

John 17:1-19
Christ's Holiness Unites Us

Main idea: We must be holy, and Jesus makes us holy.

It's an almost universal human experience to want to be better, but keep failing at it. [chart]

God repeatedly tells His people to be holy. [Leviticus 19:2] [Exodus 22:31] [Deuteronomy 28:9]

- And Jesus told His disciples something similar in the Sermon on the Mount. [Matthew 5:48]
- But the Bible says we're not really able to do this. [Jeremiah 2:22] [Romans 3:23]

I don't know about you, but holiness sounds kind of scary and impossible.

- That's probably because I read how the Israelites failed to achieve it, and I know how I can't either.
- But holiness is not a scary word.
- Holiness simply means God calls us out of the world to be separate, being shaped by God's character, and belonging entirely to Him.

Read John 17:1-10

Jesus starts this prayer by talking about glory: the glory He shared with the Father before He came to the earth, and the glory He would accomplish at the cross.

- This week, however, I only want to touch on glory in the sense of what Jesus said in verse 10 when He said, "I am glorified in them."
 - Jesus says He is glorified in His disciples. How?
 - They weren't exactly "Christian of the month" material!
 - If you read the gospels, you find them constantly arguing, confused, and denying Jesus.
 - But verses 6-9 explain it:
 - They belonged to the Father, and they belonged to Jesus.
 - Jesus revealed the Father to them.
 - They received His Word.
 - They believed in Him.
 - And Jesus even says that they kept His Word.
- Jesus is glorified when His people receive, believe, and obey God's Word.
 - This is what distinguishes us from the world, and that's what holiness is: being separate.
 - Holiness begins with receiving and believing what God has said.

First, Jesus prays that we would be protected in His name. (v. 11-13)

- Maybe your idea of holiness is like the monks in Monty Python. [video]
- But holiness is not isolation or self-infliction; it's identity.
 - Jesus said that God is our Father. [Matthew 6:9]
 - And in this prayer, Jesus even calls God our Holy Father.
 - Being made holy primarily means identifying with Him.
- When we remember whose name we bear, it changes how we live and how we treat each other.
 - Jesus says this identity leads to unity.
 - Holiness is never meant to make us proud; it makes us one.
 - We're united because we share the same Father, the same Savior, the same Spirit, and the same mission.

Second, Jesus prays that we would be kept from the evil one. (v. 14-16)

- Jesus says we are not of the world, just as He is not of the world.
- This doesn't mean we withdraw; it means we don't belong to the world's values anymore.
 - It's kind of like a boat in the water. [\[picture\]](#)
 - A boat, of course, does what it was made to do when it's in the water.
 - But water is not meant to be in the boat.
 - Christians are made to be in the world, but we shouldn't be content with the world's sin in us.
- This is why Jesus prays, "Keep them from the evil one."
 - We cannot keep ourselves holy.
 - We cannot attempt to keep fighting all of our spiritual battles in our own strength.
 - Holiness is God's work in us, and He guards us as His own.

Third, Jesus prays that we would be sanctified in the truth. (v. 17-19)

- Jesus prays for our holiness, that God would set us apart entirely for Himself.
 - Holiness is not a rulebook.
 - The Bible is not primarily a rulebook. It's God's love letter to us.
 - Holiness is what happens when God's truth reshapes our lives.
 - And it doesn't start with us, it starts with Jesus Himself. Jesus is the Truth.
 - Jesus set Himself apart. (v. 19)
 - And by doing so, He set us apart.
 - This is grace: we must be holy, and Jesus makes us holy. [\[Hebrews 10:10\]](#)
 - Holiness is not optional.
 - Holiness is the mark of a disciple.
 - Holiness is the witness the world needs.
 - We're not called merely to be forgiven. We're called to be holy, as God is holy.
 - But we don't do this alone.
 - Holiness is not self-improvement.
 - Holiness is surrender.
 - Holiness is Jesus sanctifying us through His truth and His Spirit.
 - Holiness isn't something we do; it's something Jesus does in us.
- When Michelangelo was asked how he carved David out of a block of marble, he supposedly said, "I just removed everything that wasn't David." [\[picture\]](#)
 - That is what Jesus prays for in John 17. He asks the Father to remove everything in us that is not Christ, so that what remains is holy, beautiful, unified, and true.
 - Christ's holiness unites us because we are all being shaped by the same Sculptor.

You see, holiness is not something we create or achieve by our own efforts.

- Holiness is something Jesus creates in us.
- In John 17, Jesus was hours away from going to the cross, and He spent some of that time praying for His disciples.
 - As Jesus was leaving His disciples in the world, He prayed for their protection, their unity, and their holiness.
 - He prayed that they would be holy, set apart for God's purposes.
 - And it's only through Jesus, dying for our sins, and rescuing us from our sins, that we can be made holy.
 - So believe the gospel, and let Jesus do His sanctifying work in you.