

The Most Important Verse in the Bible
By David Johnson, Executive Director AZSBC

Introduction

There are 31,102 verses in the Bible. What if you had to pick one that was most important? What if you could only give one verse to a person or the whole world? What would it be? It would have to be John 3:16. Not just because you find it underneath the In-N-Out Burger drink cup. Not just because of the guy with the rainbow hair that holds up the signs at the Super Bowl. Not even because if you know that verse you can get a discount on an oil change at Kwik Kar in Dallas, Texas. But because of what it means.

Max Lucado says John 3:16 is “A twenty-six-word parade of hope: beginning with God, ending with life, and urging us to do the same. Brief enough to write on a napkin or memorize in a moment, yet solid enough to weather two thousand years of storms and questions. If you know nothing of the Bible, start here. If you know everything in the Bible, return here. We all need the reminder. The heart of the human problem is the heart of the human. And God's treatment is prescribed in John 3:16. He loves. He gave. We believe. We live...”

This morning I want to talk about the most important verse in the Bible--John 3:16 to see what it really tells us. Let's say it together...

God Loves The World

What does it mean to say that God loves the world? Does it mean that He loves the planet—the rocks, trees, rivers, streams, oceans and animals? Yes and no. He created the world and was pleased with it. It was all good. But it was not complete so He made Man and Woman. The word for world here means the inhabited world. The people of the world. He loves the world and its people. How does He loves them? Here is what the Bible says...

He loves people like a father loves His children (Ps. 103:13)

He loves people and cares for them whether just or unjust (Matthew 5:45)

He loves people and gives them good and perfect gifts (James 1:17)

The problem is that the world does not love Him. After Adam and Eve disobeyed God and took of the forbidden fruit, people have been separated from God by sin. And none of us are exempt from that. We have all sinned. That breaks God's heart. That is why He had to do something about it...

David Platt tells a story about a missionary who was giving away New Testaments in a market in another country. A man asked if he could have one because he wanted to use the paper to roll cigarettes. The missionary said he could if he promised to read every page before he used it. The man agreed and left. A few

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weeks later, the missionary saw the man in the market again and asked if he had been reading the New Testament he gave him. The man said, “Yes, I smoked my way through Matthew, Mark, Luke and the first two chapters of John. But when I got to John 3:16, I stopped and gave my heart to Christ!” Now that man is a pastor in his country. That is what happens when a person realizes God loves the world like John 3:16 says!

God Gave His Son

Some translations say that God loved the world so much that He gave His Son. That is love beyond our comprehension. God knew there was no other way to bring us back into a right relationship with Him than by coming to earth Himself in the person of His Son Jesus Christ to make things right. That may sound a little crazy to you, but that is what He did. He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to save us. It was the best Christmas present the world has ever seen! Jesus came with a mission. It was to give His life as a sacrifice so we could be forgiven of sin. God is too holy and just to ignore the wrong things we have done. God loves us too much to just let us go. Verse 14 says, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so much the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.” That goes back to a story from the Old Testament when the people of Israel rebelled against the Lord and He sent poisonous snakes to punish them. When the people cried out to God, He told Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole so that everyone who looked at it could be healed and not die. We are like those people—we have been bitten by sin and have died spiritually. Jesus came to be the cure that we can look at and be healed. He was raised up on a cross. That is how much God loves us!

We Can Have Eternal Life

John 3:16 makes it clear that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. All of us will die. It is the consequence of sin entering the world. When we die, we will either be with God forever in a place called heaven or we will be separated from Him in a place called hell. God does not want anyone to go to hell so he has made it possible for anyone and everyone to go to heaven. All you have to do is believe. What does that mean? It is not just agreeing or saying a prayer. It does not mean just raising your hand and then walking away. It is a definite decision that involves your entire life. Here is what it means:

Admit you have sinned against God and turn from your sin to God

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Believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead
Confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Lord of your life.
That is not the end but the beginning of a new life of following Jesus. God does not just want us to be saved. He wants us to walk with Him in a new relationship like Adam and Eve in the Garden. He wants us to love Him and introduce others to Him. We are going to spend eternity with Him so we need to get to know Him!

All of that is in John 3:16. Everything you need to know about God and life and eternity is in this verse! Everything we do flows out of this verse—because God loves the world, we know He is a God of love and loves us. Because God loves the world and us, we want to love others! Because God gave His Son, we give to help others and share His love with them. Because we can have eternal life, we want others to have eternal life so they don't have to spend eternity without God. Because it says all we have to do to be saved is to believe in Him, we know we can't do it ourselves. Because it says if we believe in Him, we will not perish, we know that we are lost for eternity without Him. We really don't have to know anything more than John 3:16 but God has given us the rest of the story in the Bible. My question is not do you know John 3:16, but do you believe it? Live it?

Conclusion

Recently I visited the country of Mozambique, Africa and gave some neckties to pastors and leaders there as gifts. I gave a young man named Jose one of the ties that had John 3:16 printed on it. I explained to him what the words were since he does not read or speak English. He was thrilled to receive the tie and even put it on with his T-shirt! He began wearing the tie in the village where he leads a church. Jose first heard the good news about Jesus when our son, Jeremiah, went there as a missionary. After Jeremiah died in a motorcycle accident, others continued to come share the gospel there and now there is a church in that village. When Jose starting wearing that tie in the village, a couple of young men came up to him and asked what the words meant. When he shared John 3:16 with them, they immediately became believers! That is how powerful John 3:16 is. That is why it is the most important verse in the Bible. If you never knew another verse in the whole Bible, you could still be saved and spend eternity with God instead of being separated from Him forever just by believing what it says and trusting Jesus. Are you ready to do that today? It is the most important decision you will ever make. What will you do with John 3:16?