



## International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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### **John 16:23-33 Commentary** **New Revised Standard Version**

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

**(John 16:23) On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.**

Jesus described “that day” in the previous verse in John 16:22, “Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.” Jesus suffered grief when He looked ahead and knew how and when He would leave His disciples, and He acknowledged the fact that they grieved too because of what He foretold them. It is not wrong to grieve for the right reasons.

For example, in Romans 12:15, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” We read that Jesus actually did this and felt real sorrow, even though He knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. In John 11:35-36, we read, “Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’” We can weep when someone dies, and we can weep with their loved ones—Jesus did.

After Peter denied that he knew Jesus, Peter had good reason to weep. In Mark 14:72, we read, “At that moment the cock crowed for the second time.

Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’” And he broke down and wept.

The Apostle Paul wrote that people (even Christians) can grieve the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 4:30, Paul wrote, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.”

When Jesus spoke of “that day,” Jesus meant that His disciples would see Him again (after His crucifixion, death, and burial) when He rose from the dead. And for Jesus and His disciples, Jesus compared their suffering and pain to a woman giving birth to her child.

Jesus said His resurrection appearances would give them joy that could not be taken from them and their hearts would rejoice. On “that day,” we know that Jesus rejoiced too. In Hebrews 12:2, the writer tells Christians to look “to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who *for the sake of the joy that was set before him* endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.” Jesus rejoiced over all the benefits His death and resurrection would bring to the world and to all who would receive Him as their Lord and Savior.

Then Jesus with absolute certainty Jesus told His disciples: “ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.” The disciples knew the divine, loving, holy, just, merciful, redeeming, healing character of Jesus that is summed up in His name; so, they knew that they were never to ask anything of the Father that would be inconsistent with loving and glorifying Jesus and the Father—even as Jesus glorified the Father. As James later explained and warned in James 4:3, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.” Jesus had taught His disciples how to pray rightly. As important as asking rightly, Jesus taught them (and all who would become His disciples through their teaching) that we can pray directly to the Father in Jesus’ name. We do not need to pray to anyone else to reach God the Father. All of Jesus’ disciples can go immediately to God who will receive them as their Father, even as Jesus showed them how God would receive any who would come to Him.

**(John 16:24) Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.**

Before He himself prayed for His disciples in John chapter 17, Jesus taught His disciples some new truths. They had never prayed to the Father before, but now they could pray to the Father in Jesus' name. They had not needed to pray to the Father before because Jesus was with them and Jesus met their every need. Jesus encouraged them by telling them that after He left them, they could pray directly to the Father as He had prayed to the Father. If they asked the Father rightly, as they had learned how to ask Jesus rightly, they would receive directly from the Father just as they had received all they needed from Jesus. Their joy would be complete knowing that the Father loved and cared for them even as Jesus loved and cared for them. As Jesus' disciples, they could pray to the Father in Jesus' name, and they would soon receive the Holy Spirit to do all Jesus planned for them.

**(John 16:25) "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly of the Father.**

Much of Jesus' teaching was in proverbs or in figures of speech because He was revealing divine and spiritual truths to human beings whose knowledge and vocabulary were limited. Jesus taught His disciples according to their level of understanding day-by-day and with respect to what they could and needed to learn each day. Similarly, the more we read and try to practice daily what we learn from our Bible study, the more we will learn and the better we will practice what we are learning—which brings joy to God, to others, and to us. The "hour" was then, at that very moment. From that moment on, Jesus spoke plainly for them to easily understand. No one should interpret Jesus' plain speech as figurative speech, though Jesus often spoke figuratively. Jesus prayed plainly to His Father for them to hear His prayer. Jesus plainly revealed the Father to them as He prayed, and they learned more about how to pray to the Father from Jesus' prayer for them and for all His disciples throughout the ages.

**(John 16:26) On that day you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf;**

Once again, Jesus emphasized that all His disciples can go spiritually into the Father's presence and they pray in His name. They can directly ask the Father to meet their needs and help them fulfill Jesus' plans. Jesus and the Holy Spirit help those who believe in Jesus when they pray to the Father. In Romans 8:34, Paul explained, "Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us." And in Romans 8:26-27, Paul explained, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." Jesus and the Holy Spirit help believers pray rightly, and they pray rightly for them too. In John 16:26, Jesus emphasized that His disciples did not need Him present with them to pray for them. They could pray to the Father when they prayed in His name. Eventually, Jesus would live within them through the indwelling Holy Spirit, who the Father and the Son would send them. Since then, Jesus has sent and still sends the Holy Spirit into every one of His followers, and in the next verse Jesus explained why He sent and still sends the Holy Spirit to live in His followers. Jesus' followers love Jesus and believe that He came from God.

**(John 16:27) for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.**

Jesus explained to all His disciples that God the Father loves us! The Father will joyfully welcome Jesus' disciples, because He loves us. Because the Father loves us (even as Jesus loves us), we do not need to go fearfully into the presence of God. As John explained in 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love." Jesus' disciples believe that Jesus came from God and they love Jesus. As John explained in 1 John 4:19, "We love because he first loved us." If you want assurance that you have received the free gift of eternal life and that God loves you and will hear all your prayers, then all you need to do is believe Jesus came from

God and love Jesus. You know you love Jesus when you truly thank Jesus and praise Him for dying on the cross and rising from the dead so God could mercifully and justly forgive all your sins, cleanse you from sin, and prepare you for life eternal with God and all who love God. For this reason, believers do not fear. The perfect love of Jesus and the Father for us has cast out our fears and has given us good reasons not to fear punishment.

**(John 16:28) I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father.”**

In these words, Jesus assured His disciples and us that He is not speaking figuratively! He is speaking literally! He is communicating reality exactly. Jesus literally, factually, and actually came from God the Father. Jesus literally, factually, and actually came into the world when He was born to the virgin Mary as Matthew and Luke described. Jesus literally, factually, and actually left the world and returned to the Father as Peter preached in Acts 2:33, “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.” To deny these facts or to think Jesus was only speaking figuratively or metaphorically denies the very words of Jesus, who said He was going to speak plainly to them. You must literally believe Jesus came from God and when you know why He came—to show His love for you and save you from sin and death, you will love Jesus.

**(John 16:29) His disciples said, “Yes, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure of speech!**

Jesus’ disciples affirmed what Jesus expected them to understand. They affirmed that He was speaking plainly, and they understood. If someone does not believe Jesus’ plain speech, they need to ask themselves: “Do I truly believe Jesus came from God? Do I truly love Jesus?” If they truly love Jesus, they will believe His words, His teachings, His commands, and demonstrate their belief in Him by obeying Him. Remember what Jesus taught in John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

**(John 16:30) Now we know that you know all things, and do not need to have anyone question you; by this we believe that you**

**came from God.”**

More than once, Jesus demonstrated that He knew what people were thinking and what people wanted to ask Him. Remember what we studied in John 16:19, “Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, ‘Are you discussing among yourselves what I meant when I said, “A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me”?’” As Jesus spoke plainly to them, He reaffirmed their belief that He knew all things. He knew all things because He was/is the Son of God and had come from the Father into the world. The disciples knew that no one needed to ask Jesus questions, because He knew their questions before they asked them. Sometimes, He did (and still does) answer questions before the questions are asked. Because of Jesus’ words and works (not this one word and work alone), the disciples had many reasons to believe that Jesus came from God the Father and spoke the truth. However, after learning about the prospect of suffering persecution for their faith in Jesus, they needed some reassurance that Jesus had come from God and their persecution was not because He had not come from God. Remember, in John 16:2, Jesus had foretold them, “They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God.” They needed reassurance from Jesus that by believing in Him and loving Him they were remaining faithful to the one true God. They would especially need this reassurance when they faced their fellow Jews who thought that whenever they killed a disciple of Jesus, they were worshiping God: Jesus told them what to expect.

**(John 16:31) Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?”**

Jesus knew that increasing their faith and fully revealing himself to them would take time and events they had not yet experienced. Their faith in Jesus was not yet deep enough to withstand persecution and face death. They would need to see Jesus raised from the dead to fully believe He had come from God and that He had taught them the very words of God. They would also need to receive from Jesus the presence of the Holy Spirit within them, that He had promised He would send them. When Jesus asked, “Do you now believe?” He wanted to prepare them for what they would soon

face when He was arrested. Seeing, hearing, believing, and knowing Jesus' previous works and words would not be enough to give them the courage they would need when they faced persecution. They needed His plain speaking, and they remembered it. Jesus needed to remind them of what they would soon face. They believed up to their level of understanding, but to fully believe they would need to understand more.

**(John 16:32) The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me.**

Later that night, when the authorities arrested Jesus, His disciples did flee and abandon Him. Their belief in Jesus was not yet firmly established. Just as Jesus affirmed that His Father was with Him throughout His ministry; so, though abandoned by them, He was not alone. Throughout the ages, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have never and will never abandon any of Jesus' disciples when they suffer. And when they suffer, His disciples can pray directly to the Father in Jesus' name with the certain knowledge that Jesus and the Spirit are also praying for them and no one can take their joy and peace from them.

**(John 16:33) I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!”**

Jesus Christ gave and still gives His disciples peace. In Jesus and with Jesus in them, Jesus' disciples have peace. After Jesus appeared to His disciples and after they received the Holy Spirit, we never ever see Jesus' disciples lacking the peace of Jesus no matter how much they suffered or how many of them were killed. No matter how much persecution Jesus' disciples faced, they faced it faithfully and never denied their Lord. They obeyed Jesus' command and “took courage.” The Book of Acts shows how Peter and John took courage when on trial before the religious leaders, and how Stephen took courage when giving his testimony and while some of the religious leaders stoned him to death. Jesus gave His disciples, and He has given all His disciples throughout the ages, the assurance that He has conquered the world. Because Jesus has conquered the world, in Romans

8:36-39, the Apostle Paul could write: “As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The world has no ultimate power over Jesus’ disciples. The perfect love of God has cast out their fears, and fear is one of the weapons the world uses to control people. The perfect work of Jesus, who died and rose again, has cast out the fear of death in Jesus’ disciples, and fear of death is one of the weapons the world uses to control people. The indwelling Holy Spirit helps Jesus’ disciples overcome temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil. The devil has many weapons to use against Jesus’ disciples, but because Jesus has conquered the world, His disciples have the spiritual armor that Paul described in Ephesians 6:10-11, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” Paul more fully described this armor, armor that he also wore, and its value in Ephesians 6:10-20.

To further explain this verse, I am appending the *International Bible Study Lesson* on John 16:33—*Jesus Has Conquered the World*.

“Because Jesus Christ conquered the world, His disciples believe He came from God and they love Him. When they remember that Jesus Christ conquered the world, they maintain their joy and peace in a dangerous and uncertain world. The world did its worst to Jesus, but Jesus conquered the world when He rose from the dead. After Jesus conquered the world, He ascended into heaven, and through the indwelling Holy Spirit Jesus lives within every disciple throughout the world. From their study of the Bible and daily experiences, Jesus’ disciples know that no one can take away the joy, love, and peace that the indwelling Holy Spirit gives them. Furthermore, in and through His disciples, Jesus Christ lives and reigns throughout the world; therefore, when persecuted and killed His disciples “take courage” as He commanded. Just as Jesus prophesied, many remain amazed that the world still hates Jesus and His disciples instead of

forgetting about Jesus and ignoring His followers! Yet, because Jesus conquered the world, many people around the world still come to believe that Jesus came from God and they love Jesus too. They experience the complete joy and love of God the Father, the most loving, powerful, and wealthy person to exist. They understand that nothing can separate them from the love of God. If they are “killed all day long,” Paul’s words in Romans 8:36-37, encourage them: “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us;” therefore, they courageously remain, “strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power” (Ephesians 6:10).

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. Can believers in Jesus Christ pray to the Father? Why or why not?
2. In what two ways did Jesus speak to His disciples? Did they easily understand both ways? Why or why not?
3. Why did the disciples say they believed Jesus came from God?
4. What did Jesus foretell the disciples that they would do? What did Jesus say the disciples would face in the world?
5. Why did Jesus say what He did to His disciples? What did Jesus tell His disciples to do and what reason did He give them for doing this?

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