

## John 17:6-19 Sermon Discussion Guide

### Passage Summary

As Jesus continues His High Priestly Prayer, He turns His attention specifically to His disciples. Having prayed for the Father's glory and the accomplishment of His saving mission, Jesus now prays for those whom the Father has given Him. At the heart of this section is the theme of belonging.

Every human being longs to know that they matter, that they are loved, that they are wanted, and that they belong. We often spend much of our lives looking for affirmation, acceptance, and identity in relationships, accomplishments, careers, families, or the opinions of others. Yet in this prayer, Jesus speaks a far better word over His people.

First, Jesus reminds us that believers are a gift from the Father to the Son. Throughout these verses, the language of "gave" and "gift" appears repeatedly. This is a remarkable picture. Jesus does not speak of His people as burdens, disappointments, or projects to fix. He delights in those whom the Father has given Him. Even though He knows their weaknesses, failures, and future struggles, He still treasures them.

Second, Jesus prays that His people would be kept and guarded by the Father. Importantly, He does not ask for them to be removed from the world. They are sent into the world as witnesses to God's grace and glory. The Father's protection is not primarily about shielding believers from every hardship, but about preserving them through hardship. God uses trials, suffering, and difficulties to deepen faith and shape His people into the likeness of Christ. The same Savior who prayed, "Take this cup from me," willingly endured the cross so that His people might ultimately be kept and brought safely home.

Finally, Jesus speaks of His disciples as those who have kept God's word. At first glance, that can seem surprising. These are the very disciples who will soon scatter, doubt, and fail. Yet Jesus sees them through the lens of what He is accomplishing for them. This points us to the beauty of the gospel. Christ's perfect obedience becomes our righteousness. He lived the life we could not live and died the death we deserved. Because of His finished work, God sees His people clothed in Christ's righteousness. What is true of Jesus becomes true of those who belong to Him. This prayer reminds us that our security is not rooted in our performance but in God's love, God's keeping, and God's grace.

## **Theological Highlights**

### **1. Believers Are a Gift to Christ**

The repeated language of "giving" reminds us that salvation begins with God's initiative. The Father delights to give a people to the Son, and the Son delights in those whom He receives.

### **2. God's Protection Is Deeper Than Comfort**

Jesus does not pray for escape from hardship but preservation through it. God's goal is not merely our comfort but our conformity to Christ.

### **3. Sanctification Happens in Real Life**

Believers grow in holiness while living in a broken world. We are not removed from difficult circumstances; we are transformed within them.

### **4. Christ's Righteousness Is Credited to His People**

The disciples are described in ways that seem beyond their actual performance because Jesus sees them through the work He is accomplishing on their behalf. This is a beautiful picture of justification by grace.

### **5. Our Identity Is Rooted in Belonging**

Before we are workers, servants, parents, spouses, leaders, or anything else, we are those who belong to God.

## **Discussion Questions**

### **Belonging and Identity**

1. Most people spend their lives searching for acceptance, approval, or a sense of belonging. Where are you most tempted to look for those things apart from God?
2. Jesus repeatedly speaks of His people as gifts from the Father. What is your initial reaction to the idea that Jesus sees you as a gift rather than a disappointment?
3. What makes it difficult for you to believe that God genuinely delights in His people?
4. When you fail or struggle with sin, do you tend to move toward God or away from Him? Why?

### **Being Kept by God**

5. Jesus prays that His people would be kept and guarded by the Father. How is that different from the way you typically think about God's protection?
6. Can you identify a difficult season in your life that God used to deepen your faith or shape your character?
7. Where are you currently asking God to remove a hardship when He may instead be seeking to sustain you through it?
8. How does it encourage you to know that Jesus is praying not for your comfort, but for your ultimate preservation and growth?

## **Resting in the Gospel**

9. Jesus says His disciples have kept God's word, even though they are far from perfect. What does that teach us about how God sees His people in Christ?
10. Are there areas of guilt, shame, or failure that still shape the way you think God views you?
11. What would it look like to live this week believing that Christ's righteousness, not your performance, is your standing before God?
12. How might your daily life change if you genuinely believed that your identity was secure because you belong to God? (Relationships, Work, School, Rest)

## **Closing Prayer Points**

### **1. Thank God That We Belong to Him**

- Thank the Father for pursuing us and making us His own.
- Praise Jesus for delighting in His people despite their weaknesses.
- Ask God to deepen your confidence that you are loved and accepted in Christ.

### **2. Confess Areas of False Identity**

- Bring before God the places where you seek approval, significance, or belonging apart from Him.
- Confess ways you have allowed success, relationships, or performance to define your identity.
- Ask Him to root your heart more deeply in His love.

### **3. Trust God's Keeping Power**

- Thank God that He does not abandon His people in hardship.
- Bring current struggles, disappointments, and fears before Him.
- Ask for faith to trust that He is using even difficult circumstances for your good and His glory.

### **4. Rest in Christ's Righteousness**

- Confess areas where guilt, shame, or failure continue to weigh heavily on you.
- Thank Jesus for His perfect obedience and sacrificial death.
- Ask for grace to live in the freedom of knowing that you are clothed in His righteousness.

### **5. Grow in Holiness and Mission**

- Ask God to continue the work of sanctification He has begun in you.
- Ask that your life would increasingly reflect the beauty and character of Jesus.

## **Closing Reflection**

One of the deepest questions of the human heart is: *Do I belong?*

In John 17, Jesus answers that question for His people.

You are not forgotten.

You are not merely tolerated.

You are not a disappointment.

You are a gift given by the Father to the Son.

And because Christ has made you His own, you are kept by His grace, guarded by His power, and clothed in His righteousness until the day He brings you safely home.