

# John 17:20-16 Sermon Discussion Guide

## **Passage Summary**

As Jesus brings His High Priestly Prayer to a close, His focus expands beyond the eleven disciples gathered around Him. He begins to pray for all who will believe in Him through their message. In other words, Jesus is praying for His Church throughout every generation, including us. What is striking is His primary request.

Jesus does not first pray that His people would be successful, influential, comfortable, or even safe. He prays that they would be one.

This unity is far deeper than simply avoiding conflict or learning to get along. Jesus points to the perfect relationship that has existed from all eternity between the Father and the Son. Just as the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father, Jesus prays that His people would experience that same kind of loving communion with God and with one another. The unity He desires is rooted not in shared interests, personalities, or opinions, but in a shared life in Christ.

This unity also has a purpose. Jesus prays that His followers "may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." The church is meant to be a living testimony to the gospel. When people who would otherwise have little in common genuinely love one another, bear one another's burdens, forgive one another, and remain committed to one another, they display something the world cannot manufacture. They become a visible picture of God's reconciling grace.

Finally, Jesus reminds His followers of their ultimate hope. He longs for His people to be with Him, to behold His glory, and to experience forever the love that has existed within the Trinity from before the foundation of the world. The unity we experience now is real, but it is only a foretaste of the perfect communion we will one day enjoy with Christ and with one another.

## **Theological Highlights**

### **1. Christian Unity Is Rooted in the Trinity**

The unity Jesus prays for reflects the eternal love and fellowship shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christian community is meant to mirror God's own relational life.

### **2. We Are United by Christ, Not by Similarity**

The church is made up of people with different personalities, backgrounds, preferences, and experiences. What binds us together is not our sameness but our shared identity in Christ.

### **3. Unity Is Missional**

Jesus connects the unity of His people with the witness of the gospel. A church marked by love, humility, and reconciliation becomes a powerful testimony to the reality of Christ.

### **4. Love Is the Defining Mark of God's People**

The same love the Father has for the Son is the love Christ pours into His people. That love becomes the foundation for how we relate to one another.

### **5. Our Ultimate Home Is With Christ**

Jesus ends His prayer by expressing His desire that His people would be with Him forever. Our longing for community points beyond itself to the day when we will enjoy perfect fellowship with God and His redeemed people.

## **Discussion Questions**

### **Understanding Unity**

1. Jesus prays that His people would be one as He and the Father are one.
  - How is biblical unity different from simply avoiding conflict or "keeping the peace"?
  - What do you think makes this kind of unity so compelling?
2. Our culture often encourages division over politics, preferences, lifestyles, and countless other issues.
  - Where do you see these divisions shaping your own heart or relationships?
  - How does the gospel call us to something different?
3. What do you think keeps Christians from experiencing the kind of deep relationships Jesus prays for?

### **Jesus' Heart for His Church**

4. Jesus says the world will know Him through the unity of His people.
  - Have you ever experienced a church or Christian community that reflected this kind of love?
  - What made it so memorable?
5. Augustine famously wrote, *"Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You."* Where do you see people searching for belonging, identity, or community apart from Christ?
  - How does the church offer something fundamentally different?
6. When people look at your relationships with others, what do you hope they see about Jesus?

## **Cultivating Unity Together**

7. Genuine unity requires being known.

- How easy is it for you to let others truly know what is happening in your heart?
- What makes vulnerability difficult?

8. Are there people in your church or community group that you know well enough to recognize when they are struggling? Have a need? Not living in line with the gospel?

9. Which of these comes most naturally to you?

- Sharing your resources
- Listening well
- Speaking truth lovingly
- Offering forgiveness
- Asking for help

Which is most difficult?

10. Is there a relationship in your life where God may be calling you to take the first step toward reconciliation, deeper friendship, or greater vulnerability?

## **Closing Prayer Points**

**1. Thank God for the Gift of His Church**

- Thank the Father for adopting us into His family through Christ.
- Praise Him for giving us brothers and sisters in the faith.
- Thank Him that we never walk the Christian life alone.

**2. Pray for Deeper Unity**

- Ask God to grow genuine love within your church and community group.
- Pray for humility that values others above yourself.
- Ask God to remove pride, bitterness, comparison, or division from your heart.

**3. Pray for Courage to Be Known**

- Ask God for the courage to move beyond surface-level relationships.
- Pray for wisdom to know whom you can trust and how to pursue deeper friendships.
- Ask for grace to both know others and be known by them.

**4. Pray to Reflect Christ's Love**

- Ask God to make you quick to forgive, eager to serve, and generous with your time and resources.
- Pray that your relationships would increasingly reflect the love of Jesus.

- Ask Him to help you bear the burdens of others with compassion.

#### **5. Pray for the Church's Witness**

- Pray that your church would display the beauty of the gospel through its unity.
- Ask that neighbors, workers, students, and even strangers would encounter the love of Christ as they observe His people.
- Pray that God would use Christ Community to draw many to Himself.