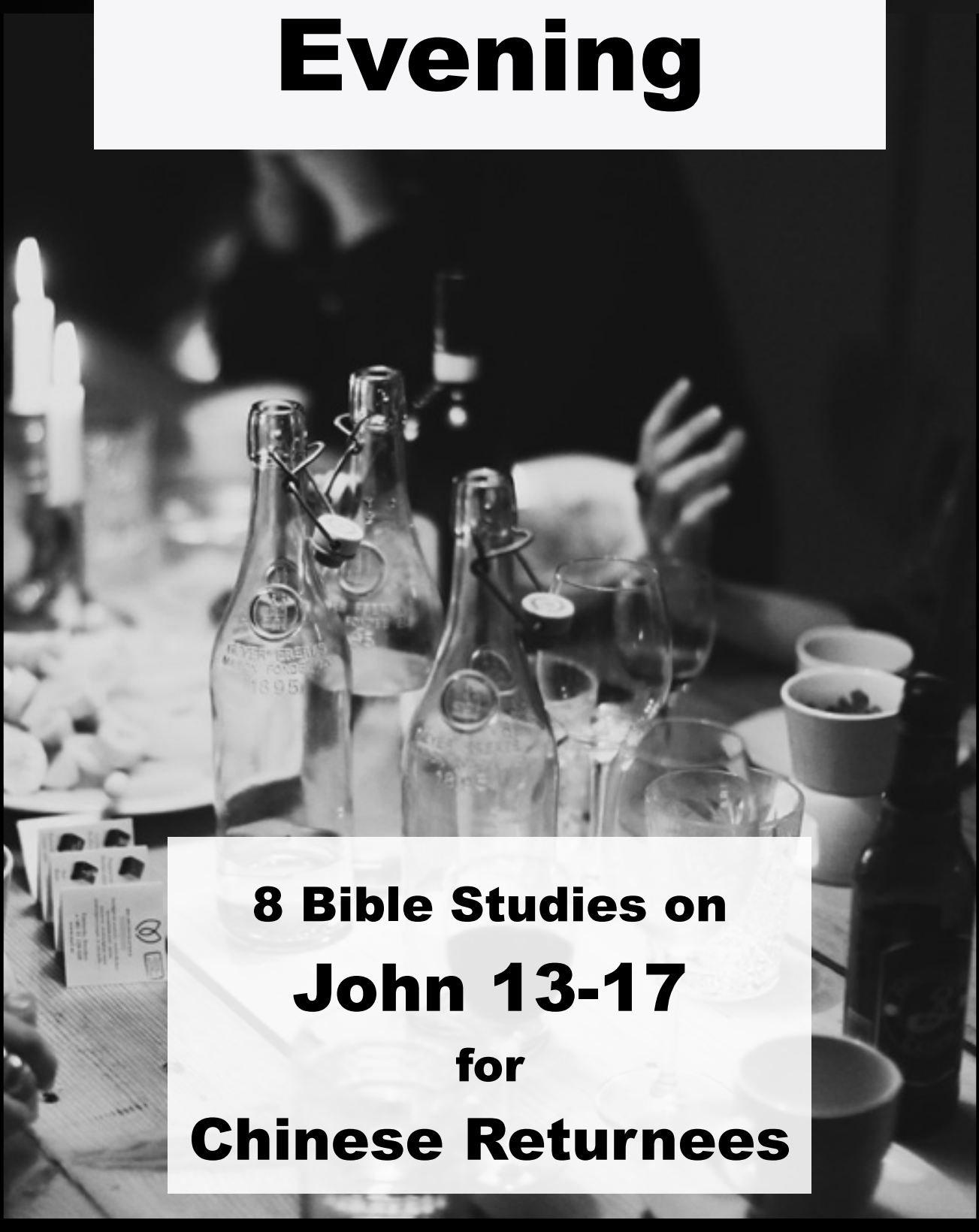


# **One Last Evening**



**8 Bible Studies on  
John 13-17  
for  
Chinese Returnees**

**Prepared for the Return**

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# Introduction

## ***The Prepared for the Return Series:***

There are hundreds of Bible study guides out there, so you might well be wondering ‘Why have a special set of Bible studies for returnees?’

Returnees to China (those going home after a period of studying or working abroad) face a huge variety of challenges to their Christian faith. Some of these challenges are common to all Christians, while others are unique to returnees. These Bible studies aim to help returnees to think through a number of these challenges in light of God’s word to equip them to stand firm in Christ when they return home. The studies will be most useful for those preparing to return soon, or those who have recently returned.

These studies have been written out of a conviction that it is God’s word which best equips Christians to stand firm, rather than any special programme, which is why these studies go through several chapters of the Bible rather than a series of topics. Our hope is that this will encourage and equip returnees to continue reading God’s word on their own, rather than feeling helpless now that they no longer have a leader to study with or a programme to work through. The application questions and scenarios aim to apply God’s word to specific situations faced by many returnees.

The studies have been designed for a group to work through; they can also be adapted for use in one-to-one Bible studies. This study pack is intended to help equip anyone leading such a study, and a group members’ edition is also available.

## **John 13-17:**

Many of us who have spent time with Chinese Christians overseas will be familiar with the feeling of saying good-bye to our friends, many of whom are still very young in their faith in Jesus. We feel concerned for them to continue walking with the Lord back home, away from the support of the church family where they first encountered Jesus, or where they matured significantly. We don’t know what challenges they will face in the future, and we want to make the most of the last few weeks before they return home to teach them what they need to know to stand firm. But time is always limited, and there is always more that we could say.

Jesus also knew how it felt to say goodbye to dear friends. John 13-17 describes Jesus’ final evening with his disciples before going to the cross. John, who was one of the disciples with Jesus on this occasion, records in great detail how Jesus used this time to equip his disciples to continue knowing him and making him known when he is no longer physically present with them. Jesus intends us to listen in on this teaching and through it to learn what it means to be a disciples of Jesus, how to stand firm in this relationship, and what to expect from our life now as his disciples.

These chapters are just one section of a larger book, John’s Gospel, and therefore must be read in context. Some questions in these studies refer to passages from earlier in John which can help us understand the meaning of Jesus’ teaching in these chapters.

## How to get the most out of this resource:

Some of the Bible study passages are quite long, and John writes in a dense style, packing rich content into each verse. Therefore it is highly recommended that group members read the passage in advance of the study. **Before you start...** boxes at the start of most studies give questions for them to think about before they come to study as a group. Doing this will not only help them to get more out of the group study, but will also encourage them to get into the habit of reading and thinking about God's word on their own.

The **main point** and **response** of each passage is summarised at the start of the Bible study, to help the leader be clear on the main things to emphasise in group discussion.

The Bible studies often begin with a **Starter Question** which aims to open up an area of conversation that is relevant to the main point of the passage and can be continued at the end of the study. They continue with questions about the passage, which can be answered directly from the text, and conclude with questions to help group members think through their own response to what they have learnt, both in their mindset and in their actions. These questions often include an imaginary scenario, aimed at helping returnees think about how to apply God's word to real life situations that they or their friends may face back in China.

In John 16:24 Jesus tells his disciples, 'Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full', and throughout John 13-17 Jesus emphasises that prayer is one of our greatest privileges as Christians. Each study ends with a box entitled '**Ask, and you will receive...**' containing a suggested topic to pray about and prayer points linked to the passage that has just been studied. Praying for these things together helps to model the importance of prayer, how to pray for a variety of topics, and how to let our prayers be shaped by what we read in God's word.

# Study 1 John 13:1-30

**Main Point:** The essential basis of discipleship: Jesus serves us through his death  
**Response:** Keep Jesus' death central in your discipleship

## Introduction: One Last Evening

Imagine that while studying overseas you go to your church small group one evening and hear some surprising news: one of the small group members, a Chinese student, has suddenly had her visa cancelled, and she has to leave the country to return home the next day! She has one last evening to spend together with her church friends.

**What sort of things would you want to talk to her about?**  
**How could you help prepare her to continue as a Christian back home?**

The disciples are in a similar situation here. While eating dinner together, Jesus suddenly tells them that this is the last evening he will spend with them. Just as your friend in the scenario above will have to keep going as a Christian without the support of her church friends from overseas, so the disciples will have to continue following Jesus after he has left them. This one last evening together is so important - and Jesus spends it teaching his disciples things that will prepare them to continue following him after he has gone.

## Read John 13:1-30

### 1. This passage describes Jesus washing the disciples' feet. What is this a picture of?

We could make lots of guesses about the meaning of Jesus' actions here, but John doesn't want us to guess. He has included plenty of clues so that we can work out the message Jesus intended to teach his disciples through washing their feet. Consider each of the questions below, and then try to sum up the answer to the main question above.

- a) **Read verses 1 and 3. What does Jesus know is about to happen?**  
*He will die.*
- b) **What other hints are there in this passage that this thing will happen?**  
*Verse 1: it is just before the Feast of the Passover (see CONTEXT). Verse 2, 11, 21-30: Judas is about to betray Jesus.*
- c) **Think about what the action of washing someone's feet meant in first century AD (see CONTEXT).**

#### CONTEXT:

**Foot-washing.** Jesus lived in the Middle East in the first century, where the roads were dusty and filthy, and everyone walked around in sandals. This meant horribly dirty feet! In most households the lowest servant had the task of washing peoples' feet when they came into the house - this job was disgusting, degrading and despised by others.

**Passover.** In 11:55 and 12:1 John has emphasised that it is Passover time. Passover was the biggest feast in the Jewish calendar, when the Jews remembered the time when God saved them from being slaves in Egypt (these events are recorded in Exodus 11-12). God killed all the eldest sons in Egypt, but told the Jewish families to kill a lamb instead, putting its blood on the doorposts of their houses, so that God would 'pass over' their houses and not kill their eldest sons. The lamb was killed instead of the son.

**d) Read verses 7 and 12. What do these verses tell us about Jesus' actions?**

*They have a deeper meaning which the disciples will understand later.*

*Summary: Jesus washes the disciples' feet like a servant, as a picture of how he will serve the disciples through his death for them.*

**2. What does the foot-washing teach us about Jesus' death?**

*Verse 1: It is an expression of Jesus' **love** for his people.*

*Verse 8: It is **necessary** to be served by Jesus' death if we are to share in the life he has come to bring.*

*Verse 10: Jesus' death is **enough** to cleanse people, once and for all. Nothing extra is needed.*

*Verses 12-17: Jesus death is an **example** for his disciples to follow.*

*The act of washing feet teaches us that his death is an act of **service**, which **cleanses** people.*

**3. What does Judas' betrayal teach us about Jesus?**

(see verses 18-19 in particular. Verse 18 quotes Psalm 41. What does Psalm 41:8-9 teach about God's chosen King?)

*We might think that Jesus is weak and out of control since he is betrayed by one of his closest friends. But this passage makes it clear that Jesus always knew that Judas would betray him (see verses 11, 18-19, 21-30). What's more, the Old Testament predicts that God's chosen King would be betrayed by a close friend (Psalm 41:9, quoted in verse 18) and Jesus points to this as further evidence that he truly is God's chosen King, the Christ. After being betrayed this King is raised up in victory (Psalm 41:10).*

In John 13-17 Jesus teaches his disciples what to expect from life when he is no longer physically present.

**4. Why do you think Jesus washes his disciples' feet at the start of this teaching section? What does this tell us about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus?**

*Before teaching us what life is like for Jesus' disciples, John records this incident to show what makes somebody a disciple of Jesus: they must first be served by Jesus through his death. Jesus' humiliating, degrading death on a cross is the basis for belonging to him. His death is the way by which we become his disciples, and it is also the model that we follow as his disciples, laying down our lives for each other.*

**5. How has this passage encouraged you to take Jesus' death more seriously?**

**6. How should Jesus' death impact: a) your thinking? b) your living?**

**7. Use the examples below to consider how to respond to this passage in two imaginary situations:**

- a) Your friend Yang became a Christian while studying overseas, and has now been back in China for several months. He shares with you that he is starting to doubt his relationship with God because he feels like such a bad Christian: he has had fierce arguments with his parents, he is struggling with impure thoughts, and he has been dishonest in his dealings at work. He tells you that he doesn't feel he can ever make it up to God and be a proper Christian again.

**How could you use this passage in your reply to Yang?**

**b)** Ling joined the only church she could find in her hometown, but she is really struggling with it. The style of singing is very different to what she was used to at church overseas, the sermons are much longer, and the other Christians there annoy her - they don't seem to understand the Bible as well as she does, yet they have very strong opinions which they are quick to share with others. She doesn't want to get too involved in the life of the church because of this.

**How should this passage shape Ling's response to this situation?**

**8. Think back to the scenario in the Introduction (page 5).**

**From this passage, what would Jesus tell your friend to help her stand firm as a Christian back in China?**

**'Ask, and you will receive...'**

***Thanksgiving***

One of the things that Jesus emphasises in this section is that all Christians can speak directly to God as Father. Each study will suggest a different topic to guide our prayers. In this study it seems appropriate to begin by thanking God for Jesus and his servant-hearted death for us.

- \* Give thanks for each of the facets of Jesus' death that we see in this passage. For example, give thanks that Jesus willingly served us, although he is the King of kings; give thanks that Jesus' death is all we need to be forgiven by God, etc.
- \* No matter how we are feeling about returning to China, give thanks that all these aspects about Jesus' death are still true back home.
- \* Give thanks that Jesus has called us to be his disciples and to be like him in loving and serving others.
- \* Give thanks for Jesus' teaching to his disciples in these chapters of John, and that it has been preserved for us too.

# Study 2 John 13:31-14:4

**Main Point:** Jesus must depart and will later bring his followers to be with him  
**Response:** Believe this and so be comforted

**Before you start...**

Read John 7:32-34 and 8:21 where Jesus speaks to the Jews who opposed him. How would this make the disciples feel when they hear Jesus' words in John 13:33?

**Starter Question:** During your time overseas, what things are/were you homesick for?

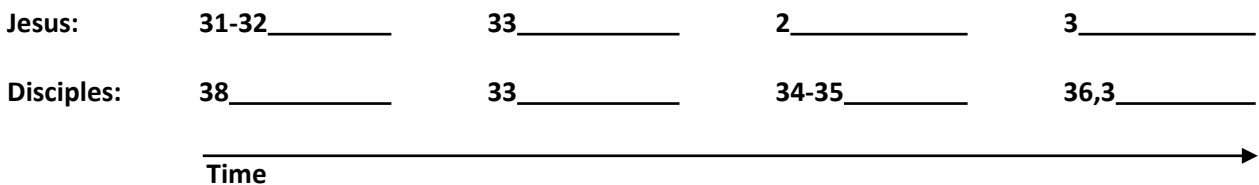
**Read John 13:31-14:4**

**1. Go through the passage and draw appropriate facial expressions for the disciples at each point.**  
 (if you are studying with a large enough group, split into three groups with each group taking one smaller section: 13:31-35, 13:36-38, 14:1-4. Then read through the passage again with group members revealing the facial expressions at the right times.)

**2. a) Why are the disciples so distressed in this passage?**  
*Jesus says that he will leave him and they cannot come with him. After seeing who Jesus is, it's unthinkable that he would leave!*

**b) How would the context of John 7:32-34, 8:21 (see 'Before you start...') add to the disciples' distress?**  
*Jesus told the Jews that they would die in their sin. Will he condemn the disciples in the same way?*

**3. Complete this timeline for the passage. Include what will happen to Jesus, and what will happen to the disciples.**



**(Read 12:23-24. What is Jesus referring to when he says he will be "glorified" in 13:31?)**

**4. a) Why are the disciples unable to go with Jesus now? (v36-38)**  
*They still have the problem of their sin, which will be manifested through Peter denying Jesus*



**b) What will make them able to go with him in the future?**

*Jesus will prepare a place for them (14:2). 13:37-38 implies that he will do this through his death: rather than Peter laying down his life for Jesus, Jesus will lay down his life for his disciples. He already promised this, for example in John 10:11-18 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."*

**5. a) How does Jesus want his disciples to respond to his words (14:1)?**

*To believe him, and for their hearts to be comforted.*

**b) In question 2 we discussed the disciples' distress. How would this passage comfort them in this distress?**

*They will not die in their sin, because Jesus will die for their sin. Therefore Jesus will not leave them forever, but will return to bring them to be where he is eternally.*

**WHO AM I?**

An important question to ask in these chapters is: Which character does John want us to identify ourselves with? The book *Dig Deeper*<sup>1</sup> calls this principle the 'Who Am I?' Tool.

Each part of the Bible is written for us, but we are not meant to identify directly with every character. The 'Who Am I?' Tool is useful in John 13-17 as we consider to what extent Jesus' words are intended just for his original disciples, and to what extent they are applicable for us also. We are in a similar position to the disciples, yet not exactly the same.

**6. Should we respond in the same way as the disciples? Why/why not?**

(To help answer this question, consider what similarities and differences there are between the disciples' situation and ours)

*We do not feel the same distress as the disciples, as we did not experience living with Jesus and having him leave us. However, like them, we now live as Jesus' disciples without him physically present with us, and we are waiting for Jesus to return to take us to be with him, knowing that his death has prepared a place for us in his Father's house. Therefore this passage should help us to believe Jesus' promise that he has prepared a place for us, and should comfort us when we feel aware of Jesus' physical absence and of our own sin.*

**7. How should this passage shape the way we understand our lives now? (Look back to the timeline from question 3)**

*We live in an 'in between time'. Jesus has prepared a place for us with him through his death and resurrection and he will return to take us there. We live now waiting and longing for him to return, yet comforted by his certain promises. As we wait we are to love each other as Jesus loved us (13:34-35).*

**8. In 14:2 Jesus tells us that our real home is in his Father's house. How has this passage helped you see what things we should be 'homesick' for?**

*In particular, we should be homesick to be with Jesus and the Father.*

**9. How could you use this passage to help Ling and Yang, whose imaginary situations we discussed in the previous study?**

<sup>1</sup> *Dig Deeper*, Nigel Beynon and Andrew Sach (IVP 2005), see chapter 16.

**'Ask, and you will receive...'**

***Authorities***

This passage teaches that our home is in heaven with Jesus, not here on earth. However, at present we live under the authority of human rulers whom God has set over us, and it is right that we pray for them (Paul teaches this in 1 Timothy 2:1-4). Our prayers should be shaped by the knowledge that Jesus has prepared a perfect, eternal home for those who trust him.

- \* Give thanks for China's leaders and for how they are working for the stability of the nation. Pray that God would give them wisdom to rule well and that God would work through their decisions to open many doors for gospel advance.
- \* Pray for Christians in positions of authority, that they would value their home in heaven more than the privileges they enjoy on earth and that they would be unashamed to be known as Jesus' disciples.
- \* Pray for Chinese Christians to be wise in the way they relate to authorities: to be respectful and submissive towards human authorities, while honouring God as the ultimate authority.

# Study 3 John 14:5-21

**Main Point:** Jesus has revealed the Father and his Spirit will continue to do so.

**Response:** Take heart: despite Jesus' absence we can know God intimately

**Before you start...**

To understand this passage, it is useful to know some background from the rest of John's Gospel.

**1. To help us understand 14:6 more clearly:**

- Read John 1:14-18, 5:30-47, 7:18, 8:14-18. Why can Jesus say he is "the truth"?
- Read John 3:14-18, 4:13-14, 6:47-51, 10:10-11, 11:25-44. What does it mean for Jesus to be "the life"?

**2. To help us understand 14:10-12 more clearly, read John 5:1-24.**

- What are the "works" that Jesus does?
- What are the "greater works" referred to in 5:20?
- How do Jesus' works relate to the Father's works?

**Read John 14:5-21**

It is helpful to note that John 13:36-14:31 is structured around questions asked by the disciples and Jesus' answers to these questions. 14:5-21 includes two questions, in verses 5 and 8. We will look at them both in turn.

**1. John 14:5-7**

**a) Why does Thomas ask this question? (how is it linked to what Jesus has just told them?)**

*In 13:36 and 14:2-3 Jesus tells his disciples that he will leave them to prepare a place for them. He reassures them that they know the way to this place. But Thomas doesn't feel reassured; he doesn't know where Jesus is going, so he is worried that he can't know the way to go there.*

**b) How does Jesus answer Thomas' question?**

- **Where is Jesus going? (v7)**
- **Consider your answers to 'Before you start...' question 1. Why can Jesus say he is the way? Why can Jesus say he is the *only* way ("No one comes to the Father except through me")?**

*Jesus will go to the Father. He is able to show people the truth about the Father because only he has seen the Father (1:14-18). He can bring eternal resurrection life to people, freeing them from condemnation (3:14-18, 11:25-44). Only he has seen the Father and only he can give people eternal life, therefore he is the only way for people to come to the Father.*

**c) How would Jesus' answer help his disciples to continue following him after he leaves them?**

*They don't know exactly where Jesus is going and how or when they will go to be with him. But they can be confident that knowing Jesus is enough to take them safely to be with the Father.*

**2. John 14:8-21**

**a) Why does Philip ask this question (how is it linked to what Jesus has just told them?)**

*In v7 Jesus tells them that they know the Father and have seen him. Philip is not quite convinced - after all, remember John 1:18 "No one has ever seen God"... Philip thinks that if only Jesus can give them just one glimpse of the Father, he'll be satisfied that Jesus really will take them to be with him.*

**b) How does Jesus answer Philip's question?**

**Jesus' answer is much longer this time. Let's consider it step by step:**

**v9-11**

- **How does Jesus answer Philip's question?**
- **How does the context from 'Before you start...' question 2 help us understand this?**

*Jesus and the Father are one; they are "in" each other (v10,11). Therefore Jesus has already shown them the Father through his words (v10) and his works (v11) - for example, the sign described in chapter 5.*

**v12-14**

- **Jesus did some very great "works", such as healing a lame man (chapter 5) and even raising a dead man (chapter 11)! How can Jesus say that those who believe in him will do "greater works" than him? (use the context from 'Before you start...' question 2 to help)**
- **So what sort of things do you think Jesus expects his followers to ask in his name (v13-14)?**
- **How does this address Philip's question?**

*In 5:20-24 Jesus refers to his "greater works" (greater than the healing in chapter 5, for example) of granting eternal life and judging people. In 14:12 he says that those who believe in him will do these greater works "because I am going to the Father". Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, believers in Jesus are now able to grant eternal life to people! We will learn more about how this works in the next passage. Here we see that Jesus expects prayer to be a part of this: he will do these works through us as we ask the Father in his name.*

*So not only have Jesus' disciples seen the Father through hearing Jesus' words and seeing his works, they will be involved in Jesus' work themselves.*

**v15-21**

- **What will the disciples' relationship with the Father and Jesus be like after Jesus leaves them?**
- **What is the Helper's role in this? (consider what it means for him to be "another" Helper (16), and the "Spirit of truth" (17))**
- **How does this address Philip's question?**

*After Jesus leaves the Father will send his Spirit to live in the disciples. He is "another" Helper, which implies that he will do the same work that Jesus did, of revealing the Father through Jesus' words and works. He is the "Spirit of truth" who will teach them true knowledge of God by reminding them of Jesus' words. Based on this truth, the disciples' relationship with Jesus will be even more intimate than before: they will see Jesus (19) and share the same unity with Jesus that Jesus has with the Father (compare 10-11 with 20)! The relationship will be one of love between the disciple, Jesus and the Father (21). The disciples express this love through keeping Jesus' commandments (15,21).*

*So the disciples will not be left without knowledge of the Father after Jesus leaves; rather, they will know Jesus and the Father even more intimately through the Spirit who will live in them, teaching them the truth about God.*

**Try to sum up Jesus' answer to Philip's question.**

*"Through seeing me you have seen the Father, and you will continue to know the Father even more intimately through the Spirit of truth who will live in you".*

**c) How would Jesus' answer help them to continue to follow him after he leaves them?**

*It reassures them that although Jesus is physically absent from them, they can continue to know Jesus and God the Father - in fact they will be "in" each other. Through his disciples Jesus will do even greater works than he did previously: bringing people to eternal life. This is an amazing privilege!*

**3. How does this passage help you answer the following questions/objections that friends and family might have:**

- How can Christians say that Jesus is the only way to have eternal life when there are so many other religions?
- I can't believe in God because I can't see him.
- Your kind of Christianity seems to only care about what happens in the future. My church helps us receive blessings here and now.

**4. How has this passage helped you to understand your relationship with God?**

*For example:*

- We can know God truly through Jesus - and not in any other way.
- God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all involved in helping us to know God.
- Jesus lives in us, he loves us, and we respond in love and obedience to him.

**5. After you return home to China, there are likely to be times when you feel lonely, far from God, and tempted to doubt his existence.**

**What truths from this passage will be a comfort to you at those times?**

**Write down your answer so that you can remind yourself of it when you feel lonely etc:**

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**6. Think back to the scenario in the Introduction.**

**From this passage, what would Jesus tell your friend to help her stand firm as a Christian back in China?**

**'Ask, and you will receive...'**

***People from other religious groups***

China is a country with great ethnic and religious diversity, despite being an officially atheist state. This passage teaches that Jesus is the only way to truly know God and have eternal life, and so no matter whether someone is Buddhist, Muslim, atheist, or something else, they need to know Jesus. This passage is a good opportunity to pray for different religious groups in China.

- \* Pray for the two large Muslim ethnic groups in China: the Hui (around 13 million) and the Uighur (around 11 million). Only a handful of Christians exist in these people groups, and those who convert to Christianity face social rejection and persecution by their communities. Pray for Han Chinese to have confidence and conviction to reach Hui and Uighur people with the gospel.
- \* Pray for other people groups which have their own religion, such as Tibetan Buddhism. Pray for God to soften their hearts towards Jesus and for them to recognise that he is the way, the truth and the life.
- \* Buddhism is the most common religion in China. Some are devout Buddhists, but many just feel an affinity to Buddhism as the most Chinese religion, and occasionally visit a temple or say a prayer. Pray for them to see that Jesus offers more than a sense of peace or a philosophy to live by; he offers personal relationship with the one true God.

# Study 4 John 14:22-31

**Main Point:** Jesus will reveal himself to the world through the apostles' teaching  
**Response:** Believe this and so be comforted

**Before you start...**

1. How does Jesus' answer in v23-31 relate to Judas' question in v22? (clue: who does Jesus say can know him?)
2. This passage (particularly v27-31) has a lot of similar themes to 13:36-14:4. What similarities can you find? How do these help you understand what Jesus is talking about in 14:27-31?

**Read John 14:22-31**

1. a) Put Judas' question (v22) in your own words.

b) Why does Judas ask this question? (Look back to what Jesus has just said in 14:17,19)

*Jesus promises that his disciples will know him intimately, but what about the rest of the world? Will the disciples always be a minority in a world that is opposed to Jesus?*

c) When do we feel frustrated that Jesus has not revealed himself to more people?

*(Think of personal examples - such as the sadness of family members not knowing Jesus, or the difficulty of being the only Christian in your company)*

2. How will Jesus reveal himself to the world? (The following questions will help to answer this question)

a) v23-24: Who can know Jesus? How?

*"Anyone" who loves Jesus and does what he says. The key is in our response to Jesus' words, which are also God's words (v24). Compare v23 to v21: anyone who responds to Jesus in this way can know him as intimately as the disciples know him.*

b) v25-26: Who can know Jesus? How?

*These verses are particularly addressed to the disciples who heard Jesus' teaching (v25). The Holy Spirit will remind them of Jesus' words so that they can know Jesus.*

c) v27-31 What does Jesus teach the disciples? How will this reveal Jesus to the world?

*Jesus teaches them about his coming death and resurrection: he is going to the Father and will later return to them (v28). The result of this will be "peace" for the disciples (v27 - compare this to 14:1 where Peter is told that despite the fact he will deny Jesus he need not be troubled because Jesus is preparing a place for Peter with the Father). Jesus' death will also reveal Jesus to the world (v31), as the world sees Jesus' obedience to his Father.*

d) How does this passage help us understand how the disciples will do “greater works” than Jesus (14:12)?

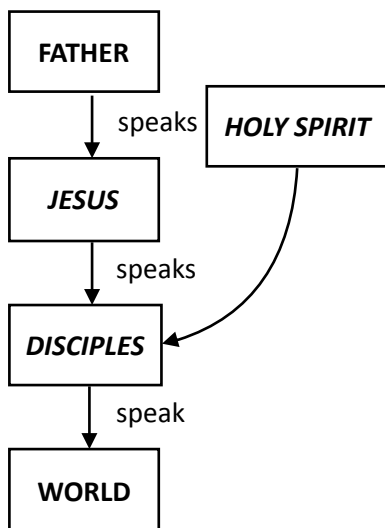
*The disciples have been entrusted with Jesus’ words through Jesus’ teaching and the Holy Spirit who reminds them of this teaching. As they pass on these words, they reveal Jesus and the Father to the world, allowing the world access to eternal life.*

3. Using the ‘Who Am I?’ Tool from Study 2, which parts of Jesus’ words are addressed to us? For the parts not addressed to us, where do we fit in?

**\*CLUE\*** Look out for words like “anyone” or “whoever” which suggest Jesus’ words apply to more than just his original hearers.

- a) v23-24: “Anyone” who loves Jesus and keeps his words can know the Father and Son living in them - including us!
- b) v25-26: These verses are addressed to the disciples who heard Jesus spoke to them, therefore can “remember” what Jesus told them (not us, as we were not there). It is through them that “anyone” (v23) can hear Jesus’ words and keep them.
- c) v27-31: Jesus’ words particularly comfort the apostles by explaining the meaning of Jesus’ death, but they are to pass these words on to us (“the world”) too, so that we may know Jesus and share in this peace.

Sum up answer to Question 2 using the diagram below, and talk through how each link in the chain works:



*Jesus will reveal himself to the world as the apostles pass on the words that Jesus taught them, enabled by the Holy Spirit.*



**4. Read John 20:30-31. Here John tells us that he wrote this book so that his readers may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. How does this passage help us to trust what John writes about Jesus?**

*John was one of the disciples who saw Jesus, heard his words and was reminded of them by the Holy Spirit. Therefore we can trust that the words we read in John's Gospel are true and are directly from Jesus. This book is God's means of revealing himself to the world!*

**5. How does this passage help us to respond when we face the frustrations discussed above (1.c))?**

*Jesus is making himself known to the world through the teaching of the apostles. We now have this teaching and can pass it on to others so that they can know Jesus. Think about how far the knowledge of Jesus has already spread since his death and resurrection 2000 years ago!*

**6. What could you do this week with the words of Jesus that have been entrusted to you?**

*For example, asking a non-Christian friend if they would like to look at part of the Bible with you, or inviting them to an event where they will hear the words of Jesus taught.*

**7. How does this passage increase your confidence to tell others about Jesus?**

**8. Share one or two names of people back home that you hope to share the news of Jesus with, and pray for opportunities to do this.**

**9. Think back to the scenario in the Introduction.**

**From this passage, what would Jesus tell your friend to help her stand firm as a Christian back in China?**

**'Ask, and you will receive...'**

***The workplace***

After returning to China, many who have studied abroad will find that they spend the majority of their waking hours at work. Working hours are long and expectations are high. However, the workplace is not just something to be endured, it is also a great opportunity for the gospel.

- \* Praise God that there are an increasing number of workplace Christian groups in Chinese cities, where Christian colleagues meet together regularly. Pray that these groups would be deeply convinced that Jesus is revealing himself to the world as Christians pass on the apostles' words about Jesus, and that they would work together to help their colleagues hear these words of life.
- \* Pray that individual Christians would see their workplace as a mission field, that they would build good relationships with their colleagues and be committed to helping their colleagues hear about Jesus.
- \* Pray for Christians to live lives of integrity that commend the gospel, particularly when they are put under pressure at work to compromise Christian values.
- \* Pray for Christians to have wisdom as they seek to honour their boss and work hard, while prioritising their commitment to Jesus and to his church.

# Study 5 John 15:1-17

**Main Point:** Those who abide in Jesus are God's loved, fruitful people

**Response:** Joyfully abide in this relationship

**Before you start...**

1. Look for repeated words or ideas in this passage. How do these help you identify the main ideas in the passage?
2. The image of a vine appears several times in the Old Testament. Read Isaiah 5:1-7 and 27:2-6:
  - a) What does the vine represent?
  - b) How do these two images of the vine in Isaiah differ from each other?
  - c) How does this background help us understand John 15?

**Starter Question:** After you return home, what do you think will be the main challenges for you to stand firm as a Christian?

*For example: struggling to settle into church and therefore lacking Christian friends; facing difficult situations such as looking for work, getting used to living with family, etc.*

**Read John 15:1-17**

1. Feedback from 'Before you start...' question 1. What repeated words and ideas are in this passage?

*Abide, love, vine/branches/fruit, prayer, keep commandments*

2. How does the vine image help us understand our relationship with Jesus?

(A photograph or drawing of a vine helps to illustrate Jesus' words here)

**a) From verses 1-8?**

- Relationship with Jesus is essential: if we move away from him we will be destroyed but if we abide in him we will bear much fruit (v4-6)
- Relationship with Jesus is intimate: we are a part of him, like a branch is part of a vine.
- Relationship with Jesus is secure: it is based on Jesus' word which cleanses us (v3), not based on our own performance.



**b) From the Old Testament context? (see 'Before you start...' question 2.)**

*God described the nation of Israel as a fruitless vine because of the people's unrighteousness. But God promised to make them fruitful. Here we see that Jesus is the true vine: it is through him that God rescues his people from unrighteousness and makes them bear fruit.*

### 3. What does the life of someone abiding in Jesus look like?

What we do: Hold to Jesus' words and keep his commandments (7,10,14)

Love each other, by laying down our life for each other (12,13,17)

What we experience: Close relationship with the Father through prayer (7,16)

The Father loves us in the same way as he loves Jesus! (9)

Joy (11)

We are Jesus' friends, he tells us what he is doing (14,15)

*Summary: We have an intimate, loving relationship with Jesus and the Father, and we bear fruit through obeying his commands to love each other.*

Remember the context of this passage: in John 13-17 Jesus teaches his disciples what life will be like without him physically present.

#### 4. a) What have we already learnt about what life will be like for Jesus' disciples from John 13-14?

*The disciples will face a time without Jesus, but Jesus will continue to reveal God to the apostles, and through their word he will reveal God to the whole world.*

#### b) What does this chapter add to our understanding of life now?

- *We have a joyful, fruitful, loving, obedient relationship with Jesus and the Father*
- *The most important thing is for us to cling to this relationship: "Abide in me".*

### 5. From this passage, what motivates you to abide in Jesus?

*For example:*

- *We are his friends: we can know what he's doing and take part in it through prayer*
- *We share in the great love between Father and Son*
- *Jesus promises that we will bear fruit*
- *Failure to abide leads to destruction*

### 6. Think about the challenges you discussed in the Starter Question. How could this passage help you to 'abide' when facing these challenges?

*Areas you could discuss include:*

- *Prioritise listening to and thinking about Jesus' words*
- *Remember that we are in the same vine as other Christians and so love them, even when they are difficult to get along with!*
- *Pray with confidence and dependency to our Father*
- *Remind yourself how wonderful it is to be "in Jesus" as his friends whom he loves*

**7. To stand firm in our relationship with God it is important to keep listening to him (through reading the Bible) and talking to him (through prayer).**

**a) How does this passage encourage you to do these things?**

*(eg v15: as we read the Bible we are listening to our friend Jesus explaining his plans, and as we pray we are joining him in these plans)*

**b) Are you in the habit of doing these things regularly?**

**c) What steps could you take to make progress in these areas?**

**d) Have you thought about how to keep doing this after you return home?**

**8. Think back to the scenario in the Introduction.**

**From this passage, what would Jesus tell your friend to help her stand firm as a Christian back in China?**

**9. Spend time praying for each other to abide in Jesus after returning home.**

**'Ask, and you will receive...'**

***Returnees***

My pastor used to often say "no change is spiritually neutral". For those who have studied or worked overseas for a period of time, returning to China can bring many great opportunities for spiritual growth and gospel ministry, and can also present many challenges. We need to pray for ourselves and for other returnee friends, that in this new environment we would continue to abide in Jesus and bear much fruit.

- \* Pray for returnees to quickly establish patterns of regular of prayer and Bible reading, making this a priority amongst all the other demands on their time. Pray that they would delight in listening to God and talking to him.
- \* Pray for returnees to quickly settle into a faithful church back home. Pray that they would love the other Christians there in the same way that Jesus has loved them, that they would have a humble attitude, and would have opportunities to serve their church.
- \* Pray for returnees to joyfully abide in Jesus when they face pressure to live for other things, such as family, career, marriage, money, etc.

# Study 6 John 15:18-16:4

**Main Point:** As Jesus' disciples testify to him, they will be hated by the world  
**Response:** Continue trusting Jesus and testifying to him

Before you start...

Read John 5:1-18 and 8:31-59.

1. How do the Jews respond to Jesus?
2. Why do they respond in this way?

Read John 15:18-16:4

## 1. Why does the world hate Jesus' disciples? (18-21)

- *The disciples don't belong to the world, but to Jesus (19)*
- *The world treats Jesus' "servants" in the same way that it treats their "master" Jesus, whom the world hates (18,20)*
- *The world does not know God the Father (21)*

### CONTEXT: Who is "the world"?

In John's Gospel, "the world" refers to humanity in opposition to God (see for example 1:10, 3:19, 7:7). In this passage "the world" is used to mean anyone who does not believe in Jesus.

## 2. Why does the world hate Jesus? (22-24)

### CONTEXT: Jesus' words and works

The significance of the things Jesus says and does is explained in passages such as John 5:19 and 12:49-50. Read these verses and consider: Why does the fact that people have seen and heard Jesus increase their sin?

*Jesus does and says exactly what the Father does and says. Therefore if someone hates Jesus it reveals that they hate God the Father. These verses do not mean that they were sinless before Jesus came, but their reaction to Jesus exposes their sinful hatred of God. Jesus describes their hatred of him as unreasonable (25).*

## 3. What will the disciples do? Why will this increase the world's hatred of them? (26-27)

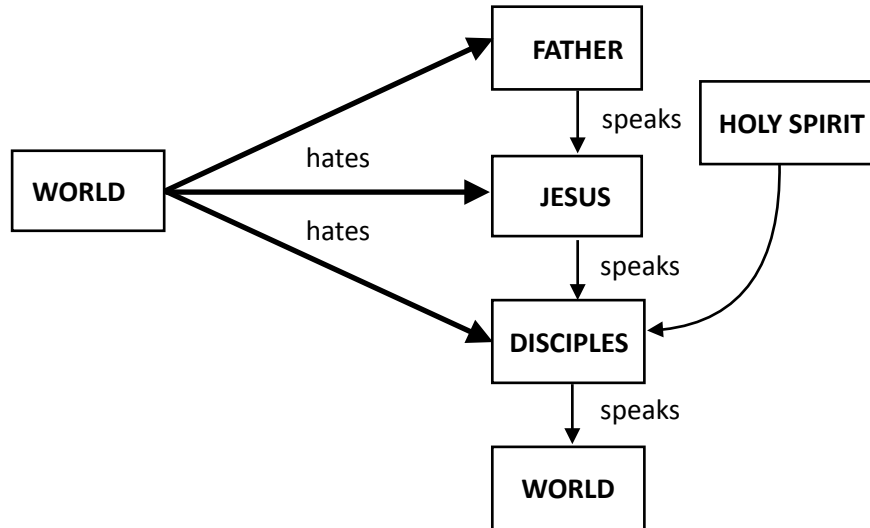
*The Holy Spirit teaches the disciples about what Jesus said and did and helps them to pass these on to others. But in v22-24 we see that the world hates Jesus' words and works, so as Jesus' disciples speak about him they will be hated by the world.*

## 4. What effect does Jesus want his words to have on the disciples? How do his words achieve this effect? (1-4)

- *Jesus is preparing them in advance for the persecution that they will face so that they don't "fall away": i.e. stop believing in Jesus or stop witnessing to Jesus.*

- Even the Jewish religious leaders will persecute them, so it would be tempting for the disciples to wonder whether they are doing something wrong. Jesus' words are intended to reassure them that facing opposition is the normal consequence of witnessing to Jesus.
- Verse 20 is an encouragement that while some will persecute the disciples, others will listen to their words and believe in Jesus.

Add to the diagram from Study 4:



*This illustrates that it is as Jesus' disciples speak about Jesus that the world hates them, but it is also as they speak about Jesus that the world has an opportunity to hear and believe in Jesus (these contrasting reactions are described in 15:20).*

**5. When facing persecution, how would the relationship with Jesus and with other Christians described in John 15:1-17 comfort Jesus' disciples?**

*Even though Jesus' disciples are hated by the world, they have a loving relationship with Jesus and the Father, and also with other Christians. They are hated by the world because they no longer belong to the world, they belong to Jesus and to his family.*

**6. How should this passage impact what you think about non-Christians around you?**

*We often assume that our family, friends, colleagues etc are basically good, rational people who will naturally accept the gospel if it is explained well to them. This passage challenges that assumption.*

**7. a) Why do you think many churches fail to teach the content of this passage?  
b) What would be the impact on a church if it failed to teach it?**

*We want the world to like us and to like Jesus, so it is hard to accept that Jesus teaches the opposite. But if we fail to grasp the teaching of this passage we could be tempted to only tell people the parts of the gospel that they find easy to accept. If someone rejects the gospel, we might think that there is something wrong with us, our explanation, or the gospel message itself.*

**8. a) Back in China, what kind of opposition might you face from the world as you speak of Jesus?  
b) How would this passage help you in these situations?  
c) How could you use it to help Christians in the scenarios below?**

- A Christian in a state-owned company in China where employees are not meant to have any religion. If they admit they are a Christian to their colleagues, they risk losing their job.
- A Christian whose family are upset because of certain choices she has made due to being a Christian: e.g. breaking up with her non-Christian boyfriend, spending every Sunday morning at church.

**9. Think back to the scenario in the Introduction.**

**From this passage, what would Jesus tell your friend to help her stand firm as a Christian back in China?**

**'Ask, and you will receive...'**

***Persecuted Christians***

This passage teaches us that persecution is normal for Christians, and is one of the things that Satan may use to tempt us to fall away. Therefore we should pray for our brothers and sisters who are persecuted all over the world.

- \* Pray for Christians in countries where Christians risk losing their lives for following Jesus. You could pray for places such as North Korea, Nigeria and many parts of the Middle East. More detailed information can be found from organisations like Open Doors.
- \* Pray for yourself or people you know who have met with opposition to their faith in Jesus, from family, friends, colleagues etc.
- \* Pray that persecuted Christians would rejoice that they belong to Jesus and not to the world, and that the joy of knowing Jesus would keep them standing firm. Pray that they would not compromise or fall away from Jesus.
- \* Pray that persecuted Christians would continue to testify to Jesus, and that God might have mercy on those who oppose them, bringing them to repentance and faith in Jesus.

# Study 7 John 16:5-33

**Main Point:** Jesus' departure brings conviction to the world and relationship with God.

**Response:** Understand and rejoice in this

**Before you start...**

Split this passage into several smaller paragraphs and give each one a title.

How does each paragraph encourage the disciples to "take heart" (16:33)?

**Starter Question:**

What things make you think: "I wish Jesus was physically here with me!"?

When might you think this after returning to China?

**Recap:** Look back to the timeline from John 13:31-14:4 (page 8)

Consider what we have studied so far up to 16:4. What will life be like for followers of Jesus between his departure and future return?

*Jesus will continue to reveal God to the apostles, and through their word he will reveal God to the whole world. All Christians enjoy a loving, fruitful relationship with Jesus and each other, although they are hated by the world for belonging to Jesus.*

**Read John 16:5-33**

**16:5-15**

**1. Why does Jesus say that it is better for the disciples that he leaves them (v7)?**

*After Jesus leaves, he will send the Helper to them*

**a) What will the Helper do for the disciples? (7,12-15)**

*Tell them all the truth about Jesus from God the Father (see the diagram on page 16)*

**b) What will the Helper do for the world? (8-11)**

- NOTE: 'convict the world concerning...' can also be translated as 'convict the world of guilt concerning...'

- *He will show the world they are guilty of rejecting Jesus, they are guilty of unrighteousness, they are on the side that will be judged guilty. Being convicted of these things will ultimately lead to their salvation.*

**c) How are the Helper's two roles connected?**

- *As the world hears the words of Jesus spoken by the apostles, the Spirit will also work in them to convict them that this word is true*



## 2. Using the 'Who Am I?' Tool, where do we fit in these verses?

*The Spirit will directly declare truth to the apostles (12-15), not to us. However, we read their words in the Bible and so we can also be involved in telling this truth to the world, just as the apostles were. We used to be part of "the world", but the Holy Spirit worked in our own hearts, convicting us of these things so that we might believe in Jesus.*

## 3. How does this help us when we're sharing the gospel and we think, "If only Jesus were physically here it would be so much easier to make people believe in him!"?

*As we speak the apostles' words about Jesus to the world we can be confident that the Spirit is working in people's hearts, convicting them as in v8-11. This should give us boldness in sharing the gospel.*

**16:16-33**

## 4. What is the "sorrow" that the disciples will experience?

*Jesus leaving them, i.e. his death.*

## 5. When will it turn to joy? (v21-24, see also 14:16-20)

*When they see Jesus again - not only at his resurrection, but also as he continues to live in them by the Spirit (Jesus says that at this time they will speak to the Father in Jesus' name, suggesting that Jesus is not physically with them. 14:18-19 also describe the Holy Spirit's coming as a time when the disciples will "see" Jesus).*

## 6. Why will they (and we!) go on experiencing joy?

*Through their relationship with the Father. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection his disciples will be able to speak directly to the Father, asking him for things in Jesus' name, knowing that these prayers will be heard and answered by their Father who loves them. Despite opposition from the world, they can have peace because Jesus has overcome the world (v33).*

## 7. Jesus has already promised his disciples that they can ask the Father anything "in Jesus' name" (14:13-14; 15:7,15-16). "In Jesus' name" means anything that is in line with Jesus' character and plans. So what sort of things should we ask for?

*For example, we should pray for Jesus to be made known to the world through the apostles' words, that our churches would teach the Bible faithfully and clearly, that we would also do this in our personal evangelism, that the Holy Spirit would convict the hearts of our non-Christian friends, that we would love each other, etc.*

## 8. Look back to your answers to the Recap above. How does John 16:5-33 add to your understanding of what to expect from life now as Jesus' follower?

*We can expect a loving, close relationship with God where we hear him speak through the apostles' words, and we talk to him directly. We should expect joy, even though we also experience suffering (33).*

**9. Think back to the situations you mentioned in the Starter Question. How can this passage help you when you face those situations?**

**10. How does this passage challenge your attitude to prayer? How would you like this passage to impact your prayer life over the next week?**

**11. Think back to the scenario in the Introduction.**

**From this passage, what would Jesus tell your friend to help her stand firm as a Christian back in China?**

**'Ask, and you will receive...'**

***Family members***

This passage teaches that we can have great joy now in praying directly to God as our Father. So enjoy talking to your Father using the suggestions below:

- \* Thank God that through Jesus we become part of his family, with God as our Father and other Christians as our brothers and sisters. Pray that we would identify even more closely with God than with our human families, while still relating with love and wisdom towards our human families.
- \* Pray for non-Christian family members, that they would have opportunities to hear about Jesus and that the Holy Spirit would convict them concerning sin, righteousness and judgment. Pray for our own witness to them.
- \* Pray for Christian family members, that they would have joy in their relationship with God through Jesus.

# Study 8 John 17:1-26

**Main Point:** God will make himself known to the world through believers' witness

**Response:** Align yourself with this plan

Before you start...

1. Split this passage into several paragraphs. Who does Jesus pray for in each paragraph? (hint: look at verse 20)
2. This passage tells us a lot about God's plan. Look for repeated words and phrases in order to identify important elements of this plan. Which of these elements has Jesus already spoken about in John 13-16?

**Starter Question:** If you asked your friends back in China "What is the goal of your life?", what would the most common answers be?

Read John 17:1-26

1. What is the goal of God's plan? (v1-5)

- How will Jesus be glorified? (see 12:23-24) *Through his death and resurrection, which display the riches of God's character (his faithfulness, justice, love, holiness, etc.)*

**"glory"** = magnificence, honour, beauty

- How do these verses define "eternal life"? *Knowing God the Father and Jesus Christ*

*So the goal of God's plan is that he would be glorified as people know him eternally through Jesus.*

2. Complete the table:

	6-19	20-26
<b>Who does Jesus pray for in these verses?</b>	<i>His apostles: those who heard his words and believed that God sent him (8)</i>	<i>People who will believe in him through the apostles' words (20) - i.e. all Christians throughout history, including us!</i>
<b>What does Jesus pray for them?</b>	<i>That they would continue to believe in Jesus, and so be one with each other (11) That God would protect them from the devil (15) That they would be "sanctified" (= set apart for a special purpose) by God's word (17)</i>	<i>That they would be one with each other and with God, just as Jesus and the Father are one. That through their unity, the world may believe in Jesus. That they would be with Jesus and see his glory.</i>

<p><b>How will God achieve his plan to glorify himself (see v1-5)?</b></p>	<p><i>Through Jesus, the apostles know God and have eternal life. Jesus will send the disciples into the world to bear witness to him so that more people may know God (18)</i></p>	<p><i>As Jesus' followers live out their one-ness with God and with each other they display God's glory to the world so that the world may also have know God and have eternal life (21, 23)</i></p>
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**3. Looking at the whole passage, how will God glorify himself?** (You could redraw the diagram from study 6 to show the chain of revelation from the Father, to Jesus, to his apostles, to the world)

*God is making himself known to the world through the apostles' words about Jesus so that everyone who believes in him can eternally enjoy his glory.*

**a) Why is the role of the apostles so important?**

*Jesus entrusted them with the word of truth about God, and so it is only through listening to their words that we can know God.*

**b) What is our role in God's plan?**

*We hear and believe the words of the apostles. This makes us one with God and with each other. Through this we pass on the truth about God to others.*

**4. Jesus has already told the disciples about his plan in John 13-16. Why do you think he wanted them to hear him pray for this plan?**

*To give them confidence that God will achieve this plan, because Jesus has asked him to.*

**5. Look back to your answers to the Starter Question. Why is God's goal so much better than the goals we have for our own lives?**

*He promises eternal relationship with himself, the one true God. We can know him and be one with him. We are part of his plan to show his glory to the world.*

**6. How should knowing God's plan impact your goals for your life a) while you are overseas? b) back in China?**

*For example, in our work are we seeking career advancement, or is our priority to make Jesus known? Are we more concerned for the glory of our family, or for the glory of Jesus? Will we make sure we are part of a church which teaches Jesus' words as recorded in the Bible by the apostles?*

**7. What role should our relationships with other Christians play in our evangelism? How could you put this into practice?**

*Think about how you could let non-Christians friends see something of the one-ness we have with other Christians through Jesus, and how you could work together to share the gospel.*

**8. Think back to the scenario in the Introduction.**

**From this passage, what would Jesus tell your friend to help her stand firm as a Christian back in China? What would he pray for her?**

**'Ask, and you will receive...'**

***The Church in China***

It is encouraging to see that in this passage Jesus prayed for the church throughout history - including the Church in China today. This prayer helps us know how we should pray for the church.

- \* Pray for churches in China to have the same desires as Jesus: that many people would know God, have eternal life and bring God glory. Pray that this would prevail against human plans for our own glory.
- \* Pray for church leaders and preachers in China, that they would have confidence in the apostles' words recorded in the Bible. Pray that they would teach clearly and faithfully about Jesus, and through this make God known to the world. Pray that they would have good training to equip them to do this.
- \* Pray for Christians in these churches to be united around the gospel. Pray against divisions in churches or selfish arguments between church members. Pray that Christians' unity and love for each other would help non-Christians to believe in Jesus.