

# Twenty-One Days With John

## Day 16 – John 16

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### **Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, often I do not understand Your will. Sometimes the pain of life clouds my vision of Your gracious presence in my life. When I am wayward, direct me. When I am grieving, give me the joy that comes so graciously through Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name I pray. Amen.

### **Meditation:**

Witnessing often carries with it a degree of risk. That's why law enforcement agencies have witness protection programs. These programs are designed to protect those who are willing to bear witness the Truth. But who, after all, would try to harm those who tell the truth? Only those who have the evil desire to destroy the Truth.

John 16 begins with Jesus' warning that the disciples will be witnesses of the Truth. The disciples will be excommunicated, "put out," tortured, persecuted and even killed for witnessing on their Lord's behalf. Interestingly enough, Jesus explained that those who perpetuate this persecution and even kills them will do it thinking they are doing a godly thing, making an "offering to God" (John 16:3).

Jesus' warning gives us a remarkable insight into some of the possible motivations—or more accurately, justifications—those who crucified Jesus and sought to kill Jesus' followers. Why did Caiaphas and Annas arrest Jesus and hand Him over to Pilate to be crucified? Why did St. Paul, prior to his conversion, consent to the killing of Christians? Jesus' comment may provide a partial answer. They—and other persecutors—thought they were doing it "for the Lord." How amazing it is that Satan often does his most damaging work through those who, thinking they are working for God, are really working for Satan!

Why did Jesus explain this to the disciples *now*? Certainly Jesus taught this in previous instances. But why now, just hours before His betrayal?

*First*, He wanted to prepare the disciples for the harsh reality that He will be crucified by those claiming to be doing God's will. *Second*, He wanted to give the disciples a "heads up," an advance warning of what was to come. From this time on, Jesus would no longer be there to be the main target. In Jesus' absence, the disciples would be the target. They must be His witnesses. They must bear unshakable witness to the Truth.

Jesus know the disciples must be forewarned of the risks of bearing the Truth. "To be forewarned," as the saying goes, "is to be forearmed." From this point on, especially in the coming hours and days, the disciples will need God's witness protection program: the full armor of God (cf. Ephesians 6).

John 16:5 reverts back to the disciples unasked—but overriding—concern. "Where are You going, Jesus?" No one dared ask Jesus directly although they, like Thomas and Philip, tried to figure out this baffling mystery previously in John 14. Note that even after several hours of discussion, the disciples *still* didn't know specifically where Jesus was going. How they, as Peter expressed in John 13:36, longed to be with Him!

Where was Jesus going? We know He was going to the cross. Why didn't He tell the disciples? His answer is clear.

"I have much more to say that you can now bear....In a little while you will see Me no more, and then after a little while you will see Me" (John 16:12, 16 NIV).

To the befuddled, grieving disciples, Jesus' answer must have seemed evasive. It seemed like an answer that wasn't an answer. But, whatever the disciples' issues were, no matter how confused they may have been, Jesus assured them He would not leave His disciples comfortless.

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How would they receive comfort? Jesus would send the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of Truth” (16:13). The Spirit would guide them into the Truth. The Spirit would speak the words of the Father. The comfort that Spirit would give would come by reminding the disciples of Jesus’ Words and the Words of Scripture.

The Spirit was not going to comfort them by merely making them “feel good.” The comfort of the Spirit would come through the Word of Truth, that is, through Scripture. Isn’t that the exact way Christians, today, received the Spirit’s comfort? We are not comforted when we simply want God to make us feel good. Instead, we are comforted when we go directly—and humbly—to the Scriptures for the Truth, God’s *comforting* Truth. There we find the truth of His love and grace for us. There we find God’s promise to lead us to Truth. There we find God’s gracious promise that He will *never* leave or abandon us.

Is that enough for us? It should be! Unfortunately, often it’s not. We’re not alone. That’s pretty much where the disciples seem to be as well (cf. John 16:17ff.). Note how the disciples, still awaiting the answer to their question, are still not comforted. Note how they are still obsessed—and talking amongst themselves—trying to discern where Jesus is going (cf. John 16:19). Notice the more they seemed to long—and insist—on Jesus answering their question their way in their time, the more grieved and frustrated they became. Sometimes it’s amazing just how much we are like the disciples, isn’t it!

Jesus admitted to the disciples that He was not being direct. He was intentionally speaking figuratively...as was His way. Speaking figuratively seemed to be Jesus’ way of telling the Truth to those who really weren’t ready for it. Remember how John explained that when Jesus said, “I am the Good Shepherd” in John 10:6, He was using a figure of speech?

Jesus’ parables are another example of His penchant for speaking figuratively. Peter once wrestled with Jesus’ figurative teaching in Matthew 15. Having heard several of Jesus’ figures of speech in Matthew, Peter came to Jesus. “Explain the parable to us,” Peter insisted. “Are you still so dull?” Jesus asked them (Matthew 15:15-16).

Were the disciples still “so dull” in their final hours before Jesus’ death? It certainly appears so! Finally, Jesus put aside the figurative speech and speaks to the disciples “clearly” and directly to address their desperation (cf. 16:25, 28).

Having spoken plainly to His disciples, did they finally know where Jesus is going? Did they have finally have a clearer, more specific and detailed explanation? As much as they would have wanted it, the answer is simply, “No.”

But do notice the disciples’ response of faith. Even though they did not have the answer for their question they wanted, and even though they knew Jesus was withholding specifics from them, and even though it caused them much grief, they finally believed. “Now we can see that You know all things...” they responded.

The disciples found comfort in simple, unquestioning, trusting faith. They discovered that God may not provide comfort by providing specific answers to their direct questions. No, they found comfort by simply believing that Jesus, the omniscient One, was in control. They need ask no more questions. All they needed to do was to trust in the One who has overcome the world (John 16:33).

Are you wanting God to give you a specific answer for an issue in Your life? Does it grieve you that God hasn’t given you a specific answer yet? The disciples grieved...until they came to recognize that Jesus knew everything—even their grief. Jesus knew their feelings, their

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yearnings...everything. In John 16 we find the disciples came to realize that since Jesus knew everything, they did not need answers to the specific questions they have. All they needed was to trust Him.

Does Jesus care for you? Does Jesus know what you are experiencing? Can Jesus deliver you? Of course! We can place everything in His hands. We can let the Spirit lead us into the Truth of His Word. There, in His Word, we will find Jesus, the One who has overcome the world. He will give us peace. Those who believe in Him can, in all things, take heart (John 16:33).

**Prayer:**

Jesus, so often I become frustrated because I'm looking for specific answers from You. Yet, You seem not to care. Having read John 16, now I realize how the disciples felt the same way. As You taught and comforted the disciples to simply trust You, send Your Spirit so that I can have Your victory over the world and the evil in it. Enable me to experience Your peace...and shamelessly bear witness to that peace to others. In Your name I pray, Amen.

Thomas F. Fischer

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