

Read: John 3:14-21

Rejoice that God So Loved the World

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Ella sat with a full heart, surrounded by torn wrapping paper and two lovely birthday gifts. Her uncle bought her a pricy present, something everyone wanted—brand new wireless earbuds. When Ella thanked her uncle, he didn't say, "You're welcome." Instead he said, "I love you." Then she remembered what her parents gave her—cute earrings in the shape of a dolphin with Ella's name etched into the silver. It was as if they were specially made just for a dolphin lover like Ella. With her arms around her mother, Ella whispered, "Thank you." Mom breathed back, "I love you." So Ella sat with a heart full of love, and she did a little birthday dance.

Maybe you've received a Christmas gift so expensive that any person would love it. That kind of gift says, "I love you so much!" Perhaps you've received a birthday present that was picked out special just for you. That kind of gift says, "I love *you*—unique, precious *you*."

God gave you both kinds of gifts when he sent Jesus. You may get some expensive gifts, but none as expensive as the one God sent you. "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son." Even people who spend lots of money on presents would never give up their son or daughter. But God did. When Jesus came to live as a human, it cost God his Son. When Jesus took away your sins on the cross, it cost him his life. Why did God give us so much? He did it to say, "I love you so much!"

God's gift is also unique, just for you. God wants *you* to be in heaven with him. *You* were Jesus' motivation when he came to earth. Hanging on the cross, he pictured *you*. There will be a party in heaven when *you* arrive. Jesus is precisely the right gift for you. But there's one more gift with your name on it—God gave you faith to believe in Jesus. "Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Why did God give those things to you? He wanted to say, "I love *you*, exactly *you*."

Jesus is the kind of gift that makes you want to do an eternal life dance and rejoice in God's love.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What gift did God give to the world?
- What blessings will you have because you believe in Jesus?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- How expensive was it when God gave his Son to the world?
- What are some ways that you express joy when you remember God's love?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- List some reasons why it is surprising that God would love the world.
- What are some differences between someone who doesn't believe in Jesus and someone who does?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, you have given us the best gift ever. Put joy in our hearts and praise on our lips because of your love for the world. Amen.

Hymn: CW 391:1,4 – God Loved the World So that He Gave

God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe
Should everlasting life receive.

Be of good cheer, for God's own Son
Forgives the sins that you have done.
You're justified by Jesus' blood.
Baptized, you are a child of God.