



ONE LIFE: SENT BY JESUS TO CARRY EACH OTHER

A 7-Day Devotion Series
based on John 17:20-21



"My prayer is not for them 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."

– Jesus

**What would it look like in the YMCA to fulfill this prayer of Jesus
"that they all may be one"?**

One way is when we care for and carry each other – especially when we're not the same, weary, and hurting.

You're invited to use this 7-day devotion series written by Christian YMCA leaders, a collection of meditations on the One and Only Jesus, his prayer and mission based on John 17:20-21, and about our being sent by God's love to carry each other in this one life.

Published: January 2023

Photo by [Claudio Schwarz](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Devotion Series Edited by Tim Hallman,
Director of Christian Emphasis, YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne
tim_hallman@fwymca.org / www.fwymca.org

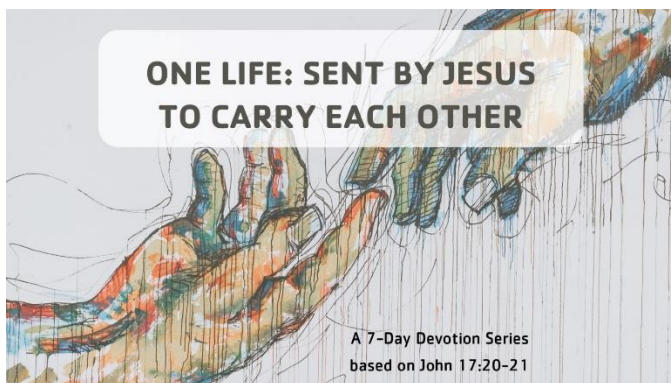
**The mission of the YMCA is to put Christian principles into
practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind
and body for all.**

Downloadable PDF versions available at
www.ymcachristianprinciples.org / search "one life"

[DAY ONE]

"My prayer is not for them 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." – Jesus

[John 17:20-21]



Is Jesus still answering his prayer in John 17:20-21? If so, what would it look like?

I see it in the transformation of my friend Phyu, in the way she began to trust God. Phyu puts it this way: "I felt the love – love is what drew me to explore and begin to trust God."

Jesus prayed for all his disciples, those with him then and everyone who would trust him in the future, that they would *be one* – amongst themselves and with God.

He prayed that Father and Son would be *in* "us" – just as they are in one another.

But why? What is it that Jesus experienced that he wanted so eagerly for all people to experience? What is this relationship?

Love forms and gives identity to God. It flows between Father, Son, and Spirit, between them and us, and then flows out between humanity.

This transformational caring causes a oneness of heart, purpose, and affection. What happens to one part, happens to the whole, causing the unique individual to live in and for the whole.

We are invited to find our identity and purpose in this flow of love. This brings a rich challenge to our understanding of community.

The prayer of Jesus *"that they may all be one"* is an invitation of love to humanity, that we might share what the Father, Son, and Spirit experience. As Phyu shared with me: "Without love, we have nothing – everything changes because of love."

Though she grew up a Burmese Buddhist, her 20-year journey with the YMCA transformed her, inspiring Phyu to start a YMCA in her hometown in Myanmar - as a Christian. It all began with enrolling her three sons in Y programs in the USA, it was a way for her to navigate and anchor herself in a foreign land.

Eventually, she became a volunteer with her Y and then joined the staff as a group exercise instructor. Her continual encounters with the way of love through the followers of Christ she met at the Y changed everything for her, and then her hometown.

Jesus is still working to answer his prayer through the Y; like he did with Phyu.

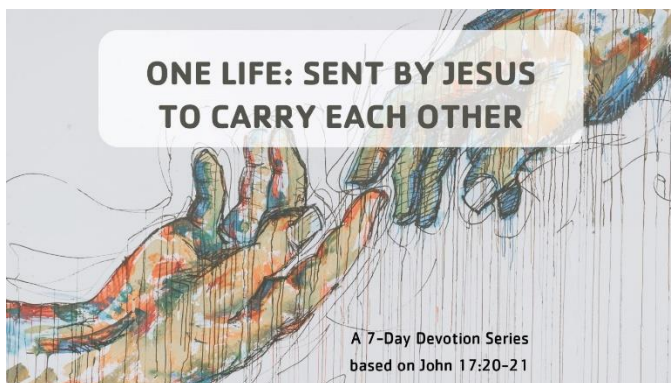
Who is the Phyu in your life that you can become "one" with, and extend God's eternal invitation of love?

Written by: Janele Nelson, Association Mission Director, YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap Counties, WA

[DAY TWO]

"My prayer is not for them 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." – Jesus

[John 17:20-21]



When you stop to think about it, it's extraordinary that Jesus has patiently and purposefully been working to answer his own prayer, from that agonizing night in the Garden of Gethsemane up to this very moment.

When Christians gather, the conversation eventually turns to the many ways we are divided. We reflect on how disappointed God must be that we are not more unified.

We lament about how often the world's disbelief is a result of our broken unity with each other.

And yet...for all the real divisiveness that exists amongst the Body of Christ, Jesus is still at work to bring together those who believe him, that they might be one, just as Jesus and God are one.

What patience Jesus must have with us! What kindness! And that might be the key to us also joining Jesus in answering his prayer for unity.

Just as Jesus was sent by the Father to save the world, so we are also sent to be part of this saving, this kind of healing, this patient rescue work.

Let's not overlook how crucial patience and kindness are to rebuilding unity among those we have been hurt by, those who have broken trust, and fractured community.

In my ministry with the YMCA, I want to highlight ways we can be part of the answer to Jesus' prayer for unity.

Is it when we gather for worship songs or a Gospel sermon? Is it when we stand in a circle and pray or join a church? I certainly hope that participating in these activities strengthens our union with Christ.

But what about the rest of our life, the days and hours when we're at work, at home, at school, at the Y, or out and about in the community?

That's where we spend most of our time, interacting with diverse Christians from different denominations and ethnicities. It's also where we give the witness to the world about our union with God in Christ.

Immediately you might start to feel overwhelmed! Where would we get the energy and capacity to be patient and kind on this scale?

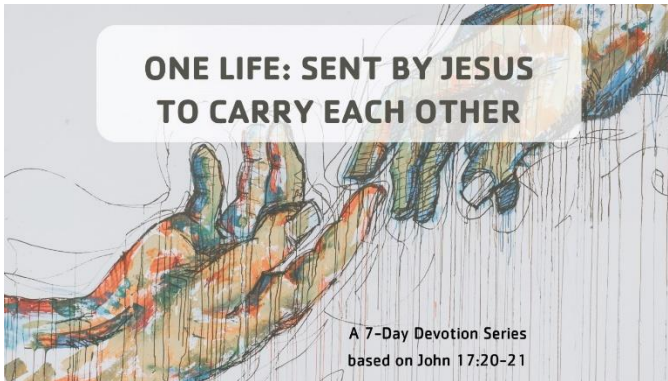
May we realize, in that moment, it's our union with Christ Jesus, that's how we're able to carry those who are hurting that God has placed in our life.

Written by Tim Hallman, Christian Emphasis Director, YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne IN

[DAY THREE]

"My prayer is not for them 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." – Jesus

[John 17:20-21]



Uno. Dos. Tres. One of the first words I learned in my study of Spanish was “uno” meaning ONE. Such a simple word that we all know.

Yet, the concept of ONE is not easy for humans.

Have you observed the extreme vitriol and hate in our society in the last few years? Polarization has been growing as people, feelings, and circumstances clash with vengeance.

In a world of division, Jesus might have prayed something like this: *"Father, I pray that all would become disciples of mine, nestled in your fatherly love. I pray that as people come from many different nations, languages, cultures, statuses, and classes that it wouldn't matter ONE iota. They would be ONE in You. Stop the divisions. Stop what separates. Lead us by your Spirit."*

Since our beginning, the YMCA demonstrates its uniqueness in welcoming and caring for all.

For example, a few years ago I attended an LGBTQ Christian conference, which was quite a bit out of my zone of comfort.

As I listened intently to the stories being shared, I began to understand the intense pain and hurt they too had experienced at the hands of Christians and the church.

One day, while sharing my conference learnings with our YMCA staff, I took a moment to apologize for the way Christians have hurt those in the LGBTQ community. There was not one dry eye in that room.

Unity doesn't mean that we must think or believe exactly the same in the YMCA.

Rather, the Holy Spirit tenderly leads us into unity amidst a divided world by empowering us to love one another like Jesus.

Here's the kicker: In his prayer, Jesus gives the world an opportunity to judge the validity of his ministry based on people being ONE.

You see, when God's people are unified, it helps people see and give glory to God! Our being ONE affects others! How might our love and unity in the YMCA draw ALL people together?

May the Spirit of God help you demonstrate a ONENESS marked by building others up, caring deeply, and serving extravagantly while refusing to get sidetracked by the divisive matters of the day.

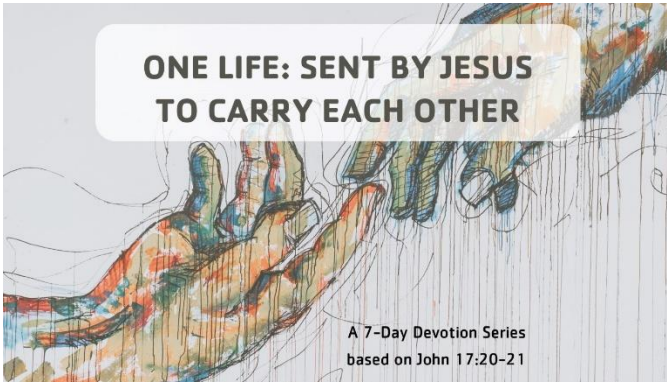
Jesus knew what we'd be going through today. He is near and present. The same prayer is for you and me today, that we may be ONE.

Written by: Nancy Abbott, Chaplain, YMCA of Greater San Antonio TX

[DAY FOUR]

"My prayer is not for them 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." – Jesus

[John 17:20-21]



Can this really be true?

Is it possible that the same oneness and unity that exists between God the Father and God the Son is available to those of us who believe it?

The current situation in our world, in our nation, and indeed in our churches seems to indicate that the very opposite is true.

We are much more comfortable sticking close to people that think and believe exactly as we do. Those who think or believe differently are rejected or worse. This fosters fear-based uniformity instead of caring unity.

The Father and the Son are One, but they are different. The Father and Son carry each other, but they are not the same. Every human being is the same, in that we are all human beings.

However, every human being is different and unique in so many ways – yet Jesus is suggesting that we can be one, we can still care for and carry each other.

It's what we were sent to do at the YMCA. I think it is amazing that the Y movement chose this prayer of Jesus to guide who we aspire to be.

At Silver Bay YMCA in upstate NY, we put it this way: "*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here!*"

This is our way of communicating that unity is important to us.

You may be rich or poor or anywhere in between and you are welcome here. You may be from any racial, national, or ethnic background; you are welcome here. It does not matter how you define your gender or your sexual preferences, you're welcome here.

It does not matter what religious faith you practice, what denomination you belong to, or if you have no faith at all, all are welcome here. In our community, we seek caring unity, not uniformity.

We foster and seek diversity by welcoming everyone and excluding no one. I have found that the pursuit of oneness and unity, amid diversity, at Silver Bay YMCA is a journey rather than a destination.

It can be a messy and difficult life, while simultaneously being beautiful and glorious.

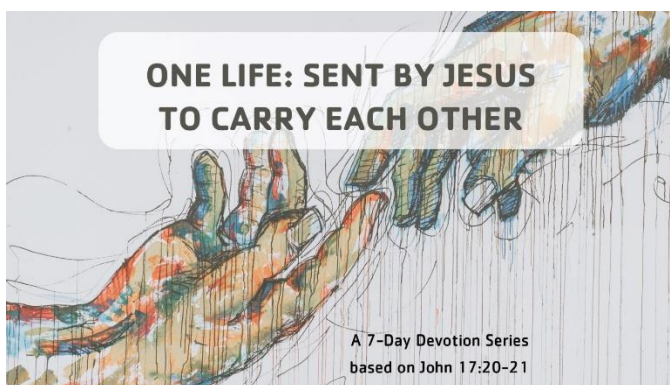
Don't let the challenge deter you from pursuing unity, instead, let the challenge fuel you to continually pursue the oneness and unity that exists between God the Father and God the Son!

Written by: Garth Allen, Chaplain, Silver Bay YMCA NY

[DAY FIVE]

"My prayer is not for them 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." – Jesus

[John 17:20-21]



How often is the point of Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-21 missed?

I've heard Christian leaders upset by the use of John 17 in the YMCA movement, arguing that this prayer from Jesus is intended for Christians only.

I've heard other leaders upset by the use of John 17 in the Y because it comes from a faith tradition that they do not identify with, thus making them feel excluded.

We are living through a very divisive time in our country and around the world, so much so that even a caring prayer for unity can become divisive.

What if we could pause for a moment and take a step back from the "dividing walls of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14)? *What if we could approach John 17 with a Y "listen first" mentality?*

How might this prayer change before our eyes if we joined Jesus to pray it every day?

For Jesus, it is a both/and prayer. The “them alone” is for followers of Christ as mentioned in John 17:11, that we may be united as one.

But Jesus then expands this to also pray for all the people who will ever believe in him through the future message of “little Christs”, that ALL may be one.

When I see the word “all” my prayer and my hope are that it really means **all**. It reminds me of what the apostle Paul writes in his first letter to Timothy (1:4-6) regarding Christ Jesus who is a mediator, a ransom for all people, who wants everyone to be saved and know the truth.

If God desires that all be saved—from fear, shame, ego, greed, lust, and other hurtful, hellish ways of living—then why not see this as a prayer for ALL as well as a prayer for Christ-followers?

Can it be a both/and prayer for oneness?

Let’s not let a prayer for unity divide us.

Instead, let’s accept the call to care and carry our colleagues at the Y—no matter who they are, what they look like, how they vote, who they love—and take steps together to love our neighbor as ourselves, to pray for our enemies, and to take on the nature of a servant.

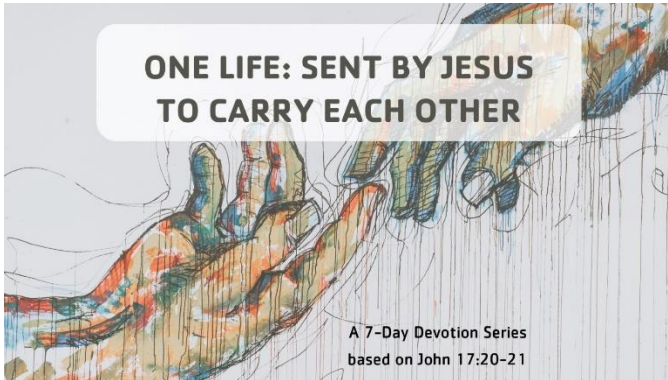
Is this possible? May it be so, for with God all things are possible!

Written by: Dori Gorman, Chaplain, YMCA of Middle Tennessee

[DAY SIX]

"My prayer is not for them 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." – Jesus

[John 17:20-21]



How do you show up at work? How do you show up at home?

How we show up reflects our love for Jesus, and how we go through our daily routines becomes a way to care for others like Christ does for us.

Our social engagements with one another matter and to have a successful interaction with those we engage with an understanding must be reached, which requires we must listen first.

This is important, especially with those who are different from us.

From my experience, a happy and loyal staff requires active listening, especially to their concerns and hurts; doing this in a caring and authentic way builds unity and benefits our relationship.

When we carefully listen to our members share their diverse experiences, it shows that you hear them and can actively respond to a possible solution to the issue at hand.

Earlier in my parenthood, I found that when my children had some bad news to share, I was quick to share my response prior to "listening", which created other and more critical problems.

So how did I become better at listening? It's a process.

No one is ALWAYS perfect in it, but there is a way to approach it. The Psalmist writes in 46:10 to "Be still and know that I am God" – this is a helpful reminder of how my life can demonstrate faith and unity with the Lord and others.

Practicing being still and listening to God is not easy for me. In a practical approach, I will walk off somewhere and take five minutes of total quiet and turn off the phone and the noise in my head.

Wait and listen for God to share all the sounds around you. At the end of the five minutes, write down all the things you heard during that time of silence (i.e. running water, the hum of the air conditioning, birds chirping, etc.)

Keep practicing this exercise and then apply this activity to your conversations. It will help you hear the call of Christ to send you to others, to be his hands and heart, to care and carry those who are praying for hope and help.

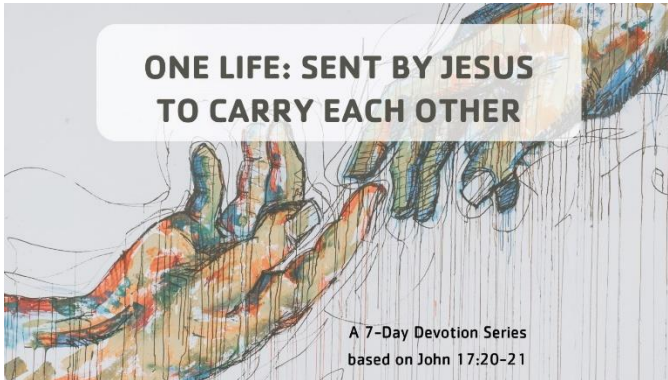
See what happens when you take your time to answer the prayer of Jesus, "that we may all be one."

Written by Jamal Riley, Association Chaplain, YMCA of Greater Richmond VA

[DAY SEVEN]

"My prayer is not for them 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." – Jesus

[John 17:20-21]



One of my most exciting experiences as a Christian is helping someone respond to the call of Christ upon their life.

The second is helping different kinds of Christians serve in the world with a spirit of unity.

And according to the prayer of Jesus in the Garden, these two realities are intertwined.

People live between the tension of “birds of a feather flock together” and “opposites attract” – which is magnified for Christians in the YMCA and the church since we’re expected to have one love for each other and with Christ.

According to some statistics, there are over two billion Christians in the world, which includes almost every kind of possible diversity, which also implies every kind of tension.

It's one thing for Christians to be naturally drawn to some kinds of diversity, and repelled by others. It's another thing when we idolize certain attractions and demonize certain differences.

If you're anything like me, your heart soars when it hears of someone accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior!

And your heart sours when you hear of Christians slandering one another. *But what can we do so that there is more union with Jesus and fewer divisions between those who believe in Him?*

The best place to start is with you: who in your life does the Holy Spirit want to carry closer to Christ? Are we being attentive and faithful to that? Are we actively praying for God to use us to nourish their commitment to Christ?

But also: which Christians are we against? Which Christians in our YMCA, church or denomination, city or nation, do we resent?

Christian conflict is always brewing, the embers often stoked by lingering bitterness and antagonisms. *So, within our own spirit, who has disappointed us, who are we blaming, and who do we need to forgive?*

Jesus felt this tension amongst his people in Judea and Galilee, the crowds flocked to him, sinners were drawn to him. He eagerly healed the hurting and offered forgiveness to all who would receive it; it was what he was sent to do. And so are we.

We get one life; you got to do what you should, imitating the healing and forgiving of Jesus, living in the tension, carrying each other, forging union with God wherever we can.

Written by Tim Hallman, Christian Emphasis Director, YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne IN