



SHADOW MOUNTAIN

LEADER

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### Getting Started

1. As a group, recite/read John 3:16 together. What is your first memory of this verse?

2. As you have grown in your faith, how has the impact of this verse grown or changed over the years? How has it stayed the same? *This is a personal question. No “right” or “wrong” answers here. We just want to start thinking about how this verse has the power to grow in our hearts over time.*

### Going Deeper

1. Read Jeremiah 31:3 and 1 John 3:1. In your own words, “what manner of love” has the Father bestowed upon the world (and you) through action? What did He do to show you His love for you? *Sometimes, when we think about the love of God, we forget that the love of God was given to us not only in a word but in an action. When God sent Jesus Christ, and He was hung there on the cross, that picture of Christ writhing in agony on the cross is God’s picture of His love for us at work. He knew that we were doomed to death because of our sin. He sent Jesus Christ out of a loving heart to take our place, and when He suffered and died there, He demonstrated His love for you and for me. God did not just say, “I love you.” He did something to demonstrate His love. There are no empty words of love in the message of the Gospel.*

2. Describe the personal nature of being loved by God. In what way do you live in this “God loves me” reality? How is this different than other kinds of love? *When the Bible says that God loves the world, it literally means that God loves you as if you were the only person on this earth. God loves you not in a general way, but God loves you specifically, personally, as if you were the only one to love. That’s why we can say this is the greatest expression of the love of God in the entire Bible. God loves the world, one person at a time.*

3. Each and every person is a candidate for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Think of someone you know (or know of) who lived life in such a way that he/she (to your way of thinking) should not have been a candidate for this Gospel. What behavior, speech, or disposition gave you this impression? **Here is an interesting exercise: Think of this undeserving person and (in your head) read John 3:16 and insert this person's name in the verse. "For God so loved \_\_\_\_\_ that He gave His only begotten Son that if \_\_\_\_\_ would believe in Him, \_\_\_\_\_ would not perish but have eternal life."** In this context, it becomes difficult to confine a person down to our limited understanding of them (and of salvation). It's critical for us to understand that if God loved the world, He loved even the most undeserving person. Every human being is part of the "whosoever."

4. This passage also points out that it is each person's decision to accept this Gospel and its gift (i.e., whosoever believes in Him). Describe someone you know/have known that chose to not accept God's offer. What thoughts and feelings come up in you and you reflect on the weight of rejecting this offer. **God does not force His love on us. God offers that love to us in the person of Jesus Christ, and He asks only that we reach out our hands and receive it. He has demonstrated the genuineness of that love, and He simply says to us, "If you will accept, if you will receive My love, by receiving Jesus Christ, you can have eternal life."** And the difference between all of us is that some of us are sinners who have received God's love and His forgiveness and others of us are sinners who have not.

### Applying the Message

1. Life in Christ begins when we accept God's offer. But it continues. Where in this walk of faith are you? How connected do you feel to the Gospel today? What is one hindrance to living fully in the "good news" of the Gospel?

2. How might you more fully embrace this Gospel by thinking, behaving, and speaking in a more Gospel-centric way? In what way can you start living differently today?