

John 17 - "The Great High Priest"

Starter: What's the worst excuse you've ever given or heard for not attending church?

In the Tabernacle and then the Temple, only the High Priest was allowed into the most holy place and before he went in he had to sanctify himself (make himself holy) because Yahweh "dwelled" in the holy of holies. Anyone who tried to enter the holy of holies (or even touch something holy like the Ark of the Covenant) could well die.

Read Hebrews 9:11-15.

The role of the High Priest was to, "Act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb 5:1) In Hebrews 4, the writer talks of Jesus as the Great High Priest - he is greater than any other High Priest before or after him.

Q. Why? (Hebrews 5:5 and 7:26 should help.)

In John 17, Jesus prays for 3 things: himself (kind of), the disciples, and the church. Have the most holy person in your group read verses 1-5; an average Christian read verses 6-19 and then the biggest sinner read 20-26. ;-)

Q. What does Jesus say eternal life is and what does he mean?

Q. In v6, what does Jesus mean by *manifesting the Father's name*?

Q. As Jesus prays for his disciples he says, "they are in the world" (v11) but they are, "not of the world" (v16). What does this mean?

Jesus prays for the sanctification of the disciples. He says, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (v17). In chapter 14 Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will, "bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (14:26) and in chapter 16 he said, "he will guide you into all truth" (16:13). It's pretty clear that sanctification comes through the Holy Spirit then.

Q. In your experience, how does the Holy Spirit make one holy?

When Jesus prays for the church (vv20-26) he prays for their unity specifically. He says that through the unity which is brought about by the Holy Spirit, the church should have as much love for each other as the Father does for the Son (v23). The purpose of this love is two-fold:

1. So that others may see the beauty of such a creation and be attracted to it.
2. So that those within the church would see the glory of God (eternal life now?).

Q. How close is the church to perfect unity?

Q. What is YOUR role in bringing unity to the church?

My suggestion is that although we can encourage one another, the only person we're truly responsible for is ourselves and in that, our own holiness.

Maybe finish off in prayer for unity in the Church (universal (catholic)) and for the Spirit to convict us of areas where we are far from Holy!!