

The potential of prayer

 **John 17.6-19**

Jesus prays at length, talking with his father (God) about how he has been revealed to his disciples. He prays earnestly for them, asking God to keep them united and set them apart (holy, sanctified). He particularly asks God to keep them safe from the evil one, while they remain in the world.

Now read **John 17.6-19** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

These are some of the last words of Jesus before his crucifixion, demonstrating how prayer is an ongoing conversation with God. Jesus knows the problems his disciples will face once he is no longer with them. There is a sense of comfort that Jesus is also praying the same for us.



Ask yourself: How does prayer help you in uncertain times?

Daily Prayer

Jesus' prayer in John 17 has echoes of the Lord's Prayer. Try praying the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of each day...but with a twist. Use a different Bible version of the prayer each day (you can find them on www.biblegateway.com/) and look up Matthew 6.9-13.

How does using less familiar words change the way you think about the prayer and/or respond to God?

DANCE

The song 'Safe in the Father's hands' by Paul Field reflects the request by Jesus for us to be kept safe. The words can be found in some hymnbooks or here: www.elevationkids.com/song/safe-in-the-fathers-hands.

Whether or not you know the tune (which you can find on YouTube), make up a dance or a mime – or even your own tune! – either on your own or as a household, and use it as an opportunity to celebrate that Jesus' prayer is just as much for us now as it was for his disciples then.



FIND OUT

Research a country where Christians are persecuted for their faith. You could start with the World Watch list, which lists the most dangerous places to be a Christian – see www.opendoorsuk.org. On that website you also find a variety of resources and ideas for prayer and action, including how to contact your MP to advocate for those who are suffering for their faith.

WALK

This week, pray with your feet. Choose a safe part of your community and... just go for a walk. Allow what you see and experience to influence your prayers – e.g. passing a food shop might remind you of Fairtrade or a local food bank; graffiti might stimulate prayer about the need to have a voice. If you cannot walk safely, try to visualise a walk as you 'walk your fingers' over a map of your local area.

BAKE

Make shield-shaped biscuits. Every time you eat one, or give one to someone else, give thanks for God's protection.

You will need: access to an oven; 50g caster sugar, 50g butter, 100g self-raising flour, 25ml milk, a drop of vanilla essence, a shield-shaped cookie cutter (or make your own shield template) and a knife, a rolling pin, a baking tray, icing sugar (optional).

- Preheat your oven to 190C/370F/Gas 5.
- Sieve the flour into a bowl; add the butter and rub with your fingers until the mixture is like breadcrumbs. Add the sugar and rub again. Add the milk and the vanilla essence. Knead together with your hands to make a firm dough.
- Roll out the dough on a floured surface to about 10mm thick. Cut out shield shapes. Spread the shapes out on a lightly greased baking tray.
- Cook for about 15 minutes – until golden brown.
- When they are ready, remove from the oven and allow to cool. (optional) Decorate with a dusting of icing sugar.

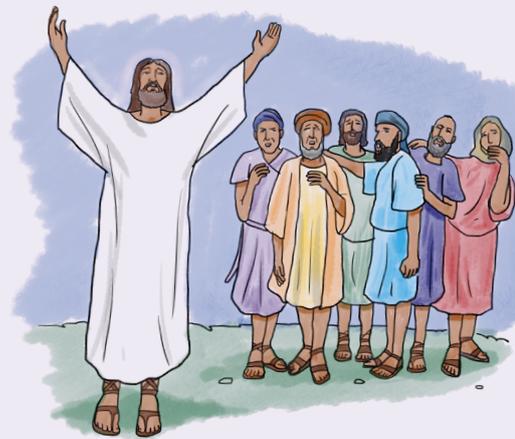


Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed, 'Father, I have made your name known to my friends. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and I have been glorified in them. Everything I have has come from you, and they believe that you sent me. I have protected them, I have guarded them, but now I am leaving and coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name.

'I have told them many things so they would be filled with my joy. Holy Father, protect them in your name. I have given them your word, and the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Holy Father, protect them in your name.

'I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. Holy Father, protect them in your name.'



'As you sent me into the world, so I send them into the world. Make them holy by your truth. Holy Father, protect them in your name.'

John 17.6-19

Did you know?

- To glorify means to praise or honour greatly.
- The evil one means Satan or the devil, a personification of evil.

John 17.6-19 (NRSV)

Jesus said, 'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your

name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.'