

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

For God So Loved
John 3:1-16

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

Yes, Lord, Yes, *The Worship Hymnal* #445; CCLI #12224

Once Again, *The Worship Hymnal* # 241; CCLI #1564362

Lamb of God, *The Worship Hymnal* #261; CCLI #16787

The Love of God, *The Worship Hymnal* # 111; CCLI # 18448 Public Domain

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***For God So Loved*****Focal Text**

John 3:1-16

Background

John 3:1-21

Main Idea

In love and through Jesus, God offers eternal life to those willing for God to create them anew.

Question to Explore

How can anyone be born after having grown old?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to decide whether and to what extent they are willing for God to create them anew.

Gathering together:

Sing: **Yes, Lord, Yes**, *The Worship Hymnal* #445; CCLI #12224

First thoughts:

Jan Karon writes in her popular Mitford Years Novels of an incident when Father Tim enters the church on a Saturday. "Then, toward the front, on the gospel side, he saw a man kneeling in a pew. Suddenly, he leaned back and uttered such a desperate cry that the rector's heart fairly thundered.

"If you're up there, prove it! Show me! If you're God, you can prove it!" In the visitor's voice was a combination of anger, despair, and odd hope.

"I'll never ask you this again," the man said coldly, and then, with a fury that chilled his listener, he shouted again, "Are...you...up...there?"

With what appeared to be utter exhaustion, he put his head in his hands as the question reverberated in the nave.

Father Tim slid into the pew across the aisle and knelt on the worn cushion. "You may be asking the wrong question," he said, quietly.

Startled, the man raised his head.

"I believe the question you may want to ask is not 'Are you up there?' but 'Are you down here?'"

"What kind of joke is that?"

"God wouldn't be God if He were only up there. In fact, another name for Him is Immanuel, which means 'God with us.'" "He's with us right now, in this room." (Karon, Jan, **The Mitford Bedside Companion**. Toronto: Viking Penguin, 2006, 127-131).

In John 1 we examined the truth which is expressed in this story – God is with us – right here in this room. The Gospel of John will demonstrate that truth throughout the entire book.

As Father Tim continued to talk with the distraught businessman who somehow found his way into the church that Saturday morning, God's Spirit was at work. "Let me ask you something." Said the rector. "Would you like to ask Christ into your life?"

The stranger stared into the darkened sanctuary. "I can't do it. I've tried."

"It isn't a test you have to pass. It doesn't require discipline and intelligence...not even strength and perseverance. It only requires faith."

"If you could repeat this," he said. "Thank you, God, for loving me, and for sending Your Son to die for my sins. I sincerely repent of my sins, and receive Christ as my personal Savior. Now, as your child, I turn my entire life over to You. Amen."

The man repeated the prayer and they were silent.

"Is that all?" the man asked finally.

"That's all."

The fictional businessman found what millions have found since Jesus came with the profound message of John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

He discovered that God took the initiative. He came to earth; He really is down here among us and He offers his salvation as we believe in him.

We continue the study of John with a look at Nicodemus who like the fictional businessman sought God, but found it hard to accept the simplicity of Christ's message. Nicodemus may remind us of friends who struggle to accept Christ. John 3 demonstrates both the mystery and the simplicity of the message of Christ.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

For God So Loved

Focal Text

John 3:1-16

Background

John 3:1-21

Main Idea

In love and through Jesus, God offers eternal life to those willing for God to create them anew.

Question to Explore

How can anyone be born after having grown old?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to decide whether and to what extent they are willing for God to create them anew.

Introduction to your personal study:

This may be a familiar passage, but it is not an easy passage to convey to others. Start your study early in the week before you are to teach. Ask God to help you understand the deep, deep truth which is encapsulated in the familiar words of John 3:16. Be aware also that for many – and for some in your group – these are not familiar words. What a blessing to be able to study them with someone to whom they are new.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

John 3:1

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish religious court. His name means “conqueror of the people.” The Sanhedrin consisted of seventy elders, mainly from the priestly families, plus the high priest. The Sanhedrin was made up of both Sadducees and Pharisees although the Sadducees dominated the Sanhedrin. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a separated one. The Pharisees separated themselves from all people and things they considered to be ceremonially unclean. “The Pharisees are well educated, deeply concerned about the traditions of Israel and the preservation of those traditions. It is estimated that at the time of Jesus there are approximately seven thousand members of this lay movement. They have very great influence with the people at large, due to their knowledge of both the law and the traditions, and also because of their admirable ethical goals. Many Pharisees fast twice a week and give the money thus saved to the poor. They are intellectuals; they are socially concerned moderates” (Palmer, E.F. **The Intimate Gospel: Studies in John.** Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1978, pages 42-43).

John 3:2

He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

Nicodemus was himself one who studied the Scripture and who obeyed the laws of the Scripture to the most minute detail. Yet, he understood that the things which Jesus was doing could only be done with the power of God. “He addresses Jesus as “Rabbi,” the most honored title in Judaism. Most of the Jewish leaders never recognized Jesus as a rabbi or teacher. Yet Nicodemus uses the strong statement ***we know you are a teacher who has come from God.*** “Know” renders a verb which means to think through experiential knowledge and reach a conviction” (Hobbs, H.H. **The Gospel of John: Invitation to Life.** Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, 1988, page 24).

“Nicodemus, like the others (see John 2:23) had been impressed by the signs which he saw without realizing their deeper significance, but there was in him a sincere willingness to learn more to which Jesus responded by ‘entrusting himself’ to him more than he did to many others” (Bruce, F.F. **The Gospel of John: Introduction,**

Exposition and Notes. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1983, page 83).

Some have interpreted his coming by night as a desire for secrecy. Others feel that he knew the press of people demanding Jesus' attention during the day. He sought Jesus at a time when he could question Jesus and understand His purpose.

John 3:3

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

Jesus here introduces a concept essential to Christian faith and certainly one held dear by those who call themselves evangelicals.

The King James Version of the Bible uses the phrase ***"Truly, truly"*** which always introduced a statement by Jesus of the most serious nature. One translation uses ***"Indeed and in truth"*** (Bruce, page 82).

Hendriksen (**New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to John**. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1953, pages 132) translated the words as ***"I most solemnly assure you"***. The phrase appears three times in this conversation with Nicodemus. These are some of the most important words Jesus will speak.

No one can understand the things of God unless he or she experiences a change at the very center of his or her being. It is an experience so profound it is a new creation which is the result.

"His (Jesus) purpose was to lead Nicodemus from where he was to where Jesus wanted him to be. As a righteous Jew and Pharisee, Nicodemus thought that by natural birth he already was in the kingdom of God (Matt. 3:7-9; Rom. 10: 1-4). Jesus wanted him to see that more was involved" (Hobbs, pages 24-25).

"Jesus makes it clear to Nicodemus that a new beginning from above is needed to experience God's kingdom. The Greek word translated 'from above' is the word *anōthen*, which may mean both 'again' and 'from above.' It is this built in ambiguity in the Greek word that Nicodemus takes advantage of to pose a question to Jesus" (Palmer, page 44).

John 3: 4-8

"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus would not have had a problem with Jesus insisting that proselytes from paganism would have to experience a radical change. He, however, was one of the “separated ones” who by the purity of their lives tried to please God. Nicodemus stated the fact that one could not be physically born a second time. He may also have been referring to the difficulty of a grown person being expected to change his ways and start over again. “Because Nicodemus’ thought patterns were limited to the physical realm, for him Jesus’ demand meant the impossibility of an old man becoming a fetus and being born a second time” (Howard, F. D. **Bible Book Study Commentary: John (Part 1)**. Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press. October-December, 1986, Volume 8, Number 3, page 39). Jesus continues to emphasize the radical change necessary.

“Although Jews tended to equal their nation with God’s kingdom, Jesus used the term ‘kingdom of God’ to describe God’s spiritual rule in the hearts of all who submit to His sovereignty. While God’s kingdom always has existed, it took on a new meaning with the advent of Jesus’ messianic ministry. Apparently, to **see** the kingdom of God means to *enter* the kingdom of God (v. 5). Although Nicodemus believed in ‘miracles’ (v. 2) he was blind to his need for a miraculous birth (v. 4)” (Howard, pages 38-39).

John the Baptist had been preaching the necessity of repentance and that was demonstrated by baptism by water. John emphasize that one would come after him who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Baptism by water continued to be the outward symbol of an inward change that has already occurred. Christian baptism symbolizes the new beginning for every one who by faith-union with Christ shares his death and burial in a spiritual sense and rises with him in newness of life.

Hobbs understands this verse to be a description of both the physical birth –the water-and the spiritual birth. “To be born of the flesh is to be become a natural person with natural relationships such as family and society. To be born of the Spirit is to be a spiritual person with spiritual relationships such as being a child of God in the kingdom of God” (Hobbs, page 25).

Howard (page 40) would agree. “In view of the several contrasts in John between the physical realm and the spiritual realm, most likely this is the first such contrast between the physical birth and spiritual birth. The first puts one into the human family, but only the latter can put one into God’s family.”

“Since Nicodemus had trouble making the transition from the natural to the spiritual, Jesus drew from a common natural experience. The Greek word for ‘wind’ and ‘Spirit’ is the same (pneuma). It is possible that a gentle night breeze began to blow through a

nearby olive tree and Jesus used it as an example. The wind is an invisible power. We know it is present only by its effect in the shaking of the leaves on a tree. Yet we know that it is real, even though we cannot see it. This was precisely Nicodemus' problem. He wanted to see rather than to believe. If Nicodemus could accept the fact of wind only through its result, why could he not accept the fact of the Spirit's work by His transforming result?" (Hobbs, pages 25-26).

"Here then we have three great kindred conceptions, the conception of entry into the Kingdom of God, the conception of sonship of God and the conception of eternal life; and all are dependent on, all are the products of, perfect acceptance of and perfect obedience to the will of God. It is just here that the idea of being reborn comes in. It is the idea of being reborn that links all these three conceptions together. It is quite clear that, as we are and in our own strength, we are quite unable to render to God this perfect obedience; it is only when the grace of God enters into us and takes possession of us and changes us that we can give to God the reverence and the devotion we ought to give. It is Jesus Christ who can work the change in us; it is through Him that we are reborn; it is when He enters into possession of our hearts and lives that the change comes.

When that happens we are born of *water and the Spirit*. There are two thoughts there. *Water* is the symbol of cleansing. When Jesus takes possession of our lives, when we love Him with all our heart, the sins of the past are forgiven and forgotten. The *Spirit* is the symbol of power. When Jesus takes possession of our lives it is not only that the past is forgotten and forgiven; if that we all, we might well proceed to make the same mess of life all over again, but into life there enters this new power which enables us to be what by ourselves we could never be, and to do what by ourselves we could never do. Water and the Spirit stand for the cleansing and the strengthening power of Christ, which wipes out the past and which gives us victory in the future" (Barclay W., **The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John**, Volume 1. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956, pages 118-119.)

John 3: 9-15

"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; but how will you believe if I speak of heavenly things. No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

Nicodemus answered like so many people we know "How can this be?"

But Nicodemus was a religious teacher and leader. He should have been sensitive to spiritual teachings. The fact of his seeking Jesus was an indication that he longed for deeper understanding. But he was held back by the teachings and commitments he had already accepted and even in the presence of Jesus Himself was not able, at that time at least, to accept God's gift.

Jesus asserts that He has the authority to speak of heavenly things because he came from heaven. Jesus uses here his often used self-description – Son of Man. He refers to an incident with which Nicodemus would have been very familiar. "Jesus' reference was to Numbers 21:4-9. The Israelites had been bitten by serpents so that many died. God told Moses to make a brass serpent and hold it aloft on a pole. All who looked upon it would live. They did not live by analyzing the material out of which it was made, the quality of workmanship, or the manner in which it was held. They were saved by believing God's promise.

In like manner the Son of Man must be lifted up. And all who believe in Him will have eternal life. In John 'lifted up' always refers to the crucifixion. And all who believe in the crucified Christ will receive eternal life. 'Eternal life' is one of the key phrases in John's Gospel. It refers not to the length of life which begins at death. It is the quality of life one receives the moment one believes in Jesus and which extends into eternity" (Hobbs, page 27).

"Eternal life is the kind of life that God lives; it is God's life. To enter into eternal life is to enter into possession of that kind of life which is the life of God. It is to be lifted up above merely human, temporary, passing, transient things, into that joy and peace which belong only to God. And clearly a man can only enter into this close communion and fellowship with God when he renders to God that love, that reverence, that devotion, that obedience which truly bring him into fellowship with God" (Barclay, page 118).

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

"A confessional summary of the Gospel follows: It originates in the love of God for a disobedient world, it centers in the giving of the only Son to and for the world, and its end is that people may not be lost but live under the saving sovereignty of God. The giving of the only Son clearly embraces both incarnation and vicarious death; it is the entire mission of the Son that is in view. If, as many think, the language echoes Abraham's giving his only son, whom he loved (Gen 22), the event in view is vaster. Here alone in the Fourth Gospel the love of God for the rebellious world is stated to be the reason for the incarnation and death of Christ; more characteristically love for the disciples and the evil of the world are stressed. That is no reason for diminishing the importance of this statement; it is the fundamental summary of the message of this Gospel and should therefore be seen as the background of the canvas on which the

rest of the Gospel is painted” (Beasley-Murray, G.R. **Word Biblical Commentary: John**. Second Edition, Volume 36. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2000, page 51).

Did Nicodemus place his faith in Jesus as Saviour? Hobbs says that John did not say that Nicodemus received Jesus as Saviour at this point, but that the seed had been sown. In fact he apparently did not do so as indicated in John 7: 45-51 ***Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?” “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards declared. “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. “Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law – there is a curse on them.” Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, “Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?” They replied, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.”***

Nicodemus was sympathetic to Jesus and encouraged the other Pharisees to listen to him. But the Pharisees report that no one their group are followers of Jesus; they state that the mob who did not know the law are the followers. The Scripture is silent about any commitment Nicodemus made except to report that after the crucifixion of Jesus he helped Joseph of Arimathea to bury the body.

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jesus burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

John 19: 38-42.

Perhaps Nicodemus, like Joseph of Arimathea, was a secret disciple. Nonetheless, it was these two men who attended to the body of Jesus after his death on the cross.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Lead the group to consider the wonder of the “new birth” and the joy of being a new creation in Christ. Consider what eternal life means to you today as well as in the future.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

For God So Loved

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

John 3:1-16

Background

John 3:1-21

Main Idea

In love and through Jesus, God offers eternal life to those willing for God to create them anew.

Question to Explore

How can anyone be born after having grown old?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to decide whether and to what extent they are willing for God to create them anew.

Connect with Life:

Begin by reading (with feeling) John 3:16 or having someone read who you know can do so with feeling.

Ask for comments about John 3:16 by seeking responses from the group for these questions:

When did this verse first become important to you?

Was it something you learned as a child even before you understood it's meaning?

Was it a crucial verse in your coming to salvation?

Guide the Study:

Have someone read the entire passage John 3: 1-18.

Summarize the facts about Nicodemus given in the preparation materials.

Have someone read John 3:2.

Ask the group to share this: What do you consider to be the reason that Nicodemus came to talk to Jesus at night?

Follow with this: What is remarkable about Nicodemus' attitude toward Jesus? (He called Jesus by the respected title of "Rabbi" or teacher. He said that the miraculous signs done by Jesus indicated that God was with him).

Ask the group to discuss how Nicodemus might be like some people we know.

Have someone read John 3:3.

Ask: How important is this statement to the basic beliefs of Christianity? (All important)

From the teaching material discuss the words "I tell you the truth"; "Truly, truly"; "I most solemnly assure you".

List on the white board words which mean "born again".

A new creation

A new beginning

One having repented of sin and asked God's forgiveness by accepting Jesus as Saviour

Forgiven of sin

A total change of life focus

Understanding of spiritual things)

Explain the Greek word *anōthen* which may mean both "again" and "from above".

Have someone read John 3: 4-8.

Ask: What was Nicodemus' reaction to Jesus telling him he had to be born again.

Discuss how valid this reaction was.

Comment: Can you imagine one of your friends reacting as Nicodemus did?

Explain that Nicodemus felt that he was one who by birth and the purity of his life already belonged to the kingdom of God. Explain how this understanding was different from Jesus' using the term to describe God's spiritual rule in the hearts of all who submit to His sovereignty.

Write this definition on a white board or large piece of paper. **The Kingdom of God describes God's spiritual rule in the hearts of all who submit to his sovereignty.**

Describe the importance of baptism. (You may want to have three people read the passages telling of the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3: 13-17; Mark 1: 9-11; and Luke 3: 21-22 – watch your time here).

Explain: Baptism by water is the outward symbol of an inward change that has already occurred; it is a testimony to others of the change which has occurred in one's life. This is why it is referred to as "believer's baptism".

Say: Verses 5 and 6 are reminders of baptism by water, but they most likely refer to our physical birth and our spiritual birth. We are all born physically; we must choose to be born spiritually.

Discuss the concept of water symbolizing cleansing and Spirit symbolizing power.

"When that happens we are born of *water and the Spirit*. There are two thoughts there. *Water* is the symbol of cleansing. When Jesus takes possession of our lives, when we love Him with all our heart, the sins of the past are forgiven and forgotten. The *Spirit* is the symbol of power. When Jesus takes possession of our lives it is not only that the past is forgotten and forgiven; if that we all, we might well proceed to make the same mess of life all over again, but into life there enters this new power which enables us to be what by ourselves we could never be, and to do what by ourselves we could never do. Water and the Spirit stand for the cleansing and the strengthening power of Christ, which wipes out the past and which gives us victory in the future".++ (Barclay W., **The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John**, Volume 1. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956, pages 118-119.)

Write the Greek word **pneuma** on the white board or large piece of paper. Beside the word write **wind** and **spirit**.

Explain: In Greek the same word is used for both wind and spirit. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he understands the power of wind even though he does not see it. The power of the Spirit is also unseen, but it is demonstrated in many observable ways.

Ask: Does Nicodemus understand what Jesus is saying? (He replies, "How can this be?")

Have someone read the passage in Numbers 21: 4-9.

Summarize the teaching: The Israelites had been bitten by serpents so that many died. God told Moses to make a brass serpent and hold it aloft on a pole. All who looked upon it would live. They did not live by analyzing the material out of which it was made, the quality of workmanship, or the manner in which it was held. They were saved by believing God's promise.

Ask: What does the phrase "lifted up" mean as Jesus used it? (It refers to the crucifixion).

Discuss the meaning of eternal life. (It refers not just to life after death, but to the quality of our life after accepting Jesus as our Saviour; it is the kind of life God lives; beyond the merely human and temporary into that joy and peace which belong only to God).

Have someone read John 3:16. State that the Worship Time will focus on this verse.

As time allows, discuss the relationship which Nicodemus had to Jesus after this encounter.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Be sensitive to the needs of your group. If there is someone in your group who has not understood the teaching of John 3:3 and 3:16, allow for a quiet time of reflection and commitment.

Encourage the group to appreciate anew the importance of this teaching and commit to share it with others as God leads in the weeks ahead.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

YOUTH!!! TAKE TEN

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

For God So Loved John 3:1-16

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Application on next page

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. Revised Standard Version

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need to be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him. (Peterson, J. **The Message**, 2002).

Use Peterson's **The Message** as well as the Revised Standard Version of John 3:16-18 to answer the following questions.

Who can be saved?

What kind of life is promised?

Does God point an accusing finger without giving hope?

How are people introduced to the one-of-a-kind Son of God?

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***For God So Loved***
John 3:1-16**Beginning the Service:**

Sing:

Once Again, *The Worship Hymnal* # 241; CCLI #1564362

Lamb of God, *The Worship Hymnal* #261; CCLI #16787

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

The Somalis of Eastern Ethiopia number more than 2 million. Only a handful of these Muslims have heard and received the Good News of Jesus Christ. With ongoing civil war just over the Somali border, this can be a dangerous place for Christian workers. The grandmother of a new Somali believer recently had a dream in which she saw Jesus on the cross offering pure water for all who approached His feet. Those who came to Jesus dwelt in a place that was pure, white, and lush. Passing by, the grandmother then entered a place that was dark, dirty, and lifeless. A friend in the darkness told her this dark place was where they belong. When the grandmother awoke, she told her believing grandson about this dream.

Pray that this grandmother and others will come to Christ – the giver of that which is pure, white, and lush. Pray for Somali immigrants from Ethiopia and from Somalia to North America who often find life in their new countries disappointing. Many have lived with war all of their lives and find living in a more peaceful and law-abiding context difficult. Pray that Christians with whom they work and interact may demonstrate the love of Christ.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

God's Infinite Love

John 3: 16-18

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need to be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him. (Peterson, J. *The Message*, 2002).

"God's infinite love made manifest in an infinitely glorious manner", this is the theme of the golden text which has endeared itself to the hearts of all God's children. The verse sheds light on the following aspects of this love: 1. its character (so loved), 2. its Author (God), 3. Its object (the world), 4: its Gift (his Son, the only-begotten), and 5. its purpose (that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life) (Hendriksen, page 139).

God so loved the world. "The word so by reason of what follows must be interpreted as indicating: *in such an infinite degree and in such a transcendently glorious manner*" (Hendricksen, page 139). This was an intense, overwhelming love. It was like no other love.

God so loved. God's love is in action, reaching back into the past and coming to fruition in Bethlehem and Calgary.

God is the initiator of this love – its author. No understanding of God is right unless it is foremost an understanding of God as love. The world see God as judge and blames

God for their failure to respond to His place in their lives. God is seen as “up there” when He is “down here” seeking those who will be saved.

The ones who are loved include everyone in the world. If this is true then we as believers must be about the task of sharing this good news.

The gift of his Son – his one and only Son – is the climax of God's love. “The verb *he gave* must be taken in the sense of *he gave unto death as an offering for sin*” (Hendricksen, page 141).

The purpose of the gift is so that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The translation in **The Message** indicates that it is to be a whole and lasting life. Later in the book of John we will read ***I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*** (John 10:10). The King James Version of that verse says ***“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”***

If we as believers feel that our lives are restricted by our faith, we have missed the truth of the gospel. Our lives are filled with all the good things that a Father would give his beloved children. That is true in the daily life of our existence on this earth and it will be true throughout eternity.

“God’s infinite love made manifest in an infinitely glorious manner” is the theme of the wonderful verse so precious to us as believers. This one verse sheds light on the following aspects of this love: God so loved – he loved so much and to such a degree. It is God Himself who loved us. He loved us all – the world – all who will believe. He gave his Son, the only-begotten, to pay for sins we have committed in order that all who believe in him should not perish but live abundantly in the here and now and gloriously with God the Father and Son for eternity.

Call to Commitment:

Give thanks for the glorious hope of these verses. Memorize them if you have not already done so.

Concluding the Service:

Sing:

The Love of God, *The Worship Hymnal* # 111; CCLI # 18448 Public Domain