

# Sharing Love's Life-Giving Words: A Study of John 3:16

By Donna Pyle

Open with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study of the Word.

## Opening

Many Christians know **John 3:16** by heart. Martin Luther called this verse “the Bible in miniature.” This proclamation of the Gospel on the lips of missionaries for centuries has brought multitudes to the feet of Christ: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

## Love

Webster's Dictionary defines love as “having profoundly tender, passionate affection for.” We often put that in the context of people that we choose to love, but God chooses to love all people, not just the likeable. What do these passages say about God's love for us: **Deuteronomy 7:6; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4–5; 1 John 3:1a; 1 John 4:9–10?**

The verb “loved” in **John 3:16** is translated from the Greek word *agapao*, a two-fold process that expresses the deep and constant love of God towards His children and produces and fosters a reverential love in us toward the Giver. We behold God's intimate love toward His children in the very beginning of Scripture (**Genesis 3:8**) where God walked in the garden in the cool of the day looking for Adam and Eve. Tell about a time in your life when you were especially aware of the presence of your heavenly Father in your daily walk.

It states in **1 John 4:16**: “God is love” and “whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.” Note that love is a choice and an action — not a feeling. Because God first loved us, we respond in love to Him, and we are compelled to love our neighbors (**1 John 4:19**). How is this truth reflected in your life?

According to **Jeremiah 31:3**, how has God loved us? God's love is everlasting to the whole world, whether friend, foe, or alien — He doesn't just love good people. God's love endures forever (**1 Chronicles 16:34**), and He demonstrated His love at great personal cost: the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son. Jesus did not die on the Cross to compel God to love people, but because He already loved us.

## Gave

That God “gave” shows His initiative toward us. The Greek word for “gave” in **John 3:16** is *didomi*, which refers



to bestowing a gift or supplying and furnishing necessary things. God gave us His Son! How do these passages affirm this wonderful truth: **John 1:14, 18; Romans 5:10; Romans 8:32; James 1:17–18?**

## Whoever

**John 3:16** states “whoever believes in Him.” The Greek word for “whoever,” *pas*, refers to all or everyone. The Almighty Lord specifically casts the net around all of humankind. That net includes you and me and every person we will ever see or meet. Oftentimes, our human tendencies towards mistrust, dislike, and skepticism hinder our willingness to tell others about God's love. Take a moment now to silently list the *whoevers* in your “net” (family, friends, classmates, coworkers, neighbors) who need to know their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and pray for the Holy Spirit to provide you with opportunities to share the Gospel's life-giving words with them.

## Believe

We cannot simply believe that Jesus exists. Scripture tells us that even the demons know He exists (**James 2:19**). We are called to believe that He is who He says He is and will do all

He says He will do. Discuss what these passages reveal about the word “believe”: **Matthew 21:22; John 20:31; Romans 10:9, 17; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; and Hebrews 11:6.**

### Shall not perish but have eternal life

**John 3:16** reassures us that believers “shall not perish but have eternal life.” Human beings will either exist eternally separated from God by unbelief (hell) or in union with God eternally through faith in Christ alone, His forgiveness and salvation (heaven). Hell, like heaven, is an actual, physical place of eternal existence (**Luke 16:23**). What do the following passages reveal to us about hell: **Matthew 10:28; Matthew 18:9; Mark 9:43?**

Those who believe that Jesus came to save the lost by offering His life as the atoning sacrifice on a cross to redeem broken humanity shall not perish. The phrase “shall not perish” is cool water on a parched tongue. We will live eternally with God because God wants us with Him. That hopeful promise

of eternal life will be ours to hold through the eyes of faith lifted up to Christ the crucified. In Christ, God reconciled the world to Himself (**Romans 5:10**).

### Closing

When we trust God and take Him at His Word, His love for us compels us to extend His grace and love to others. According to the Great Commandment, what is vital in establishing a trusting relationship that opens doors to share God’s life-giving words with others? (**Read Mark 12:31.**) Close by praying for the Holy Spirit to lead you to “open-door opportunities” in your relationships in the week to come.

Sing or speak the hymn “God Loved the World” (*LSB* #571; *LW* #352; *TLH* #245).

*Donna Pyle, founder of Artesian Ministries (www.artesianministries.org), is Vice President—Christian Life for Texas District LWML and a member of Salem LCMS, Tomball, where she serves as an adult Bible class teacher and worship leader.*