

# LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for October 24: Jesus the one and only

October 11, 2010

John 3:16 is one of the first verses we learn as Christians, which means it also may be one of the first ones we tend to take for granted. Not forget, because we've memorized it for stickers and awards growing up, but take granted, as in not valuing it and appreciating it for all it is.

Read John 3:16 again nice and slow and imagine reading it for the very first time. Mind blowing, isn't it? Jesus was, and is, God's plan to rescue the world from itself and from being eternally separated from him.

What other religion or system of belief does that? None of them. Christianity is the only one that relies totally on God's grace and love through Jesus. All the other belief systems "rest" in the fact that you have to somehow earn your salvation, which really isn't very "restful" at all.

Jump ahead a few chapters in John to chapter 11 and look at how Jesus again states this amazing love that God has for us through himself. Jesus prays aloud just before he is about to call Lazarus out of the tomb from being dead for four days. In verse 42, he says, "I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

Now look again at John 3:16, "For God so love the world that he gave his one and only son ... ." Some translations use the word, "sent" instead of "gave." He wants the people there to know, and for us to know today, that God's greatest expression of love to us in the form of his son, Jesus. That is why Jesus is such a big deal. And we must know as Christians that there

has never been or ever will be an expression of God's love that is equal to or greater than Jesus himself.

You have to love God's attitude. Essentially he says, "Look, it's my plan to rescue the world, I'm going to do it and since it's my plan I choose to do it through my son, Jesus." Wouldn't we feel the same way if we had the power to rescue the world?

Of course, our plan would be filled with our prejudices, biases and all the other baggage we have in our lives. Can you just imagine God using someone else's plan for salvation instead of his own? It's like God would be the power portion of equation and you would be the designer coming up with a solution to this global problem. Thankfully God would have nothing to do with that. Instead, he says, I'm going to honor my son.

So since Jesus is at the center of salvation, and we have a new life because of this salvation, that means everything in our lives should focus on and revolve around Jesus. The logic is actually very simple, don't you think? And if we are going to be obedient and intentional about sharing our faith (Jesus), then we must remember to make our conversations focus on him as well.

Notice how, in the life of Christ, he started at one point with people, wherever they were, and brought it back around to God's love and himself. You must be listening to the promptings and urgings of the Holy Spirit to know when and what to say. Some conversations you'll be planting seeds, some will be about watering seeds that already have been planted, and finally others will bring about harvest.

In the Apostle Paul's letter to Timothy, he again reminds the young pastor, this time in writing, that God's desire is for everyone to come to know him through Jesus. In reality, will everyone be saved and have this great salvation? No, but God's love is unconditional and extended to all. We

accept and return it as best we can back to God by believing in Jesus.

In light of all the other ideas and philosophies that were around back in Paul's day that said you just have to love God the best way you know how and that will be good enough to ultimately get you into heaven (sound familiar to our own culture?), Paul makes it very clear in 1 Timothy 2:5 that there is only one path, through Jesus, that leads back to God, and he also is our mediator before God. This means he stands in the gap between God and man.

There is no other religion that offers such a just and perfect mediator. Man and society will say, "Well, that's a good way, but we think there is another way." It doesn't matter what man "decides" since God already has made clear the way to being reconciled back to him and that way is in Jesus alone. As Christians, we get the wonderful privilege of sharing this great news with everyone.