

## John – Week 12 – The Greatest Love – Bible Study Helps

Title: The Greatest Love

### Sermon Summary:

This Christmas sermon provides an in-depth examination of John 3:16, often called the most recognized verse in the Bible. The pastor unpacks each phrase of this verse to reveal the extraordinary nature of God's love and His gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The message emphasizes that God, the greatest being, demonstrated the greatest love by giving His greatest treasure—His only begotten Son—so that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life. The sermon challenges listeners to move beyond familiarity with the Christmas story to truly understand the magnitude of God's sacrifice and the free gift of salvation available to all who believe. It clarifies that salvation is not earned through works but received through faith in Jesus Christ alone, and once received, it is eternal and cannot be lost.

### Key Points:

- John 3:16 was spoken by Jesus Christ Himself during His conversation with Nicodemus about being born again
- The verse contains multiple "greatest" elements: the greatest being (God), the greatest extent of love (so loved), the greatest affection (love), the greatest impact (the world), the greatest act (gave), the greatest treasure (His only begotten Son), the greatest company (whosoever), the greatest trust (believeth), the greatest deliverance (should not perish), and the greatest promise (everlasting life)
- God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ, born as a baby in Bethlehem, demonstrating ultimate humility
- All people have sinned and fall short of God's glory, making salvation through human effort impossible
- God's love extended to humanity while we were still His enemies and sinners
- Salvation is a free gift received through faith in Jesus Christ, not earned through works or good behavior
- Everlasting life begins immediately upon trusting Christ, not at some future point
- Once saved, a person cannot lose their salvation because it depends on Christ, not on human effort
- The requirement for heaven is being born again spiritually, not just physical birth
- Many people celebrate Christmas without understanding the true significance of Christ's birth and sacrifice

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### Scripture Reference:

- John 3:1-16 (primary focus on verse 16)
- Numbers 21 (Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness)
- Luke 2:1-14 (the Christmas story)
- 1 John 4:7-11 (God is love)
- Romans 5:8 (God demonstrates His love while we were sinners)
- Romans 10 (whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved)
- Genesis 1:1 (In the beginning God)
- John 1:1-3 (In the beginning was the Word)

### Stories:

- The account of Nicodemus coming to Jesus by night and their conversation about being born again
- The biblical narrative of Moses lifting up the brass serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21) and how it foreshadowed Christ being lifted up on the cross
- The Christmas story from Luke 2, including the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, the shepherds in the field, and the angelic announcement
- The story of Abraham and Isaac, referenced as a parallel to God giving His only Son
- The historical account from World War I when opposing troops called a Christmas truce to celebrate together
- Personal testimony of the pastor's salvation on January 7, 1996, when he cried out to God at his lowest point

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### Discipleship Questions

How does understanding that Jesus spoke John 3:16 directly to Nicodemus change the way you read and apply this familiar verse?

In what ways does God's love extend 'to the greatest extent' for people who are His enemies, and how should that reality shape how we love difficult people in our own lives?

The sermon emphasizes that salvation depends entirely on Jesus Christ and not on our own works or efforts. How does this truth bring both comfort and challenge to your daily walk with God?

What does it mean that believers receive 'everlasting life' the moment they trust Christ, rather than waiting until physical death, and how should this impact how we live today?

How has the familiarity of Christmas traditions and celebrations potentially caused you to lose sight of the magnitude of God becoming man in Jesus Christ?

The pastor mentioned that God gave His 'greatest treasure' in Jesus. What treasures or idols in your life compete for the affection that belongs to God alone?

Why do you think the concept of 'whosoever' is both simple and profound, and what barriers prevent people from accepting this open invitation?

How does the story of Abraham and Isaac in the Old Testament help us understand the depth of sacrifice God made in giving His only Son?

If you truly believed this might be your last Christmas before Christ's return, what would you do differently in how you celebrate and share the gospel?

The sermon states that intellectual belief is not enough—it requires heart belief and calling upon Christ. What is the difference between these two types of belief, and which one characterizes your relationship with Jesus?

# Small Group Guide: The Greatest Love

## Based on John 3:16

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### Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

**Icebreaker Question:** What's the most meaningful gift you've ever received, and why was it so special to you?

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### Sermon Overview

This week we explored what may be the most recognized verse in the Bible—John 3:16. Pastor reminded us that this familiar verse contains "the greatest things" about God's gift to humanity. Jesus spoke these words to Nicodemus, revealing God's incredible love and His plan for salvation.

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### Key Takeaways

1. **The Greatest Being** - God Himself is the source of salvation
2. **The Greatest Love** - God loved us "so" much—to an immeasurable extent
3. **The Greatest Impact** - God loved the whole world—all of mankind
4. **The Greatest Act** - God gave, demonstrating the most impactful action
5. **The Greatest Treasure** - His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ
6. **The Greatest Company** - Whosoever—the invitation is to everyone
7. **The Greatest Trust** - Believeth in Him—placing faith in Jesus alone
8. **The Greatest Deliverance** - Should not perish—rescued from eternal separation
9. **The Greatest Promise** - Everlasting life—eternal security with God

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### Discussion Questions

#### Understanding the Text (15-20 minutes)

1. **Read John 3:1-16 together.** What stands out to you about the context of this conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus? Why is it significant that Jesus is the one speaking these words?

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2. The sermon emphasized that John 3:16 starts with "God." Why is it important that God is the initiator of salvation rather than us?
3. What does it mean that God loved the world "so" much? How does this differ from ordinary love?

### Going Deeper (20-25 minutes)

4. The pastor mentioned that God loved us "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8). How does this change your understanding of God's love? How is this different from human love?
5. Discuss the phrase "only begotten Son." What did it cost God to give this gift? How does the story of Abraham and Isaac help us understand this sacrifice?
6. The sermon stated: "If my salvation in any way depends on what I have to do before or after I pray a prayer...we don't have the right thing." What does this mean? Why is it important that salvation is entirely God's work?
7. How does understanding that we receive "everlasting life" immediately upon trusting Christ (present tense) change how we view our salvation? What assurance does this give us?

### Personal Application (15-20 minutes)

8. The pastor asked, "If you were to die today, are you 100% sure that you'd be in heaven?" How would you answer this question? What gives you confidence (or causes doubt)?
9. Many people celebrate Christmas without truly understanding or accepting Jesus. How can we help others see beyond the cultural traditions to the true meaning of Christ's birth?
10. The sermon mentioned that "the love of Christ constrains us"—it motivates us to action. How should understanding God's great love in John 3:16 change the way we live this week?
11. Are there any sins you need to confess or areas where you need to repent and get right with God? (Allow time for silent reflection)

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## Practical Applications

### This Week's Challenge:

Choose at least one of the following to put into practice:

#### Option 1: Share the Gospel

- Identify one person in your life who needs to hear about Jesus
- Pray daily for an opportunity to share John 3:16 with them
- Be prepared to explain what each phrase means

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### Option 2: Memorize & Meditate

- Memorize John 3:16 if you haven't already
- Each day this week, focus on one "greatest" aspect from the sermon
- Journal about how that particular aspect impacts your life

### Option 3: Gratitude Practice

- Write a prayer or letter to God thanking Him for each aspect of John 3:16
- Share your gratitude with your family or a friend
- Consider how you can "give" to others as God gave to you

### Option 4: Examine Your Heart

- If you've never truly trusted Christ, don't leave this group without settling that question
- Confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord
- Share your decision with the group or group leader

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## Memory Verse

**John 3:16** - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

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## Prayer Focus

**Praise:** Thank God for His incredible love and the gift of Jesus

**Confession:** Confess any areas where you've taken God's gift for granted or failed to share it with others

**Intercession:**

- Pray for those who celebrate Christmas without knowing Christ
- Pray for opportunities to share the gospel this season
- Pray for any group members who may be uncertain about their salvation

**Petition:** Ask God to help you live in light of His great love this week

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## Before Next Week

- Read John 3:17-21 in preparation for next week's discussion
- Follow through on your practical application commitment
- Be ready to share how God worked in your life through this study

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## Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to those who may not be certain of their salvation
- Create space for people to ask questions about how to be saved
- Don't rush through the application section—this is where transformation happens
- Consider having someone prepared to share their salvation testimony
- Be ready to pray with anyone who wants to trust Christ during your meeting

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*"This may be our last Christmas together... This might be the last day. What did God speak to you about today?"*

# 5-Day Devotional: The Greatest Love

## Day 1: The Greatest Being

**Reading:** Genesis 1:1-5; John 1:1-5

**Devotional:** In the beginning was God—the greatest being of all time. Before time existed, before creation spoke its first word, God was. This Christmas season, we celebrate that this same God who spoke galaxies into existence chose to become a baby in Bethlehem. The Creator entered His creation. This is where our faith begins—not with our goodness, but with His greatness. As you navigate the busyness of this season, pause and remember: the God who holds the universe also holds you. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Everything you do should revolve around this truth. Today, acknowledge Him as the greatest being in your life, not just intellectually, but with your whole heart.

**Reflection:** How does recognizing God as the greatest being change your perspective on your current circumstances?

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## Day 2: Love Beyond Measure

**Reading:** Romans 5:6-11; 1 John 4:7-12

**Devotional:** "For God SO loved the world..." That word "so" is immeasurable. While we were yet sinners—rebellious, indifferent, even hostile—Christ died for us. This is not the love of a distant deity, but the passionate affection of a Father who gave everything. God didn't wait for us to clean ourselves up or prove ourselves worthy. He loved us at our worst. This Christmas, remember that the manger represents love to the greatest extent possible. God is love, and He demonstrated it by sending His only Son. The world may celebrate with lights and gifts, but few understand they're celebrating the greatest love story ever told. Today, let the magnitude of God's "so loved" overwhelm you and compel you to love others sacrificially.

**Reflection:** Who in your life needs to experience God's unconditional love through you today?

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## Day 3: The Gift That Changes Everything

**Reading:** Luke 2:1-20; 2 Corinthians 9:15

**Devotional:** God gave His greatest treasure—His only begotten Son. Imagine the value of this gift: the Father sacrificing what He loved most for people who didn't deserve it. Every Christmas gift we exchange pales in comparison. Jesus wasn't just a good teacher or moral example; He

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was God wrapped in flesh, placed in a manger because there was no room in the inn. The shepherds heard the angels proclaim, "Glory to God in the highest!" because the highest God had descended to the lowest place. This gift wasn't given to impress us but to save us. While the world searches for the perfect present, God has already given it. The question isn't what you'll receive this Christmas, but whether you've received Him.

**Reflection:** Have you truly received God's gift of Jesus Christ, or have you just acknowledged Him intellectually?

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### Day 4: Whosoever Believes

**Reading:** John 3:14-21; Romans 10:9-13

**Devotional:** "Whosoever believeth in Him..." This is the most inclusive invitation ever extended. Not "whosoever is good enough" or "whosoever works hard enough," but whosoever believes. Salvation isn't about your performance; it's about His provision. Just as the Israelites looked to the bronze serpent and lived, we must look to Christ crucified and risen. Belief isn't mere intellectual agreement—it's placing the full weight of your eternal destiny into Jesus' hands. It's confessing with your mouth and believing in your heart. This Christmas, many will celebrate Jesus' birth without truly believing in Him. Don't let familiarity breed complacency. The greatest company of heaven is made up of whosoever—anyone who places their trust completely in Christ. Where have you placed yours?

**Reflection:** Is your faith in Jesus Christ genuine trust, or just religious tradition?

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### Day 5: Everlasting Life—Right Now

**Reading:** 1 John 5:9-13; Ephesians 2:4-7

**Devotional:** "Should not perish, but HAVE everlasting life." Notice the present tense—have, not "will have someday." The moment you trust Christ, everlasting life begins. You're already seated in heavenly places. Death becomes a doorway, not a destination to fear. This is the greatest promise with the greatest assurance: nothing can separate you from God's love in Christ Jesus. This may be our last Christmas together on earth—Jesus could return at any moment. What matters most is not the presents under the tree, but the presence of Christ in your heart. If you've trusted Him, you possess eternal life right now. If you haven't, today is the day of salvation. Don't leave this season without settling your eternal destiny. God's gift is offered; will you receive it?

**Reflection:** Can you say with certainty that you have everlasting life, or are you still uncertain about your salvation?

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**Closing Prayer:** *Father, thank You for the greatest love expressed through the greatest gift—Jesus Christ. Help me to truly understand and embrace the magnitude of what You've done. May this Christmas be more than tradition; may it be transformation. If I've never truly trusted Christ, I do so now. If I have, renew my passion for You and use me to share this good news with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.*