

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for "the big question."*

Read John 3:16-20 aloud.

1. According to verse 16, why did God become human?

When you think of God, what attributes come to mind? How high is love on that list?

Was this kind of sacrificial giving consistent with the way God treated people in the Old Testament? How had God tried to connect with people in the past?

He was always seeking ways to connect with people, so coming in person was the logical conclusion of the OT. See Psalm 103:8-14.

What could you do that would cause God to love you more?

What could you do that would cause God to love you less?

2. In what ways did Jesus' coming open the door to a relationship with God than had never before been conceived?

While it is common for us to think of God as Father, it nearly got Jesus killed (John 5:18). People could not imagine God being so accessible.

How hard or easy is it for you to think of God as your Father? Why?

How hard or easy is it for you to feel like God loves you? Why?

3. If Jesus came to save rather than condemn (17), why do so many people with Christian roots struggle with guilt?

What role does appropriate guilt play in believing?

How do you respond to this quote from Max Lucado...

God loves you just the way you are, but he loves you so much that he is not content to leave you that way.

4. If Jesus was an expression of God's love, why was he rejected by his contemporaries?

Why is Jesus rejected by people today?

How does verse 19 explain Jesus' rejection and crucifixion?

5. How does following Jesus encourage us to deal with the dark spots in our lives (20)?

What is a dark place that the light of Jesus has helped you navigate?

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

How has God's love impacted your life?

Resources

Bible notes

- While most translations print these verses in red, there is debate among scholars about where Jesus stopped speaking and John resumed narration. Beginning in verse 13, the pronouns referring to Jesus are “he” and “him,” but it still could be Jesus talking. Whether these words are from John or Jesus, they are true and powerful.

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

What was your most memorable Christmas gift?

Ask who can quote John 3:16. If you have younger kids, help them memorize it one phrase at a time.

Now challenge the group to quote John 3:16 doing goofy things (standing on one foot, hopping, lying down, in pig Latin, standing on their head, etc.). Give a prize for the person who can quote it in the most astounding way.

Why is this verse such a favorite?

What does this verse mean?

God loves, God gave, we believe, we receive

How does God’s love affect us on a daily basis?

How can you show God’s love in a greater way?



December 20, 2009

LIFE Group Guide

John 3 – God’s greatest gift

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme for this meeting: **God’s amazing, giving love.**

For several weeks, we’ve been reading and singing about the incarnation. The Christmas season calls us to focus on Jesus’ coming and to imitate him by serving others. The sermon this week and on Christmas Eve will focus on God’s amazing gifts, so the LG guide considers the greatest gift – his love shown through sending Jesus.

Remember that the Activity Room of Hearthside is available for a meeting site. Several groups have used it, sometimes in combination with a service project for residents. Call 443-1994 if your group needs a change in scenery.

Leadership tip:

Work for meetings that encourage believers and inspire seekers, and that make it safe for people to share their story. What they say is more powerful than anything you say because verbalizing a thought makes it take hold deeply. Be a facilitator more than a teacher.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone’s spiritual pulse, and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ What is your favorite and least favorite holiday goody?
- ❖ What was your most memorable Christmas gift?
- ❖ Worship included 5 gifts from God, and the Christmas Eve service will involve 4 other gifts. What do you think those 4 gifts will be?
- ❖ When did you begin to understand how much God loves you?