

## session 7 study guide

# interceding for others

### starter

EXPRESS IT! How do you express your love for others?

- ☐ I tell them.
- ☐ I assume they know.
- ☐ I write notes, emails or text messages.
- ☐ I try to do something nice for them.
- ☐ I help when they ask.
- ☐ I give hugs.
- ☐ I try not to say hurtful things.
- ☐ I spend time with them.
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your favorite way for your family to express their love for you?

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2. What about your friends?

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**message**

The Gospel of John records something extraordinary: Jesus' prayer to the heavenly Father *for us*. That's right . . . Jesus prayed for everyone who would hear His disciples' message and believe in Him. As you read this prayer recorded in John 17:20-26, consider the following questions: (1) What is Jesus' prayer for us? (2) What is He asking the Father regarding unity among believers? (3) What does He ask for Himself?

*My prayer is not for [my disciples] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.*

1. There are a couple of startling things about this prayer, not least of which is *when* Jesus prayed it. Take a look at the next chapter, John 18. When did Jesus offer His prayer to the Father on our behalf?

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2. If you were about to be arrested, put on trial and then executed, would praying for others be high on your list of priorities? Why or why not?

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3. What do you think the timing of Jesus' prayer says about His priorities?

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4. How many times does the word "love" or "loved" appear in Jesus' prayer? Why do you think this is significant?

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5. How are unity and love related?

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6. Why do you think the unity of all believers was so important to Jesus?

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7. How might praying for someone be an expression of your love for them?

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8. It has been said that nothing makes us love someone more than praying for them. How do you think praying for a person who is difficult to love could change your attitude toward that person?

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### **dig**

Jesus asked the Father to help us love one another in unity. Many of the New Testament writers believed that praying for each other is an obvious part of loving one another. For instance, James wrote, “Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:13-16).

1. Have you ever prayed for someone who was sick and they got well? What happened?

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2. Have you ever prayed for someone who was sick and they *didn't* get well? What happened?

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3. What do you think was the difference?

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4. What is “the prayer offered in faith”?

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5. Have you ever prayed for someone who was spiritually, mentally or emotionally sick? How does that relate to this passage?

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6. How does praying for someone to be physically healed or spiritually restored express love?

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### **apply**

1. Paul wrote this command to the church in Galatia: “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). What do you think it means to “carry each other’s burdens”?

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2. Do you know someone who is struggling? How might you be able to share his or her load?

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3. Do you think it is enough to pray for someone whom you might be able to help? How might you be God's answer to your prayer?

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4. How do you think carrying each other's burdens relates to Jesus' prayer for love and unity? In what ways?

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5. How often do you pray for your own needs before others' needs? How might your perspective change if you prayed for others first?

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6. Who around you is hurting? Express your love for those people by writing out a prayer for them below.

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### **reflect**

Part of following the command to carry each other's burdens is allowing others to help us. It can be difficult or embarrassing to ask others for help, but that doesn't let us off the hook.

1. Have you ever been sick (in body, heart or spirit) and asked for prayer? What happened?

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2. Do you know of someone who prays for you regularly, such as a friend, parent, grandparent or youth leader? If so, how do you feel about it? If not, who will you ask to pray for you?

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3. Do you need special prayer for a burden you are carrying? With whom will you share it?

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4. How can letting others love us by praying for us create more unity?

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5. Ask your friends and family what they need prayer for and make a list below. Share your needs with them, too. After a week, check in to see how God is answering your prayers and drawing you together in unity, just as Jesus prayed.

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**meditation**



May they be brought to complete unity to let  
the world know that you sent me and have loved them  
even as you have loved me.

JOHN 17:23