

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**March 25, 2012**

**To Everyone Who Believes**

Read John 3:11-21

**Key verse: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16).**

It may be the best known conversation in the New Testament, this talk that Jesus has with Nicodemus. A Pharisee and member of the ruling council, Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night, searching for spiritual answers. Immediately, Jesus confronts Nicodemus with his need to be born again spiritually (3:1-3). Their conversation then focuses on the differences between physical birth and spiritual birth (3:4-8).

A few verses later, Jesus leads the conversation to a statement that brings the entire Gospel into focus: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (v. 16). In this single verse, John 3:16 describes: (1) the depth of God’s love for humanity, (2) the results of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, and (3) the response to Christ required in order to receive salvation....

**1. *John 3:16 describes the depth of God’s love for humanity:*** God loved the world and all people so much that God gave his only son in order to save the world and its people.

**2. *John 3:16 describes the results of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross:*** Jesus paid the price for our sins so that he could offer us what his sacrifice bought for us—*life* abundant and eternal.

**3. *John 3:16 describes the response to Christ required in order to receive salvation:*** “...everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” To “believe” means more than intellectual assent. To believe in Christ means to put our trust in Christ alone to save us and to put Christ in charge of our lives, both now and for eternity.

In his book *What Was God Doing on the Cross?*, Alister McGrath describes the following three stages of receiving what Christ did for us on the cross: “I may believe that God is promising me forgiveness of sins; I may trust that promise; but unless I respond to that promise, I will not receive forgiveness. The first two stages of faith prepare the way for the third. Without it, they are incomplete.”

Then McGrath illustrates these three stages with the following story:

“Consider a bottle of penicillin, the famous antibiotic identified by Alexander Fleming, and first produced for clinical use in Great Britain. The drug was responsible for saving the lives of countless individuals who would otherwise have died from various forms of

blood poisoning. Think of the three stages of faith like this. I may accept that the bottle exists. I may trust in its ability to cure blood poisoning. But nothing will change unless I *receive* the drug which it contains. I must allow it to destroy the bacteria which are slowly killing me. Otherwise, I have not benefited from my faith in it.

“It is the third element of faith which is of vital importance in making sense of the cross. Just as faith links a bottle of penicillin to the cure of blood poisoning, so faith forges a link between the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ and ourselves. Faith unites us with the risen Christ, and makes available to us everything he gained through his obedience and resurrection.”

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