



# First Baptist Church Selmer

TRANSFORMED: FROM DEATH TO LIFE TO ABUNDANT LIFE • REDEMPTION •  
JOHN 3:16-21 • 6/2/2024

## MAIN POINT

God loved us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to redeem all of mankind from sin, condemnation, and death.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**How do you typically react to change? Do you enjoy change, or does it make you nervous?**

**What is the biggest life change you've been through recently? What do you remember most about it?**

**When God shows His power in a person's life by saving him or her, what changes?**

An honest assessment of human nature shows that we have a notoriously love/hate relationship with change. Sometimes we crave it; sometimes we loathe it. Regardless of our preferences toward change in general, it is an essential part of our Christian lives.

Our study today will look at a familiar conversation in John 3 that took place between a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus, and Jesus. Perhaps the most known and memorized passage of Scripture is found in this conversation but what was its context?

Nicodemus comes to Jesus one night asking him to explain more clearly who He was. Jesus replied to Nicodemus, "...unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Confused, Nicodemus continues with questions related to Jesus' statement. This

conversation continues back and forth until we arrive at one of the most famous passages in all of Scripture.

This study of John 3:16-21 shows us that real change begins and ends with faith in Jesus.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 3:16.

16 *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (ESV)*

### **What human need does this verse address?**

*"Everyone who believes in him should not perish"* (v. 16) recognizes the problem and solution of the human condition. Without Jesus' death, man—a natural-born sinner—is doomed to an eternity apart from God. The sin of man condemns him, but the grace of God grants him eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. John 3:16 is not only a message of hope, but also a message that helps man recognize his need for salvation.

### **What does it mean to "believe" in Jesus? Why is this so important?**

This verse also has a strong emphasis on belief; no other action is called for on our part. Belief is far more than accepting something intellectually. Romans 10:9 teaches us that we must *"confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead..."* Saving faith requires full trust and total commitment to Christ, the One who died for each of us.

### **What words from this passage help us understand the manner of God's love for us?**

Out of His love for us, God sent Jesus to accomplish our salvation on the cross. When we believe in Jesus we believe in both His identity and His finished work. These verses are at the heart of the gospel message. The Greek word for "gospel" means "good news." It's a declaration of God's activity to permanently redeem and restore our lives. God's love provided salvation for the world through the gift and sacrifice of His Son, but salvation comes only to those who believe in Christ.

## **How does John 3:16 emphasize Jesus' work on the cross, and not our own futile efforts, to be right with God?**

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 3:17-18.

17 "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."  
(ESV)

### **What are the two possibilities (concerning eternity) Jesus pointed out in these verses?**

There are only two options, saved or condemned. God's love is the main emphasis of verse 16 while freedom from condemnation is a key concept in verses 17-18. God's love has removed the source of our condemnation—all through Jesus' death on the cross. Romans 8:1 tells us, "*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" We can have a wonderful peace today knowing that we no longer stand condemned simply by having a saving faith in Jesus Christ!

### **How would you explain freedom from condemnation to someone?**

### **How should Christ's forgiveness and removal of sin lead us to see ourselves?**

### **How should it lead us to see others?**

### **Read Romans 5:6-11 and Ephesians 2:4-10. What attributes of God do you see in these passages?**

### **How does Paul, the writer of Romans and Ephesians, describe the state of humanity and our need for Jesus?**

God's mercy, love, and grace bring about change. Simply put, mercy is the act of not receiving what you truly deserve while grace is the act of receiving something that you do not deserve. God's love is the John 3:16 kind of love in which God sacrificed His Son for sinners to have life. God's grace has extended unwarranted favor toward all who have sinned against Him. Paul described the timing of Christ's death as "*while we were still sinners*" and "*at the right time.*" Christ did not die for us when we were worthy of being saved; He died when we were at our absolute worst—broken and deserving of an eternity apart from Him.

Everyone responds to Jesus in some way, either with belief or denial. There is no middle ground. If Jesus is who the Bible claims that He is and did what the Bible says He did, our response to Him is the most important thing we can ever do. If the words of Scripture are to be trusted, and salvation is found in no one else, all who have not trusted in Jesus alone for their salvation are condemned to spend eternity apart from Him.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 3:19-21.

*19 "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." (ESV)*

**What does it mean to "believe" in Jesus?**

**What kind of action does this believing require? According to Jesus' words in verses 19-21, how will belief show itself?**

**What does it practically mean to walk in the light? How can we reflect the light of Christ in our lives?**

Most often, it is not a matter of faith or intellect that keeps a person from believing but rather a spiritual blindness that seeks to live in darkness versus the light.

We see in 1 John 1:5-7 that believers are to walk in the light, but what light? *"...God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."*

It is not a matter of simply believing in Jesus, but living a life transformed by Him!

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How might knowing that you are saved by God’s grace and not by works give you confidence in your walk with Christ? In your relationship with others?**

**This week, how can you rely on God’s grace, rather than your own efforts, to show love to others?**

**How can we keep our relationship with Jesus at the center of our lives this week?**

**How might He transform our church and our impact on our community as we do?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for His love as seen in the gift of Jesus, the removal of sin and condemnation, and the privilege of walking in the light of Christ. Ask God for opportunities to share the love and salvation of Christ with others.

## COMMENTARY

| JOHN 3:16-21

3:16. Eternal life comes not because of anything we do. Salvation comes as a free gift when we believe what God has said. *“That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”* Four times in three verses (vv. 16-18) Jesus uses variations of the word *“believe,”* perhaps the most important keyword in John’s Gospel. Jesus classified the entire human race into two groups—those who believe and are not condemned, and those who do not believe and are condemned already. The gospel begins with God’s love, continues through the cross and the empty tomb, and results in eternal life for those who believe. The verb *“perish”* speaks of eternal death in contrast to eternal life. It represents the opposite of preservation since death is the opposite of life. Those who refuse God’s gift are alienated from Him without hope for both the present and the future.

3:17-18. Did all this happen for judgment and condemnation? No. That was never God’s purpose. Notice how central Jesus is to the passage. Verse 17 talks about God’s saving the world through Him. Every human being has a choice—eternal life or eternal death. And as the Bible describes it, to perish is not to cease to exist, but to experience utter failure, futility, and loss—an eternity without God.

3:19-21. Now we see the verdict. People reject Christ because of evil deeds and because they hate the light. God does not label their deeds evil because they love darkness; they love darkness because that is their very nature. What possible excuses keep people from Christ? This passage tells us they refuse light because it shows us the darkness in their own lives. Believers possess eternal life, but unbelievers do not. Believers are not condemned, but unbelievers are condemned already. Believers live in the light, while unbelievers live in the darkness. The last phrase of this paragraph should encourage all of us. Those who practice the truth, who continuously live in the light of God's Spirit, demonstrate that their righteousness—the right standing we have before God once our sins are forgiven—has been brought about by God.