

# Life Group Discussion Guide

The Lord's Prayer: Delighting in How Jesus Prayed  
Week 1: Prayer & Heaven • John 17:1-5

When we hear the phrase, "The Lord's Prayer," many of us recall the words of Jesus recorded in the sixth chapter of Matthew (Our Father in heaven...). But that's not what this series is about. In that well-known passage, Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray, but, through this series, we're after something greater still: how Jesus prayed.

John 17 records the only extended prayer of Jesus—a prayer that stands among His final words to His disciples. Today, we read His words with a dual focus:

- a. How can John 17 enlarge my heart for Jesus?

First, we approach this prayer as if we were eavesdropping on Jesus as if we were there that fateful night and so privileged as to hear how He speaks to His Father. This prayer is a window into the heart of the Savior. How will it change ours?

- b. How can John 17 teach me to pray?

Second, we come to this passage eager to learn about prayer. How did Jesus pray? What did He say? John 17 is a glimpse into the answer. It's by the Savior's own prayer life that we'll learn how to pray.

- As we begin this series about prayer, what would you consider the strengths and weaknesses of your personal prayer life?
- How do you desire your prayer life to change and grow?

## 1. God-Centered Prayer Fills our Mental Map of Heaven

"After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:" John 17:1

Why would John begin his record of Jesus' prayer by specifying where He looked? What does he mean by "heaven" and what does it matter? To help us understand, let's consider the concept of a "mental map." A mental map is simply a map in your brain of places, people, events, and experiences you've had. The more you experience this place or event, the map is continually filled in and shaped by new information.

Consider this: When it comes to heaven, earthlings' mental maps are barely populated. There's very little texture, understanding, or even emotion attached to heaven. The reality is, we only have mental maps of earth. Only Jesus, who "came from heaven," and "is above all," has a mental map of heaven (John 3:13; 31). And that map is better, more important, more glorious, and more enduring than the seven billion mental maps of earth, combined.

The good news? Jesus is seeking to lift us into His heavenly reality—a full world of endless life and joy and love and meaning that we only have access to through Him. How is this possible? Prayer.

Prayer builds our mental map of heaven. In prayer you are connecting to God, who dwells in the heavens and who, through His Spirit and Word, begins to download into you more and more of His divine essence, thus making you more and more a citizen of heaven.

- How developed is your mental map of heaven? Describe it.
- Do your prayers lift the “eyes” of your heart to heaven, seeking God and His ways, or have they been stuck on an earthly level? What changes when our prayers become God-centered and Scripture-fed?

## **2. God-Centered Prayer Loves the Glory of Heaven**

“After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.’” John 17:1–5

Jesus is standing at the precipice of His brutal execution, and what does He pray about in this final, crucial hour? Glory.

This is not the first time Jesus has spoken on this topic. Elsewhere in John’s Gospel He says, “I do not accept glory from human beings,” and “How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (5:41; 44–45)

Jesus accepts only the glory that comes from the Father and invites us to receive the same, yet knows we settle for glory from a far lesser source: one another. What does this look like? Our education, occupation, wealth, connections, achievements—these are all ways we seek glory from one another.

“This does not mean we should not go to school or have good jobs and so on. But we need to recognize that none of those things improves our mental map of heaven, our citizenship in heaven. And, in fact, those things can and often do keep us from seeking the glory that comes only from God. Part of the reason we do not have deeper prayer lives is that the glory we receive from earth, from one another, keeps us amply satisfied.”

- In what ways have you sought glory from other people?
- What is one practical step you can take to reorient yourself to seek glory from God instead of people? What do you think will change when you do?

Unlike us, Jesus did not “accept glory from human beings.” Instead, He prays His Father would glorify Him as He has glorified the Father by finishing His work on the earth. If Jesus is praying for the most worthy being in the universe—God the Father—to bring more glory to God the Son, shouldn’t we pray for the same?

“There is no prayer that will fill in your map of heaven more prolifically and accurately than praying for the glory of Jesus to increase, overflow, and multiply the universe over, in heaven and on earth. Just as Jesus taught in Matthew 6, this is a prayer for God’s heavenly kingdom to come to earth—for the splendor of His Son to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.”

With this posture of prayer, Pastor Jon left us with two final instructions for cultivating a God-centered prayer life:

- a. Praise God’s Son for being unflinchingly determined to bring heaven to earth.

To us, heaven is a foreign world. And the only way for the gap to be bridged was for the Lord of Heaven to die at our hands and for our sins. Without flinching, He did it. Let’s love Him with a deeper love.

- b. Learn to pray for the glory of Father and Son.

Let’s fill our mental map with heaven by praying for the glories of heaven:

“Father, glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you. He brought you glory on earth by completing the works you gave Him to do. Let me delight in those works. Let me read the words in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and the rest of the Scriptures, not as history or a chore, but as the story of heaven coming to earth and making me a citizen of heaven. And let me praise you with shouts of joy for each of those works, chiefly the suffering death of my loving Savior.”

- Take time now to pray together as this week’s message has taught us to pray.
- What practical application from our Scripture passage will you carry into your prayer life?