

## CCC HOW MUCH GOD LOVES YOU

A word that we hear a lot now a day is the word “interactive.” *Time* called it “The Interactive Revolution.” Let me give you an example of what is meant by this - First we had interactive video games where you don’t just look at the screen. You interact. You respond. You push buttons and stuff. Now we have interactive television. Some of you are very well acquainted with “the Home Shopping Network” where there is interaction. You can call on the phone and order something. Now they’re even coming out with interactive movies. You will be able to choose the ending you want. So if you want to the guy to get stabbed or if you want him to get the girl you press A or B and you get to choose.

Education has known for years that interaction is the fastest way to learn. In our schools they’ve been using this for decades. You learn more by doing than you do by just passively sitting. The “sit still while I instill” approach is not really the fastest way to learn.

Of course Jesus, being God, understood this much more then we do today. Two thousand years ago He gave us two interactive experiences by which we can do the gospel, do the truth. One of the interactive experiences He called **baptism**. That’s when we go and get all wet for Jesus. We get put into the water, we come back out. That is an action step that symbolizes the powerful truth that Jesus died, that Jesus was buried in the ground and that He rose again. Baptism is also a symbol that the person being baptized has died to their old ways of living and that I’m

beginning a new way of living. That's what God wants me to do and that's what Baptism is about...

The other interactive experience that He's given us is the Lord's Supper. Today Elder Bob Goslee and some of the Men from the Monday Night Men's Fellowship are going to be helping lead us in the act of Communion, or the act of the Lord's Supper. That means that today we're going to have a little bit different service rather than you just sitting still while I talk. It's going to be an interactive worship service. The first thing I want you to do is pull out this information card. Then on the back notice where it has the lines. I'd like for each of you to write down one thing that you're thankful for. It doesn't have to be the top thing in your life, just write down one thing that you are grateful for. (PAUSE) Okay thank you for taking time to do that if

you want to fill out the rest you can but I just wanted to get us thinking about being thankful first this morning.

Now, Before we take the Lord's Supper we need to review what it represents and why we take Communion. We're going to look at just one verse this morning. But it's the greatest verse in the Bible, John 3:16. It's the greatest verse because it summarizes Christianity. It's the gospel in a nutshell. If you were to only get one verse in the entire Bible and you were to get this verse and understand it and act on it, you'd make it. This is the ticket to Heaven verse. This is the one that counts the most. Once you understand this you understand what Christianity is all about. The King James version says, *"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."* Circle "Son." Notice it's the first thirteenth word. This verse has

twenty-five words in it. The middle word, the thirteenth word, is the word “Son.” That in itself is a lesson. That Jesus Christ is the center of Christianity. You take Christ out of Christianity and you have nothing. It’s like taking Christ out of Christmas – there’s nothing to it. Jesus is the center of Christianity. It’s built on a person not a philosophy. But on the person – Jesus Christ.

The first twelve words in this verse are all about God. “*For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten....*” then “Son” the thirteenth word is right in the middle. Then the next twelve words are all about man. “*...that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” That in itself is a picture of Christianity – the Good News, the gospel. God is on one side and man is on the other. Jesus Christ came to earth. He came to earth to be the bridge between God and man.

The Bible says in the book of Timothy “*There is one God and there is one mediator between God and man – the man Jesus Christ.*” Jesus the Son of God came to build a bridge.

This Bible verse, were looking at John 3:16, gives the whole message of Christianity in four points. Notice it tells us

**God’s passion** – “*God so loved the world*”.

It tells us about

**God’s present** – “*He gave His only begotten Son.*”

It tells us about

**God’s proposal** – “*that whosoever believes in Him.*”

And it tells us

**God’s promise** – “*that we should not perish but have everlasting life.*”

**First, God's passion:** *"God so loved the world."*

Circle "so." This is an extraordinary love. A love that none of us can comprehend. You say to somebody, "I love you." You don't walk up to them and say, "I *so* love you." But God *so* loves you. He loves you so much you could never understand it. We've talked about this many, many times that you matter so much to God. It doesn't matter who you are, what you've done, where you've been, where you're going – you matter to God.

You want to hear something really amazing... in God's word you are compared to the universe. I want you to go outside tonight and lie on the ground and look up and see all the stars the universe and everything like that which is so amazing and then say to yourself... I am more significant to God than all of this... God says you are more significant to Me than this entire universe. What I am

trying to say, people may have written you off, your family may have written you off, people may have made you feel your nothing, your worthless, but listen to the real truth... to God you're very significant... God so loves you... He loves you more than you'll ever know.

In fact, if you had been the only person born and you had sinned and you needed a savior Jesus Christ still would have come to earth and died just for you. That's how much you matter to God. This is my prayer for each of you, from God's word, the bible, *"May you be able to feel and understand how long and how wide and how deep and how high God's love really is and experience this love for yourself."* Ephesians 3:18 That is His passion...He loves you. God so loves you. The next thing this verse shows us is God has a present for you...

**His present is this:** *“He gave His only begotten Son.”*

Notice it doesn't say, *“God so loved the world that He sent an angel.”* It doesn't say, *“God so loved the world He wrote sent you a text message or an email.”* It says *He sent His Son.* He sent an infinite being and endless being, to die for an infinite number of sins. *He gave His Son.* The word in Greek means He willingly gave Him up. Why is it important to know He willingly gave, because at any point Jesus could have sinned? You need to know Jesus could of sinned and if He had chosen to sin he would have been separated from God, just as you and I are separated... God didn't *loan* Jesus. He *gave* Him.

You have heard me say this many times at Calvary that God is a Holy, Righteous, Just God. When you break a law you've got to pay the penalty. If you go speeding you get a ticket. If you shoplift you have to spend some time in

jail. If you break man's laws you pay man's penalties. If you break God's laws you pay God's penalties. God says, *“The wages of sin is death.”* That's a pretty heavy penalty. That means either I've got to die for all the things I've done wrong and when I use the word death here... I am talking about spiritual death, eternal separation from God in an eternal place He created for those who are spiritual dead, Hell. But you don't have to be separated from God. Jesus came and took my rap. He served my time. He paid my sentence. He died for me. And He died for you. He was nailed to a cross so you can quit nailing yourself to a cross for those things you feel guilty about. That's the good news.

**Now God's proposal:** *“Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* The word “believe” means more than just a head knowledge. A lot of people

are going to miss heaven by eighteen inches. They've got it *here* in their head. But they don't got it *here*, in their heart. The Bible says the devil believes in Jesus but you're not going to find the devil in heaven. Why? Because it takes more than your mental consent to become a Christian. The word means trust in, cling to, rely on, adhere to, surrender to. It means to sell out to. Let me give you an example... I believe in Hitler but I'm not a Nazi. I believe in Carl Marx but I'm not a communist. I therefore can believe in Jesus and not be a Christian. Why? Because it means more than a head knowledge. It takes more than knowing He existed... it means to commit yourself to. To trust in His ways.

Notice *"Now God says He will accept us and acquit us, declare us not guilty if we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we can all be saved in the same way*

*by coming to Christ no matter who we are or what we've been like."* That's good news?

So what does it mean to believe? It means that when you become a believer in Christ you put on a sign that says "Under new management." That's what it means to be a Christian. I used to manage my own life. Now God calls the shots. I used to be the CEO and president of Me, inc. Now God is my boss. He's the manager. I let Him direct my life. That's what it means to believe. He gave His life for me and I give my life in return to Him.

**His promise:** *"You should not perish but have everlasting life."* Circle "everlasting." How long is everlasting? It's not a hundred years. It's not five hundred years. It's not ten zillion years. It's everlasting! We get up to heaven and say, "Hey how would you like to come over to my mansion for ten thousand years. We'll just talk a while, maybe play

some games have some fellowship!” That’ll be a split second compared to eternity. Here is how I see it... even if the Christian life here on earth was the most miserable way to live – and it’s not, but even if it were it would be worth it to have eternal life guaranteed and secured. That’s the good news. That’s what we celebrate today, what Jesus made possible on the cross. He died on the Cross for my sins so that I can spend eternity with Him forever in Heaven.

**Communion:**

I’m going to ask the Elder Bob and the other men to come at this time and we will serve communion.

As we serve these the elements both the wine and the bread... please wait until everyone has been served and then we’ll take together.

I also want to say that the Bible says that communion is only for believers. Obviously it means nothing to somebody who’s made no commitment to Christ, but if you haven’t made that commitment that’s okay, let me also encourage you to keep coming back, sit back relax and just consider the claims of Christ... we have many people who come and are just here to hear the claims of Christ and your welcome... but Communion has no value to you if you haven’t asked Christ into your life, it is for believers.

Now to those who are Christians the Bible also says that during this time of Communion we are to pray and to consider our lives, consider the outcome of our lives, to do some self-examination of our purpose in life, what are we living for...

As we begin to take communion, let's have a brief prayer of asking God to open our hearts and minds and see what we need to confess to Him.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank You for the opportunity we have to come here this morning and to remember what You have done for each of us. When we think of what you went through on the cross, Lord, it's with emotion that we remember, as we do this in remembrance of what you did for us. As we look forward to the promised of Your return it's with joy in our hearts that we anticipate Your return. Your word tells us that we are to examine our hearts. So right now, Lord, I would ask that as we pause this moment that each of us would look deep within us. Is there some un-confessed sin in your life?

Pause

Father, we acknowledge that sin to You today. We acknowledge our sins of commission, acts of wrong that we've done and thought, deeds, grudges that we're harboring. Anger, bitterness toward others. Unresolved relationships and hurts. Father, we commit those to You. And for those things that we have not done that we ought to be doing we confess those to You and ask for Your forgiveness. We thank You that in Your word You tell us that if we confess our sins You are faithful and just and will forgive us and cleanse us from all righteousness. Today we claim that as we lay these sins before You. We ask that You would cleanse each of our hearts. We come to You with clean hearts now. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen