

Praying with Jesus

Part 4

Last week, we considered the first of three sections associated with the High Priestly Prayer. If you remember, in versus 1-5, Jesus prayed for Himself. The hour for which Jesus stepped down from heaven's glory into our sin infested world had arrived.

It was time for Jesus to do what God demanded that we do, but were helpless to do - perfectly fulfill the righteous Law of God. It was time for Jesus to offer His life as an atoning blood sacrifice and ransom for God's chosen saints. It was time for our great King to become the sacrificial Lamb. It was time for the sinless Savior to become sin, endure God's wrath, and die in place of those who God would redeem by His sovereign grace and goodness.

With this hour at hand - this crucible of suffering, persecution, and death - Jesus fixed His gaze upon heaven, comforted Himself by declaring God's fatherly love, and prayed that God would glorify Himself by saving lost souls thru His blood sacrifice and death.

Friends, the Gospel reminds us that servants are not greater than their master. (John 15:20) If you're a Christian, Jesus is your Master and you are His servant. This means that trials, tests, sufferings, and eventually death will enter your life. (1 Pet. 4:12-16) When they do, like Jesus, we should be quick to fix our gaze on the eternal hope, promise, and glory of heaven. We should be quick to comfort ourselves with the eternal love and goodness of our heavenly Father, who adopted us by grace thru faith in Jesus. And, we should diligently pray that God would glorify Himself thru our crucible by drawing lost souls to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Trials, tests, sufferings, and death are purposed by God to increase our affections for heaven, deepen our delight in His fatherly love, and glorify His name thru our faithful testimony to the Cross of Christ.

Transition

Today, we continue to explore the greatest of all prayers – the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus Christ. In verse 6, Jesus shifts the focus of His prayer onto the disciples of His earthly ministry.

Let's read together Jesus' prayer for His disciples. **[Read John 17:6-19]**

As we continue to learn to pray like Jesus, I want to connect and apply Jesus' prayer for His disciples to parenthood. Parent's, let me make a categorically true biblical statement that should immediately raise your listening antenna: **A child is a parent's disciple!**

Notice what I did not say – **A child is a church's disciple!**

In our text this morning, we are reminded that Jesus' disciples were handpicked by God the Father and entrusted to Him for a specific purpose. Likewise, children are created by God, for His glory, and entrusted to parents for discipleship. Children are a parent's disciples.

God's holy Word is clear on this matter. Listen carefully to God's command to Israel:

“And these words that I have commanded you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deut. 7:6-9)

This command from God comes on the heels of Moses giving Israel the Ten Commandments. Notice that God did not command Moses or Aaron to teach the Ten Commandments to Israel's children. No! God was speaking to the people of Israel. God was speaking Israeli parents.

Sadly, there is an unbiblical attitude and expectation among many Christian parents in today's evangelical Church. This attitude and expectation believes children and teenagers, although born to Christian parents, are to be primarily disciplined by the Church.

Parents, this just isn't true – and it isn't true because it isn't biblical.

The Bible is clear! Children are gracious rewards given from God to parents, not churches. Children are fruit of the womb. To my knowledge, churches do not have wombs. However, women do. Trust me on this; I know what I'm talking about. I watched in profound amazement as my wife, not the church, birthed our four precious children.

Now, let me make myself clear. I am not saying or even implying that the Church has no responsibility for the discipleship and equipping of children and teenagers. Don't hear me say that, because I'm not. However, what I am most definitely saying is that the primary responsibility and privilege of discipling and equipping children and teenagers falls squarely on the shoulders of parents – not the Church.

Parents, listen carefully!

It is God's creative design and plan for the family that you serve as the primary discipler and equipper of your children. To abdicate this role to the Church is disobedience, plain and simple.

It is for this reason I believe Jesus' prayer for His disciples can be directly connected and applied to parenthood. As parents, just like with Jesus, God has given us precious lives to disciple and send out into the world as equipped ambassadors of the Gospel.

EXEGESIS

With this foundation in place – that parents are the primary disciplers of children - let's turn our attention to the careful examination of Jesus' High Priestly Prayer for His disciples.

Discipleship Goals for Parent

Before we look at the specific prayer requests Jesus offered on behalf of His disciples, I want to first present parents with two primary discipleship goals – both of which are found in this text. These two goals were none other the Jesus' goals for His disciples.

Notice carefully how Jesus describes His disciples before He prays for them.

“I have manifested Your name to the people whom You gave Me out of this world. Yours they were, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your Word. Now they know that everything that You have given 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 the truth that I came from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.” (vs.6-8)

What a powerful confession by Jesus. In this text, Jesus reveals two primary goals He had for His disciples.

To begin with, the first thing Jesus confesses about His ministry to His disciples is that He “manifested” God's name before them. Above everything else, the goal of Jesus' discipleship was to exalt the name and character of God before His disciples.

So, it goes without saying that Jesus' discipleship goals should be the same goals we have as Christian parents. Thus, the overarching discipleship goal of every Christian parent is to **manifest the name of God**.

Now, what exactly does “manifest” mean? To manifest is to make known and reveal something or someone. What should we make known and reveal before our children? The name of God! Our chief goal is to exalt the name of God before our children.

Here, it's important to note that the “name of God” extends beyond the mere name of God and emphasizes the fullness of His character. One commentator calls it “the sum total of God's perfections.”¹

The chief goal of every Christian parent is to do exactly what Jesus did with His disciples – make known the sum total of God's perfections. Our goal as parents is to make known the holy, majestic, and glorious character of God to our children.

¹ R.C. Sproul, *The Gospel of John*, St. Andrews Expository Commentary, p.322.

How do we make known the perfections and glory of God's character to our children? Our second goal helps us accomplish the chief the goal.

With our chief goal in place, our second goal as parents is to teach our children the Word of God. In verse 8, Jesus says, **"I have given them the words You gave Me..."**

Jesus taught and planted the very words of God into the lives of His disciples. Other than exalting the name and character of God before our children on a daily basis, **there is no greater calling in our lives than to teach and plant God's Word in the hearts of our children.**

Is this not exactly what God commanded the Israelites to do with their children in Deuteronomy? God commanded the Israelites to teach His commandments diligently, consistently, and systematically to their children. But, notice this parents – in order to do this effectively, you must first be a mother or father who loves God's Word and establishes it in *your* heart.

Look, you cannot teach what you do not know. That's why God commanded parents to establish His commandments on their own hearts before He commanded them to teach His commandments to their children. **Discipling your children is an overflow of your personal discipleship.** Did you catch that parent? Your child's spiritual growth is profoundly influenced by your own growth.

So, our two-fold goal as parents is to...

- Exalt the name and character of God.
- Exalt the Word of God.

Now, before we move into Jesus' specific prayer requests, notice the result of Jesus exalting the character of God and the Word of God before His disciples. Listen carefully to the second half of vs. 8:

"For I have given them the words that You gave Me, and they have received them and have come to know the truth that I came from You; and they have believed that You sent Me."

Christian parent, I ask you – **"Is this not the greatest desire of your heart?"** That your children, like the disciples of Jesus Christ, would receive God's Word, come to know the truth of Christ as Incarnate God, Messiah, and Savior, and believe on Him for salvation and eternal life?

Is this not the deepest longing of your soul? That your precious children will believe the Gospel as Truth and surrender their lives to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?

Is it? It sure should be!

Jesus' Fourfold Prayer for His Disciples

In vs. 9-16, Jesus prays specifically for His disciples. In fact, He prays four specific blessings over His disciples.

Preservation

First off, Jesus prays for the preservation of His disciples. In vs.9-11, Jesus prays...

"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one."

Jesus first request of the Father on behalf of His disciples is to **"keep them in Your name...."** This word "keep" literally means to keep watch over and guard.

Of course, this prayer in no way implies that a child of God can ever be lost. The Scriptures are clear on this point, God doesn't lose those He redeems for His glory. The Good Shepherd does not lose His sheep. In fact, Jesus says as much in verse 12 – **"I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost...."**

Yet, the fact remains that, as Jesus noted, His disciples would remain in this world after He ascended to His throne of glory in heaven.

So, what Jesus is asking the Father to do is preserve His disciples. One commentator offers a useful analogy.

A father and young son are walking along train tracks. There is danger at hand, so the father holds the child's hand. If the boy's safety depends in his own strength to hold his father's hand, he is in grave danger – he could lose his grip and wander into the path of a train. But, what keeps the young boy from destruction is not the boy's grip on his father's hand but the father's grip on his son's hand.

This is what Jesus is asking the Father to do – to keep His grip on the disciples. Jesus knows we are prone to loosen our grip on God and the truth of His Word. So, Jesus prays that God the Father, when our grip weakens, would keep us firmly in His sovereign and secure grip.

Parents, our children and teenagers are no different. Like us, they too are prone to weaken their grip on Christ and the Word of God. At every turn, temptation lurks and our Enemy prowls like a lion waiting to devour. As parents, we should pray earnestly for our children. We should pray that God the Father hold them firmly in His gracious and loving grip when their grip weakens – and it will.

The Joy of Christ

Second, Jesus prays for Christlike joy in His disciples. In vs. 13, Jesus prays...

“But now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.”

Jesus’ second request of the Father on behalf of His disciples was for them **“to have His joy fulfilled in themselves.”** (vs.13)

Joy should not be confused with happiness. Happiness is an emotion that flutters and changes with the wind. One minute our children are happy; the next minute they are sad. Happiness is influenced both positively and negatively by virtually everything in our lives – relationships, food, the success of our favorite sports team, weather, tax season, and our jobs are just a few of the wide spectrum of things that influence our happiness meter.

Jesus is not talking about the happiness of His disciples. He knows that His disciples will be persecuted and even martyred for their witness to the Gospel. Happiness is not what Jesus is praying for.

Jesus is praying for joy. Joy is different than happiness. Happiness is grounded in our temporary emotions. Joy is grounded in our eternal position as adopted son and daughters of God. Our emotions and situations change in the blink of an eye, which means so does our happiness. Our position in Christ never changes. We are adopted, justified, reconciled, and forgiven saints.

God’s eternal favor, affections, and blessings are ours thru Christ. This is why Christians can and should have joy in the midst of life’s most challenging, painful, and heartbreaking seasons of life.

Jesus didn’t pray for His disciples happiness. Jesus prayed for His disciples joy.

Parents, we should be praying that our children are captured and filled with Christlike joy. We should be praying that their position in Christ will overtake the ups and downs of this hard and disappointing life.

We should be praying that in the midst of the dating breakups, failed tests, fractured friendships, peer pressure that leads to being ostracized, team losses, admission rejections, and sin struggles that the joy of Christ would trump their sorrows, disappointments, hurts, and losses.

This is what Christ prayed for His disciples. And, this is what Christian parents should pray for their children - Christlike joy in the midst of a broken life and broken world. Why? Our position in Christ and our hope in heaven are guaranteed and untouched by the hard knocks of life.

Protection from the Evil One

Third, Jesus prays for protection for His disciples. In vs. 14-15, Jesus prays...

“I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.”

Jesus' third request of the Father on behalf of His disciples was that He would **“keep them from the Evil One”** (vs.15)

Parents, the Apostle Peter reminds us that **“our Adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”** (1 Peter 5:8)

Our children's enemy is none other than Satan, the Deceiver, the Liar, the Accuser of the Brethren, the Tempter, and the Author of Sin. Our enemy wants to devour our children with lies, accusations, temptations, and destructive sin that produces guilt, despair, and hopelessness.

The mission of our enemy is void of rest. He is prowling right now and you can rest assured that He has your son and/or daughter in the crosshairs of his schemes. Parent, you can rest assured our enemy knows your child's name and weaknesses.

Jesus asked the heavenly Father to shield the disciples with spiritual protection.

Notice what else Jesus prayed for. Jesus prayed that His disciples would remain in the world. Interesting, don't you think? In a day and time when Christian parents will do virtually anything to remove their children from the world, Jesus actually prayed that His disciples would remain in the world.

Parents, God's desire is to protect your children from the Enemy while leaving them in the world and using their holy lives to be salt and light in a infected and dark culture.

As Christian parents, we should be praying for God's spiritual protection as we place our children in the world. We should praying that as God protects their minds, hearts, souls from the enemy, that He will use their holy lives to sting sin and expose the Truth of Jesus Christ and the Gospel to their peers living in sin.

Sanctification in Truth

Finally, Jesus prays for the holiness of His disciples. In vs. 16-19, Jesus prays...

“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate Myself, that they may also be sanctified in truth.”

Jesus' final request of His heavenly Father on behalf of His disciples was for their **"sanctification in truth."**

As Jesus sent them into the world rather than taking them from the world, He prayed that the Father would sanctify them. Jesus prayed that the disciples would live in this world as holy men whose lives brought glory to God.

Parents, one of the constant prayers we should pray for our children is for their sanctification. We should be praying daily that God, in His grace and mercy, would transform them into holy saints used by Him for the glory of His name and the advancement of His Gospel and Kingdom.

Notice if you will that our sanctification is anchored to the Truth. Both times Jesus prays for the sanctification of His disciples, the request is linked to the truth. After His resurrection, Jesus would send the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, who would bring to remembrance all that Jesus had taught the disciples.

As Christians, we are promised that the Spirit of Truth indwells us – as well as our Christian children. Our prayer as parents should be that the Spirit of Truth would plant a love and passion for God's Word in the hearts of our children. Why? Because it is Truth that sanctifies the believer.

Parent, listen carefully!

Neither you nor your child can grow in holiness if the Word of God is largely absent from your life and home. The Truth of God's Word, applied by the Spirit of Truth, produces God-glorifying sanctification in our lives as well as the lives of our children.

Are you praying daily for your child's holiness? Have you established God's Word, the Word of Truth, as the foundation for your home?

Closing

Parents, thru the High Priestly Prayer of Christ for His disciples, we are challenged to pray four specific prayers for our children. We are to pray that...

- God would **preserve** them for His glory.
- God would **fill** them with the joy of Christ.
- God would **protect** them from the Evil One.
- God would **sanctify** them thru the Spirit of Truth and the Word of Truth.

If Jesus prayed this way for His beloved disciples, surely every Christian parent should pray these same prayers for their beloved disciples – their children.