

IS IT REALLY THAT SIMPLE?

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him** should not perish but have everlasting life.**
(John 3:16)

It has been said that John 3:16 is the most quoted verse in the Bible, and yet the least understood. I recently heard a friend add, “It is the first verse that many people learn and the last one they will forget.”

It is claimed that no other single verse in the Bible so concisely summarizes God’s relationship with humanity and His plan of salvation for all of mankind.

How can it be that a single Bible verse can be deemed so important and yet so surprisingly few really understand it? How can it be that so many read this verse, claim to believe it, and yet teach a doctrine that is so contrary to it?

I have read gospel tracts that teach up to eleven (11) things a person must do to have eternal life and wind up in heaven. Some are more generous and only have three or four on their list, but regardless, most folks seem intent on adding to this verse, not recognizing that “to add to it is to actually take away from it.”

This single verse has been said to contain the “gospel in a nutshell.” It says so very much and yet even millions who can quote it fail to grasp its message!

Let’s examine this verse in more detail, by looking at each part individually.

For
God
So
Loved
The
World
That
He
Gave
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Only
Begotten
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That
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In
Him
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Before continuing to read this pamphlet, let me encourage you to take at least 30 seconds to a minute for each word and meditate on this verse, exploring in your mind just what those words mean to you.

For (Continues conversation of vs. 14 -15)

God (the greatest PERSON)

So (denotes METHOD)

Loved (the greatest EMOTION)

The (specifies and pinpoints)

World (the greatest NUMBER of PEOPLE)

That (subordinate conj.—Intro of purpose)

He (God is the subject here—not us)

Gave (voluntary – the greatest ACTION)

His (denotes their relationship)

Only (how unique He is to the Father)

Begotten (Orig. word means “of its kind”)

Son (the greatest PERSON)

That (introduces another “purpose clause”)

Whoever (the greatest OPPORTUNITY)

Believes (the greatest SIMPLICITY)

In (say “in,” not “about”) means to trust

Him (refers to Jesus – He is the Savior)

Should (no man need to perish)

Not (the opposite of “will”)

Perish (the greatest NEGATIVE)

But (the greatest DIFFERENCE)

Have (to possess it now, not later)

Everlasting (the greatest Length of TIME)

Life (the greatest POSSESSION)

Lest anyone think that this verse differs somehow from its context, one should read the verses before and after it. If anything, doing so will only solidify what this verse clearly teaches, not detract from it.

For example, let’s examine verse 16 in the context of verses 14 through 18.

¹⁴ *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,* ¹⁵ *that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

(John 3:14-18)

Some might still argue that it just cannot be that simple. “Surely, we have to DO something ourselves,” they say. Yet, let us look at what other Scriptures say about that.

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

(John 5:24)

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die”

(John 11:25-26)

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.

(John 6:47)

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.

(Acts 16:31)

One reason it is that simple is the fact that eternal life is a gift and cannot be earned; otherwise we could boast about deserving it. Unless we accept it as a gift, we don’t get it at all. For many, that is hard to believe.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

(Ephesians 2:8 & 9)

Yes, God has made it about as simple as possible for His creation to be reconciled to Himself and yet most of those for whom Christ died continue to ignore His sacrificial gift. All one has to do, or can do, to receive this gift is to believe God for it—trust Him.

That is what the word translated “believe” means—“to trust,” “rely upon,” or “place confidence in.” It is not to just believe the facts about Jesus but to trust Him as the risen savior for the eternal life He promises.

If you’ve just read this and are learning for the first time the true meaning of John 3:16, why not decide right now to depend on Jesus alone to save you? There is no other savior!

If you are trusting in Jesus alone to save you and would like additional material to help you grow as a new child of God, simply write us at the address below and we will send you additional material to assist you.

Jesus said in John 10:10 that he came to bring us life, and life *more abundantly*.

We want that for you and hope you see the wisdom in receiving God’s gift for you.

*NOTE: All quoted scripture is from the New King James Version of the Bible, published by Thomas Nelson Publishers)
(Scripture emphases mine.)

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