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"Facing the shadow of the cross when He prays this prayer (**Jn. 17**)," this prayer marks the end of Jesus' earthly ministry and "the beginning of His intercessory ministry for believers" (read **Rom. 8:34, Heb. 7:25**). We hear Jesus' heart for the Father and His apostles and us! In **:1-5**, Jesus prays for Himself, that He may be glorified. In **:6-19**, He prays for the 11 apostles, that they may be protected and sanctified. In **:20-26**, He prays for the whole Church down through the centuries, that all future believers may be united and glorified. May we overhear reverently, expectantly.

The prayer begins by stressing Jesus' relationship and fellowship with His Father. "Prayer expresses the soul's longing for God; it is the cry of God's people to their gracious-compassionate-heavenly Father." "**Father!**" He refers to Him several times (see **17:5,11,21,24,25**). His Father, who would never leave Him or His disciples alone. The Father and Jesus and the Holy Spirit may be all we have at times, but They are always more than enough!

Jesus didn't focus His prayer on the suffering He was about to endure or the toughest decision He would ever make in Gethsemane. He called attention to the fulfillment of the Father's plan, the glory His Father would receive, and the gift of eternal life for 'His own.' You can sense the deep longing Jesus felt for His Father. He sounds homesick! We have to remember all He left behind when He became flesh and dwelt among us. Let's reverently listen to His words with His Father. Here's how we can pray as our Lord Jesus did.

Read 17:1-5. :1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven (sky), He said [When Jesus had said these words, He raised his eyes to Heaven and said], "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that (hina) the Son may glorify You [Glorify Your Son now so that He may bring glory to You]. After He had washed their feet, told them of Judas' betrayal and Peter's denials and that He would be leaving them but sending the Spirit to permanently indwell them, He lifted His eyes to heaven, and prayed. "A person who does not know how to 'look up' has lost the clue to his humanity."

Father: The Son looks up in love and obedience to His Father. It's my understanding that the word Father is used of God 116 times in this Gospel. It is the Father who had brought Jesus to this hour. Amazing love and trust! In the hour of death itself to look up and within and say, "Father! We are assured we are Yours! We belong! You'll never leave us!"

The hour has come (12:23, 13:1), the hour when He would be made sin and die in our place, for us as sinners by nature and by heredity (in Adam), for our sins, and for sin in the flesh (**Rom. 8:1-4**). Sin, death, and Satan would be defeated. As the Lamb of God (**1:29,36**), Jesus would be sacrificed. Remember **12:23-24 (read)**: "Unless it dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Jesus was willing. "By going to the cross, Jesus showed that there was nothing that the love of God was not prepared to do and suffer for men and women, that there was literally no limit to it." Yes, "beyond the cross lies glory, but the cross is the only way to it." Jesus viewed the cross from an eternal perspective—for all the sinners and sins—past, present, future.

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Why does the Son make this request? **So that Jesus could glorify His Father!** Remember clear back in **1:14: And we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.** The cost of Jesus being glorified is beyond our imagination, but the result would be the expression of the heart and grace of the Father. "Though unthinkable to the disciples, the death of the Messiah was an essential & deliberate part of God's eternal plan."

Jesus' death was necessary. The cross would end up displaying both His own glory and the Father's glory like no other event in history, revealing His power, justice, and holiness. "At the same time, it dramatically demonstrated His grace, mercy, and love." This was God's eternal plan (**Acts 2:23**).

:2 "Even as You gave Him authority over all flesh [over everyone, see Mt. 28:18], that to all whom You have given Him, He may (Lit. everything that You have given Him, to them He may...) give eternal life." It is only through Jesus and His death and resurrection that eternal life can be received. Jesus referred to 'His own' as gifts from His Father (**17:6,9,24**). Here the apostles are seen as a gift given by the Father to the Son. They are a small group, but they would have a worldwide mission because Jesus has authority over all.

Eternal life is in Jesus alone (see **3:15-16; 4:14; 5:21,24,26; 6:33-35,54; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6**). Now He explains what eternal life is. **:3 "This is eternal life, that they may know (1097, come to know) You, the only true (genuine, real, inside and out!) God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."** Eternal life is not only a quantity of life but also a quality. It is enjoying intimate fellowship with the Father and Jesus now and forever. Can you imagine! It is a present reality for all who belong to Jesus (**3:15,16, 5:24, read 1 Jn. 5:13,20**). We are introduced to a life that can't be experienced apart from Jesus and the Father and the Spirit. As believers are the Father's gift to Jesus, Jesus' gift to us is eternal life: coming to know both the Father and the Son. Notice, knowledge

of the only true God can't be divorced from knowledge of Jesus. Get to know Jesus well and you'll know the Father well also.

:4 **"I(!) glorified You on the earth, having accomplished (or by accomplishing) the work which You have given Me to do."** Jesus' prayer was based on His completed work, which He would accomplish later that day (Friday). Even though the Cross was a few hours away, it was a certainty. This was an obedient act of a Son who only did and said what His Father wanted Him to do and say. In this way He would reveal who the Father is and what He's all about. **Heb. 2:10** says, **"For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings."** Without the work on the cross, there would be no eternal life, no salvation, no deliverance from sin. Just think, the cross would somehow reveal the essence of who the Father and Jesus are and would also result in eternal life for us. Think about that! May we continue to look to Him and the cross. Throughout His earthly ministry, He had made known the heart, mind, thoughts, and glory of His Father. But it wasn't until at the cross that Jesus as the Word (**1:1**) was seen in His glory on earth. "The Son glorified the Father, showing Him to be a God of supreme love, willing to give up His Son. The Father glorified the Son, showing Him likewise to be a God of supreme love, willing to give up His life." **Phil. 2:5-8.** May we forever praise the Lamb who was slain (**Rev. 5:9**).

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You can sense Jesus' desire to go home to His Father. His desire was fulfilled at His death, at His ascension and His exaltation to the Father's right hand. He now reigns in His glorified body. What intimate fellowship He has always shared with His Father. "That kind of a personal, familial relationship with God was completely foreign to the Jews of Jesus' day." Yet through Jesus, anyone who believes in Him is "granted that same spiritual, family intimacy."

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In 1974, 5 individuals (2 couples and a single woman) wanted to begin a church in Carson Valley, NV, which would emphasize helping Christians grow. Their chosen verses were **Col. 1:28-29**: Written by the apostle Paul, **“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”** These 5 Christians considered the fact that there were several churches emphasizing evangelism in Carson Valley, where people were becoming Christians, but there were no churches helping Christians grow in their faith. So they contacted a church in the Bay area where I was an intern. They explained their desire. My mentor recommended me. We came to CV in late August 1974. Marylee and I were around 27 years old, we had 2-year-old Jenny, and Craig was soon to be born a month after we came here. We nearly doubled the population; talk about church growth! I began teaching in the Gospel of Mark. Even though I had graduated from seminary, I didn't know a lot about the Bible. I knew quite a bit of theology—the study of God—but I knew little about the Bible. But as I grew and I shared what I was learning, people began growing in our Lord and inviting others to come. I always considered myself about ½ inch ahead of the others. We were known as a teaching church. We just all grew together, and we became a family, hungry for our Lord Jesus and His word. We did everything together: cross-country skiing, camping, Bible studies in people's homes. From the beginning, I wanted to disciple others as I had been discipled by Bob Smith. I would ask him so many questions, and he would always answer, “Let's see what God has to say about this,” and he would lead me to Bible passages that answered my questions. From the beginning, I looked for men to disciple. As time went by, the elders suggested that I develop a discipleship program so I could deal with more than one at a time. In 1984, I developed a written program, and I asked several men if they wanted to meet early in the morning together to study our Lord's Word. We actually met for two years at a time. Many of our elders came through that ministry. I always considered that early morning discipleship the key to our church. Many individuals went through that. One year a group of women came and asked me to disciple them. So I had an early men's group and an afternoon meeting with some women. Just think, having growing Christians circulating throughout our local body of believers! What fun that was for me personally!

Another key that I believe was so helpful was having elders who were shepherds, examples, servants, and sharing God's truth with the body, having a conduct of faith worthy of being imitated. 5 years into our ministry, 4 individuals and myself became elders and we each had a real heart for our ministry, wanting to love and serve and make decisions that would honor God. We began to see spiritual and numerical growth. We did everything together. Such good memories. For those who were a part of those years, thank you!

That's how what was known as Ranchos Community Church began 50 years ago. I had the privilege of being one of the pastor-teachers for 46 of those years. My love for my Lord and His words as recorded in the Bible have grown through the years. In fact, I consider my last few years off staff some of the most growing years of my life. Never stop growing in Him. I don't think that growth process for Christians will ever end, even in eternity!

NOTES And just as Jesus had glorified the Father, so the Father had glorified Him (**5:37, 8:54**).

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JBP 17 ¹⁻⁵ When Jesus had said these words, he raised his eyes to Heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son now so that he may bring glory to you, :2 for you have given him authority over all men to give eternal life for all that you have given to him. :3 And this is eternal life, to know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent—Jesus Christ. :4 “I have brought you honor upon earth, I have completed the task which you gave me to do. :5 Now, Father, honor me in your own presence with the glory that I knew with you before the world was made.