

THE SOUTHWESTERNER



Home of the Southwest School of Bible Studies

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THE LORD'S PRAYER FOR UNITY

JOHN 17:20-23

CODY WESTBROOK

Just hours before His death, in the midst of the most difficult time of His life, you were on the Lord's mind. So was I, and so was every Christian who has ever or will ever live on this earth. The Lord's prayer in the garden is recorded for us in John 17. In that prayer Jesus spoke to the Father about Himself (John 17:1-5), the disciples (John 17:6-19), and every New Testament Christian who would ever exist (John 17:20-23). Specifically, Jesus was interested in the unity of His people. As we think about the prayer of our Savior pertaining to unity, there are five words that come to mind.

- **Desire.** In the moments leading up to His death, Jesus was concerned with the unity of His people. That was His desire, but is it ours? Unity is beautiful (Ps. 133:1) and we must endeavor to keep it (Eph. 4:3). We must live in peace with one another (2 Cor. 13:11), and pursue the things that make it possible (Rom. 14:19). But none of that is achievable without desire. If unity was important enough to occupy our Lord's attention in His prayer then it should be important enough to occupy our attention as well.
- **Object.** Jesus' desire is the unity of "those who will believe in Me through their word." There is an emphasis on the word of God in John 17. The disciples kept God's word (v. 6); Jesus gave them God's word (v. 8, 14), sanctification is possible through the word (v. 17), and unity is made possible through the word (v. 20). Jesus did not pray for the unity of all religiously minded people or the drawing together of all man-made denominational bodies. He prayed for the unity of HIS people—

those who love and obey the word of God.

- **Pattern.** Our unity is to be patterned after the unity of the Father and the Son. Jesus said, "...that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You..." Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). The Father and Son have perfect unity in purpose (John 6:37-40), word (John 12:50; 14:10), judgment (John 8:16), work (John 10:38), and being (John 1:1-2; 18). There is no greater example for God's people to follow (cf. 1 Pet. 2:18).
- **Location.** Unity is found "in us"—that is, in the Father and the Son. Unity cannot be found outside of the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6) where a variety of contradictory beliefs and practices exist. Rather, unity is found among those who have been added to the body of Christ (Acts 2:47), speak the same thing (1 Cor. 1:10), and abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11).
- **Goal.** Note that there are three: "that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." There is both an internal and external thrust to unity. Internally, Jesus desires our perfection, or completeness. He wants His people to come to a completed or perfect state of unity. Externally, our unity tells the world that God loves His people and Christ came to die for them. This is the message of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." When is the last time

you thought about unity in terms of evangelism?

Jesus considered unity to be so important that He included it in His prayer when He knew that soldiers were on their way to arrest Him and set Him in the direction of the cross. How important is it to you?

SW



SINGING WHEN MERRY

Rob L. Whitacre '97

Farouk Radwan wrote, “One of the facts about the operation of the mind is that everything that you hear or see programs your mind.” The strength of song should not be overlooked. One study found, “Those who listen to romantic songs after breakups recover 10 times slower than those who don’t.” Indeed, what we sing has a deep and profound impact upon our minds. No one understands this better than God. “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms” (James 5:13).

It is Partial: Could it be that God is giving us an inspired prescription for man’s mental merriness when James penned those inspired words? As long as we live in this world, we cannot and never will be in a state of continued euphoria. “Is any...” helps man realize the fragile nature of his condition. Sometimes we will be afflicted while at other times we will be merry. I have often found that worship in song had a powerful effect upon my mood. There have been times I have entered into the worship of God with a heavy heart, a beat body, and a sorrowful spirit that has been refreshed and renewed by the power of song.

Adam Clark wrote, It is natural for a man to sing when he is cheerful and happy. Now no subject can be more noble than that which is Divine: and as God alone is the author of all that good which makes a man happy, then his praise should be the subject of the song of him who is merry.

It is Possible: No, as James indicated, we won’t always be merry, but we can achieve it from time to time. According to Thayer, “merry” means to “to be of good spirits, gladden, to be joyful.” Even when conditions are not so cheerful, the child of God can find an inner joy that can be manifested in song.

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them” (Acts 16:25). Instead of having a pity party, these prisoners of Rome lifted their voices in praise to God. We must remember true joy is a fruit of the Spirit that is produced when we follow His word (Gal. 5:22-23; John 6:63).

It is Pointed: We must sing psalms. The singing of scripture and the psalms of praise should be the source of our songs. Humanistic hymns are both dangerous and demoralizing to the spiritual man. Singing has the power to infiltrate the depths of man’s mind and spirit with its words. This is why Paul wrote,

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16).

God knew song was one way to place His word in the human heart. How long can we sing about adultery, drinking, gambling, sex, and cheating before they dwell in our hearts? How long can we sing of sin before it sits in our spirit? Therefore, we must be careful about what we sing. Have you ever examined the words you sing while listening to your iPod? Would Jesus sing that song? Perhaps one reason you are not merry is because your song selection is not merry!

It is Polemic: Singing psalms is God’s defense against the devil. The Psalmist wrote, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11). It has long been my contention that the book of Psalms is more than the Jewish hymnal but also is a handbook for good spiritual and mental health. One preacher wrote, “For every human sigh there is a divine Psalm!” (For every feeling you can have...there’s a passage in the Psalms to teach you how to properly respond to that feeling). There is something about our praise in song to God that is able to affect every aspect of man (mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual). There is no doubt God’s plan for praise in song was a form of medicine for the mind and a shield for the soul. God knew what He was doing, when He directed us to sing with the “fruit of our lips” (Heb. 13:15).

The Psalmist penned, “Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely” (Psa. 147:1).

The Defender, Mt. Vernon church of Christ, Weekly Bulletin, December 17, 2017.

SW



SOUTHWEST

Southwest School of Bible Studies

FOURTH QUARTER—CLASS SCHEDULE

Dates: April 29, 2019 -July 14, 2019

MONDAY — WEDNESDAY — FRIDAY

8:00-8:50	1	Messiahship	L. Summers
	2	Minor Prophets (II)	C. Bond
9:00-9:50	1	1, 2 Kings	L. Summers
	2	Ezekiel	S. Lloyd
10:00-10:30	CHAPEL		
10:40-11:30	1	1, 2 Chronicles	C. Bond
	2	Hebrews	S. Lloyd
11:30-1:00	LUNCH		
1:00-2:00	1	GSP	Staff
	2	GSP	Staff
2:00-2:50	1	Expository Preaching	S. Lloyd
	2	Teaching Methods	C. Bond
3:00-3:50	1	Logic	L. Summers
	2	1, 2, 3 John	S. Lloyd

TUESDAY & THURSDAY

Tuesday

8:00-11:30	1	1, 2 Samuel	R. Sherffius
	2	Preaching Practicum	W. Jones

Chapel from 9:30-10:00

1:00-3:50	1	Acts	R. Sherffius
	2	Personal Evangelism	T. Kennedy

Thursday

8:00-11:30	1	Proverbs, Eccl. Song of S.	T. Kennedy
	2	1, 2 Peter, James	W. Jones

Chapel from 9:30-10:00

1:00-3:50	1	Advanced NT Studies	C. Westbrook
	2	Revelation	T. Kennedy

Record for the Week of April 28, 2019

Bible Class	147
Morning Assembly.....	209
Evening Assembly	161
Iglesia de Cristo	
Morning Assembly.....	N/A
Contribution	\$N/A

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:

Betty Kellsmurphy is in Austin Lakes Hospital. Please call the church office for visiting information.

Charles Houston has been homebound with back issues.

Health Concerns: Lois Ewald, Debra Johnson, Diana Rodriguez, Clarence Whetstone, Angela Young.

Shut-ins: Jeannette Hansen, Rosemary Garrett, Jon Little, Bobby Johnson, Elvira Martinez, Ginny Oswald, Jan Smith.

Others: Sonny & Lee Barr, Bill Ellison, Bonnie Gomer, CK Holt, Deborah Hoover, Nell McCown, Bill & Nancy Ponds, Cheri Sarten, Kay Westbrook, Gib Young.

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Brett Gerhardt
David Locke
Bill Siebert

Preachers:

Cody Westbrook

SOUTHWEST SCHOOL OF BIBLE STUDIES

Director: Steven Lloyd
Assoc. Director: Clay Bond

WORSHIP AND STUDY OPPORTUNITIES: Sunday, Bible Classes 9:30 am, Worship 10:30 am and 6:00 pm
Tuesday, 10:00 am (September-May), Men's and Ladies' Bible Classes | Wednesday, Bible Classes, 7:00 pm
RADIO PROGRAM – *The Word of Life* | Sunday, 7:30 am | KLBJ, 590-AM and 99.7 FM | online at swcofc.org/word-of-life