

WHOLLY HIS

John 17:12-19 (NIV)

12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.

15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

1. Notice in this passage the repeated mention of *the world*. What does it mean that Jesus' disciples aren't of the world, or that they don't *belong* to the world? Look for clues in this passage and the whole chapter as to what makes the disciples different from the world.

Although the Gospel of John includes many references to Jesus' love and compassion for the people of the world, frequently—as in this passage—the world is a phrase used to indicate a spiritual atmosphere of darkness and unbelief, as well as outright hostility to the gospel. Look back at 15:18-25 to gain a sense of Jesus' realism about what the disciples are going to face in that atmosphere.

2. In light of this, strikingly, Jesus prays repeatedly for the disciples' safety and protection (v.11-12, 15). What are the greatest dangers they face, according to Jesus?

History and Christian tradition indicate that the twelve apostles all suffered terrible persecution in their subsequent lives. Almost all of them died violent deaths. Acts 12:2 tells us James, the brother of John, was put to death with a sword at Herod Agrippa's behest. Peter is said to have been crucified in Rome under Nero, Thomas was run through with a spear in India, Matthew was stabbed to death in Ethiopia, and so on.

3. How does this information affect your reading of Jesus' prayers for his loved ones? Jesus knew what was facing him on the cross, and he wanted his dear friends to be prepared for all the struggles ahead. What clues can you identify in our passage as to how Jesus has specifically equipped them to face their trials?

4. Jesus also asked the Father to sanctify his disciples through his word. How can we allow God's Word to have that kind of effect in our lives?

Scripture tells us we should cast our anxieties on God, because he cares for us (1 Peter 5:7), and to pray on all occasions and with all kinds of prayers and requests (Ephesians 6:18). We are invited to bring all concerns, large and small, to the Father who loves us tenderly, and it's not wrong to ask for safety from physical harm and danger. However, John 17 reminds us that Jesus knows that our most profound need is to be kept close to our Father, and he is advocating for us.