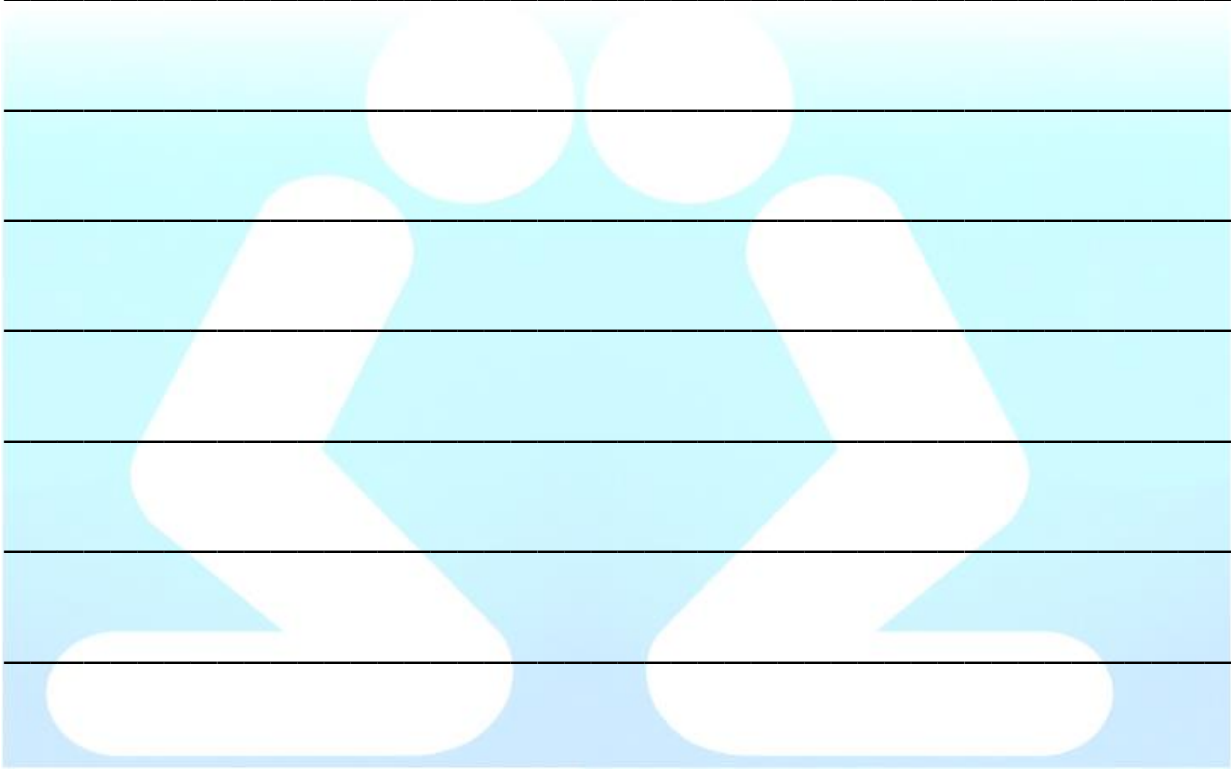
The word *glory* appears eight times in variations from verses 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 22 and 24. Throughout the Gospels it is used sixty-six times. The word means weight or significant importance; as a verb it means to honor or praise. It can also signify God's presence in power, majesty and beauty.

Why all this talk about glory? Obviously, it is one of the prominent themes in Jesus' life and even in this prayer from John 17. Jesus' entire goal and life mission was to glorify God. In other words, Jesus sought to bring attention and fame to God. What is interesting, is not only does Jesus seek to glorify God but also prays for the Father to glorify Himself – which Jesus shared with God before the world existed (v.5)! Since God does not share His glory (Isaiah 42:8; 48:11), we know that Jesus is indeed uniquely God.

How does this apply today? This has several applications.

1. The goal of life and prayer is to glorify God. We are not to be self-centered but humble and reverence of God. In relation to prayer, our requests should seek to bring appropriate attention and worship to God. God has not created prayer as a magic genie to fulfill selfish agendas and pleasures. God's glory is primary over human preference.
"Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory" Psalm 115:1
- ☛ God is jealous for the fame of His name. If someone told me 2 out of 3 of my daughters would love me, I would not be happy. A father would not settle for this because he seeks the love of every one of his children. Knowing and loving God is ultimate in all of life. Is there anything replacing your attention and devotion for God?
Psalm 119:37 "Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things and revive me in your way."
Isaiah 26:8 "Yes, Lord, we wait for you, in the path of your judgments. Our desire is for your name and your renown."
- ☛ Spend some time praising and thanking God. Tell Him why you love Him for who He is more than just what He gives to you. If needed, use Psalm 145, 136, 105 or others.
2. Since Jesus is God, we can pray to Him. He can identify with every circumstance in our life. His strength, comfort, grace and hope are available through prayer.
- ☛ Pray directly to Jesus with what is on your heart at the moment. Join with others in prayer if available.
3. In verse 22, Jesus prays that believers will receive His glory. It is a humbling and awesome thought that Jesus prays we have significance and weight in God's kingdom. Our identity is not rooted in our works but God's grace. He has declared us accepted and righteous in His sight and gives us each a kingdom purpose.
- ☛ Read 1 Peter 2:9-12 to discover the purpose of our significance.
- ☛ ENCOUNTER: What is the main point God is teaching you through this Encounter?

PRAYER ENCOUNTER NOTES



PRAYER ENCOUNTER 3 Perspective

Read John 17:1-2

Jesus prays with perspective. He understands the full view of his life in terms of the past, present and the future. Jesus has all authority (cf. John 2:18-19; 5:27; 10:18; 12:49; 13:1-3; 14:10; 19:10-11), so he trusts the outcome following His prayer. He prays, *“Father, the hour has come”*. In John’s Gospel, the time marking phrase “the hour” (cf. John 2:4; 4:23; 5:25; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1-3; 16:25; 16:32; 17:1) signifies the experience of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection to glorify God. In all, Jesus’ life and prayer is one of confident perspective. He knows He will endure the cross, but He also knows He will be resurrected and ascend to His throne.

What does it mean for us to pray with confident perspective?

1. Pray with trust (faith).

As Jesus trusted the outcome of His life to God, so can we. Though it may be difficult to see **how** God is working, we must remember that God **is** working. There is never a day or moment when God is not bringing all things together for His glory and our good. The obvious point to note is that praying with trust and faith is not a short-term perspective – it views life from an eternal mindset.

Romans 8:28 “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

Colossians 3:2 “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”

- ✪ What are 2-3 prayer items that you need to turn from doubt to trust? Ask God to help you to trust His purposes and turn to an eternal perspective. Join in prayer with and for others, if available.

2. Pray with thanksgiving (praise).

Thankfulness is a key to opening the door into God’s house. It recognizes the greatness of God but also His grace to share with us the privilege of prayer. It realigns our perspective from being self-focused to God-focused. Thankfulness reminds us of what is truly important and necessary.

Psalms 100:4 “Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

- ✪ In the 2-3 prayer items you thought about above, for what can you express thanksgiving?
- ✪ What are some action steps to maintain a confident – eternal perspective?
- ✪ ENCOUNTER: What is the main point God is teaching you through this Encounter?

PRAYER ENCOUNTER 4 Eternal Life

Read John 17:1-3

Jesus prays for you to have eternal life. This is the essence of His life and mission. All who believe in Jesus Christ (the gospel: Jesus' substitutionary life, death and resurrection) will receive eternal life (John 3:15-16, 36; 4:14; 5:24; 6:27, 54; 10:28; 12:25; 17:2-3).

What is eternal life and how does it help me to pray?

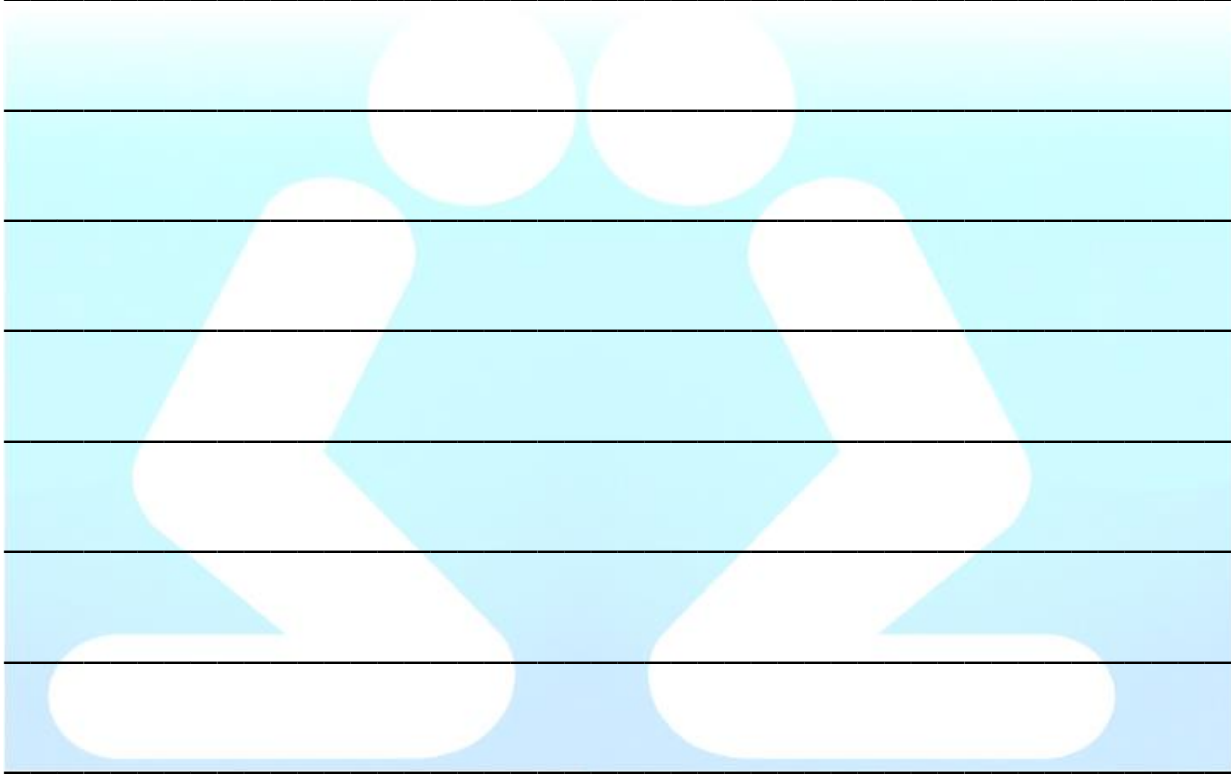
Eternal life is defined by a relational belief in God:

- 1. The relationship is immediate.** Jesus says, "this is eternal life..." The idea is that eternal life starts instantaneously. Indeed, saving faith implies that you are going to heaven, but it is more than that. Eternal life is a present reality describing a relationship with God in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Quantitatively, it is here now with more to come. Qualitatively, it is beyond imagination of delight and fulfillment. A relationship with God provides an immediate communication with God. Prayer is an invitation to fellowship or intercede at any time.
Hebrews 4:16 "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."
- 2. The relationship is identifiable.** Jesus says, it is with "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." In other words, salvation is gift of grace with the one and only God of all creation.
Prayer is directed to God the Father, in Jesus Christ, through his Holy Spirit. There is perfect mediation because of Christ's work and discernable response from the Spirit's intercession.
Ephesians 2:13, 18 "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ...For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father."
- 3. The relationship is intimate.** Jesus says, "This is eternal life, that they know you..." This knowledge of God refers to a personal, dynamic and continuous relationship with the living God. It goes beyond just head knowledge or mental assent. Salvation is a specific knowledge of specific Truth – realizing that truth is ultimately a Person. It means having heart affection and intimate devotion with Jesus Christ through faith, confession of sin, worship, prayer, obedience and spending time reading God's Word.
Romans 8:15 "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"

☪ Is your relationship with Jesus immediate, identifiable and intimate? If not, why not? Spend time in prayer, confession and adoration to grow in relationship with God.

☪ ENCOUNTER: What is the main point God is teaching you through this Encounter?

PRAYER ENCOUNTER NOTES



PRAYER ENCOUNTER 5 Reflection and Intercession

Read John 17:6-26

In this prayer Jesus is not only praying for Himself but others. He prays for the disciples as well as those who would believe in Him in the future. His basis of praying for others is the revelation of God – making God known. Jesus did this through His life, His teaching, praying, and everything He did revealed the character and purposes of God.

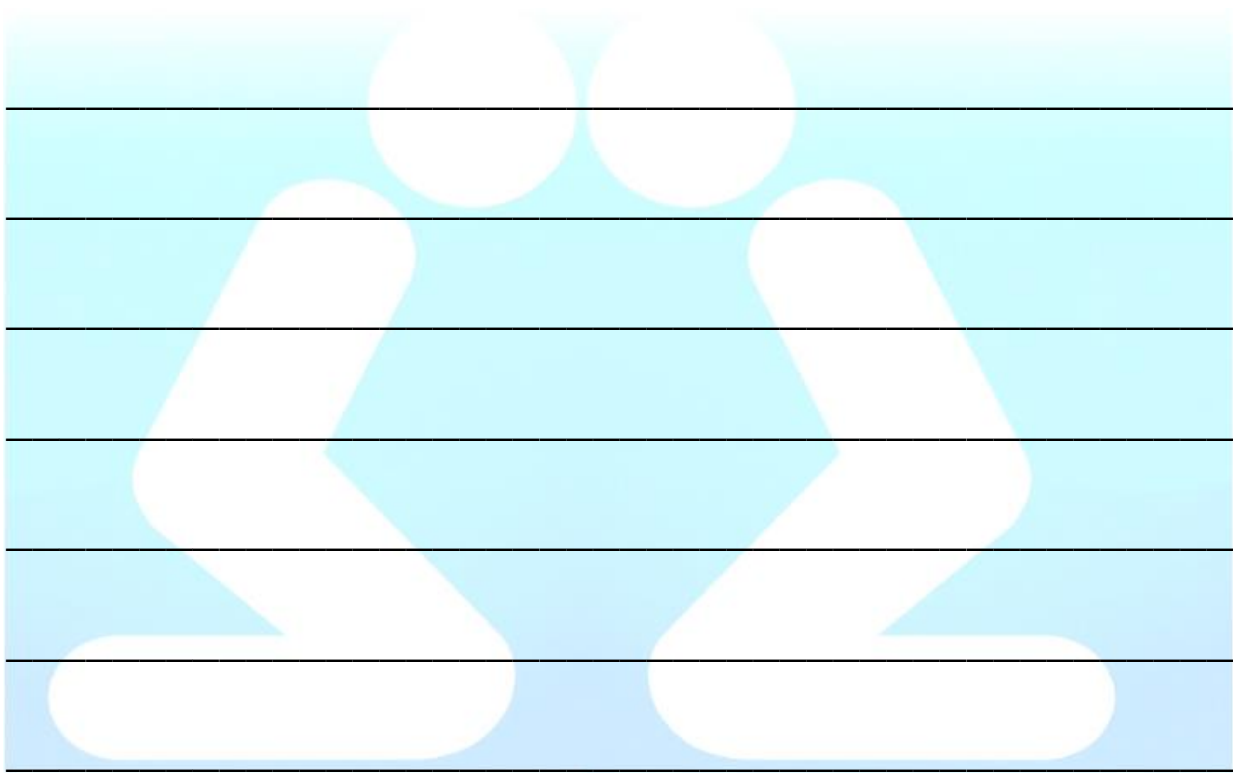
John 17: 6-8 “I have manifested your name...Now they know everything that you have give me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.”

Have you considered what your life is revealing to others? Our beliefs, behaviors and being paint a picture of God to others. As a believer, others see (or don't see) God in you. It happens at home, work, neighborhoods, schools, shopping, athletic fields and all over this world. God has designed the world as a gallery to display His art work.

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

- ✪ Where have you seen Jesus today/week? Share this with others if available. Take a few moments to pray for God to reveal Himself to you.
- ✪ Jesus prayed for you (17:9, 20). He prayed for God to reveal Himself to you through the words of faithful disciples. Who revealed or how was God first revealed to you? Thank God for this faithful witness.
- ✪ Intercession (praying for others) is initiated by revelation – putting God on display. Perhaps praying for others is of little value if you are not displaying Jesus. How and when are you putting God on display to others (be specific)? If you need to repent for any neglect in this area, do so immediately. Ask for God's help. If helpful, ask others in the church to assist.
- ✪ Take a few moments to pray for God to reveal Himself through your life. Pray that the person(s) receiving it would respond by believing in the “Sent One” – Jesus Christ.
- ✪ ENCOUNTER: What is the main point God is teaching you through this Encounter?

PRAYER ENCOUNTER NOTES



PRAYER ENCOUNTER 6

Reflection: Submission

Read John 17:6-12

At this point in John 17, Jesus begins to pray for the disciples. However, before He does, He prays with a yielded heart to God. This entire prayer is wrapped in the context of Jesus' submission to the Father's will. Jesus calls God "Father" six different times in this short passage and it provides an example of how we should relate to God as Father.

"Father" in vv. 1, 5, 21 and 24

Jesus prays to the Father who sent Him to be glorified through a righteous life and a sacrificial death. Jesus understood the purpose was to redeem people and bring them into a unity and saving relationship with the Father (17:21, 24).

In prayer, the name "Father" is an intimate and loving name. It reminds us that God is not an abstract deity but a Person to whom we are invited to relate. We can talk to Him any time we desire or we can call upon Him for help in times of need. God is a Father who hears and cares.

- ✪ For encouragement of God as your Father, read Luke 11:1-11, 12:22-32; James 1:17
- ✪ Pray to God the Father, as one of His adopted children. Tell Him you love Him, tell Him what weighs on your mind and heart, tell Him!

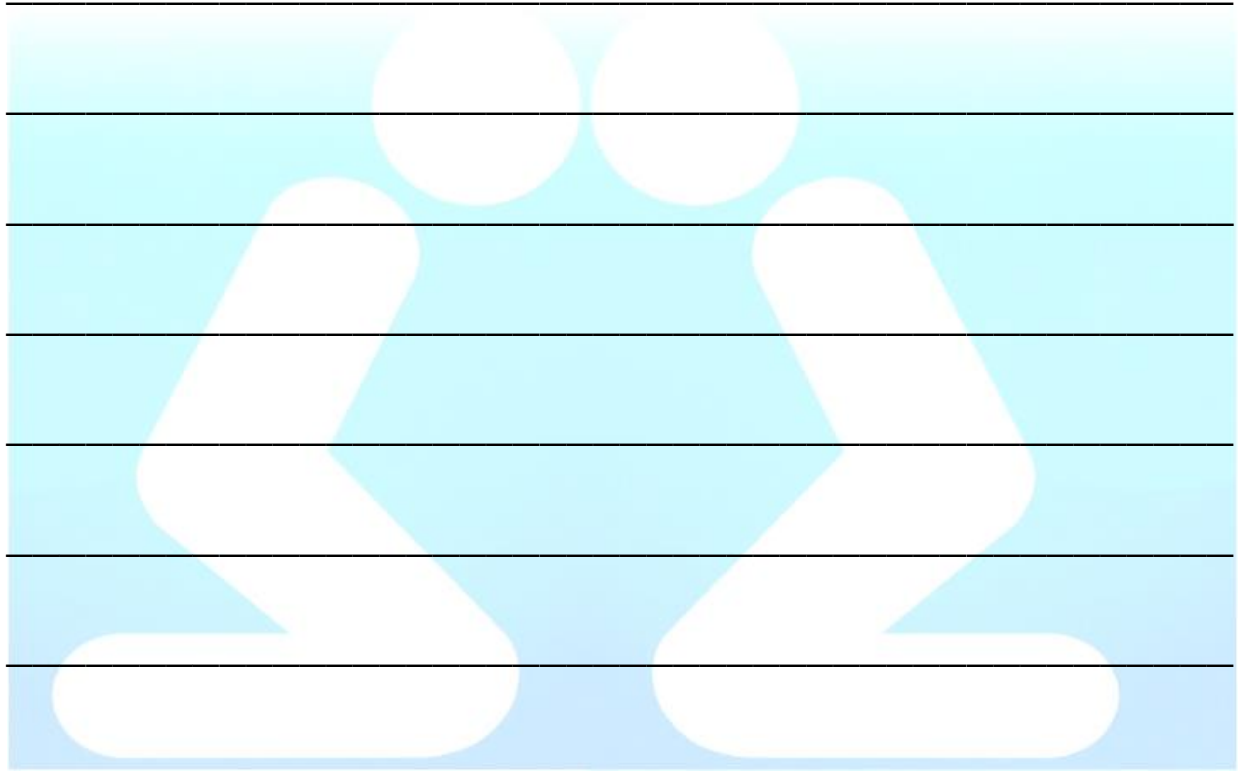
"Holy Father" in v.11; "Righteous Father" in v.25

Jesus prays to a Holy and Righteous, One whom is all powerful – Creator and Sustainer. Jesus knows only God can give help and hope to His disciples, which is the purpose of this prayer. Just consider the context of this prayer – Jesus will be scourged almost to death, flesh from His back will be ripped apart, thorns rammed into His brows, nails driven into His hands, and bears the full wrath of God for the sins He never committed, then will die. Yet, Jesus calls God "Holy" and "Righteous".

These titles become intriguing word combinations with the name Father. It shows that God seeks to be related to but in a certain manner, because He is holy and righteous. His set apartness or wholly otherness means His plans and purposes are infinitely different than our own but they are always good. This means God is a perfect Father.

- ✪ Read Matthew 10:28-33. Is God's holiness something you fear? Perhaps there is an aspect that we should fear God (Proverbs 1:7). Yet, our fear should not drive us away from God but toward Him as our Holy Father.
- ✪ Read 1 John 1:5-10. Pray to the Holy Father. Come before Him acknowledging your sin. Confess it to Him. Receive His grace through Jesus Christ . Ask Him to search your heart for areas that lack faith and holiness in your life.
- ✪ ENCOUNTER: What is the main point God is teaching you through this Encounter?

PRAYER ENCOUNTER NOTES



PRAYER ENCOUNTER 7

Reflection: Secure Identity

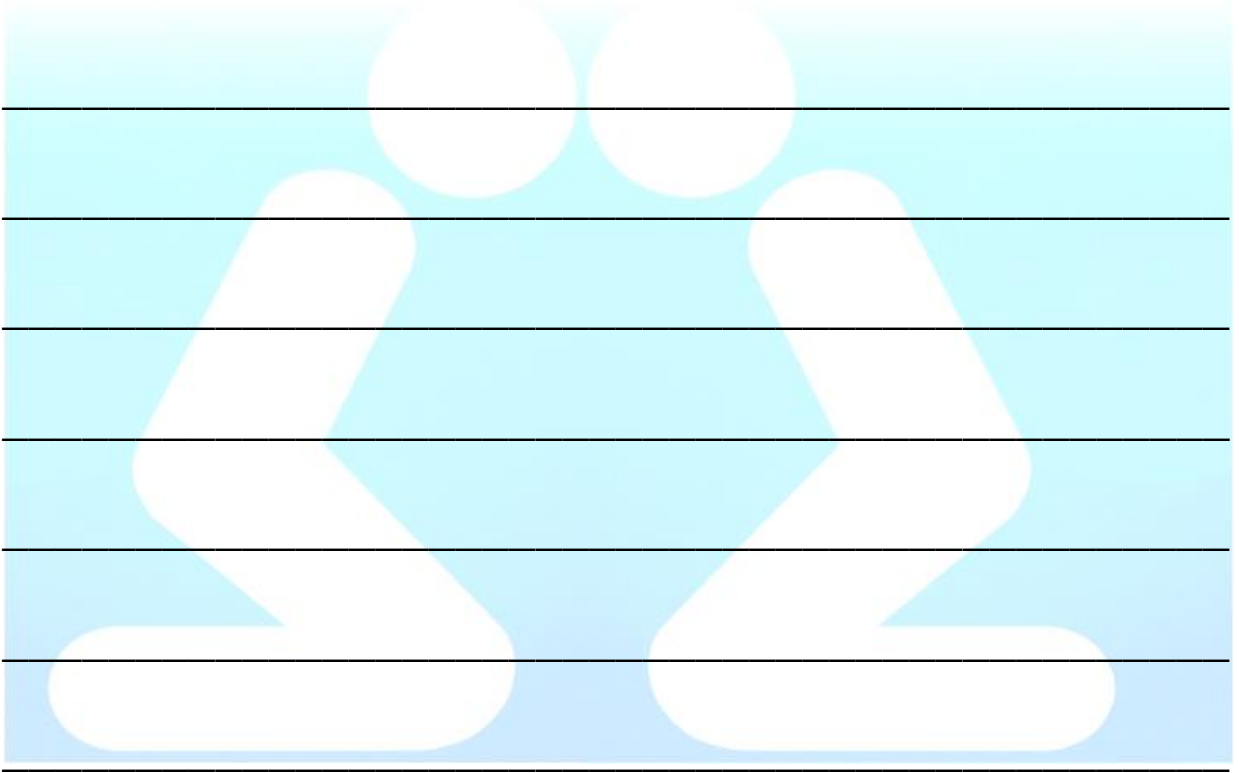
Read John 17:6-12

As mentioned in the previous Encounters, Jesus is praying for others. It is significant to observe **what** Jesus prays for others. Even more important is to apply in practice and prayer for what Jesus prays and teaches (Matthew 28:20; James 1:22). As Jesus prays He submits those He prays for to God (17:9-10). He knows, like Him, they are in the world and not of it. They are like an astronaut in outer space, or a scuba diver hundreds of feet beneath the ocean's surface; they must maintain connection to their lifeline while living outside of their natural element.

Likewise, believers today must abide in Jesus. They must understand their only means to survival in this world is their spiritual lifeline. Jesus' prayer for them is to be kept in God's name; in other words, protection. However, this protection is not an escapist lifestyle. He is not calling everyone to run away or withdraw from the world. Instead Jesus' prayer of protection in God's name is more about an identity. They are in the world but they must root their identity and security in the powerful name of Jesus. This will give them confidence to face all the trials they would face as the persecuted early church. And for believers today, we must face all life's trials and testings with the promises of God's Word and the power of His presence in our life. After all, Jesus is with us.

- ✪ What is the first thing you normally pray for others? How does this compare to Jesus' prayer for a secure identity rooted in God and the gospel?
- ✪ How is Jesus' prayer for protection ("keep them in my name") different from the way we pray for help or protection?
- ✪ Read John 15:1-7. Realize that abiding in Jesus is the greatest form of protection in this world and also the key to answered prayer. Pray to the Lord and talk to Him about where you are in your abiding relationship with Jesus... After some time, join in prayer with others for encouragement and strengthening of your faith.
- ✪ Pray for others to be kept in God's name – the powerful name of Jesus that helps, heals and gives hope!
- ✪ ENCOUNTER: What is the main point God is teaching you through this Encounter?

PRAYER ENCOUNTER NOTES



PRAYER ENCOUNTER 8

Reflection: Joy

Read John 17:13-19

Joy is one of the hallmarks of God's people. Yet it often remains conspicuously absent in many Christians today. One pastor quipped, "If Jesus is in your heart, you should inform your face!" Unfortunately, many people have lost their joy.

What is joy? Joy is a disposition of delight; it is a mindset and attitude that finds its focus solely in God. John Piper says, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in [not just from] Him." In other words, to know joy is to know God and declare as the *psalmist*, "*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore*" (16:11).

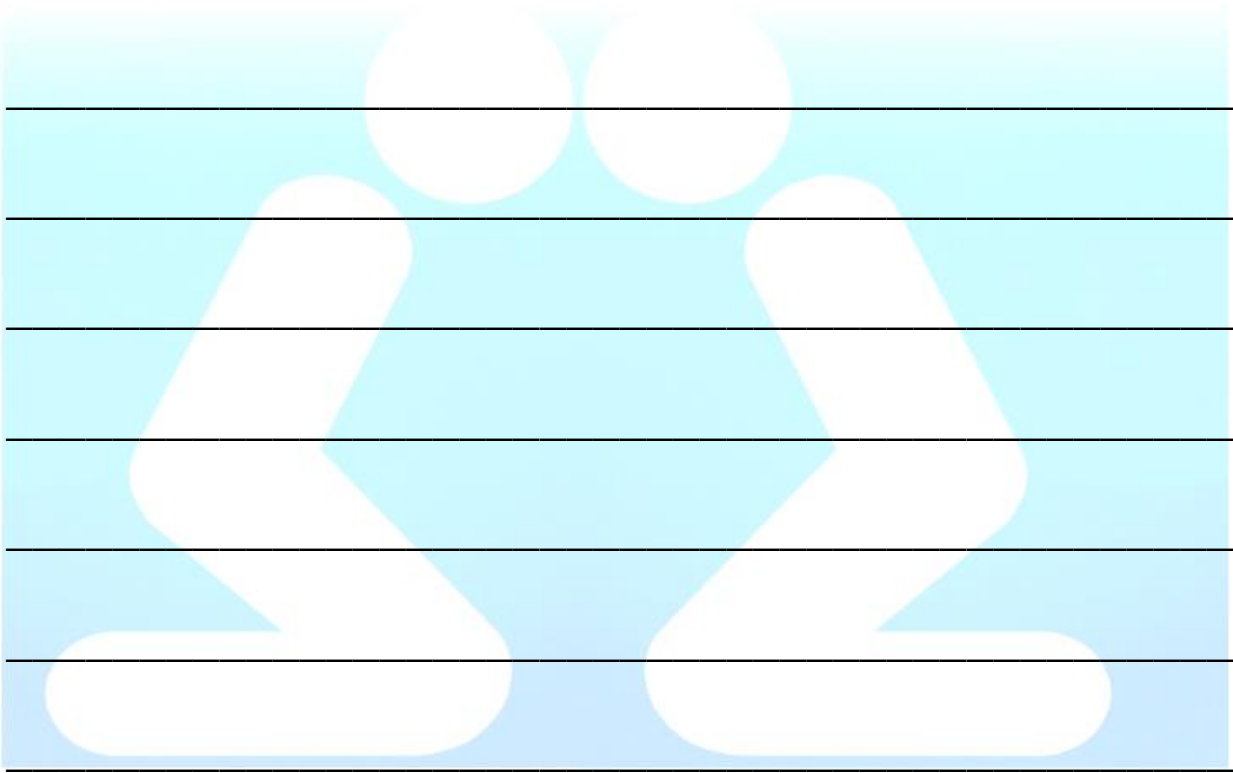
Jesus prays for others to have "my joy fulfilled in themselves" (17:13). In other words, Jesus was a joyful person and wanted others to experience that for themselves. It is His joy that He prays we have, not our own. Therefore, joy is not determined by our self wants or even needs, but by a right relationship with God the Father.

- ✪ What brings you joy? Pray for God to reveal to you that the deepest delight and most enduring joy is found in God and not just His blessings (your comfort and convenience).

Furthermore, Jesus prays generously. He is not stingy in praying for our joy. He prays that we have it fulfilled – completed – or the full measure. He wants it to overflow in super-abundant proportions; like having to drink from the saucer because the cup is overflowed. When you view the totality of Jesus' prayer in John 17, you see that Jesus is praying God's best... and ultimately this joy that Jesus speaks is simply a byproduct of obedience; not yours, but Jesus'! (Hebrews 12:2) Jesus essentially is praying, "I was sent into the world to be holy for them and to die for them. If they will just believe and receive my word they will have joy." If you are missing joy, then you are missing Jesus. Get close to Jesus and you will discover a world of life, hope, peace, happiness and joy.

- ✪ Settle your heart. Slow your mind. Don't rush and spend some moments with Jesus. Understand that Jesus prays for your joy and invites you to a life filled with it. Realize it is the evil one against you, set out to steal your joy (John 10:10).
- ✪ As a result of this study, what things do you need to share in prayer with Jesus?
- ✪ ENCOUNTER: What is the main point God is teaching you through this Encounter?

PRAYER ENCOUNTER NOTES



PRAYER ENCOUNTER 9

Reflection: Unity

Read John 17:20-21

Jesus' prayer in John 17 is part of the last moments before His unfair arrest, experience of being betrayed by close friends, and ultimately His tortuous death. And most striking is that He spends these moments praying for the disciples and those who would later believe upon their message. Jesus had on His heart and mind all Christians for future generations. And His prayer was for them to have unity and oneness with God and each other.

The prayer of unity is yet another theme throughout John 17, specifically in verses 11, 21, 22 and 23. Its emphasis shows that Jesus does not take the subject lightly. This is ultimately seen and modeled in heaven between the three Persons of the Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. To be or act Christian is to display unity with God and His followers. Its purpose is seen in verse 23, “so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me”. God’s reputation is at stake! When Christians stand united together they are a powerful proof and testimony to the gospel.

In one sense, this unity is already present because believers are unconditionally adopted into God’s family by grace through faith. Yet, in another sense, Christian unity takes time to be cultivated through the context of relationships.

How can we become an answer to Jesus’ prayer for unity?

- ✪ Pray with authenticity and integrity. God knows our hearts. We cannot fake or pretend our way towards unity with God and others.
Psalm 51:6 “Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.”

- ✪ Pray with the practice of unity. It is easy to say and pray for unity without ever actually doing anything about it. Praying together with other believers demonstrates that you take Christian unity seriously. Praying with others shows humility that we cannot do life alone and are dependent upon Christ and His Church.
Psalm 133:1 “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.”
1 Corinthians 3:9 “For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building.”
Hebrews 10:25 “Do not neglect meeting together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

- ✪ Pray for the purpose of unity. Remember that God’s reputation is at stake. The world is watching God’s people to see if they live what they say they believe. Pray that your church will maintain Christian unity for the purpose of evangelizing its community and world.

- ✪ ENCOUNTER: What is the main point God is teaching you through this Encounter?

PRAYER ENCOUNTER 10

Sent Praying

Read John 17:3, 18-26

Jesus' prayer concludes where it started. Jesus understood God's glory was ultimate. He prayed for God to be glorified through His actions and the world would see His glory that the Father gave to him (17:24). The world saw Jesus' glory because He was sent into the world.

Likewise, believers must submit to the ultimate priority of life in God's glory. It starts and ends with Jesus' mission. Jesus was the Sent One to reveal God's glory and redeem humanity. He did so by identifying with humanity by becoming one of them. At the end of His life He is able to say and pray, "I have accomplished all the work that you gave me to God...I have made known to them your name" (17:4, 26). His mission was to proclaim the grace and truth of God and that is our mission today.

John 20:21 "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.'"

- ✪ A praying life is a prioritized life. We must come to an awakening and awareness that God's glory is ultimate. Pray for this in your life.

Psalm 96:6-8 "Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name"

- ✪ God is jealous for the fame of His name. If someone told me 4 out of 5 of my children would love me, I would not be happy. A father would not settle for this because he seeks the love of every one of his children. Knowing and loving God is ultimate in all of life. Is there anything replacing your attention and devotion for God?

Psalm 119:37 "Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things and revive me in your way."

Isaiah 26:8 "Yes, Lord, we wait for you, in the path of your judgments. Our desire is for your name and your renown."

- ✪ Jesus prays "so that the world may know". He also confidently declares that He made (past) and will continue making (present & future) God's name known in 17:26. This becomes the believer's model for praying.

How is your/our prayers moving inwardly (sanctification) and outwardly (service and evangelism)? Pray for God to give you/us compassion for others in praying and living on mission as "Sent ones".

- ✪ ENCOUNTER: What is the main point God is teaching you through this Encounter?

