

John (Part 25)

John 17:6-21 Eternal Life is Knowing God: Living Life as God Does

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From John 16, we understand that one of the reasons why Christ had to leave was so that faith would be better instilled in His disciples, including us. How will faith be instilled in people during the Millennium, when Christ is once again on earth? Is faith something that is only needed by the first-fruits, in order to prepare them for the positions they are being trained for in the World Tomorrow and beyond?

One of the problems that we have with a question like this is, although there is information in the Bible about the Millennium, in many cases, there are not a lot of specifics. There are overviews that are given to us, from which we can make a lot of speculations and assumptions, many of which might be wrong, as to exactly what life is going to be like during the Millennium, and how visible the government of God is going to be.

How visible is it going to be? There are indications in Isaiah 30 that if you are just about to do something wrong, suddenly a voice booms out from behind you saying, "This is the way, walk you in it!" Is that going to be happening every 30 seconds, every time a thought goes through your mind to do something wrong?

It hardly seems likely that is going to occur, but it gives an overview that the government of God is going to be intimately concerned with the welfare of the people over which it is governing. We know that there is going to be correction, and sometimes the correction is going to take place fairly quickly, maybe immediately.

Is the Millennium going to be highly technical? Are we going have television sets, the technology of shooting rockets into space, all of the accoutrements of this society, even in regard to agriculture? Are we going to have tractors, or are we going to walk behind a horse or an ox? What is it going to be like?

I am just giving you a couple of principles by which to judge. Are we all going to live in villages? Are we all going to be farming? There are going to be cities; how large are they going to be?

There are a lot of things that cannot be definitely answered, right at this time. There are too many things that I do not know about what life is going to be like, to really adequately answer the question about faith in the Millennium. But there are some

principles that are given in the life of Christ that let us understand that a person can still build faith, even though Christ is here. In other words, faith is not a commodity, or an attribute, or a quality, that is restricted only to those who live when Christ is not on earth.

Matthew 16:13-17 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

We see a difference between two groups of people. On the one hand, there were the disciples who believed that Jesus was the Christ. They had faith in Him. On the other hand, there were those who were apparently consistently confused over who Christ was.

We know that the first group had this revealed to them by God. They were to the point where they believed that Jesus was the Christ. We know that their faith was not all that complete, but it was enough for them, at that time, to recognize that He was indeed the Christ. It gives us a starting point.

If they could learn something like that while He was there, then why could not their faith also be developed while He was there? I see no problem there. If in the Millennium Christ is here and God begins to convert people, to open their mind, to draw them to Christ, and they begin to live His way of life, their faith can develop. Perhaps it would not ever develop to the same quality, or the same degree, the same intensity that is needful for us here at this time, but nonetheless, living by faith would, I think, be possible.

There is no doubt that the faith that was displayed by people in the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, was not the kind of faith that is required of us today. Most of the faith that those people had to have was something that was answered. That is, their trust in God, their belief in God, was answered fairly quickly.

Mark 9:23-24 Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Jesus was right there, on the spot, and He responded by hearing the man's plea. The man believed. Does it compare with what is required of us?

John 9:35-38 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him.

This is a very clear example of a man who had this revealed to him while Christ was there.

There is enough of a demonstration there, that if that was able to be done while He was present, then it is not going to be all that difficult for that to be sustained through a person's life, regardless of whether Christ is there, or He is off in heaven with His Father.

I think that God will be adequate to meeting the needs of the people in the Millennium, and that they will be able to live by faith. Circumstances will certainly be different from what they are here and now, but they are going to have to meet the same basic requirement that we do. Hebrews 10:38 says that the just shall live by faith. They are going to be required to live by faith, even as we. I do not know what the circumstances will be, but they are going to have to live by faith.

Here is another question: it has been my understanding from the latter part of Ezekiel that there will once again be a sacrificial system in the World Tomorrow, but Hebrews 10 seems to indicate otherwise.

Hebrews 10 does not say that there will never be another sacrificial system. What it is saying is that there is no need for a sacrifice like Christ's again, that is, the sacrifice that He made is sufficient to take care of the sins of mankind, all of the sins of mankind for all time.

This is not in contradiction to the latter part of Ezekiel, beginning in chapter 40, where there is certainly an indication of the reestablishment of a sacrificial system, very similar to what was in effect beginning in Leviticus.

Once we understand the basic rules, we can see that it would be possible for God to establish the sacrificial system during the Millennium.

Galatians 3:24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Paul is talking about a law (verse 19) that was added because of transgressions; transgressions of the spiritual law resulted in the adding of the ceremonial, sacrificial, ritualistic law. This law (verse 24) was our tutor, or our teacher, or our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Not justified by the sacrifices, but justified by faith.

Why could this not work during the Millennium? Instead of looking forward to the sacrifice of Christ, look back on the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifices were something that occurred in the past, but could also be used as a schoolmaster that would bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith.

Beginning in Ezekiel 40, there is a description of the tabernacle and some of its furniture. In Ezekiel 44, there are things regarding the priests.

Ezekiel 44:10-16 “And the Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who strayed away from Me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, as gatekeepers of the house and ministers of the house; they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them. Because they ministered to them before their idols and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity, therefore I have raised My hand in an oath against them,” says the Lord God, “that they shall bear their iniquity. And they shall not come near Me to minister to Me as priest, nor come near any of My holy things, nor into the Most Holy Place; but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed. Nevertheless I will make them keep charge of the temple, for all its work, and for all that has to be done in it. But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood,” says the Lord God. “They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge.”

If we take that for what it literally says, then I propose that that is not something that

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could be done during the Millennium, unless they were resurrected to do it. Is there a special resurrection for those at the beginning of the Millennium who minister to God? We have been taught, through Mr. Armstrong, that there are three resurrections: one at the beginning, when Christ returns, and one at the end of the Millennium, after Satan has been loosed. Which resurrection would those described in verses 10-16, according to that teaching of Mr. Armstrong, when would they come up from the grave?

If they have not been converted, it would be after the Millennium is over. Yet Ezekiel 44 clearly shows that it was those who went astray and led people to the worship of idols, who are going to be ministering at that time. In verse 15, it is also going to be the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok “who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray,” are going to minister to God.

There is a time element missing here. I have not been able to solve this. How could that be during the Millennium? So it leaves a question: will there be a sacrificial system during the Millennium, or will it be deferred until after the Great White Throne? It is certainly a possibility, that what is in Ezekiel 44, could take place after the Millennium and during the Great White Throne period, when the very people who were instrumental in causing the problem are resurrected to face the error of their way, and to repent.

There is no doubt that God is going to resurrect that system. God is true, His Word can be believed. It shows very clearly in Ezekiel 44 that He is going to resurrect that system, and He is going to make those who sin in the carrying out of their responsibilities go through the system again. This time, they are going to do it with understanding, and they are going to be at least partly responsible for leading people to Christ through the sacrificial system. It is once again going to be instituted, only this time, it is going to work. It is going to work in being a tutor to lead people to Christ, and then the people will be justified by faith. I do not think there is any doubt about that, it is just a matter of when. When is it going to occur? Maybe the answer is in the scripture somewhere. If we took Ezekiel 44 all by itself, and put it together with Revelation 20, according to our understanding, it would have to take place after the Millennium is over, during the Great White Throne period.

We will now go back to the book of John.

John 17:1-5 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You

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have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”

The word *glorify* means to bring honor to, to magnify, or to praise. That could be done in a number of ways. One can do it verbally, that is, verbally praise someone or magnify them, by advertising or speaking well of the greatness of their qualities and attributes that one feels is good. It can also be done as a witness of one’s life through imitation. If we imitate someone who we think is great, we bring a certain amount of glorification to them.

In John 17, we find Jesus reaching the very climax of His life. The giving up of the Godhead, of becoming a human being, or going through all of the strenuous responsibilities of living a perfect life, of never once giving into sin—all of those things had been done to prepare Him for the hours that were just beyond this period of time. Christ certainly did not want to have lived His life in vain, and then collapse in His responsibilities right at the end, so He is appealing to God to give Him the strength to glorify His Father in what is about to occur.

What was about to occur is that mankind was going to have revealed to them one of the highest places in the life of Christ, in His scheme of things, that is, the part that He played in God’s purpose. It is through what is about to occur that we are going to find forgiveness of sin. We are going to find reconciliation to God through the forgiveness of sin. His death was inseparable from His life. If He had not gone through the death, there would not have been a perfect sacrifice, there would not have been a payment for sin.

What we are going to see is the most extensive glorification or magnification of God’s love for man. “Greater love has no man than that he lay down his life for his friends.” He had done that in the giving of His time and energy, during the period of time from birth up until now. But now, He was literally going to lay down His life as a sacrifice for mankind.

It may be hard for us to understand how that can bring glory to someone, but it does. It brings glory to the Father, because it is the greatest representation of God’s love for man. God is love, and “greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends.” God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. That brings honor and glory to the Father.

In verse 5, it also brings honor and glory to the one who performs that. You recognize

that throughout history, those who have sacrificed their lives as a martyr for some cause, in most cases, attain far greater glory in their martyrdom than they ever would, had they died peacefully in their bed. They had died for a cause, as a hero: they gave their lives. It is that principle that is at work here.

There is another aspect of this glory for Christ. His death, though it was the end of His physical life, was a necessary step for you and me to have reconciliation with God. Because of that reconciliation with God, we add to the glory of the Son and to the Father, because it is multiplied through you and me. We become reflections of both of Them.

So Christ's death is an absolutely necessary step in God's purpose, no matter how one looks at it.

Matthew 27:51-54 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

This is just a small thing, but it was important enough that God caused it to be put into His Word. Those physical manifestations made believers out of them for a little while. They were verbally glorifying God, and that happened immediately.

John 17:4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

The second phrase, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do," is the explanation of how He glorified the Father. There is a summation of what He did: He finished the work. The work included everything from the time that He began to recognize who and what He was, up until this time. The finished work brought glorification to God.

Romans 8:31-32 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

The death of Christ is an example of how far God is willing to go to save you and me. That brings honor and glory to Him, and glory to the Son, because it plays a very important part in our obedience to Him.

This is the Bible's own definition of eternal life.

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

There is a sermon there. The key is understanding the word *know*. We normally think of eternal life in terms of length, as life without end. But it is obvious that life without end would only be enjoyable if it were lived in a way that was enjoyable. Would eternal life be good if one had to be disabled in some way, physically or mentally, during that whole period of time? Forever, and ever, and ever, and ever. Would it be good to be a quadriplegic, forever? Would it be good, to be somebody of extremely low intelligence, mentally deficient, blind? Would it be good to live life eternally, where one was always squabbling with everybody else? Fighting, in misery, in pain, emotional pain all the time, because one was always angry, upset, depressed, discouraged, bitter, envious, jealous? You know, the way we always live. (I hope we are overcoming that.)

Who has eternal life? The angels have eternal life, but they are not the subject here. The only ones who have eternal life, of the kind which we want to live, is God, the God family, the Father and the Son.

Eternal life, by definition, has to be the kind of life that God lives. It is length of life, and in addition to that, it is quality of life. Life is worthwhile, to be lived forever, only if it is lived like God lives. That is what we are striving to do here and now. We are trying to get into the swing of things so that we live the same kind of life that God lives. Of course, we do not live it on the same scale. We do not live it as perfectly. We do not have the quality that He has, but He certainly wants to get us into the flow of things so that we are not resisting Him in any way, and so that we have the same kind of heart and attitude. When He gives us life without end, we will already be in the flow of living the same way that He does.

That is the hard part: being converted to live the kind of life that God lives. We are no longer competing with one another, we are cooperating with one another. We are no longer bitter and envious towards one another, we want to help, and serve, and give to one another; be generous, kind, obedient to the law of God, the way of God, all of the

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time. Even if the thought of sin comes into our mind, we put it out. We live a life of self-sacrifice, concern and care for those around us.

Life, then, from the time that God begins to call us, becomes a matter of being changed, converted, to where we are living life the way that God does so that He can give us endless life, and then we will go right on living life the way that God does, only on His level.

Amos 5:4 For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: "Seek Me and live; ..."

If a person is truly seeking Him, that person is going to live. *Live* does not just mean endlessly. It is obvious, implied, that He means, "Live the way that I live."

It would not be a loving God that would ask us to seek Him and continue to live the way that humans have always lived. Did not Jesus say in John 10:10 that "I came that you might have life more abundantly."

The question is, how should we then live? The Bible gives the answer to this.

Ezekiel 33:9 "Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity;..."

Seek Me and live! God says to the wicked, "Turn and live!" He says to us, "Warn them, and if they do not turn, they are going to die."

Ezekiel 33:9-11 "...he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?"' Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God,..."

That is the answer to the question. In your Bible, there is a comma after the word *God* at the beginning of verse 11. There were no punctuation marks when the Bible was written. That is the answer to the question: how should we live? "As I live" says the Eternal God. Period.

Ezekiel 33:11 "...I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the

wicked turn from his way and live.”

Can you understand why Jesus said this is eternal life, that we should know God? Why would you seek God? The reason to seek God is so that you know Him, so that you know how He lives, so that you can imitate Him.

Hosea 4:6 “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”

Why do we die? It is because of a lack of knowledge. A lack of knowledge of what? A lack of knowledge of God, of His way of life, of His purpose, of the doctrines of God.

When the ancient Jews were putting together the Talmud, they had a teaching that was a question and answer thing. This was the question: what is the smallest section of scripture on which hangs all of the essentials of the law? The answer according to them, is Proverbs 3:6.

Proverbs 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

It does not say that in the Hebrews, it simply says “Know Him, and He will direct your paths.”

Do you see why Jesus said that eternal life is to know God? It is not to know *about* Him; it is to know God through seeking Him for the purpose of imitating Him, for living like He does. How should we live? “Like I do,” says God.

He is not talking about the splendor or the glory that he lives in, He is talking about the way that He lives. He is talking about the kind of mind, the kind of heart, the kind of attitude, the approach to life that He has.

Certainly, intellectual knowledge is a part of this. In fact, it is intellectual knowledge that begins to show us what God is like. What Christ is talking about in John 17 is the knowledge that comes from an intimate relationship. In Hebrew, the word *know* indicates more than just “knowledge about.”

Genesis 4:1 is probably the best known use of the word *know* in the entire Bible:

Genesis 4:1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain,...

To the Hebrews, the word *know* connoted the intimacy of a personal relationship that went all of the way to sexual intercourse.

For you and me, the important thing is not the sexual intercourse. What is important is the intimacy of the relationship, where you are so close to a person, it is like you know their very mind and their thoughts. You know which way they are going to act and react. It is the kind of intimacy that precedes the intercourse, that kind of intimacy between a man and a woman. It is not the intercourse that God is concerned about here, but it is the expression of the feelings, the love, the emotion, the kindness, the generosity, that precedes that. That is the closest thing that we have in human life that describes the kind of relationship that God wants to have with us.

John 17:6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."

Psalms 20:7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.

It seems like a strange way of putting it, but what he is saying is, we trust in God because He is better than a horse, He is better than a shield. God ever lives, God is all powerful, God is omnipotent, God is omniscient. God is everywhere all at once. God can perceive everything that is going on. God can read people's mind. God has such awesome power that He can do anything that He wants, and who is going to stop Him?

So we put our trust in somebody like that, rather than an old horse and a shield and a chariot. We know what He is. It is not just that we know about Him, but we know what He is.

Psalms 22:22 I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

This verse is a prophecy of what Christ will do, and Christ did this. We read this in John 17:6. He declared to those men the attributes of God.

Isaiah 52:5-6 “Now therefore, what have I here,” says the Lord, “That My people are taken away for nothing? Those who rule over them make them wail,” says the Lord, “And My name is blasphemed continually every day. Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore they shall know in that day that I am He who speaks: ‘Behold, it is I.’”

The implication is “in that day,” when God’s name is being blasphemed, that His people will know His name, and they are going to trust in it. Not just know about it, they will know Him.

How was this done? How did Jesus do it? There are two ways that He did it: He did it in His teaching, and He did it in His example.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time.

The implication is obvious. If no one has ever seen Him, how do we know what He is like? How do we know what to seek after? How do we know what His attributes are? How do we know the way that He acts and reacts? How do we know how He thinks?

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father [that is the very closest kind of relationship], He has declared Him.

Verbally, audibly, before the people, and especially before His disciples, who remembered the words that He said, and now we are reading them.

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? [“You have not known me?”] He who has seen Me has seen the Father;...”

No one has seen God at any time. But He who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

John 14:9 "...so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

We have two witnesses. On the one hand, we have the audible, verbal teaching that these men heard, Christ declared it. But He also declared it through the way that He lived. We are able to understand, to know, the name of God.

John 17:6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."

In a primary sense, the people that He is talking about ("they were yours", and they were given to Christ) were the original apostles. But in a secondary sense, it also includes us. The disciples, and that would include us, are a gift from the Father to the Son.

John 17:7 "Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You."

That is, all of the works that He did, were done by the power of the Father. All of the teaching that He did was done by the inspiration of the Father.

John 17:8 "For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You;..."

Matthew 16:13, 16 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"...Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

That was revealed to them, not by flesh and blood, but by the Father in heaven.

In a secondary sense, it is true of you and me. We are gifts from the Father to the Son. God has revealed the Son to us, and we believe the Word that has come through the Son. We believe that Jesus, indeed, is the Son of God.

John 17:9 “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.”

The prayer is taking a turn here. At first, He prayed for Himself. Now, He is praying directly for the apostles, and again in a secondary sense, for you and me.

Some might see a conflict between this and John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” On the one hand, God loves the world. On the other hand, God in the flesh does not pray for the world.

There is no contradiction there. God does love the world, and He sent His Son for that purpose, to become a payment for sin and to reveal the Father, in order that the world would be turned back, eventually, each in his own order, to the Father. The Father does love the world, but Christ is not praying that the world continue the way that it is, and God is not trying to save those people right at this moment. It is essential that the apostles who are going to represent Christ, in the world, need all of the help that they can get, and that includes the prayer of the Son to the Father in their behalf.

John 17:10 “And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.”

That is interesting because He is speaking of it in the present tense. The glorification means that they were already beginning to reflect Him to some small degree. The principle that is at work is that the pupil brings glory, he magnifies, the teacher. He goes out and reflects the teacher’s teaching. He brings honor to the teacher through the spreading of what the teacher has taught him. This does not work just for Christ, it works in other areas as well, for example, in athletics. It works in education.

John 17:11 “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep [guard, protect, preserve] through Your name...”

We can say “through Your attributes,” or as Mr. Armstrong applied it, we are preserved within the church. In that sense, the mother protects and nourishes us, as though we were within its womb. So we are kept and preserved through the church of God, the name that comes from the Father.

John 17:11 "...keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are."

One commentary says that there is an interesting thing in regard to the word *name*: it reflects that which precedes it. This is in reference to the name of God. It signifies the power of the person who bears the name. "Keep through your name those whom You have given Me." The name is God, and we are to be protected, preserved, kept, through the power of that name. Who bears that name?

Of course, Jesus Christ bears the name, and God the Father bears the name. But is that all who bear the name?

John 17:12 "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept;..."

The power of that name; the name is God. Jesus was God; His name was Emanuel, He was God in the flesh. He kept those people, He preserved them, He guarded them. "Those whom You gave Me I have kept." He guarded them, protected them through the attributes of God, which He carried about with Him as well, by the spirit of God. As long as He was with them, it was His responsibility to keep them, because they were gifts to Him from the Father. He bore that name.

John 17:12 "...and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

That was Judas.

John 17:13 "But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves."

That was a request, from Christ to the Father. First of all, on behalf of the apostles, and secondarily for you and me. He was praying that we might have joy, which I think was awfully nice of Him. You want to live a good life, you want to be happy, you want to have an enjoyable period of time while you are converting to God and His way. To have a special prayer, from God in the flesh, in our behalf, that we might have the same kind of

joy that He had...that is pretty great, that is good. I like that.

John 17:14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

Here comes the other side of the coin. He prays that we might have joy, but on the other hand, He lets us know very clearly that the world hated them, and it is going to hate us.

In my former life, I grew up in the Methodist church. I then went to the Presbyterian church with my wife, and then the Christian Missionary Alliance church with my wife for another year or so. I have to throw in all of the Pentecostal churches that I went to with my grandmother. The picture that I got of Christianity from all of those churches was, by and large, nothing more than a great escape. Jesus was around, that we should escape. We should escape problems, trials, difficulties.

I had this reconfirmed to me when we were in South Carolina, the PTL Club and the 700 Club were big things. They were up in Fort Mill and Charlotte, North Carolina. Religion was big, much bigger in the South than it is out here in California. It seems to be on everybody's lips, practically all the time. I tuned in to PTL one time, the one and only time, and I listened to it for about a half an hour. In that half an hour, if I would have taken that as an example of what Christianity is like, I would have to say that Christianity consisted of nothing more than God being always on the ready to do wonderful things for us. He was going to step right out, and He was going to heal you. He was going to give you a job, He was going to give you favor in somebody's eyes. He was going to give you exactly the right words to say at exactly the right time. Or like Norman Vincent Peale, He would find a taxi for Norman, right in the middle of a rain storm.

When I read the book, it is not exactly like that. I see Jesus warning us of problems, troubles, trials, and certainly, there is always in the background the promise of deliverance. That is what the word *salvation* means. There is the promise of deliverance, but how does that deliverance come? It comes to those who overcome. It is a deliverance that is through victory, through overcoming, rather than having the way cleared of all of the obstacles that might appear in one's life.

What would we turn out to be, if God was going before us like a blocker on a football team, just clearing the way all of the time? We would turn out to be nothing but a bunch of spoiled brats. We would have no character, we would always be expecting somebody else to do it for us. We would not be able to do a thing. There would be no training at all that would be worthwhile, for living endlessly.

The building of character, the development of good qualities, of a teacher, of a ruler, who is wise through experience, who is wise and compassionate and merciful, because he has fought the same battles and he has overcome them...we have the example of our Savior's life. Certainly God helped Him, certainly God inspired Him, certainly God advised Him, certainly God gave Him power, but Christ, by His own words, says "I have overcome the world; I have been victorious." God did not clear everything out of the path for Christ. What was necessary for the performance of Christ in His responsibility was not removed out of the way.

We have God's promise that He will never give us anything that is too big for us. Life is going to be as hard as we are able to bear. But Jesus also prayed for our joy. We can be content, we can be at peace, and we can also have a measure of happiness, even though there are difficulties. There is more joy to come, but we better understand that the hardship goes right with the joy. God has not led us on a "great escape," He is preparing the way so that we have difficulties and trials that are commensurate with what He is working toward in our life.

John 17:15 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."

That is so clear. God will protect us from Satan, but He is not going to take us out of the world, Rather, he is going to, with the help of Christ, help us overcome the world.

John 17:16 "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

It is not our system, it is not our way.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

Sanctify has two applications, both very exciting. If you look up the word *sanctified* in a dictionary or a lexicon, the meaning is "set apart," or it will say "dedicated or consecrated." They are not wrong. But the implication is the word *different*, that something that is sanctified is different.

For instance, the Sabbath is sanctified. It is different from the other days of the week. It has been set apart by God for the worship of Him. It has been set apart that we should not work on that day. It is set apart as a holy convocation. It is different from the other

days. God's spirit is holy. It is different from the spirit of this world. God's spirit is clean, God's spirit is pure. It has all of the attributes, love, joy, peace, and so forth.

In John 17, we are made different by God's word. "Sanctify them, dedicate them, consecrate them, make them different, by God's truth." That is what makes us different from the world. Satan was a liar from the beginning, and this world has been founded upon the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is founded upon human reason, inspired by Satan the Devil, a liar. So when God's word, God's truth begins to come into us, it begins to set us apart. We begin to become different from the world, if we believe it and we begin to practice it. We become sanctified, set apart, different, consecrated.

The second part is that *sanctified* has the connotation, in Christ's prayer, that when He asked God to sanctify us, set us apart, He was also asking that we be equipped for the service to which we have been dedicated. Mr. Armstrong used to put it this way: if God puts a person in a position, He always gives Him the tools needed to carry out the job.

God has placed all of us in the body. All of us have a function to perform within it. Some of us, like the ministry, is very visible. Some of us have offices that are spiritual, others have offices of service within the church that are not so spiritual, but have spiritual overtones, as with a deacon. So all of us have a function to perform, and some of us, maybe several functions to perform within the body. Understand, that with your sanctification, with your consecration, with your being put into the body, God also gives you the wherewithal with which to carry out what He is giving you to do.

Maybe your job is to pray, in a special way, in a way that maybe others cannot do. Let us assume that this is a responsibility that God has given especially to widows. What God also gives them, in most cases, is time to do it with. Time that for someone else, who may be more active within the work in the sense that they are visibly seen out before the congregation doing things, does not have. That does not mean that they should not pray, but they do not have the time to do it the way that someone else that God has put into the body does have.

In every aspect of the work that God has given you and me to do within the body, He also gives us the wherewithal to do it.

John 17:18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."

In verse 14, He said that the world hates them. So He has not sent us off into a

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monastery, He has sent us into the world. If the world hates us, He is telling us that He is sending us into trouble. That does not look like Christianity is a great escape. Those are the people He is going to call in the future, the ones we take the message to.

John 17:19 “And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.”

He flips over what He said in verse 17 and reaffirms it.

The prayer now takes another turn, and gives a glimpse of the future, at least when Christ was praying this.

John 17:20-21 “I do not pray for these alone [the apostles], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

Here He was, facing death. In one sense, it was going to be the end of His ministry, the end of His work. But He also shows that He is completely confident that this thing is going to go right on. It also would include the fact of His own resurrection, that He was going to be participating beyond His death, in the work of His church. He is praying for those who are going to come, through the word of His apostles, “that they may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You.” We need to spend some time on this unity that He is talking about.

Is this unity a matter of organization or administration? I submit that the matter or organization or administration is secondary. We do not necessarily need to be converted to have a certain amount of organization. There is a Catholic church that has existed for over 1900 years, and it is a well-organized group. You have to be pretty well organized to last that long. But they are not converted, and they are not the truth.

What kind of a unity is He talking about? Certainly the administration and the organization is a part of it, but the unity that He is talking about and praying about is a unity of personal relationships. He is central to this issue: without Him, this unity of personal relationships could not take place. He is the keystone.

Ephesians 2:11-13 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision

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made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ [certainly not unified], being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel [from that organization] and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Christ is the central issue, the central figure, in this unity that He is talking about.

Ephesians 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one...

Who are the both? It is the Jew or the Israelite, and the Gentile. It is the circumcised and the uncircumcised. The uncircumcised were always in animosity and enmity against the circumcised, and vice-versa.

Ephesians 2:14-15 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh [that is by His life and by His death] the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,...

Christ is the only thing that can produce unity from people who by nature are at war with one another, who do not like one another, who have enmity against one another. Envy one another, are jealous of one another.

That is the unity that He is praying about: the unity of personal relationships.

In Ephesians 2:15, where it says “having abolished in His flesh the enmity,” it is talking about His sacrifice by His death. His death is what reconciles us to the Father, and provides the forgiveness of sins. It gives us a starting point, both Israelites and Gentile. It gives both a starting point to the reconciliation for those of us who have been estranged from God and from one another. The reconciliation to God, through the death of Jesus Christ, gives us a starting point from which we can grow to be reconciled to one another.

I John 4:17-19 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear

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involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him [that is, God] because He first loved us.

God so loved the world that He gave His Son. He provided a reconciliation to Him through Christ. It provides a starting point, that we can begin to love God through the love that God has first shown to us.

I John 14:20-21 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

That is why Jesus prayed for that in John 17. This is the major problem on earth: men have never been able to get along together. We begin competing with one another, envy one another, become jealous of one another, want to rule over one another. We compete and do everything that makes our brother an antagonist to us. You will never have peace that way.

So there has to be a point of reference that will begin to reconcile men to each other. That point of reference is Christ. It gives us something in common that we both love. God expects us to work out from that. He has added to that Christ's prayer, that we may be one, as He and the Father are one. That is a personal relationship. He was in the bosom of the Father. Unity is not natural.

John 17:21 "...that the world may know that You have sent Me..."

Christ asked for unity, that the world might believe that He was sent from the Father. He is saying that the unity within the church will convince the world of the truth of Christianity. Mankind has never been united. God is working a miracle in the church, that has never been accomplished anywhere, at any time, except in His church. That people with such diversity, race, language, social and economic status, so many differences, can somehow or another get along, believe the same things, and accomplish a great work. That is what He prayed for.

We have not reached it yet, but hopefully, we will reach it before He comes. We have to do our part in using the love of God to begin to love our neighbor. There is no better place to begin than right in your own home.