

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will do Bible study together from John chapter 17. We will use “the five steps” method of Bible study. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. You may join our Bible study every week by preparing for the next Bible study. You may also gather a few people around you and use this method of studying the Bible together. Doing Bible study together with a few other Christians is one of the best ways to grow to maturity as a Christian.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read John chapter 17 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read John chapter 17 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John chapter 17. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is the contents of the prayer of Jesus. This prayer may be divided into three parts. First in verse 1-5 he prays for himself. In verse 6-19 he prays in particular for his eleven disciples. And in verse 20-26 he prays for all believers in the world.

In his prayer with regard to himself, Jesus glorifies the Father and asks the Father to glorify him. In his prayer for his eleven disciples, he acknowledges that they belong to God the Father and were given to him. He had revealed God and God’s words to them. They accepted the words, believed and obeyed them. And now Jesus would send them into the world with the Great Commission. Jesus prays for their unity, for receiving the fullness of joy, for their protection against the devil and for their sanctification by the work of Christ and by the word. In his prayer for all the believers in the world, he especially prays for their unity, so that the world will believe that God sent Jesus Christ. He also prays that they may be with him, so that they may see his glory. And he prays that God’s love and he himself may be in them continually. What a wonderful prayer!

(T) An important truth for me is the oneness of love between God the Father, Jesus Christ and Christians.

In John 17:4 and 6 we read about the love of Jesus for God the Father and for Christians. Jesus loves God the Father by bringing glory to God the Father. That is, Jesus Christ brings glory to God the Father by completing the work God gave him to do on earth. Jesus loves the Christians by revealing God the Father’s name, that is, God’s attributes in relation to salvation, to them.

In John 17:26 we read about the love of God the Father for Jesus Christ and Christians. Jesus prays that the love that God the Father has for him may also be in the Christians.

In John 17:8 and 6, we read about the love of Christians for Jesus Christ and for God the Father. The Christians love Jesus Christ by acknowledging that Jesus Christ came from God the Father. They know this with certainty and confess this truth to others. The Christians love God the Father by obeying his word. Therefore, the real unity between God and his people is not accomplished by national unity, like the nation of Israel, anymore. The real unity between God and his people is also not accomplished by the outward organisation of the Christian Church, like any church denomination or any church union movement. But the real unity between God and his people is accomplished by the completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross for our salvation and by the bond of love that exists between God and his people! This love is not merely an emotional kind of love, but is characterised by three Bible verses.

One. Mark 12:30-31 teaches that the unity and bond of love between God and his people is characterised by a total *commitment* to God with your whole personality and behaviour.

Two. John 14:21,23 teaches that the unity and bond of love between God and his people is characterised by *obedience* to God’s Words in the Bible.

Three. John 13:34-35 teaches that the unity and bond of love between God and his people is characterised by *love* that Christians in the world have for one another.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in John chapter 17 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (17:1) What does Jesus mean when he says that "the hour (time) has arrived?"

(T) With this expression, Jesus shows that he is conscious of the fact that for every event that ever takes place in the history of mankind there is a stipulated moment in the eternal plan of God. He is conscious of the fact that for every event in the mighty drama of redemption there is a stipulated moment in the eternal plan (decree) of God. In the Gospel of John, Jesus often said, "My time has not yet come." (2:4; 7:6,8,30; 8:20) But when he spoke of his coming death on the cross, he said "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." (12:23) And at the beginning of this Thursday evening, during his last Passover meal with his disciples, he knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father" (13:1). The context shows that Jesus was not only thinking of his death on the cross, but of the entire consummation (completion) of his earthly ministry. Jesus was thinking of his death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven! In the thinking of Jesus, his suffering and the consequent glory go together! In John 12:32 he speaks of both his lifting up on the cross, his lifting up to heaven and his lifting up to the throne of the universe! He says, "But when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself." In John 14:3-4, he is thinking of his going to prepare heaven as the place where Christians may be with him for ever. In John 16 he is thinking of his work from heaven through the Holy Spirit and prayer, which will bring conversion and joy to many people. Thus, 'the hour that has come' refers to the time of his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven!

2nd Question. (17:1) What does Jesus mean when he says, "Glorify your Son"?

(S) God the Father glorifies God the Son. Jesus prays, "Grant that by means of my death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement, I may be glorified. Jesus is glorified when the radiance of all his wonderful attributes is displayed like a rainbow. In the crucifixion, his glory is revealed. His crucifixion revealed his perfect obedience to God the Father, his infinite love for sinners, and his absolute power over Satan. This obedience, love and power reflect glory on himself. The gratitude of the saved multitude also reflects glory on Jesus. Not only the cross, but also the crown glorifies God the Son. Also in his resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven, his glory is revealed. In John 17:5 he prays, "Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." Verse 5 speaks of the reward Jesus receives for his work of salvation. Philippians 2:6 says that already before the creation of the universe Jesus possessed equality with God the Father. He enjoyed the wonderful presence of God the Father, where he did not experience the sins of mankind and the suffering it brings. But in the interest of saving people, he had voluntarily surrendered this glory. Now the hour has arrived, that he will again return to this glory in heaven! Psalm 2:7-12 says that God the Father will glorify him by giving all the nations as his inheritance, by making him the ruler of all the nations on earth and the Judge of all those who resist him. Psalm 110:1-4 says that God the Father will glorify him by giving him a place at his right hand on the throne in heaven and making him the high priest of his people for ever. And Psalm 118:22-23 says that God the Father will glorify him by making him 'the capstone' of his new temple on earth, which consists of all the believers in the Church (Eph 2:19-22).

3rd Question. (17:1) What does Jesus mean when he says, that he may glorify God the Father?

(T) God the Son glorifies God the Father. Jesus prays, "Grant that by means of my completed work for salvation on earth, my death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement, I may be glorified in order that I may glorify you." The prayer of Jesus is not a selfish prayer, because he desires that whatever happens to him should glorify God the Father. The cross and the crown also reveal the virtues of God the Father. All the divine attributes come to full expression in the completed work of salvation by Jesus Christ.

In John 17:4 he says that he has glorified God the Father on earth by finishing his eternally assigned task. All the divine attributes also come to full expression in the death, resurrection ascension and enthronement of Jesus Christ! For example, *the righteousness of God* the Father is expressed. Because God the Father is righteous, he must punish sin. If he had not been righteous, he certainly would not have delivered up his beloved Son. Because he is righteous, he rewarded his Son for his work of salvation. If he had not been righteous, he would not have resurrected Christ and given him the crown in heaven.

4th Question. (17:2) Why does the Bible continually speak of all those people God the Father has given to Jesus Christ?

(S) In John 17:2, Jesus says that God the Father gave to Jesus Christ authority over all people on earth, in order that he may save all those people whom God the Father had given him.

One. Jesus Christ has authority and power over all the people in the history of the world.

The words *all flesh* means numerically *all people* and qualitatively *all of them in their present weak and sinful natures*. Thus, Jesus Christ has authority and power over all people from every tribe, language, people group and nation (Jn 3:35; Mt 28:18). He has authority and power over all the political, military, social and religious leaders of every nation in the world. There is no exception!

Two. Jesus Christ will only save those whom God the Father has given to him.

The people on earth are not sovereign over God, but God is sovereign over the people. The people on earth do not choose God or Jesus Christ, but God or Jesus Christ chooses the people whom he will save! The scope and design of God's plan of salvation is limited. When Jesus Christ speaks of "all those whom God the Father has given to him", he is thinking of all those people whom God the Father has sovereignly given to him in his eternal plan of salvation. This truth is taught by Jesus Christ in the Gospels of Matthew and John. In Matthew 11:27, Jesus says, "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and *those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him*." And in John 6:44, 37 and 39 he says, "No one can come to me *unless the Father who sent me draws him*. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. This is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose *none of all that he has given me*." (Jn 10:29).

Jesus Christ has authority and power over all people in the world, so that nobody can hinder him from saving those God the Father has given to him. Jesus Christ will not save everybody, but he will save very many people from every tribe, from every language and from every nation in the world!

5th Question. (17:3). What is eternal life?

(T) In John 17:3, Jesus says, "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Jesus does not give a definition of eternal life, but shows how eternal life *reveals* itself and how wonderful it is. *Eternal life* is the new life God gives to people who are born again, who believe in Jesus Christ. That new life consists in sharing the divine characteristics and living in God's presence without end. But eternal life manifests itself on earth by Christians joyfully knowing or acknowledging (Jn 1:10) the true God and his revelation in and through Jesus Christ. Eternal life is shown by Christians having intimate fellowship with God the Father through Jesus Christ by reading the Bible, by prayer and by gladly accepting his grace, love and guidance.

People who have eternal life know or acknowledge *the only true God*. The only true God that exists is the God who has revealed himself through the prophets in the Bible and in and through Jesus Christ in this world and in this history. The gods of all other religions are NOT the God of the Bible, because all other religions say that their god has NOT revealed himself in and through Jesus Christ. The only true God is the Father of Jesus Christ in a complete spiritual sense. The only true God is the God who has revealed himself in and through Jesus Christ in the history of this world. All people who know or acknowledge Jesus Christ as the only Saviour and only Lord show that they have eternal life!

6th Question. (17:6). What does it mean to reveal the name of God the Father to people?

(S) In John 17:6, Jesus says, "I have revealed your name to those whom you gave me." *The name* of God the Father is an expression for God the Father himself, as he reveals his glorious attributes in the realm of redemption. Apart from Jesus Christ, no one can know the living God (Jn 14:6; Mt 11:27)! Apart from Jesus Christ, no one can ever know spiritual matters in their real, inner essence and value. Anyone who rejects Jesus Christ, can never know God the Father! The purpose why Jesus Christ came to this earth was to reveal God's character and plan to people and to accomplish the salvation of those people God the Father had given to him. True knowledge of God the Father means eternal life (17:3)!

7th Question. (17:21). How must I understand the prayer of Jesus concerning unity between all Christians?

(T) In John 17:21, Jesus prays, "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

One. The two kinds of unity are NOT the same.

The unity between God the Father and God the Son is *an ontological unity, a unity of essence*. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is one divine being! But the unity between God or Jesus Christ and Christians is *a spiritual unity*, a mystical unity in which they share the same position, life and intimate relationship. And the unity between Christians in the world is not an organisational unity, but *a unity manifested in co-operation and mutual love*. Jesus is not thinking of one world-wide denomination, because there were no denominations in the time of Jesus. Just as the unity of essence between God the Father and God the Son is manifested in their co-operation in the work of salvation, likewise the spiritual unity between Christians should manifest itself in their co-operation in God's work of salvation in

this world. Christians should take a stand together in the world to defend the truth together and to proclaim the gospel together. They should demonstrate to the world that they love one another and build one another up (Jn 13:34-35).

Two. The unity in the nature of God is the foundation for the unity among Christians.

The ontological unity in the nature of God makes the spiritual unity among Christians possible. Only people who have been born anew and transformed by the eternal decision of God the Father, by the completed work of salvation of God the Son, and by the regeneration of God the Spirit, are spiritually *in* God the Father and *in* God the Son. They are also spiritually one with one another, and offer united opposition to the world. The purpose of this demonstration of spiritual unity among Christians in this world is that the people in this world will recognise the truth and also come to Jesus Christ to be saved. When Christians are united in the faith and present a common front to the world, they exert power and influence. Therefore Christians should always strive to live in peace with other Christians, but not at the expense of truth. Christians should always strive to co-operate with other Christians in proclaiming Jesus Christ.

(S) **STEP 4 and 5. APPLY and PRAY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*. Then take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in John chapter 17.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Make a commitment to do Bible study every week. Prepare next week's Bible study. Use "the five steps" method to prepare John chapter 18.

Second. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".