

Being the Church Praying Together

John 17:11-23

July 2, 2017

Introduction

As Christians, most of us know the importance of prayer. And I think most of us would agree that it is important to pray for our church and for our brothers and sisters in Christ. But what should those prayers sound like? What kinds of things should we be praying for?

As we come to John 17 we are at a climatic time in the life of Jesus. He and His disciples have just finished their meal in the upper room and in a matter of hours Jesus will be betrayed and arrested. Within 24 hours He will be dead.

But on this night before His crucifixion Jesus took time to pray, not only for Himself, but also for everyone who will believe in Him. And there is a lot that we can learn from His prayer. His prayer serves as an example of the kinds of things that we should pray for our church and for one another.

As Jesus prayed for His followers, He prayed for spiritual protection (vs. 11-15) (John 10:27-29)

- As Jesus prepared for the cross and His soon departure from earth He knew that He would be leaving His disciples in a difficult position. Until now He had been there to support them, to calm their fears and confront their doubts. But now He prays that God the Father would guard and keep them. That He would keep them from wandering or walking away from the truth. That He would protect them from evil.
- **Application:** As we pray for our church we should follow the example of Christ. We should pray that God would protect and keep those who are His. The world is hard and the enemy is real (1 Peter 5:8) and there will be those around us who will be tempted to wander or maybe even to walk away. We should regularly pray and ask God to protect us and keep us.

As Jesus prayed for His followers, He prayed for spiritual growth (vs. 16-19)

- When we are born we are born into the world. By nature we think, act and speak like the world. But when we come to Jesus He begins to change us, to set us apart from the world – this is what the Bible calls sanctification. As Jesus prayed for His disciples He asked God the Father to sanctify them, to grow them and set them apart.

- As Jesus prayed for the sanctification of His disciples, He also acknowledged His own ‘setting apart’ or consecration. This is a reference to His work on the cross. It is because of His work on the cross that we can be made holy (Hebrews 10:11-14).

- **Application:** As we pray for our church we should follow the example of Christ. We should pray that God would sanctify us (make us holy). If we are going to be the church that God has called us to be we should long to see those around us growing and we should pray that God would do His work of transformation. (Col. 1:9-10; Phil. 1:9-11)

As Jesus prayed for His followers, He prayed for spiritual unity (vs. 20-23a)

- As Jesus prepared for the cross and His soon departure from earth He knew the importance of His followers coming together. He asks God to unite them and to make them one in the same way that God the Father and God the Son are one. Jesus desires the highest possible bond of unity for His people and this is what He prays for.
- **Application:** As we pray for our church we should follow the example of Christ. We should pray that God would make us one. There are so many things that can be used to divide us. Gossip, jealousy, pride, dishonesty, etc. We should regularly pray and ask God to guard us from those things that can divide us and to bind us together in unity.

As Jesus prayed for His followers, He prayed for spiritual witness (vs. 21-23)

- As Jesus prayed for unity among His people He also prayed that God would use their unity as an example to the world of His kind of love. He prayed that God would use their unity and their love for one another to bring others to faith in Him.
- **Application:** As we pray for our church we should follow the example of Christ. We should pray and ask God to use us as an example of unity. We should ask Him to bring others to faith through the example of love and unity that He has produced in us.

Conclusion

When we depend upon organizations, we get what organizations can do;

When we depend upon education, we get what education can do;

When we depend upon man, we get what man can do;

But when we depend upon prayer, we get what God can do.

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