

# “ ‘I Pray That They Can Also Be One in Us’ ”



## SABBATH—OCTOBER 13

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** John 17:1–5; John 17:9–19; John 17:20–26; Mark 9:38–41; 1 John 2:3–6; John 13:34, 35.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘I pray not only for these followers but also for those who will believe in me because of their [my followers'] teaching. Father, I pray that all who believe in me can be one. You are in me and I am in you. I pray that they [everyone who believes in me] can also be one in us. Then the world [all the people on the earth] will believe that you sent me’ ” (John 17:20, 21, ERV).



“In this prayer, Jesus fully gives Himself to God the Father as an offering for our sins. . . . Jesus prays for everyone that He will soon die for.”—F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel [the Good News] of [from the book of] John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), page 328, adapted.

**WHAT MATTERED MOST TO JESUS** before He died? John answers that question in John 13–17. In these five important chapters, John tells us Jesus' last words to His followers. Then Jesus prays (John 17). Some people say that Jesus' prayer shows us that He is our High Priest. A high priest is a holy leader who works to save his people.

“In this prayer, Jesus fully gives Himself to God the Father as an offering for our sins. Jesus is both our High Priest and our sin offering. Jesus prays for everyone that He will soon die for. That includes Jesus' followers at the time and the people who will later believe in Him.”—F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel [the Good News] of [from the book of] John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), page 328, adapted.

Jesus' prayer shows His deep wish for His followers to be in agreement (John 17:9, 10). This week we will study Jesus' prayer for His people to be joined as one in Him. We will ask: What did Jesus pray for? Who were the ones that Jesus prayed for? What does His prayer mean to us today?

**JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF (John 17:1–5)**

Let us look more closely at Jesus' prayer for us as our High Priest. You will remember from yesterday's study that a high priest is a holy leader who works to save his people. Jesus' prayer is divided into three parts. First, Jesus prays for Himself (John 17:1–5). Next, Jesus prays for His followers (John 17:6–19). Finally, Jesus prays for the people who will later believe in Him (John 17:20–25).

**Read Jesus' prayer for Himself in John 17:1–5. What does Jesus pray for? What does this prayer mean to us?**

Jesus asks God to help Him. In the past, Jesus said that it was not the right time for Him to die (John 2:4; John 7:30; John 8:20). But He knows that now is the right time for Him to offer to die for our sins. Jesus needs God to make Him strong. Then Jesus can complete His work on earth. This awful time in Jesus' life is a time for prayer.

Jesus will give His Father glory by doing everything that God asks Him to do. Jesus must accept the Cross. What does that mean: "Jesus must accept the cross"? Does it mean that Jesus had no choice? No. It means that Jesus chose to use the power that God gave Him. Jesus used His power to choose to die for us. So, Jesus did not die against His wishes. He was willing to die to give His Father glory. The Cross was the reason why Jesus was born as a human. He came in a human body and chose to die on the cross for the sins of everyone on earth.

**John 17:13 tells us what everlasting life is. What is it? What does it mean to know God?**

Jesus tells us that everlasting life comes from knowing our God. Our knowing God comes from understanding what Jesus did at the Cross. We get this understanding about Jesus when we connect with God the Father. As humans, we often limit our knowledge to facts and information. But Jesus wants to show us that real knowledge is very deep. It is a real, personal connection with God. Jesus came to this earth to guide us humans in our search for knowledge about God and to help us find agreement and peace.

**What is the difference between knowing about God and really knowing who God is?**



**Jesus tells us that everlasting life comes from our knowing God. Our knowing God comes from understanding what Jesus did at the Cross.**

**JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS FOLLOWERS (John 17:9–19)**

**In John 17:9–19, Jesus prays for His followers. What does Jesus ask God the Father to do for them?**

After Jesus prays for Himself, He prays for His followers. Jesus' followers are in danger of losing their faith in Him in the days ahead. Jesus will no longer be with them. So, He asks God the Father to take care of them.

Jesus asks the Father to protect His followers from the evil on this earth. Jesus does not pray for the people on this earth who are against God's plan for His people (1 John 5:19). But the earth is the place where Jesus' followers will serve Him. So, Jesus prays that God will keep His followers safe. Yes, Jesus cares deeply about everyone. He is the Savior. His death is for everyone who believes in Him. But the success of the Good News depends on His followers who will go and preach about it to other people. That is why Jesus prays for His followers. Jesus prays that the devil will not defeat them (Matthew 6:13).

But Satan already defeated one of Jesus' followers: Judas. Earlier that evening, Jesus told His followers that one of them chose to turn against Him (John 13:18–30). Jesus even told His followers that the Bible warned about it before it happened (Psalm 41:9). Judas was not forced to turn against Jesus. During the Last Supper, Jesus showed Judas love and offered him friendship (John 13:26–30). "At the Last Supper, Jesus proved He was God by showing Judas that He knew what Judas was going to do before he did it. With deep love, Jesus included Judas in the work He did for His followers. But Judas closed his heart to Jesus' love."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 720, adapted.

Jesus knows that jealousy may separate His followers as it did in the past. So, He prays for them to be joined as one in mind and heart (John 17:11). Only God can join together His people in one mind and heart. Our being joined together in this way happens because the Father and Son are joined together as One. We must be one in heart and mind so that our work for God will be a success.

As God's people, we also must fully accept Bible truth and become holy. Then we will be ready to work for Him. We must be changed by the truth that we teach to other people.

**How must we live our lives to show we are "not part of the world [the people on this earth]" (John 17:14, NIV)?**



**We must be one in heart and mind so that our work for God will be a success.**

**“‘FOR EVERYONE WHO WILL BELIEVE IN ME’ ”**  
**(John 17:20, NlrV)**

Jesus finished praying for His followers. Then He prayed “ ‘for everyone who will believe in me because of their [His followers’] message’ ” (John 17:20, NlrV).

**Read in John 17:20–26 about Jesus’ biggest wish for His future believers. What was Jesus’ wish for them? Why is it so important for His prayer to come true?**

The Father and Son are in perfect agreement. Jesus prays that His future believers will be in agreement with each other the same as the Father and the Son. What does it mean that the Father and Son are in perfect agreement? They always work together in perfect agreement in everything they do (John 5:20–23). Their hearts are joined together in love for sinners. Their love for people is so deep that the Father agreed to give His Son to save us. The Son wanted to give His life too (John 3:16; John 10:15).

Jesus prays for His followers to have the same love that the Father and Son have (John 13:35). When Jesus’ followers show His love to other people, then these people will see that Jesus’ followers have a real connection with Jesus and the Father. “Christians who are joined together in heart and mind show to other people that the Good News is true.”—Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), page 498, adapted. Our agreement in heart and mind also is named unity. Our unity with each other will show everyone on earth that Jesus is the Savior. True unity is not something we can hide. We must show it. If people cannot see our unity, then how can they believe that the Good News about Jesus is true?

“God wants all of His people to join together as one in what they believe. Just before Jesus died on the cross, He prayed for His followers to be joined together in heart and mind, just as the Father and Son are. When the people on the earth see Jesus’ followers joined together in heart and mind, they will believe that God sent Jesus to save them. Jesus prayed this wonderful, loving prayer for us. . . .

“We must pray for God to answer this prayer and make it come true in our own lives.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [messages] for the Church*, volume 4, page 17, adapted.

**What can we do in our lives and in our churches to build the unity that Jesus talks about?**



**“When the people on the earth see Jesus’ followers joined together in heart and mind, they will believe that God sent Jesus to save them.” —Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [messages] for the Church*, volume 4, page 17, adapted.**

## AGREEMENT AMONG CHRISTIANS (Mark 9:38–41)

**In Mark 9:38–41 and John 10:16, Jesus tells us not to judge or shut out people who do not match our idea of who His followers should be. Why does Jesus give us this warning?**

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Jesus' prayer in John 17 is a message from Him for their church to have unity. As we learned yesterday, unity is agreement between church members. Unity means that church members feel, think, and believe the same way about God. As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe we must join together to do the work that God gave us: we must share the Three Angels' Messages with everyone on earth.

But what about our unity with other Christians? Does Jesus want us to connect with them? What does His prayer in John 17 tell us? The Bible is clear: God has loyal followers, even in Babylon. Babylon is a word picture for churches that have turned away from Bible truths (Revelation 18:4).

At the same time, we know from the book of Revelation that many people will turn away from Bible truth in the end time. Also, many false Christians will join together with the government to harm God's loyal followers (Revelation 13:1–17). For these reasons, Adventists have always been very careful about joining together with other churches.

So, in what ways should we connect with Christians from other churches? Here is some wise advice from Ellen G. White on the topic: "I have been shown that we must not avoid the W.C.T.U. [Women's Christian Temperance (the choice not to drink alcohol) Union (workers)]. We may join with them to share the message about the dangers of drinking alcohol. But our working with them does not mean we are not loyal to the Sabbath truth. When we work with the W.C.T.U. workers, we get the chance to show them that we like their message against alcohol. We also get their help in sharing that message. When they join with us, they will learn new truths that the Holy Spirit waits to bring to their hearts."—*Welfare [help given to the poor] Ministry [work done for God]*, page 163, adapted.

Ellen White's words give us some important rules we can follow. First, we can join with other Christians to help people. Second, when we work with other Christians, we must not give up the Bible truths that we believe. Third, we can use the chance to share Bible truths with them.



**As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that we must join together to do the work that God gave us: we must share the Three Angels' Messages with everyone on earth.**

## JESUS: A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE OF LOVE (John 13:34, 35)

In John 17:3, Jesus says that our having everlasting life means that we know who God is. Read 1 John 2:3–6. What do these verses say that our knowing God really means? How do we show our knowledge about God in our daily lives?

Many people today say that they are good citizens. They obey the laws of their country. Often these same citizens will say that we do not need to worry about obeying God's law anymore. But that is not what the Bible teaches. "Our knowing God does not depend first on our obeying God's law. But our obeying God's law shows other people that we already know God and that we love Him. So, knowledge about God is important. But knowledge does not do us any good unless we use it. Knowledge about God leads us to act on what we know about Him."—Ekkehardt Mueller, *The Letters of John* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 2009), page 39, adapted. Jesus Himself says that our loving Him leads to our obedience (John 14:15, 21). We show our love for Jesus when we keep His law (1 John 5:2, 3).

**What new command did Jesus give His followers? Read John 13:34, 35. How does this new command connect to unity? As we learned, unity is agreement between church members. Unity also means that church members feel, think, and believe the same way about God.**

God's command to His followers to love their neighbor was not new. God gave this command to Moses (Leviticus 19:18). What is new is Jesus' command for His followers to love each other **as He loved them**. Jesus showed His followers an example of unselfish love. This love became the new way for Christians to show love.

What a wonderful example of love! Jesus' whole life showed love in action. Jesus showed us what it means to live a life of grace. Grace is God's forgiveness, mercy, and power over sin. When God's grace fills our lives, we will not live to make ourselves happy. We will serve God always. We will not be selfish. We will behave the same as Jesus. He never stopped doing good for people. He gave up anything that stood in the way of helping them. The same rules that led Jesus should lead His people in their work.

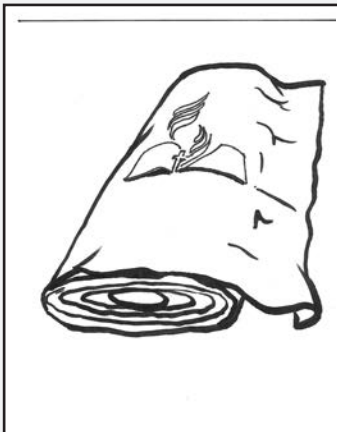
**How can we show Jesus' unselfish love to other people?**



**Jesus never stopped doing good for people. He gave up anything that stood in the way of helping them.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “God’s Law Immutable [does not change],” pages 443–446, in *The Great [worldwide] Controversy [war between Christ and Satan]*. Read the articles “Denominations [different churches], Relations [connections] to Other [different churches],” pages 763, 764, and “Roman Catholic Church,” page 1110, in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*.

“The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a worldwide church with many local churches. . . . But Adventists do not limit the idea about God’s true church to only their church. At the same time, Adventists do not say that other Christian churches make up God’s true church either. Adventists believe that God’s true church is made of all people who truly believe in Him. God knows who they are. But Adventists do say that they are God’s special end-time church. Another name for this church is God’s remnant. [A remnant is a small piece of cloth left over from a big roll of cloth. A remnant is a word picture for Seventh-day Adventists. This word picture shows us that God separated us from other people groups on this earth to be His special people at the end time. As God’s remnant church, we obey Bible truth.] Adventists believe they are God’s special remnant living in the end time that the Bible talks about in Revelation 12:17 and Revelation 12–14.”—Ekkehardt Mueller, “The Universality [having to do with every member] of the Church in the New Testament,” in Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, editor, *Message, Mission [special task done for God], and Unity [agreement] of [in] the Church* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013), page 37, adapted.



A remnant is a small piece of cloth left over from a big roll of cloth. A remnant is a word picture for Seventh-day Adventists. This word picture shows us that God separated us from other people groups on this earth to be His special people at the end time. As God’s remnant church, we obey Bible truth.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Jesus wanted the church in New Testament times to experience unity. You will remember that unity is agreement between church members. Unity also means that church members feel, think, and believe the same way about God. What does Jesus’ desire for unity among believers in New Testament times show us about how much He wants us to experience unity in the church today?
- ② Has your local church worked with other Christians to solve problems in the community? If yes, was that a good experience? How can we work with other Christians and, at the same time, stay loyal to Bible truth?