

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study

“THE LOVE AND LIGHT OF JESUS”

For individual study or group discussion

John 3 begins a series of conversations with Jesus. He will be talking with four people from four different backgrounds: Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, a Gentile official, and a person disabled for 38 years. The first conversation, in John 3:16–21, is a word to Nicodemus. He is a man of privilege, knowledge, and religious achievement who needs to hear that God loves the world. Because “the world” may very well be people who this law-keeping Israelite thinks God would never love. When Nicodemus visits Jesus in the middle of the night, he is confronted by the love and light of Jesus as he answers Nicodemus’ question, “*How can these things be?*” (v.9).

Love that gives and saves (vv. 16–18)

The answer to Nicodemus’ question begins with love. “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son...*” The word “so” doesn’t just indicate degree; it describes the manner and intensity of God’s love. As theologian Kelly Kapic explains, “*When we read that God ‘so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,’ the point is essentially the manner and the intensity of God’s love for the world. He loved us this much and in this way. The emphasis is therefore on the exceedingly great means by which God has brought about our salvation...this is how God loves: he gives. And what does he give? Himself.*”¹

- Most people think of eternal life as something that happens after they die. But in the Bible, access to eternal life is something you can have right now. Read Romans 6:4, Colossians 3:1–4, and Ephesians 2:4–6. How can we experience eternal life in the here and now?
- How does v. 17 reveal God’s redemptive heart toward humanity? Consider your answer in light of the following passages: Luke 19:10; Ezekiel 18:23,32; 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:3–4; Isaiah 53:5–6.

Light that comes and calls (vv. 19–21)

Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night, both literally and spiritually. The Light stands before him, calling him out of his darkness. The Light calls us too. To come to Jesus is to step into exposure, honesty, and transformation. As another writer observes, “*The Light arrives in [our] darkness, not after it has lifted. Jesus does not wait for your anguish to recede. He steps into it...Our Lord tears open the sky to reach his people. The same God who once bent the heavens to rescue Israel has now bent low in the person of Jesus, coming in flesh to pull us out of our darkness with his own hands.*”²

- Read John 1:4–5. How does the nighttime setting of Nicodemus’ visit illuminate John’s theological theme outlined in his prologue (1:1–18)?
- In what ways do we, like Nicodemus, prefer to approach Jesus cautiously or remain partially hidden. And what does it practically look like to step fully into the Light, trusting that Christ comes not to shame us but to rescue and transform us? (cf. 1 John 1:5–9)
- Consider vv. 19–20. In light of what Paul teaches in Romans 1:18, 24–32, discuss how humanity’s suppression of the truth and exchange of God’s glory for lesser things helps explain why people “*loved the darkness rather than the light,*” and what this reveals about the nature of sin, judgment, and our need for the saving love of Christ.



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

DATE: February 15, 2026

SPEAKER: John Mark/Brian

SERIES: The Gospel of John

PASSAGE: John 3:16–21

Family Dinner Table

The Love of the Father

In John 3:16–21, Jesus answers Nicodemus’ question, “*How can these things be?*” by pointing him to the heart of God. The new birth, eternal life, and rescue from condemnation all flow from one source: the love of the Father who gives his Son. It is a love that gives and saves (vv. 16–18), and a light that comes and calls (vv. 19–21). The cross stands at the center of both themes: there we see the Gift given for a darkened world, and the Light lifted up for all who will believe. J.C. Ryle helps us to see that John 3:16 is a window into the very heart of God: “*Would I know the length and breadth of God the Father’s love towards a sinful world? Where shall I see it most displayed? Shall I look at His glorious sun, shining down daily on the unthankful and evil? Shall I look at seed time and harvest, returning in regular yearly succession? Oh, no! I can find a stronger proof of love than anything of this sort. I look at the cross of Christ. I see in it not the cause of the Father’s love, but the effect. There I see that God so loved this wicked world, that He gave His only begotten Son, — gave Him to suffer and die, — that ‘whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life’ (John 3:16). I know that the Father loves us, because He did not withhold from us His Son, His only Son. I might sometimes fancy that God the Father is too high and holy to care for such miserable, corrupt creatures as we are! But I cannot, must not, dare not think it, when I look at the cross of Christ.*”³

- If you ever wonder whether God really loves you, especially when you feel unworthy, overlooked, or guilty, how does looking at the cross change the way you see God’s heart toward you? (cf. Romans 5:6–8)

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

RUF Staff: Alex Bosgraf at Boise State, denominational partner ministry

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

William and Charisa, supported missionary partners serving in a sensitive area in North Africa

¹ Kelly Kapic with Justin Borger. *For God So Loved, He Gave*. 2010, Grand Rapids. Zondervan. 68

² Darby Strickland. *Advent Begins in the Dark*. December 15, 2025. CCEF.org. <https://www.ccef.org/advent-begins-in-the-dark/>

³ J.C. Ryle. *Old Paths: Being Plain Statements of Some of the Weightier Matters of Christianity*. 1898/1999, Carlisle, PA. Banner of Truth. 237