



SUNDAY SCHOOL May 17, 2026

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Gospel: John 17:1-17

Context: Jesus, nearing the end of His earthly ministry, lifts His eyes in prayer—first for Himself, then for His disciples, and ultimately for all who will follow Him—revealing His deepest desires for unity, truth, and eternal life.

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

“I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

“Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me.

“I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them.

“And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.

“Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me.

“I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.

“I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

OVERVIEW

John 17:1–17 is the opening portion of Jesus’ final recorded prayer before His arrest. He speaks of:

Glory (a mutual glorifying between Father and Son)

Eternal life (defined relationally, not spatially)

Protection and unity for His disciples

Truth and sanctification

This is not a public sermon—it’s an intimate, almost overheard conversation with God.



BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Immediately Before (John 13–16)

This prayer concludes the *Farewell Discourse*:

Washing of the disciples' feet (servanthood)

Promise of the Holy Spirit

Teaching on abiding, love, and persecution

By the time we reach John 17, Jesus has *told* them everything—they just don't fully grasp it yet.

Immediately After (John 18)

Jesus is arrested

Betrayal by Judas

Trial begins

Broader Context of the Gospel of Gospel of John

John emphasizes:

Jesus as the **Word made flesh**

Repeated themes of **belief, light vs. darkness, truth**

Eternal life as something that **begins now**, not just after death

John 17 acts almost like a theological summary of the entire Gospel.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

Written likely **90–100 AD**, when early Christians were:

Being expelled from synagogues

Navigating tension with Roman authority

The idea of being “**in the world but not of the world**” reflects a real struggle:

How do you live within a dominant culture without being shaped by it?

Also, this prayer language echoes Jewish high priest traditions—interceding on behalf of others.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

Event: ~**30–33 AD** (night before crucifixion)

Written: ~**60–70 years later**

Setting: Jerusalem, during Passover

This is Jesus' final extended moment of teaching before the Passion.



BIBLE TRANSLATION UNDERSTANDING

Key Terms with Layered Meaning

“Eternal life”

Not just “life after death”

Means **quality of life rooted in relationship with God**

“Know”

Not intellectual knowledge

Implies **relational, experiential knowing**

“World”

Creation (neutral)

Humanity (loved by God)

System opposed to God (negative)

“Sanctify”

To set apart for sacred purpose

Not just moral purity—**mission-oriented identity**

Important Translation Insight

“Eternal life” is often misunderstood because English leans toward *duration* while Greek emphasizes *relationship*.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Metaphorical Lens

Heaven is not primarily a **place we go later**

It is a **relationship we enter now**

In that sense:

Eternal life = living aligned with God’s truth, love, and purpose

“Not of the world” = not shaped by the loudest voices, but by the deepest truth

Grant County Angle

Think about:

Local conversations shaped by **national media narratives**

People living in the same town, but in **completely different “worlds” of truth**

This passage pushes back on that:

Truth is not tribal



Truth is rooted in God

And sanctification?

Not withdrawal from the community

But being **set apart within it**

So instead of: “We need to get away from the world”

It becomes: “We are sent into the world differently.”

HOW SHOULD WE ACT AND REACT TO THIS SCRIPTURE TODAY?

Redefine Eternal Life

Not “later,” but “now”

Ask: *Am I living in relationship with God today?*

Be “In, Not Of”

Engage culture without being consumed by it

Especially relevant with media, politics, and online influence

Pursue Truth Over Tribe

Jesus ties sanctification directly to truth

Not comfort, not agreement—truth

Live as Sent People

“As you sent me... I send them”

Faith is outward-facing, not isolated

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What does Jesus mean by “eternal life” in this passage?

What does it look like to be “in the world but not of it” today?

How do we recognize truth in a world full of competing voices?

What does it mean to be “sanctified” in everyday life?

Why does Jesus pray for unity and protection for His followers?