



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

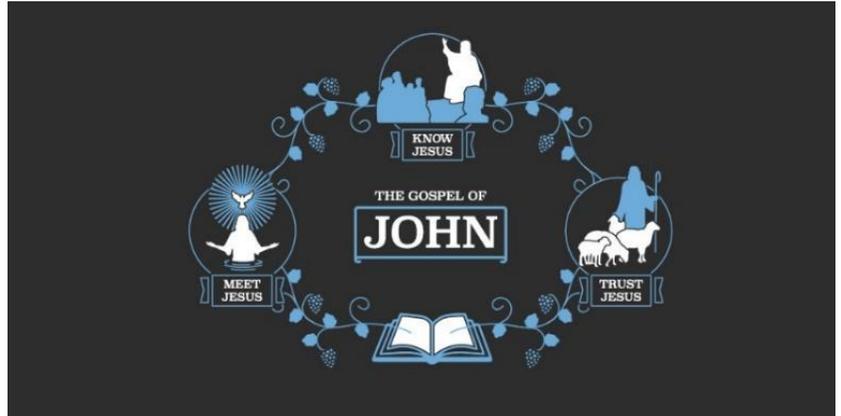
Perfectly One

The Gospel of John

John 17:20-26

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Good morning, church. For those of you who don't know, I serve as the campus pastor at our Indian Creek campus, as well as the student ministry pastor with our middle schoolers here at Sugar Grove. It's great to be with you this morning.



I invite you to open your Bibles with me to John 17. We're going to be looking at the final words of Jesus' high priestly prayer that we've been looking at the past two weeks. We've already seen some pretty wonderful things He has prayed. He's prayed for His own glory and that it would glorify the Father. He's also prayed for His disciples.

Today, as we conclude this prayer, we're going to see Jesus shift His focus away from the guys who were with Him there, praying now for all those who would follow Him throughout time, as we see in verse 20. I timed the prayer this week and it took about three and a half minutes to read out loud. Six times Jesus mentioned the unity or oneness of His disciples. As we see in verses 20-21, He's speaking not only the men who were present, but also of all those who would believe on account of their word, clear down the line even to us today. His prayer is that we would be one. He mentions this six times in three and a half minutes, so it's important.

Jesus knew He would soon be leaving these disciples and that they would find themselves in a hostile environment. He knew that eventually we would as well. That's what makes being together as one so critical. So let's see if we can understand what Jesus means when He says He wants us to be one.

I have flashbacks to when I was a kid with my two younger brothers. My mom would say, "Guys, can you just get along? Be nice to each other." That's one way to manage a 16-hour car ride. We could just be nice. But I think Jesus has something more in mind. He doesn't just want us to be one in the sense of not losing our cool and fighting whenever we get together and interact with people. I think Jesus has a greater unity in mind.

As you look throughout the Scriptures, you don't see this unity among believers defined by personalities. That's what we might readily assume. There are certain personalities that tend to rub us the wrong way, so it can be easier to just avoid those people, surrounding ourselves with people who are easier to get along with. But that's also not what Jesus is talking about. Nor is He talking about our preferences, implying we should just go to places or be part of things that are structured the way we prefer. He's not talking about our philosophies, nor the ideas we have about how ministry is supposed to look, such as what a church service is supposed to be like. He's talking about a unity that is entirely deeper than any of these things. When He speaks of us being one, He has in mind a deep-seated familial unity.

In our house we have a two-year-old boy who loves dinosaurs. A couple Saturdays ago, I found myself sitting on the couch with Peter, watching the old 2000 movie with the CGI dinosaurs called "Dinosaur." Do you remember that? If you don't, check it out. There's a scene in the movie where a herd of dinosaurs was traveling to a new home, because their previous home had been destroyed by a meteor. There were all different kinds of dinosaurs traveling together. As they were getting close to their destination, they found themselves in a canyon surrounded by rock walls. That's when a carnotaurus came up behind them. If you don't know what that is, think T-Rex. The other dinosaurs began to freak out because they didn't want to be lunch. Then

their antagonistic leader called out to them, "Run! Everybody run! Tuck your tails and get going." He was working with the mindset of the survival of the fittest. Just don't be the slowest one.

Now, we joke about that ourselves. If you're hiking and come across a bear, you don't need to outrun the bear; just outrun whoever is with you. But that's not the idea the other leader of the dinosaurs had. The up-and-coming protagonist leader in the movie said, "Guys, don't run. He will pick us off. We'll all be lunch. Let's stand together." Everyone was thinking, "Stand against a T-Rex? Nobody does that." But the leader got up close to the carnotaurus and began to roar at him. The next thing you know, he's joined by another dinosaur and another and another. There was a whole herd of them. There were iguanodons, triceratops, brachiosauruses—all different types of dinosaurs. I know right now you're thinking, "How did he just say those names so fast without tripping over them?" I don't know. But there they were, different dinosaurs standing together. Together they pushed back their enemy and they all survived.

It's a silly kids' movie, but it gives a little picture of the unity Jesus was talking about. The unity we ought to have as believers is different than, "Seek your own interest, live for yourself and cover your own tail." Rather, the unity Jesus speaks of is captured in Paul's words in Philippians 2:2-4s:

Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

That's pretty tangible. As we look at John 17:21, it seems that this should be a very tangible and observable unity. Jesus prayed "*that they may all be one...so that the world may believe*" that the Father sent Jesus into the world. The world ought to be able to see that we're one.

Can you imagine a whole community, church or group of disciples who live the way Paul is describing? Selfless. Humble. Putting the interests and needs of other people above themselves. If we were all like that, think of the attractive picture that would give the world. That's a different kind of community than the world is promoting. That's different from what we see around us. This is a community defined by Christ.

Paul continues in Philippians 2:5-8:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

In effect Paul is saying, "This unity we have as followers of Jesus Christ—as the church, as His people—is modeled for us in Jesus." We cannot find that unity apart from Him. "*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...*"

So as a church, we're not just unified in the sense of being together by association with one another. Our unity runs deeper than that. It's more like family unity. With all the differences that exist in your family, you still stick together through it all. You want what's best for your siblings, your parents and all those whom you love. That's the picture we have here in Christ's model. We realize that our oneness is derived from Christ alone and is driven by the power of the Spirit. In verse one Paul says, "*If there is...any participation in the Spirit...have the same mind.*" We walk by faith. We walk by the Spirit and we are devoted to one another. I'm not living for Jeremy anymore.

Those of you who are married have hopefully found this to be true. When you got married, life was no longer just about you. When you had kids, life was no longer just about you. Your life is now bound up with someone else. Your interests and needs are bound up in others' needs as well. Now you're concerned about them. What if as followers of Christ—as His church—we have that mind, so we can come together and be, as Jesus says in John 17:23, "perfectly one"? Not dictated by our own desires or preferences, but by our concern for each other, bound up in Christ?

This unity was a driving factor in Jesus' whole ministry. How many times throughout our study in John's Gospel have we heard Jesus talking about His unity with the Father? We've heard Him say, "I and the Father are one. You may know and understand that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father. Whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise." That's the same kind of unity we're being invited into. Look again at verses 22-23: "*...that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one...*" That's radical community, being devoted to each other and committed to each other's wellbeing.

It's this unity Jesus shared with the Father that allowed Him to open this prayer by saying in verse four, "I have *accomplished the work that You gave Me to do.*" It's that unity that allows Him to say now in verse 26, "I have made known to them your name..." As His followers, as His church, you and I have been welcomed into this unity because we are in Him. As we are in Him, we are also in one another. We are bound up together. We no longer are part of the individualistic culture of our day. In the church, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are together, one in each other, with a common interest. That's our foundation. If we miss this idea of unity Jesus is talking about, we won't see the beautiful things He brings up in today's passage. If we define oneness as simply being able to be nice to one another, we've missed the beauty of what Jesus calls us to as His followers.

Let's look at three things Jesus reminds us of in this prayer, especially as it relates to unity within the church.

Jesus' prayer reminds us there is one church.

We find the first reminder in verse 20 where Jesus reminds us there is one church: "*I do not ask for these only*"—speaking of the men He was with at that time— "*but also for those who will believe in me through their word.*"

For just a second, I want you to look around this room. Be the awkward person and look at somebody. Look behind you. Look at all the people who are gathered here today. This is one service, meeting at one location at one time. We are the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer in verse 20: "*..those who will believe in me through their word.*" We are but a small sample of those who will believe.

So we're gathered here today—at this service, in this location—as part of a long lineage of faithful saints who have upheld the same gospel—the same word they received from Christ—then passed it on from generation to generation, from person to person, all the way down the line to you and me in this room today. Their purpose was so that we would believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. We gather together as part of that community. We're here today in Sugar Grove to proclaim and sing the same gospel that was entrusted to a handful of ordinary men a couple thousand years ago. Originally there were 11 men, over there on the other side of the world, and here we are at Sugar Grove, Illinois. It's the same gospel, the same hope, the same glory of God. We're gathering this morning not only having received these things, but also being entrusted with that same gospel, so that we would share it with others as well, all those who come after us.

I want you to think about the legacy of Village Bible Church. Have you ever thought about that? What will this church be like a hundred years from now, when every one of us in this room are dead and gone? I pray that this church will still be going strong, that the gospel would still be proclaimed, that lives would still be changed. Think of the people who are going to be sitting in the very spot you're in now—10, 20, 30 years from now. One church. Wayne Grudem defines the church as "the community of all true believers for all time." One church, united under one Head, Jesus Christ.

I don't know about you, but this is the kind of thing that gets my blood pumping. It's so exciting to think that as the church, we are part of something so much bigger than ourselves, so much bigger than one location, so much more complex than seven campuses. This is also something so much more glorious than we can put our minds to.

Jesus' prayer reminds us there is one glory.

Jesus prays in verse 22, "*The glory that you have given me I have given to them...*" Don't brush past that too quickly. What a statement this is! His prayer is reminding us that there is one church and one glory. How crazy is that? Let it sink in for a moment. "*The glory that you have given me I have given to them...*" Wow.

Then we have to ask what is this glory? Do I view the church as glorious? Do I view the bride of Christ as wonderful and spectacular? What is it that Jesus has given us? Let's look at a couple things in this prayer that Jesus says He's giving to His followers.

In verses eight and 14, Jesus says, "I have given them the Father's word." In verse two, Jesus says, "I've given them eternal life." In verses 23 and 26, He's given us the love of God. In other words, brothers and sisters, the glory of the church, as we look at it, is not just a product of the church. It's not just the church in and of itself. The glory of the church is not something the church produces. The glory of the church, fundamentally, is the glory that has been given to the church. That means who the church is and what the church does becomes a manifestation of that glory, so that the world may believe. There is one glory and that glory comes from God. We're reminded of Scripture that says from Him and for Him and to Him. It's one glory.

The church is seen as glorious in Christ—why? Think about how Pastor Tim described sanctification last week. The disciples were sanctified by becoming more like Jesus and less like the world.

This reminds us of Ephesians 5:25-27 where Paul was telling husbands, *“Love your wives, as Christ loved the church.”* What did Christ do? He *“gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”* That’s how God looks at the church.

So have you thought of the church as glorious? Not glorious because of what we are in and of ourselves, not glorious because we’ve found a way to get together on a consistent basis, but glorious because Jesus has made us glorious. We’re glorious because the glory of the Father has been bestowed upon us as His church, so that the world may see and believe. To Him be the glory forever!

And yet, Jesus is so glorious that we have just tasted of His glory. He’s so glorious that we can’t perceive the extent of just how wonderful and glorious He truly is. We read in John 1:14 that Jesus has shown us His glory, the *“glory as of the only Son from the Father.”* In Colossians 1:15, Paul says, *“He is the image of the invisible God.”* Hebrews 1:3 says, *“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.”* Yet we have only seen in part. There is a gloriousness to our Savior that we cannot fathom right now. We can’t wrap our heads around it right now.

Do you ever think about Moses back in Exodus 33, who said, *“Lord, show me Your glory?”* God says, *“Okay, I’ll show you, but you can’t see My face, because no one can see Me and live. So I’m going to hide you in a rock, then when My glory passes by, you can see the back of it.”* What happened? Moses’ face lit up. It was crazy.

There is a glory to God that we cannot wrap our heads around right now, but one day as you and I enter heaven, we will see the glory of our Savior on full display. He prays to the Father in verse 24, *“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”*

Here and now we stand united as one church, looking not only to our own interests or needs, but we are also looking ahead with anticipation for that glory we’re going to see in full display when we enter into eternity. I can’t wait for that day! Man, will our jaws drop. How can we describe such a wonderful thing?

In Revelation we’re told there will be no need for the sun or other lights because God Himself will be the light. How glorious is our God! Jesus says, *“The same glory that you have given me, I have given to them.”* On that day, when we enter heaven, all things will be made clear. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:12-13, *“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”*

That’s because, brothers and sisters, as the bride of Christ, we have been crowned with the everlasting love of God. He has loved us. He continues to love us. He will love us for all eternity with the same love with which He loves His own Son. That ought to rock your world. What a glorious thing Christ has done on our behalf—all to one end: that the world may believe.

Jesus’ prayer reminds us there is one mission.

Through and through, as we look at these closing words of His prayer, we see that Jesus has this mission in mind. His prayer reminds us that not only is there one church, not only is there one glory, but there’s one mission. It’s the same mission the church has been on for all time.

Notice in verse 20 that Jesus is praying *“for those who will believe.”* There will be those who believe. In verse 21, He prays that we would all be one, *“so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”* In verse 23, He says He’s given us this glory *“so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you loved me.”* In verse 26, Jesus says, *“I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known.”*

Guys, there’s one mission. His prayer has a much broader focus than just 2,000 years ago. As Jesus stared the cross in the face, He knew there was something bigger at stake there. There was a community of people He was bringing together as He was lifted up on that cross to the glory of God. You and I, as long as it is still called today, are still on that mission. As we talked about last week, Jesus has sent His disciples into the world just as He was sent. You and I are sent into the world with one mission: to make God known and to bring glory to His name. One church, one glory, one mission.

So on a weekend like this we applaud when we see hundreds of people coming together as a church to pull off a garage sale for missions. Lots of preparation and hundreds of hours went into that. I have to be honest with you, I don’t think hundreds of

people come together and thousands of people walk through this church just because it's a garage sale. It's because of the mission. It's the why behind it. Why did we have a garage sale? We applaud that \$25,000 was raised for what? The mission, to take this gospel that we have been entrusted with and proclaim it to the uttermost parts of the world. We are to take this message that has been passed down through the ages and continue to spread it all around the world, as well as here in our communities. Our mission is to make God known and to bring glory to His name.

So the perseverance of the church, the glory of the church, the unity of the church—these things all testify to the world that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The Father sent Him into the world and Jesus has made the Father known to us through His life and His teachings. He has reconciled us to Him by His death on the cross, His burial, His resurrection and His ascension into the very throne room of God on our behalf. This is the hope. This is the message we have.

Jesus' mission, His vision, is not just to make as many converts as possible; it's to make disciples, those who will follow and teach and train others to walk as He commanded them. He said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you"* (Matthew 28:19-20).

When I was in college, one of my professors had us watch a video that caught us a little off guard at the beginning. It was about one of the last Japanese men who made a living by making swords. It was an awesome video with this man talking about his passion for sword-making. He talked about his desire to pass on the aesthetics and the heart of Japanese culture through making swords. As the video continued, the man said part of his goal was to recreate the famous Japanese Kodo sword. The problem was there was no instruction manual; it was something that had only been passed down from teacher to student, from teacher to student. So he committed the next 40 years of his life to mastering the skill.

Think of all the blood, sweat and tears and the attention to detail as he perfected his craftsmanship. Think of the times he failed over and over and over again. But he said in the video, "It's only been in the last five years that I've gotten close." He applied that same passion to everything he did. He explained that many traditional craftsmen have responded to modern times when handing down their craft, but that the essence of the tradition suffered when they did that. He brought that same mindset to the way he trained those whom he called his disciples, the men he was teaching to make swords the way he did. He said, "I want my disciples to surpass me as sword makers. It is my duty to build up disciples better than me. Otherwise, the tradition will wear thin with time."

What a beautiful picture. I sometimes wonder if we could replace some words there and say that many traditional disciples respond to modern times when handing down this faith, but the essence of the tradition suffers when they do. We should rather say, "I want my disciples to surpass me as followers of Christ. It is my duty to build up disciples better than me. Otherwise discipleship will wear thin with time."

I wonder if we brought that same zeal, that same passion, that same commitment to our parenting, what would happen. What if we said, "As a parent, I want to raise up my children to be better disciples than I am"? What if we brought that same mindset to our small groups, our Sunday School classes, our student ministry small groups—everything across the board, all that we do in discipleship—training up people to follow Christ? What if we said, "I want to do this so that the people who come after me will be better followers of Christ than I am"? If we did that, the discipleship in our church would grow stronger with time. That's the vision. That's the mission. Paul says to his own disciple Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1-2, *"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*

So I ask you today are you part of this one church, this one glory? Are you living on this one mission? Are you taking what has been entrusted to you and passing it along to someone else, teaching and training them to follow Christ, in such a way that perhaps they would follow Him even more closely than you have?

As we look at Jesus' prayer, we can conclude so many wonderful things, but we're reminded especially today that there is one church, one glory and one mission: to make God known and to bring glory to His name. You and I today are caught up in something far bigger than ourselves. To God be the glory in all things. Amen?

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.com).