

Jesus' High Priestly Prayer—Glory (John 17:1-5)

Jesus often prayed. It would have been a blessing to hear His prayers. Thankfully, the Bible records one of Jesus' lengthier prayers, giving us an example to follow. At the conclusion of His Upper Room Discourse, Jesus prayed a prayer that is recorded in John 17, a prayer that preceded Jesus' plea to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. This prayer anticipates Jesus' post-crucifixion glory and includes Jesus' intercession for His followers. It has been rightly called His "High Priestly Prayer" since in it Jesus intercedes for His people. Jesus begins by praying for Himself (verses 1-5), then for His disciples (verses 6-19), and finally for those who would believe in Him based on His disciples' message (verses 20-26). Jesus was praying for you and for me! In fact, Jesus intercedes for us constantly, a comforting reality during times of testing (Hebrews 7:25). Four key terms come to the surface in Jesus' prayer—glory, given, world, and one. From these terms we can follow a progression in Jesus' prayer that focuses on the glory of God, the identity of believers as given by God, the purity of believers as distinct from the world, and the unity of believers as one with Jesus and each other. John 17:1-5 focuses on the glory of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. From these verses we discover that glorifying God is the ultimate purpose of life.

Glorifying God is the ultimate objective of prayer (17:1).

The objective of prayer, like the objective of life itself, is to glorify God. Too often we pray for our own personal benefit or for the benefit of others. But all prayer should have God's glory as its ultimate objective.

Jesus prayed that the Father would glorify Him (17:1a).

After Jesus had finished teaching His disciples in the Upper Room, He lifted His eyes toward heaven as a posture of expectancy and He prayed. Jesus began His prayer by addressing the Father and stating that His hour had come at last. Previously Jesus had stated that His hour had not yet arrived (John 2:4; 7:8; compare 7:30; 8:20). But on the verge of His crucifixion Jesus declared that His hour had come (John 12:23; compare 13:1). Jesus had a keen sense of His purpose and the timing of the fulfillment of His redemptive work. Because His time had come, Jesus asked the Father to glorify the Son. The work of redemption would bring glory to Jesus our Savior. That work would include the crucifixion as well as the resurrection and Jesus' return to heaven. Jesus prayed that the work He would accomplish for our salvation would bring Him glory.

Jesus declared His desire to glorify the Father (17:1b).

This was not a selfish prayer on Jesus' part since Jesus inherently deserves glory. Besides, Jesus desired to be glorified so that He could in turn glorify the Father. "Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you." To "glorify" God means to acknowledge and adore Him for His inherent splendor, His divine attributes, and His powerful works. We honor God for who

He is and what He's done, enhancing the glory of His name and nature. Jesus prayed that the Father would so work in Him that He could further glorify the Father. This objective is the key to prayer. We must pray not simply for our own benefit but more specifically that God's answers to our prayers would enhance His glory.

**Fulfilling God's purpose for
our lives glorifies Him (17:2-4).**

The glory of God is the objective of our prayers. But by what means do we glorify God? Again, Jesus' prayer shows us that we glorify God by fulfilling His purpose for our lives.

The Father gave Jesus the authority to grant eternal life (17:2).

Jesus asked the Father to give Him glory just as the Father had already given Him authority over all people. That authority included the right to grant eternal life to those whom the Father gave Him. Jesus understood that those who followed Him were a gift from the Father. Because the Father had given followers to Jesus as well as spiritual authority in their lives, Jesus was able to give them eternal life. Jesus' death on the cross would make it possible for Jesus to give eternal life to all whom the Father gave Him.

Jesus described eternal life as a relational knowledge of both the Father and the Son (17:3).

At this point Jesus provides a succinct definition of eternal life. Eternal life is much more than merely unending life, since an endless life could be riddled with unpleasant experiences. Eternal life is an endless, restored, blissful relationship with God. Jesus said that eternal life is to know the only true God, that is, to have a relational knowledge of both the Father and the Son. Jesus describes Himself as having been sent by the Father, sent with a redemptive purpose. Through His redeeming work we can have a restored relationship with God. We have eternal life.

Jesus stated that He had glorified the Father by completing His redemptive work on earth (17:4).

Jesus links this gift of eternal life and the glory of God with His redemptive work. He said to the Father, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." Of course, Jesus had not yet gone to the cross, but in His mind this was a finished work. By fulfilling His purpose on earth Jesus brought glory to the Father. When we fulfill God's purpose for our lives we likewise glorify Him.

**Anticipating the glory of heaven
motivates us to glorify God (17:5).**

The objective of prayer is to glorify God and the means of glorifying God is by fulfilling His purpose in our lives. But what is the motivation for fulfilling God's purpose in our lives? Jesus identified the glory of heaven as a motivating influence in His life.

Jesus prayed that the Father would glorify Him in the Father's presence (17:5a).

Jesus repeated His prayer for the Father to glorify Him, this time adding that He desired to be glorified in the Father's presence ("with yourself"). While Jesus would receive glory for His redemptive work on the cross and His glorious resurrection, He would receive full and final glory when He returned to be with the Father in heaven.

Jesus described His glory as preexisting before creation (17:5b).

The glory of heaven was a glory that Jesus possessed prior to His incarnation. Jesus asked the Father to glorify Him with the shared glory He had enjoyed in heaven before the world began. Here we get a glimpse into the eternal relationship between God the Father and God the Son, as well as a basic understanding of Jesus' incarnation. The triune godhead shares in essential glory. When Jesus came into the world He surrendered the benefits of that glory in order to live among us and fulfill His redemptive purpose. Following His resurrection, Jesus returned to heaven where He once again enjoys the blessings of the fullness of divine glory, a glory that will be revealed to us at His second coming. Anticipating the glory of heaven encouraged Jesus in His humanity to press forward with His sacrificial death for us. We too can look forward to the joys and glories of heaven to motivate us as God's people. In so doing we remember that glorifying God is the ultimate purpose of life.