

He Gave His Only Son

January 15, 2023

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

John 1:1-5; 3:16; 1 Peter 1:13-22

Session Outline

1. The Father's Gift (John 1:1-5; 3:16)
2. Our Response (1 Peter 1:13-16)
3. The Call to Love (1 Peter 1:17-22)

Theological Theme

There is no one like Jesus. He is God's only Son. He was sent by God as the most incredible gift to us. God's plan for the redemption of man always included Jesus; He is our living hope. God's great love for us means He sent His most beloved Son to save us from our sins.



Leader Guide

He Gave His Only Son

Introduction

There are different schools of thought on the most effective gift giving practices. Think about your own habits. How do you rate yourself as a gift giver? Are you the kind that starts early and plans things out to perfection, or do you wait until the last minute and just grab something easy? Whatever your gift buying style is, one thing most people have in common is a desire for our gifts to be received well. We want people to like and appreciate what we give them.

How do you know whether someone likes a gift you give or not? Sometimes it is in their expression and reaction when they receive the gift. It may be the way that they use the gift. Do they put on an item of clothing immediately? Can you see evidence that the gift you gave them is being used and enjoyed? If you give someone a very nice gift and they never take it out of the package or just set it aside without using it at all, that is an indicator that your gift was not well received. Today we are talking about how we receive the gift of Jesus that God gave the world and what we can do to show how much we appreciate the unique gift of Jesus.

Split the group, men sitting together and women sitting together to discuss the following question:

- ❓ What type of gift giver are you? What type of gift receiver are you?
- ❓ Someone share how you saw God work in your prayer time for your lost friend.

Session Summary

God loved the world so much that He gave us the best gift ever. He sent His perfect, unique Son Jesus to save us from our sins. Jesus has been God's plan for our reconciliation from the beginning, and He is our living hope. There is no other plan for salvation; it's by grace through faith in Christ alone. Each person has a choice of how he or she will respond to the gift of Jesus offered out of love from the Father.

Once we receive the gift of Jesus, our lives are forever changed. We have a responsibility to live differently because of Jesus. We are called to be holy because He is holy, and when we make that our goal, we will have a strong influence on the world around us.


1. The Father's Gift (John 1:1-5; 3:16)

The second phrase of John 3:16 tells us the gift God gave because of His great love for the whole world. Out of His love, God offers all people the opportunity to be redeemed and made right with Him. This could only be accomplished through Jesus Christ. So, God gave us His only beloved Son so that we can be forgiven of our sins. The perfect Lamb of God became the perfect once-for-all sacrifice.

It is interesting to note that Jesus is not one possible option—He is the only way to God (see John 14:6). He was the plan from the beginning, and He is still the only plan. Jesus is the Son of God and therefore perfect and holy. He alone is uniquely qualified to redeem the lost world. It reflects God's great love for man that He sent His Son to die on the cross for us. John 1 references some of the characteristics that make Christ the only one who could do this.

 What is one of the unique characteristics of Jesus that stands out to you from John 1:1-5?

John said Jesus was there in the beginning. He referenced the trinity and stressed that Jesus was fully God even as He came to earth fully man. He is the unique combination of God made flesh. This is an important concept. Understanding the Trinity is a basic tenet of the Christian faith.


 Why is it important to know Jesus is unique?

John described Jesus as the Word and noted that all things were created by Him and through Him. He is an uncreated being who is the source of life. Think about how Jesus is not just the source of biological life but also the source of our spiritual life. It is in Him that we find new life and receive eternal life. When we don't understand who Jesus is and what makes Him unique, we miss out on the incredible things He wants to do in our lives.

John also used the analogy of light and darkness. Though this world is full of darkness, Jesus is the light and in Him we have the light so that we are never overcome by the darkness. Jesus is the giver of life and the giver of light. Without Jesus we are dead in the darkness and with Him we have life and light. It is each person's choice to trust in the One who is light and gives life or to listen to the voices of the darkness.

The Word


In using the term "Word" (logos), John was using a term familiar to both Jews and Greeks, though each attributed a different meaning to the term. For the Greek mind the "Word" referred to the rational principle that supervised or governed the universe. To the Jew, "Word" was a reference to God. Thus John wanted to equate the "Word" with God while noting that the Word was distinct from the Father. John stated that Jesus was with God "in the beginning" and that through Christ "all things were made." Jesus is therefore seen as co-eternal with God and as the Creator.

 Application: How do you need to adjust your expectations of who Jesus is? What would change if you truly viewed Him as He is described in John 1?


2. Our Response (1 Peter 1:13-16)

As we better grasp who Jesus is and all He has done for us, there should be a response evident in our lives. Jesus is light and gives life. The way we choose to act, think, and speak makes a difference because we are always representing Christ to the people around us. We must take our own lives seriously so that we point others to Jesus.

Peter said believers should prepare ourselves for action. Think of this like rolling up your sleeves to get ready for hard work. The Christian life is not about coasting by and toying with the things of the world. When you truly understand who Jesus is and what He has done for you, it should prompt you to take your faith seriously. To be ready for the hard work it takes to live as a sold-out believer in this dark world. To be clear, we do not and cannot work to earn salvation, but once we have received the gift of salvation, it will always lead to good works (see James 2:26).


 Why should believers be prepared for hard work?

The challenge is not just for believers to be ready for hard work, Peter also stressed that the way we think matters. To make “your [mind] ready for action” (v. 13) is to guard your thoughts from being sloppy and careless. It is easy to be lax about what we allow into our minds and what we allow our minds to focus on. Your thought life is extremely important. To live the way God calls you to live, it is imperative that you be intentional about controlling what goes into your mind. The concept of “garbage in, garbage out” is true. How careful are you about what goes into your mind?

 Why does it matter what you allow into your mind and what you focus your thoughts on?

Every action in your life starts as a thought. As you grow and mature into a Christian who lives like Jesus, you will have more control over your thought life. In considering how much Jesus loves us and all that He did on our behalf, we respond by striving to be more like Jesus. No one wants to be the gift giver who offers something but sees no response from the recipient. Yet, that is how many people act toward Jesus. We may appreciate and be thankful for the gift of grace and forgiveness He offers us, but do we live differently in response to that grace?


The choice comes down to whether we want to become more like the world or more like Jesus. The pressure to conform to the world is not a new issue. Peter knew the Christians he was encouraging struggled just as we do today. He instructed, “Be holy, because [God is] holy” (v. 16). There is no way to be holy like Jesus and conform to the ways of the world at the same time. For believers, it is time to make a choice of which direction you will go. Do you want to become more like the world or more like Jesus?

 Application: In what area do you need to be more intentional about striving for holiness? What changes will you make?


3. The Call to Love (1 Peter 1:17-22)

Jesus set the ultimate example of love. Just as we are called to be holy as He is holy, we are also called to be like Him in other ways. Being holy means being set apart and one of the things that sets believers apart from the world is the way that we love. It may seem like an impossible calling to love like Jesus, but it is because of Him that we are able to love deeply.

We are given the freedom to call on the Father to help us obey and conduct ourselves the way that we should. There is no higher power we can seek than the power that comes from God Himself. Peter pointed out that God shows no impartiality in answering His children so we can appeal to Him for help and know He will respond. Because He is fair, just, and impartial, He takes seriously how His children act. Your conduct matters because you align yourself with Jesus, and He takes His reputation very seriously.

 Why do you think believers should take their conduct seriously? If we don't heed the call to holiness, what might that say about our relationship with Jesus?

For those who were still tempted to straddle the line between being like the world and being like Jesus, Peter laid out a strong motivation for why godly living should be the goal. He stated that though it is a high calling to be choose godly conduct, it is a reasonable request when you consider the high price that was paid for your life. Your redemption was bought with the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus did not suffer, die, and rise again so that you could live like the world. He acted out of love and wants you to live in the fullness of that love as you reflect Him to the world around you.

 How should the realization that you were redeemed by the blood of Jesus impact the way you live?

Notice that Peter also called out the “empty way of life” (v. 18) or aimless conduct of his audience’s ancestors that they were also in danger of. This applies to the ways that they continued to try and earn their salvation by following the law. In his instruction to be holy, Peter was not talking about going back to the legalism of the law but living set apart as those motivated by love. We are to recognize the love Jesus has for us and love others the same way. That love is unselfish and focuses on what is best for others. Jesus gave up His life so that we could have eternal life. He is the ultimate demonstration of love that we should emulate. It is completely counter-cultural to live your life unselfishly. To put others first and consider how you can sacrificially serve another is only achievable through the power of Christ at work in us.

It is not easy to live a holy life in this unholy world, but it is always worth it. Peter reminded the people that Jesus was the perfect, sinless, Lamb of God. He also stressed that the plan of redemption was God’s plan from the beginning of time and is for all who believe in God and have their faith in Him. He encourages Christians that faith in God cannot disappoint us because our faith and hope are in the One who defeated death. Nothing is impossible with Him. You can love people who are hard to love. You can control your thoughts and focus on Him. You can choose holy living because He is holy. Our response to Jesus’s great love for us should be to love deeply so that the lost world is drawn to the Savior we place our faith in.



Application: Who do you need to show godly love to this week? How will you act?

Conclusion

The greatest gift possible has been given to us in the person of Jesus. He was the perfect, sinless Lamb of God who offered Himself willingly to redeem us from our sins. It is vital that we never forget who Jesus is and what He has done for us. There is no other way or plan for man to be reconciled into right relationship with God the Father. Jesus was the plan from the beginning, and we have the choice of receiving Him or not.

Being a good gift recipient is important. Once we understand who Jesus is and what He did for us, we must decide how we will respond. Peter made it clear that our response should include seriousness about how we conduct ourselves. We must be intentional about guarding our thoughts and keeping our focus on things of the Lord, not the things of the world. There is a great temptation to conform to the ways of the world, but believers are called to be holy as God is holy.

Being holy means striving to live like Jesus. The love that He showed in offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice to redeem us from our sins was unconditional and unselfish. As we recognize that love, we should also seek to emulate it. Loving deeply and unselfishly is totally different than how the world loves and how the world teaches us to love. When we love deeply like Jesus, the world will take notice and they will see Him in us. People are drawn to love like that and through it we can be the light we are called to be in this dark world.

- ❓ How would you describe what Jesus did to offer you redemption?
- ❓ What do you need to change so that you can honestly say you are seeking holiness because God is holy?
- ❓ What do you need to do differently to guard your thoughts and control what goes into your mind?
- ❓ Who do you need to share with about the love of Jesus and the redemption that is available to any who believe?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for His perfect plan for your redemption. Praise Jesus for the sacrifice He made on your behalf and confess the ways you have taken that for granted instead of seeking to live a holy life. Focus your prayer time on praying for the lost in your life.

Additional Resources

- *The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges
- *John* by R.C. Sproul
- *Be Hopeful* by Warren Wiersbe

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

1. What does this passage say?
2. What did this passage mean to its original audience?
3. What does this passage tell us about God?
4. What does this passage tell us about man?
5. What does this passage demand of me?
6. How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (*How can you use this information this week at work or with friends and neighbors?*)
7. How does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

*Adapted from Seven Arrows by Matt Rogers pastor of The Church at Cherrydale, Greenville, SC

DxD This Week

Call to Action

The point isn't that there is "only one way." The miracle is there is a way at all! His name is Jesus. Who are the lost and searching you are praying for?

For Next Week

Session Title

- Whoever Believes

Main Passages

- John 1:12-13; 3:16; Romans 1:16-17; 4:1-5

Session Outline

1. Whoever Believes (John 3:16; 1:12-13)
2. Belief and Righteousness (Romans 4:1-5)
3. Belief Blesses (Romans 1:16-17)

Memorize

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” - John 3:16

Historical Context of John

Purpose

The purpose statement in 20:30–31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God’s people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

Author

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24–25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple Jesus loved” with Peter in 13:23–24; 18:15–16; 20:2–9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3–4; 8:14–25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1–4).

Setting

The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter’s martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1, 14, 18; 10:30; 20:28).

Special Features

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John’s Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.

Extended Commentary

John 3:16

3:16–18 God, out of love, gave his one and only Son (cp. 1:14, 18), so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. John’s favorite designation for Jesus is the Son sent by the Father (3:34–36; 5:19–26; 6:40; 8:35–36; 14:13; 17:1), imagery taken from the Jewish concept of the shaliach (messenger), according to which the sent one is like the sender himself and faithfully pursues the sender’s interests (13:16, 20). Jesus is that “sent one” par excellence (9:7), and he in turn sends his disciples. Being sent implies that the commission, charge, and message are issued by the sender rather than originating with the ones sent. The messengers’ role is to fulfill their commission according to their sender’s will.¹

John 1:1–5

1:1 In the beginning was the Word echoes Gn 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” John located Jesus’s existence in eternity past with God. The Word was God: Not only did Jesus exist before creation, he is also the same God who created the heavens and the earth. “The Word” (Gk *Logos*) conveys the notion of divine self-expression or speech (Ps 19:1–4). God’s Word is effective. He speaks, and things come into being (Gn 1:3, 9; Is 55:11–12). 1:2–3 Everything that exists owes its existence to Jesus. 1:4–5 The references to life ... light, and darkness continue to draw on Genesis themes (cp. Gn 1:3–5, 14–18, 20–31; 2:7; 3:20). Light symbolism is also found in later OT messianic passages (Is 9:2; 42:6–7; 49:6; 60:1–5; Mal 4:2; cp. Lk 1:78–79).²

1 Peter 1:13–22

1:13 The grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ refers to the culmination of God’s redemptive activity in Jesus that will occur at his return (v. 5).

1:14 The phrase former ignorance means “without knowledge of God” and suggests that the recipients of this letter were mostly Gentiles who, before coming to Christ, practiced pagan religions.

1:15–16 God is the Christian’s standard for holy living (Lv 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7).

1:17 As Thomas R. Schreiner notes (1, 2 Peter, Jude), “God’s tenderness and love as Father is mingled with his judgment and the fear that should mark Christians in this world.” Thus, believers should live with a healthy reverence in all their conduct in the world.

1:18–19 The metaphor of an unblemished and spotless lamb points to Christ’s sinlessness (Lv 22:19–25). He is the sacrificial Lamb of God (Jn 1:29; Rv 5).

1:20 The plan for Christ’s sacrifice on behalf of sinners was fixed in eternity past, a sure reality set to unfold at a divinely appointed time in history (Gl 4:4).

1:21 Believers have faith because of the work of Jesus Christ.

1:22–25 Peter exhorted his readers to show sincere brotherly love for each other (i.e., other believers; v. 22) as those who are born again through the living and enduring word of God, the gospel.³

References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

Author Bio

Jerry Bridges (The Pursuit of Holiness)

Jerry Bridges is a longtime staff member of the Navigators and currently serves with their collegiate ministry. In addition to his international speaking ministry, he has authored ten books and three devotionals; among them *The Pursuit of Holiness*, which has sold well over a million copies, and the award-winning *The Discipline of Grace* and *I Will Follow You, O God*.

R.C. Sproul (John)

R.C. Sproul (1939–2017) was founder of Ligonier Ministries in Orlando, Fla. He was also copastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel, first president of Reformation Bible College, and executive editor of *Tabletalk* magazine. His radio program, *Renewing Your Mind*, is still broadcast daily on hundreds of radio stations around the world and can also be heard online.

Warren Wiersbe (Be Hopeful)

Warren W. Wiersbe, former pastor of the Moody Church and general director of *Back to the Bible*, has traveled widely as a Bible teacher and conference speaker. Because of his encouragement to those in ministry, Dr. Wiersbe is often referred to as “the pastor’s pastor.” He has ministered in churches and conferences throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Central and South America, and Europe. Dr. Wiersbe has written over 150 books, including the popular BE series of commentaries on every book of the Bible, which has sold more than four million copies. At the 2002 Christian Booksellers Convention, he was awarded the Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. Dr. Wiersbe and his wife, Betty, live in Lincoln, Nebraska.