John 17:20-26 Commentary
New International Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Study Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the *International Bible Study Forum*.

(John 17:20) "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,

If we are Christians, we can thank the Lord Jesus Christ for His prayer. Because His Father answered His prayer, we became Christians. Do so now. Jesus knew that He was about to suffer crucifixion, and He also knew that He would rise from the dead, so Jesus prayed and predicted that others would believe in Him through the testimony of His first disciples—those He set apart to tell the truth about Him, but who fearfully fled the night the soldiers arrested Jesus. Jesus knew that after He rose from the dead and appeared to them that they would gather again and believe that the Father had sent Him. Jesus knew that they would preach His message in truth and in the power of the Holy Spirit—and they did. The Book of Acts tells their early history. Throughout the subsequent centuries, those Jesus prayed for, including all those who study and teach this Bible Lesson in various parts of the world, have received all the blessings that He prayed would flow from His prayer—with more blessings yet to come and more people yet to believe. We believe in Him through the Word of God written, the Holy Bible written by His apostles. Today, His disciples continue to share the truth

about Him according to the Scriptures. As we have seen and will see, God the Father answered every part of Jesus' prayer in John 17. That fact alone gives people enough reason to believe that Jesus taught the truth.

(John 17:21) that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Jesus prayed that based on His word His disciples throughout the ages might be one. With Jesus as our Leader, King, and Savior, Jesus prayed that all His future disciples might focus on following Him as revealed in the Bible and agree and stay united in love, truth, and purpose based on His words and the words of His disciples in the Bible. Jesus' prayer is difficult for us to understand, so Jesus gave an example from His relationship with His Father to describe what He meant when He prayed. The oneness Jesus prayed for begins with the oneness the Father and the Son enjoyed, a oneness that did not destroy or absorb their separate, individual, personhood or personalities. Their oneness became an example for Jesus' first disciples. Jesus' disciples were one in heart and mind. They were one in love, holiness, justice, and mercy. They were one in purpose and in perfect agreement about how Jesus would save sinners from their sins and grant eternal life to believers. They agreed with Jesus' words in John 17:3, for Jesus spoke the words the Father gave Him: "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." The oneness that Jesus prayed for centered around the Father and the Son as revealed in the Bible. Jesus did not pray that all His disciples must agree with human leaders who claimed to know God while teaching truths or purposes that the Bible did not reveal. Jesus did not pray for organizational unity. He prayed that His disciples would agree with what the Bible clearly teaches as the Holy Spirit helps them understand, and that requires much humility and prayer on the part of Jesus' disciples. The unity that Jesus prayed for His disciples must be based on the Bible, the love that they have for one another, and the fruit of the Holy Spirit as Paul described in the Bible. Consider and pray for a Christ-like oneness that could be consistent with these words from the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:22-26, "By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another." When disciples of Jesus love, live, speak, and teach according to Bible's teachings, some in the world will believe that the Father sent Jesus in answer to Jesus' prayer. The Father and Jesus lived and served together in perfect harmony when Jesus came into the world; therefore, many believed that Jesus came from the true God. Jesus prayed for all His followers to agree in love according to God's Word; then, some would seek Jesus and Jesus would save those who would believe in Him through them. Jesus did not pray for uniformity of thought and expression with no individuality. Jesus did not pray that all churches must be organized according to the same pattern or Christians must always wear the same type of clothing. Jesus prayed for an inner spiritual unity among His disciples made possible by the Holy Spirit in those who believe the Bible is the true Word of God written. We cannot emphasize too strongly that true Christian unity must be according to the Bible, the Word of God written. Disunity often begins with a departure from the Bible's teachings.

(John 17:22) I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—

God the Father gave Jesus the power to do the works He did to help people believe in Him, the people that the Father gave Him. The way of life that Jesus revealed also revealed His glory and the glory of God. God the Father gave glory to Jesus. God the Father gave Jesus the life and ministry Jesus had on earth when He sent Jesus into the world. Jesus imparted His glory, His way of life and ministry, to His disciples so they could work perfectly together as the Father and the Son had perfectly worked together so many would believe in Jesus. Jesus' glory and grace worked through His disciples as the Father and the Son intended. Jesus gave them the glory of God so they could heal the sick, work miracles of compassion, and preach with the power of the Holy Spirit that would help people believe in Jesus. Jesus still gives His disciples glory—unity with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and a way of life, ministry, and purpose especially suited to them.

(John 17:23) I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Jesus Christ indwells His disciples. God the Father indwells Jesus. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to indwell His disciples. So, we can truthfully say with the Apostle Paul that we are temples of the living God on earth. In 2 Corinthians 6:16, Paul wrote, "What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'" As imperfect as all Jesus' disciples remain until they see Jesus Christ face-to-face according to the Scriptures, think of each Christian as a loving, living, walking, talking temple of the living God. We are not yet perfect but remember that God is still working within us—the Bible calls this the process of sanctification. The unity that Jesus' disciples maintain depends on their unity with God, who indwells them and every true disciple of Jesus. Disunity begins with some form of disobedience to God, of Jesus commands as revealed in the Bible. The way Jesus' disciples love, live, and conform to the will of God revealed in the Bible leads some in the world to understand that the Father sent Jesus into the world. Because God indwells Jesus' disciples, believers know from Jesus' prayer and experience that the Father loves them even as the Father loves Jesus.

The Father and the Son are one divine spiritual essence: as divine Persons they indwell one another and have perfect love and communication, which is truly beyond our human and finite comprehension, but according to the Bible. When Jesus sent (and still sends) His Holy Spirit into His true followers, they know the love of God within them, and some will see the love of God within them as they speak and behave as the true God inspires them; therefore, some come to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Various verses in the New Testament explain what Jesus meant better than my words. Consider Romans 12:2-10 and think how Jesus fulfilled His Father's perfect will and how we as His disciples in process of sanctification should love and live too: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace

given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor." I suggest you study Romans 12 completely and prayerfully.

(John 17:24) "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

The Father gave Jesus all that He desired in His prayer because Jesus always prayed and prays according to the perfect will of God His Father. In John 14, Jesus promised to prepare a place in heaven for all His followers. Now, He prays that they will be with Him in heaven when the time is right—after they have finished the work that He has for them in the world. Someday, all Jesus' disciples will see His glory in heaven. They will see the love and the glory He had from His Father before they created the universe.

(John 17:25) "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.

Many sins and troubles we see in the world today result from many people not knowing God and especially not knowing God as "Righteous" Father. Jesus and His disciples knew God as their "Righteous Father." In His prayer, Jesus addressed His Father as "Holy Father" and "Righteous Father" (John 17:11 & 17:25). Because the Father sent the Son into the world, who would be glorified when He died on the cross for the forgiveness of sinners, God the Father can be holy and righteous while loving us; that is, by loving repentant sinners who trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Because the Father is holy and righteous, He will declare righteous and

restore to righteousness all who believe He sent His Son, Jesus Christ. He will create a new heaven and earth where everything will be made right. Because God is righteous and always does what is perfectly right and loving, and because every person has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, the world situation in Jesus' day and our day is not as God intends (see Romans 2:12, 3:23 & 5:12). Therefore, He sent Jesus into the world. Because God is righteous and those in the world system are unrighteous, they do not know God the Father or His Son. However, all those the Father sent and sends to Jesus come to know the true God. If we know God the Father, it is because the Father sent Jesus to us and we know Jesus.

(John 17:26) I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

Jesus taught the truth that He and the love of God can be in us, in those who believe in Him. The same love that the Father and the Son have for each other indwells everyone who trusts in Jesus with saving faith. Through Jesus, the Bible teaches Jesus' disciples God's name. Jesus made the name "Father" known, especially in the Gospel of John. Before His arrest, in Mark 14:36, Jesus prayed, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." Jesus' disciples know God is their "Father." The Aramaic name "Abba" means "Father." Paul explained the use of the name "Abba Father" in Romans 8:15-17, "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him." He also wrote in Galatians 4:6, "And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" Disciples of Jesus are the children of God who call God their "Father." The other name of the Father is "Savior," and the Father gave Jesus His name, "Savior" (see John 17:11). The meaning of the name "Jesus" is "Savior" and the Father sent Jesus to save all who would believe in Him (see John 3:16). The other Person and divine name of God we know is that of the "Holy Spirit," the

Person that Jesus said He would send into His disciples, who would be another Advocate, Comforter, or Helper like Him. In the process of sanctification, the Holy Spirit saves Jesus' disciples from committing many sins. By His work, we know that His name is also "Savior." Remember these words of Jesus in John 14:16, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever." And in John 14:26, Jesus said, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you." And in John 15:26, Jesus said, "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf." And in, John 16:7, Jesus said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." The Holy Spirit and the Truth of God (Jesus) use the Truth of God written (the words of Jesus and His disciples, the Bible), to save people by leading them to believe the Father sent Jesus into the world to grant eternal life to all who trust in Him as Lord and Savior. Remember John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Who did Jesus pray for in His "High Priestly Prayer" (see John 17)?

2. What did Jesus want the world to believe?

3. What does it mean to you to have the Father and the Son in you?

4. What does it mean to you to be one with the Father and Jesus and with all who believe in the Father and the Son?

5. What does it mean to you to be loved by the Father even as the Father has loved Jesus?

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