

Pursuing and Growing in Prayer and Joy (John 16:23-27)

Please turn in God's Word to John chapter 16. We've been teaching through this final message of Jesus to His disciples in the upper room in John 13-17, this farewell message before the cross He endured for the joy before Him.

It's been a joy for me to study these words of Jesus as He said in John 15:11 *'These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.'* These things Jesus spoke in the upper room are for you, for the joy of Christ to be in you, so that your joy may be full. In John 16:20 we saw last time the joy of the Lord doesn't mean there's no sorrow or struggles but the Lord turns even those sorrows into joy, transforms grief to gladness, changes hurting to rejoicing. It's a joy based on the gospel, looking to Jesus who died for sin and is risen and is reigning at the right hand of the Father who loves us and gives joy and all we need as we ask for Christ's name sake

In John 16:22 Jesus said *'you have sorrow now but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.'*²³ *In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.'*²⁴ *Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.'*²⁵ *I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.'*²⁶ *In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.'*

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we come to you in the name of Jesus who we believe in and love. We thank you that you love us and hear us for His name's sake, that we can come directly to you in prayer on account of His name, because of who He is and what He's done for us. We praise you that the hour has come where we can understand clearly through your Spirit and we ask that you would make the truth of this passage clear and plain. Help our hearts to rejoice, as the text says, with a joy that no one can take away from us, a joy circumstances or sorrow can't steal. I ask that you would help us receive this truth that our joy may be full. These things I ask for the sake of Jesus' name, His fame, His glory, believing this is His desire, too, Amen.

I'm eager and excited to pursue the joy of the Lord with you in this passage. This text highlights pursuing and growing in prayer and joy, which we all need to pursue and grow in more this year, for the sake of the name of Jesus

3 questions in the text to help us pursue and grow in prayer and joy in 2016:

1. What is praying in the name of Jesus?
2. How does this bring us full joy?
3. Where can you apply this?

First, what is praying in the name of Jesus?

²⁴ *Until now you have asked nothing in my name...* Until the point Jesus said this in the upper room, His followers hadn't prayed in the name of Jesus yet. This is a new teaching in context, a new way to pray, in the name of Jesus.

²³ *In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.* ²⁴ *Until now you have asked nothing in my name ...* ²⁶ *In that day you will ask in my name ...*

3x Jesus mentions asking in His name, 2x He mentions '*in that day*.' What's '*that day*'? I don't think it's the day He rose because v. 23 says His followers wouldn't ask Him questions in that day, but they did ask Jesus questions that day and the days after (Jn 20:15, 21:21, Lk 24:18, Acts 1:6 same Grk verb). But in Acts 2 the day came when they no longer asked questions of Jesus as He was no longer on earth so instead they asked of the Father from then on.

'*That day*' began at Pentecost, the age of the Spirit and the church, a new era of a Jew/Gentile bride and body of Jesus. In v. 25 He calls it an '*hour*' when instead of parables or figurative language they didn't understand before His death and resurrection, an '*hour*' (=time) was coming when the truth of God would be clear and plain to them. That time I take as when Jesus went to the Father and sent the Spirit who makes the truth clear, in Acts 2 and after that. Jesus is talking about from *that day forward*, how all Christians should pray

In v. 23 the first Greek verb for 'ask' meant 'ask a *question for information*' while the 2nd Greek verb meant 'ask a *petition/request*.' The first verb is for asking questions for the sake of knowledge, the second verb is for asking in sense of needs. v. 23 in NASB '*In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.*' It's the difference between asking *Jesus about* things vs. asking *His Father for* things in His name. When Jesus was still on earth, the disciples were constantly asking Jesus questions for information, but the day came after Jesus left earth where they would no longer do that. The Word of Christ and His Spirit now gives all the information needed for our questions as Jesus promised in v. 13: *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth ...* Now we ask the Father to help us apply it

Jesus earlier taught them to pray to the Father, bringing requests or petitions for their needs: *Our Father...give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our sins...lead us...deliver us...* Prayer isn't coming with questions to Jesus for information and expecting His audible answers like with these apostles--He is the answer and His sufficient Word has answers--prayer is asking God for His kingdom to come, and His will to be done. Jesus gave information we need for life's big questions, now what we need from the Father is help in application of His will in His Word. We no longer ask Jesus questions for curiosity's sake, we now ask His Father for what we need for Christ's sake.

So what exactly is it to pray 'in the name of Jesus'? And is the end of v. 23 a promise no matter what we ask the Father, that He'll give us what we ask as long as we use the words 'in Jesus' name?' In His name does NOT mean:

- a magic formula that guarantees what we ask for (see Acts 19:13-17)
- a phrase we tack on prayer like a stamp so it's not returned to sender
- a spiritual sign-off code like 'over and out' or a 10-4 over the radio
- a cue that we're wrapping it up for God or for people waiting to eat
- it's not the exact words we say, but here's some key words to help understand the words *in my name*: access, authority, asking for Jesus

ACCESS THROUGH JESUS

If you were to walk into a bank where you don't have an account and ask if they'll give you all the money they have in the drawer (don't do that by the way, they may push a button and some men in uniforms may show up), but you wouldn't be given access to their vault. On the other hand if you came in the name of a billionaire who has an account there, if you're his wife and he's put your name on the account as a co-signer with full access, then you receive access. Whatever you ask for is available to you if the accounts set up that way with instructions to give you access. The church is the bride of Christ in Scripture. We come in His name, giving us access to His accounts, unsearchable riches in Christ, every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. In v. 23 He tells His bride-to-be whatever they ask in His name will be granted

'We are joined in "legal union" with Jesus. We are His partners ... We are joined in "Life union" ... Then, there is the "love union." We are the bride of Christ. In one sense we have taken His name. We are betrothed. We are joined to Christ as the object of His love ... This all can be said to be part of our position in Christ. It does not depend on our spirituality or the quality of our life. It is grounded only on our salvation ... It is certain that this aspect was included when Christ told His disciples to ask "in my name."¹

But if you're not in that relationship, if you don't truly love Jesus, if you're not in a committed covenant relationship with Jesus, the application for you is back in v. 8: you need to be convicted of sin, righteousness and judgment. Start with what Jesus said just minutes earlier '*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*' The only way to come to the Father is to come in faith through Jesus, believing the truth about your sin and the judgment you deserve, and trusting the righteousness of Jesus alone who died for your sin, and lived so you may have life. It's not Jesus plus what we do that gets us to the Father, Jesus is the only way to the Father in what He has done for us. Acts 4:12 says His name is the only one under heaven by which men can be saved, by believing in the name of Jesus
[at the name of Jesus every knee must bow, tongue confess He's Lord]

That's true in salvation, it's also true in our supplication, our prayers to God. The name that grants heaven when we die also grants access to it in prayer. There's a story told of a union soldier during the Civil War who tried to see the President but when he told the secretaries and guards his name, he was denied access. So he sat outside the White House weeping, believing only the President could help in his case. Eventually a boy came along and asked the soldier what his problem was, and when he explained his situation, the boy said 'let me see what I can do to help.' He walked with the soldier back into the White House and this time they walked past secretaries and security and weren't stopped when they came to the doors of the Oval Office. They walked right in and Abraham Lincoln looked up from his desk and said 'my son, what can I do for you?' The son said to his father, 'this soldier here is in need of your help.' So the soldier got to speak to his commander in chief²

By himself he had no access when he told them his name but when he came with the son, he had access in his name Lincoln. As we come in the name of God's Son, we have access in the name Jesus. But it's even better than that analogy, because Jesus doesn't have to ask His Father for us, by His name a believer has direct access to the throne room of the universe 24/7! There's an open door policy for all believers all the time! All names in the Lamb's Book are pre-approved in His name for full access and the Father's affection

²⁶ *In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf;* ²⁷ *for the Father himself loves you ...* So in other words, asking in the name of Jesus means I don't ask Jesus to ask for me, I have direct access to the Father because of the love relationship I have with His Son. The Father welcomes all who love His Son. Jesus doesn't have to convince His Father or put in a good word for us, His Father loves us, too!

We don't come to God in the name of Mary, we don't pray to her so she can ask God on our behalf, that's a false RCC teaching. We come in the name of Jesus who is the only Mediator between God and man, and His mediating work is finished once for all on the cross, bringing believers to God. So we don't ask the Son to ask the Father on our behalf, the NT teaches we pray to the Father directly because we bear the name 'son.' We are sons by the Spirit of adoption, Christians bear the name of Christ the Son. *His Name means access*, a 1st key word to understand asking 'in His name,' a 2nd is *authority*

AUTHORITY OF JESUS (in name of a Lord/King meant in His authority)

In the context just 4 days earlier people shouted to Jesus '*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!*' (12:13). In Esther 8:8 the Persian king declared '*write ... in the king's name ... for a decree which is written in the name of the king ... may not be revoked.*'

Maybe you've seen movies where the authorized representatives of a king come to a door and say 'open in the name of the king!' A king's name means under the authority of that king, representing his wishes, what he's decreed, this is his will, so on that basis they're asking that door to open. The doors to heaven's throne room will open in the name of King Jesus. We can come boldly to the throne of grace through His name when we know what we're asking represents His wishes. So next time you pray in the name of Jesus, think 'in the name of the King, based on His will decreed in His Word, this is what I ask on that basis, I believe this represents the wishes of the King.'

If you think about that before you end a prayer 'in the name of Jesus,' that will affect how you pray. Don't just say 'in Jesus' name, amen,' *think about what it means* and if your prayer is based on the King's will and word or is it just asking for what you want. It's ok to say the words at the end of prayer, but you can also start your prayer that way. Many of the prayers in the NT don't end with the words 'Jesus name' but at least think: 'what would Jesus desire in this situation, that's what I want to ask for His sake?' It's ok to cast all our cares on Him, as Peter who was in the upper room understood and wrote (1 Pet 5:7). But as John, who was also in the upper room, understood and wrote, asking in the name of a king includes what the will of the king is

1 Jn 5:13-15: *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked...*

Does that mean we can't ask requests unless we're confident it's God's will? No, but it does mean we submit those requests to God's will, just like Jesus Himself modeled hours after the upper room in Gethsemane as He prayed: *'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.'* ...Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed *"My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done"* (Mt 26)

So coming in Jesus name isn't a guarantee that whatever we desire we'll get. 'In His name' isn't a blank check, it's a way to keep what we want in check. James 4:3 says *'When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures'* (NIV). Prayer in Jesus name reminds us of the authority of Jesus we're to submit to, and it should align our motives to His and what pleases God. 'If it's possible, I ask for this if it pleases you, but if not, I ask your will, not mine, be done.' If I'm praying in Jesus' name, I should be representing how Jesus prayed. 'In His name'=access through Jesus, authority of Jesus, 3rdly: *asking for Jesus.*

ASKING FOR JESUS (asking for the sake of Jesus' name, for His glory)

Jn 17:1 *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you..."* So moments after Jesus instructed to pray in His name, Jesus illustrated it by praying first and foremost for His glory that would bring the Father glory. Jesus practiced what He just preached by asking for the sake of the name of the Lord. In v. 6 He used the language of manifesting God's name, that means making visible who He is, showing the glory and worth of

Go back to 12:27, another prayer of Jesus right before the upper room. It's a great example and application of how to pray like/for Jesus when troubled: *12:27 "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name.'* That's often how God answers prayer, not by taking us out of a trial or trouble, but by accomplishing His purpose for that hour for the glory of His name. Ask in His name, ask for His name to be glorified. It'll change not only how you pray, it'll change you as it changes your focus from being delivered from trouble to seeking how you can glorify the Lord's name in it. If that's your heart and prayer, you can know God will help you see answers

Look at 14:13: *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* If your prayer in His name is how Jesus prayed for His Father's name, the Lord answers in whatever way brings most glory.

Jesus explains when we pray in His name, it's so that God will be glorified in Christ. The Lord answers requests in His name, what we ask for the sake of His name, for the glory of who Jesus is, to manifest His worth and honor. It's ok to use the words 'in the name of Jesus,' but it may be more helpful to think or even say, 'I ask if you would do this *for* Jesus, would you answer in whatever way brings most *glory to* Jesus, for the *sake of* His name, not me.'

1st question: what is praying in His name? Think access to Jesus, authority of Jesus, asking for Jesus. **2nd question: How does this bring us full joy?**

Look again John 16:24: *'Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.'*

Earlier in Jn 3:29, John the Baptist described full joy in His presence: *'the friend of the bridegroom, who...hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.'* (NASB). The bride of Christ has fuller joy in His presence, interacting with our Beloved. 15:7 *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified...¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full*
[16:24 '...ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full']

Other Scriptures say 'we have not because we ask not.' Do you ask God for joy as you pray? Jesus tells us ask *'in my name...and you will receive, that your joy may be full.'* There's a fullness of joy that comes through prayer. The Lord said of His people through the prophet Isaiah *'I will...make them joyful in the house of prayer'* (Isa 56:7). The Lord makes joyful in prayer.

The early church prayed for the joy of fellow believers. Paul in Rom 15:13 *'May the God of hope **fill you with all joy...**'* Paul prayed for other believers that the God of hope would fill them with joy. That's a biblical prayer to ask God for, that God would fill with a joy that's full, the joy of v. 22 that can't be taken away. Do you know a brother or sister that needs strengthening or endurance or patience? Pray like Paul in Colossians 1: *'we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be ... strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience **with joy...**'* (v.9, 11). Paul's prayers were full of asking that God would give others joy.

Rom 12:12 commands *'Be joyful in hope...faithful in prayer'* (NIV). There's a connection between faithfulness in prayer and joyfulness. 1 Thess 5:16-18 *'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances...'* That makes it very practical: the path to joy is praying thanksgiving to God.

One way to be more prayerful, making you more joyful is be more thankful. Phil 4:4 *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice...in everything by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made...*

3rd question: where can you apply this? (answer: Psalms, turn to Ps 16)

The Psalms were written to be prayed. Within 12 hours of leaving the upper room, Jesus on the cross prayed to God the words of 2 different Psalms. The early church in Acts 4 prayed from 2 other Psalms. Paul taught as the Word of Christ dwells in us, we'll teach and admonish each other in psalms (Col. 3:16), so I want to close doing that. Bonhoeffer wrote *Psalms: the Prayer Book of the Bible*, "The Psalms are given to us to this end, that we may learn to pray them in the name of Jesus Christ."³ Praying the psalms has changed my life of prayer. Over the holidays I read Don Whitney's book *Praying the Bible* where he urges praying a psalm each day and using its words to pray about our concerns and prayer lists and also God's concerns in that passage.

[I've been doing that since 1/1, it's given my prayers new life and joy]

Several Psalms pray for the joy of people in connection to the Lord's name: Ps 5:11 *'Spread your protection over them, that those who love **your name** may **rejoice in you**'*; 89:16 *'They **rejoice in your name** all day long'* (NIV). The more we focus on the name of the Lord in prayer, the more we love and look to it in our requests as our focus instead of us, the more we'll have joy.

The Psalms help pray in light of those key words access, authority, asking. **Access** to God's presence, practicing that presence made David's joy full. Ps 16:8: *I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.* ⁹ *Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices ...* ¹¹ *You make known to me the path of life; **in your presence there is fullness of joy**...*[there's a full joy coming to His presence. Turn to Ps 20]

AUTHORITY OF THE LORD'S NAME – Not only access in His name is a source of joy in prayer, there's authority, power, and strength in His name. Notice the prayer in Ps 20 invoking the Lord's name for strength and for joy ¹ *May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May **the name of the God of Jacob** protect you!* ² *May he send you **help** from the sanctuary...* ⁵ *May we **shout for joy** over your salvation, and **in the name of our God**...*[see Ps 31]

ASKING FOR THE SAKE OF HIS NAME is a 3rd aspect we see in Ps 31:3 *'you are my rock and my fortress; and **for your name's sake** you lead me and guide me* [NKJV translates it as a request asking 'for your name's sake, lead me and guide me']... ² *I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love*

So he prayed for the sake of the Lord's name, he asked and received so his joy would be full. Look at Ps 25. David asks forgiveness for the sake of His name. 25:11 *For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great.* When our sin is great, we can ask for grace for the sake of His greater name. I'm not great, I don't deserve it, but His name deserves it, so we pray in that (it's like Ps 23: *He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake*)

Ps 79:9 *Help us O God of our salvation, **for the glory of your name**; deliver us, and atone for our sins, **for your name's sake!*** [starting to see a pattern?] In the Hebrew parallelism 'for your name sake'='for the glory of your name.' Ps 32 says when we confess our sin, when we come clean, there's a full joy. 32:11 *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!* 37:4 *Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart* [flip-side of Jn 16, joy in Lord, answered prayers].

Turn to Ps 51. Another Psalm says if we cherish sin in our heart, God won't listen to our prayers (66:18). If I'm delighting in sin, God doesn't give those desires, but in Ps 51 if I truly repent of sin, ask forgiveness, I receive for joy 51:1 *Have mercy on me O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy...*⁸ *Let me hear **joy and gladness**; let the bones that you have broken **rejoice** ...*¹² *Restore to me **the joy of your salvation** ...*

[unconfessed sin will rob you of joy, confess it, ask for God to restore joy]

Look at Ps 63 for joy after praying in His name: 63:4 *So I will bless you as long as I live; **in your name** I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with **joyful** lips.*

Now turn to Ps 85. If a people need revival, if you need revival, pray like Ps 85, v. 6: *Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?* Jesus said if we ask we'll receive that our joy may be full. So ask for that.

Ps 86:12 *I **give thanks** to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will **glorify your name** forever ...*⁴ ***Gladden the soul of your servant**, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul* [NAS 'make glad the soul'; NIV 'bring joy']

Glorifying the Lord's name in prayer brings gladdening, or joy to our souls. God can make us glad in prayer as we make the glory of His name a focus. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him, to have joy in Him. Look at Ps 90. It was written by Moses, and it's a prayer that if we ask and receive, our joy will be full. Ps 90:14: *Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, **that we may rejoice and be glad** all our days. **Make us glad** ...* God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him, most glad in Him and He can make us much glad as we make much of Him in prayer.

92:1 *It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High ...*⁴ *For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.* It's like the modern song 'I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart and enter His courts with praise, I will say this is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice for He has made me glad. He has made me glad (2x), I will rejoice for He has made me glad.' As we give thanks to His name and give glory to His name, He makes us glad.

Let's let Jesus have the last word on how staying in His Word and it in us helps fill out prayers He will answer for His glory and for our fuller joy: *'If...my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified...These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full'* (Jn 15:7-11). Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, may your name be hallowed, and glorified. Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name, be glory. We come to you as Father in the name of Your Son Jesus, based on who He is and what He's done for us as our Mediator, Savior, and Lord. Jesus' name has all authority and power, help us all hail the power of Jesus' name. Make us bow, make us be glad. May your Word dwell and abide in us richly so we speak in psalms and ask in prayer in light of your Word and will. Cause our souls to be satisfied in Christ so He will be glorified in us. We ask in whatever we do, in word or deed, that we would do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to You. Help us to confess sin that robs our joy and to pray for the joy of the Lord to be our strength. We ask believing this is what Jesus would want, if you would do this for Jesus, for His name to be glorified, for the honor of Him who said 'ask in my name and you'll receive that your joy may be full.'

¹ John F. Walvoord, "Prayer in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 91 (1934): 466.

² Richard Phillips, "A Last Word on Prayer," www.sermonaudio.com

³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*, p. 19. The psalms Jesus prays on the cross are Ps 22:1 (Matt 27:46) and Ps 31:5 (Luke 23:46). The early church prayer in Acts 4:24-26 uses the words of Ps 146:6 and quotes Ps 2:1-2.