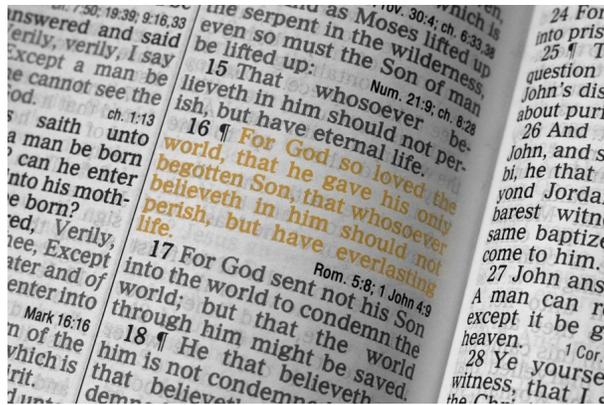


Exploring John 3:16 — Christian ed at home

Adapted from an article by JOLELLE BRUMMIT-YALE in the Presbyterian Outlook



Scripture: John 3:14-21

Materials: large print version of the Bible verse & page of verse written in boxes included in this mailing; envelope(s), scissors, construction paper and crayons/markers & glue

Many of us likely remember Cliffs Notes. Many times, confused by a book assigned to us in English class or short on time to finish our homework, we'd turn to these yellow and black covered books. In their pages, we'd find ultra-condensed versions of literature as well as important quotes and interpretations of the reading. I'd imagine if a Cliffs Notes version of the Bible had existed, John 3:16 would have been quoted in the summary section of the guide.

John 3:16 is one of those verses that has taken on a life of its own. It has been written on thousands of pieces of poster board so that it could be held up at sporting events. It has been printed on bumper stickers and used as the text for custom license plates. And it is available to be printed on T-shirts in any color and font.

This verse of Scripture is so well-known that we really don't even think about its meaning. In fact, we may even roll our eyes when someone quotes it because it has been so overused. However, its radical message of love and care for the world are still an unopened gift for our children. In this week's lesson, your children will "play" with John 3:16. They'll engage in wondering about its message and will create art aimed at sharing the hope it contains for all of creation.

Prepare

In this mailing, you'll find two versions of John 3:16.

- One page is a large print version of the verse in its entirety.
- Next, you'll have the words of the verse divided into text boxes. Cut out the words from the pages with the words in boxes. Place the scrambled words into

an envelope. If multiple children are participating, you may want to print out one copy per child of the words you will cut out so that each child has a set to work with.

Prepare to read aloud the Gospel text.

- Tell your children that this story presents Jesus speaking to Nicodemus, a religious leader who is curious about the message that Jesus has been preaching to people.
- Nicodemus wants to learn more about who Jesus is. Jesus gives a long speech explaining his role on earth. This reading is part of that speech.

Read

Read John 3:14-21 aloud. (If you choose to read it from a children's Bible, note that the next part of the activity employs a verse from the text as it is printed in the NRSV.)

Wonder

- Share with your children that one of the verses in this reading is likely the most "famous" part of the Bible. It is often used to explain who Jesus was and what God's love looks like.
- Show your children the printout of John 3:16. Read it aloud to or with your children.
- Ask them to share their initial thoughts about the sentence. What does it mean to them?

Do

Next, give your children the envelope that contains the passage's words that you cut out.

- Ask your children to lay the words out in the order that they appear in John 3:16. You may want to keep the full verse out for them to use as a guide.
- Once they have put the words in order, have your children point to or pick up the words that they think are most important or meaningful.
- Ask them why they chose these words. What do these words mean to them?
- What do these words tell them about God?
- Why are these words more important or meaningful than the other words in the verse?

Finally, have your children use the words that they selected to create a piece of art that shares the message of John 3:16.

- Ask them to glue the words to a piece of construction paper and then to use crayons or markers to illustrate their meaning.
- Hang this piece of art somewhere in your home where it can serve as a reminder of the everlasting love of God that came to us through Jesus.



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