



For God So Loved The World ... and You Too John 3:16

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Group Leader Notes

This week, we conclude our sermon series *Under Pressure: Faith in an Anxious Age*. We've looked at the modern-day pressures we experience—technology, mental health, raising the next generations, work and purpose, and aging—and what our faith has to say. Finally, there is one modern day pressure I want us to consider. In our modern world, with all its pressures and challenges, why have many walked away from faith or the church? This question unsettles me because I want you to experience Christ's love. So, what I want to do today is make the best case I can for our Christian faith.

Questions:

Is the decline of Christianity in American reversible? What is the antidote to our modern-day anxieties?

Bottom Line:

Jesus is our answer because Jesus is love, Jesus is our hope, Jesus is our way. Jesus teaches us that God is love and that we are loved. Therefore, if God is love, we, too, are called to love.

Take Home Message:

Love others as Christ first loved you—For God so loved the world he gave his life for you, for me, for our enemies, and said, follow me, this is the way that leads to life. Second, simply accept this truth. That God so loves you, that you might find everlasting life.

Main Scripture Reading: John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Other Scripture References: 1 John 4:8; John 1:18

Teaching Points:

- God's love for us is described as:
 - *Chesed* (Hebrew): Covenant love or steadfast love, but also means mercy, an unearned kindness or goodness
 - *Agape* (Greek): Implies a decision of the will, an unconditional kind of love
- *Hamartia* (Greek): Is used to describe sin. An archery term which means to miss the mark. It means we miss the ideal way we were meant to live
- God loves you, fiercely and restlessly. And he came to us in Jesus Christ, to rescue us from ourselves, to save us from the ways we miss the mark, to forgive us and set us on the right path. This is the depth of God's love.

Group Discussion

Begin in prayer before reading and discussing the text.

1. Pastor Joshua started the message by analyzing the continuous decline of Christianity in America since the early 1990's.
 - Do you know anyone who left the church? If yes, what were their reasons for leaving?
2. Pastor Joshua discussed how God's love is described in the bible as *chesed* (Hebrew) and *agape* (Greek). He likened God's love to parent's love of a child or love in marriage. He quotes the late pastor, Tim Keller:

To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.

 - Have you ever experienced this love? To be accepted as you are; warts and all.
 - Is it hard to imagine that anyone could love you that much?
3. Pastor Joshua said that in John's gospel, everlasting or eternal life is not something we finally attain when we die. We start living this life *here and now*. As we love one another in the same way that Jesus loved us, we begin to bring heaven here to earth.
 - How do you understand the connection between how we live our earthly lives and eternal life?
 - Read Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
4. If you have not accepted Jesus as your Lord and savior, consider discussing your reservations with your group. If you have a personal desire to know Jesus, ask your group to pray about it.

Let's Pray 1John 4:7-12

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. In Jesus name, Amen.