

8

Leaving a Legacy

John 17:20-26

When Jesus prayed for the whole church, he divided it into two classes: the original disciples, who became apostles, whose message became the New Testament (the rule of Christian faith); and everyone else, "those who will believe in me through their message" including, of course, ourselves.

God the Father gave to his Son all Christians (past, present and future) to love and to save. He called us all to be one (together) transculturally, transglobally and transhistorically. We are to live out that bond in faith, love, holiness and mission; these are the unchanging realities of our life together. But we do not attempt this kind of spiritual togetherness without help. God himself created a model and so allows us a glimpse of the active bond between Father and Son during the Son's earthly ministry. All Christians share the destiny of contemplating and being enriched by the Son in his glory forever and ever. These are the certainties and fixed points by which we should be living as Christ's disciples in church today.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Suppose you could drop in on your church one hundred years from now. What would you hope to find?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. If you were praying for your great-great grandchildren, what would you ask God for?

In the final words of Jesus' farewell, he continues to pray- this time for his followers of the distant future. Read John 17:20-26.

1. As you picture Jesus speaking the words of this prayer to his Father on your behalf, what do you find particularly compelling?

2. What part does love have in this prayer?

3. What times and places does Jesus' prayer here encompass?

What do these reveal about God?

About all who believe in Jesus?

4. How would you describe the unity mentioned in these verses?

5. What are some of your most powerful experiences of unity with other believers?

6. Where and how do you see troubling forms of disunity between God's people?

7. What gifts does Jesus ask God to give you in this prayer?

8. What seems to be the purpose of this lavish legacy?

9. As you consider your place among the people of God, what can you do to promote the kind of unity that Jesus prays for?

10. Jesus prayed for you, "May [insert your name here] also be in us so that the world may believe." How can you begin or continue to live out that legacy?

Read aloud Jesus' prayer for you as recorded in verses 20-26. Then pray your response in return.

Now or Later

Echo the prayer of Jesus by praying his words for a church or ministry that seems to need the blessings described in his prayer for all future believers. Pause now and then to pray for specific needs and people in that organization