

Youth Teaching Resources

May 13, 2018



Easter: Keeping Close (April 1-May 20)

John 15:9-17 – “Real Love”

John 17:6-19 – “Questions of Belonging”

John 15:26-16:15 (RCL 15:26-27, 16:4b-15) – “Goodbye,
and Hello”

Season After Pentecost: The Perils of Pauline ... Thinking (May 27-July 8)

Romans 8:12-17 – “In the Flesh, of the Spirit”

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Questions of Belonging

John 17:6-19

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

How often do you pray for your students? When you pray for them, what kind of prayer is it? Are you praying for their safety and health? Are your prayers for protection and peace? Whenever I hear about someone praying for their children, I think about the parent of a missionary who said they always prayed for their student to do the work of God. When their prayers were answered and their student ended up halfway around the globe, they wished they had been more specific in praying that God would keep them closer to home. Keep praying for your students, but also be aware that the Holy Spirit will move in their life and it might not lead to exactly what you had been praying for.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip “Bruce Learns to Pray” from *Bruce Almighty*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why is what Bruce says a “good prayer”?
- 2) How does Bruce’s prayer come true?
- 3) Have your prayers ever felt fake?
- 4) What makes your prayers real?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading John 17:6-19. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony’s commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Who is Jesus praying for during this prayer? Does it apply to us at all?
- 2) How did Jesus make God fully known to the disciples?
- 3) How are we given to Jesus?

Information *continued*

- 4) How could Jesus be glorified through the disciples? How is Jesus glorified through us?
- 5) What is at the heart of Jesus' prayer? Is this still appropriate for us today?
- 6) What does it mean to be sanctified by God?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Why is it so important in how Jesus says goodbye?
- 2) Why do farewell speeches typically end in a prayer?
- 3) Why did Jesus not pray for the entire world?
- 4) What is/was the "evil one" that Jesus mentions in his prayer?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": How could Jesus sanctify himself?

Transformation

Conclude your session by having a volunteer lay down on a large sheet of paper and trace their outline. When their outline has been created, challenge the group to write different attributes of a Christian inside the outline. Allow the students time to write and then instruct the students to place a checkmark beside those attributes they believe are the hardest to live out. Finally, have the students circle the attributes they most relate to. When each student has completed these three tasks, facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why did you write down the attributes that you did inside the outline?
- 2) Why did you place the checkmarks where you did? How do you live these things out if they are so hard?
- 3) What makes the attributes that you circled so relatable to you? Why do you think it is easier for some people to live some attributes out but not others?
- 4) All of these attributes reflect our ability to continue to be Jesus' disciples. How does this prayer resonate with you on those days that it is hard to be Jesus' disciples?
- 5) How do we help others live their life out for Christ? How does this make us be a stronger body of Christ? How do we continue to bring glory to God by being the body of Christ?

Close with a prayer of thanksgiving; that Jesus would care enough about each of us to pray for us and that the relationship that we have with each other continues to grow.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

A long farewell—Here’s a quick review of the final hours of fellowship between Jesus and his closest disciples, according to the Fourth Gospel. John 13 describes how Jesus washed his followers’ feet in a tender gesture, then began to explain that “the hour” marking the culmination of his work had come (cf. John 5:28; 12:23; 16:25, 32). Jesus told his followers to carry on his work by loving one another as he had loved them, so demonstrating his continued presence in the world.

Jesus made it clear that he was leaving, but not forever (chapter 14). He was going to prepare a place for them so that a day would come when they would all be together again. Even though he was departing physically, Jesus would not leave them orphaned, but would remain present in their hearts and minds through the continuing work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus went on (chapter 15) to speak about what it meant to live in connectedness – as a vine and its branches – even through dark days. As life-giving sap flows from the vine to the branches, so the Holy Spirit continues to connect disciples with Christ, who described the Spirit as the believers’ Advocate, Counselor, Teacher, and Comforter. Jesus spoke candidly in chapter 16 about the grief and mourning his friends might experience when he left, but also predicted a time of new joy and strength as they learned to depend on the Spirit and to look toward the future.

Finally, the author says, in the last moments of their time together, Jesus prayed for himself, for his disciples, and for all who would come to believe in him (chapter 17).

A common approach—Gail O’Day notes that farewell speeches, as a genre, typically ended with a prayer. Moses’ final speech to the Israelites, for example, concluded with a hymn of praise to God (Deut. 31:30-32:47, often called “The Song of Moses”) and a lengthy blessing of the people (Deuteronomy 33). In the apocryphal book of Jubilees, speeches attributed to Moses and Noah end with prayers (Jub. 1:19-21, 10:3-6). Jewish apocalyptic writings included multiple examples of farewell discourses that concluded with prayers. Thus, the convention would have been familiar to the author of Fourth Gospel as well as his readers. (See O’Day, “John,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 9 [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995], 787.

Whether Jesus actually prayed in this way, or whether the author imagined that this is how Jesus would have prayed, is an open question.

Outlining the prayer—John 17 is typically referred to as Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer,” but scholars have varying views on how the prayer is structured. Many suggest an outline in which Jesus prays for himself (vv. 1-5), his present disciples (vv. 6-19), and all future followers (vv. 20-26). Others see the first section as continuing into v. 8, while others divide the prayer into four or more parts, sometimes regarding vv. 6-8 as a separate section, or

Digging Deeper *continued*

considering vv. 1-3 and vv. 4-8 as identifiable units. Some divide the final section into two parts in which vv. 20-23 is a prayer for all believers to be one, and vv. 24-26 is a concluding plea for the ultimate union of Father, Son and all believers.

Whatever structure we adopt, it is important to note that the entire prayer exudes dimensions of past, present, and future: there was a sense in which Jesus' "hour" had already commenced, was continuing, and would have eschatological significance. Intercessions that appear to address the present disciples in vv. 6-19 may also apply to all future followers. Despite its varied emphases, the prayer exhibits a repetitive theme: that the Father, the Son, and believers might live in unity.

Why not pray for the world?—In v. 9, Jesus said he was “not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.” Why, in that context, did Jesus focus on the disciples rather than the world? George R. Beasley-Murray explains it simply:

“The exclusion of the world from his prayer must be understood in its context; the disciples have been chosen to help the Church to fulfill its calling, which is none other than to reveal and to continue the mission of its Lord to the world (v 18); it is as the Church fulfills its calling in the unity of the divine love that the world will recognize that Jesus has been sent to them by God (vv. 21, 23). To this extent the prayer of Jesus for the disciples is indirectly prayer for the world also.”

(*John*, vol. 36 of Word Biblical Commentary. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 298.)

The evil one—Jesus' reference to “the evil one” in v. 15 should not necessarily be read as a divine endorsement of belief in a supernatural and personal embodiment of evil who consciously opposed God. The concept of a personal “Satan” became popular as Judaism emerged during the late postexilic period, when the Hebrews lived under the aegis of the Persian empire. The Persian religion, Zoroastrianism, featured a supreme being, Ahura Mazda, who was opposed by an evil force known as Angra Mainyu, who later came to be thought of as Ahriman, or the “devil.”

The idea that evil had its source in an evil supernatural power was so widespread in Jesus' day that it was a given, and Jesus used language that his followers would understand. The notion of a supernatural being who rivals God does nothing less than posit a polytheistic rival god, however. If we believe there is only one God – rather than a dualistic system in which a supreme “good” god is opposed by a bad one – there is no room for another deity, and Jesus' references to Satan or an “evil one” can be regarded as metaphorical.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

How could Jesus sanctify himself?

Toward the end of his prayer, as Jesus prayed for his disciples to be “sanctified” or “set apart,” he also said “I sanctify myself” (vv. 17-18). We are not the first to wonder what this means. J. Ramsey Michaels explores the question this way:

How does Jesus sanctify *himself*? Simply by making a strong commitment in his heart to fulfill his mission? In a sense, yes, but his mission on earth is already complete—except for his redemptive death. Therefore, “I sanctify myself” can only mean consecration *to death*. Jesus sanctifies or consecrates himself as a priest would consecrate a sacrifice! He is priest and sacrificial victim at the same time (cf. Heb. 9:12). It is solely on the basis of the one word sanctify or “consecrate” in verse 19 that the traditional designation of chapter 17 as Jesus’ “high-priestly prayer” is justified. His self-consecration to the Father benefits the disciples. It is for them (Gr.: *hyper autōn*, v. 19) just as the Good Shepherd’s death is “for the sheep” in 10:11, 15 or as Caiaphas prophesies Jesus’ death “for the Jewish nation” in 11:50–52, or as Jesus speaks of giving his life “for his friends” in 15:13.

(*John*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011], 297.)

It has often been observed that the “high priestly prayer” served not only as a petition, but as an exhortation or teaching moment for the disciples. Jesus’ willingness to consecrate himself for the task at hand was a model for the disciples. Though Jesus prayed for the Father to “Sanctify them in the truth,” he knew that they would also need to dedicate themselves to following the truth he had taught them: their sanctification came in conjunction with their being sent into the world (v. 18). Jesus’ commitment of himself to the coming passion was for the disciples’ benefit as well as the world’s: “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth” (v. 19).

This is precisely what we do when churches ordain clergy, as a church we “sanctify” or “consecrate” or “set them apart” for the cause of the ministry – but the church’s action is really an endorsement of the candidate’s own decision to devote his or her life to serving Christ.

Though less formal, all believers may be “sanctified” or “set apart” as Christ followers, but such consecration goes hand in hand with our own commitment to follow Jesus and be “of Christ” rather than “of the world.”