

God Speaks

**Devotional Responses to
Every 3:16 in the New Testament**

By the Members and Friends of the Christian Writers
Fellowship of Western North Carolina (CWF-WNC)

The ministry staff and the congregation of Long's Chapel United Methodist Church are blessed with the presence of the Christian Writers Fellowship on our campus. We are delighted to provide a space for the monthly meetings and to support this wonderful outreach with our prayers. May CWF continue its strong influence beyond the walls of our church through the written word.

—*Reverend Tim McConnell, Long's Chapel UMC*

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Christian Writers Fellowship of Western North Carolina

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Introduction

One of the most quoted verses in the New Testament is John 3:16—“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.” (NKJV).

With that one verse embedded in my mind and heart for many years, I became interested in the 3:16s of the other Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. They also contain basic, but intriguing, truths. I investigated Acts 3:16 and discovered that it, too, was meaningful.

The responses in this book examine the five verses mentioned above as well as the 3:16s in the words written to first-century churches—Romans to Revelation. Twenty-two of those writings are preserved in the New Testament, but only sixteen of them contain a 3:16.

The Christian Writers Fellowship of Western North Carolina (CWF-WNC) invites you to join us as we meditate on these powerful words from the Bible. Nineteen of our members contributed responses to this book. We invite you to add your response on the journal pages that are provided.

As you read, pray for wisdom. Ask God to lead you with His powerful, loving guidance.

Lucy N. Adams, Co-founder
Maureen Miller, Co-founder
Carolyn Underwood, Secretary

Matthew 3:16

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. (NKJV)

Have you ever wondered why Jesus was baptized?

Yes, it is strange because baptism is a response to the forgiveness of sins, and Jesus was the sinless Son of God.

However, He began His ministry by identifying with the people. His cousin, John the Baptist, had been called to start the ministry of Jesus. God, who created the heavens and the earth, as we read in Genesis, was beginning another new creation.

This creation would begin with the birth of Jesus. The heavens that God created “in the beginning” opened when Jesus was baptized. And a dove, which is the symbol of the Spirit, came down to earth. Oh, what a glorious sight it must have been!

God Speaks: My Son Jesus was obedient and saw a magnificent sight.

Prayer: O God, I am blessed with Your plan for baptism and with Your Spirit descending upon me. Amen.

Lucy N. Adams

Matthew 3:16

And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. (The Jerusalem Bible)

During my devotions one morning, I read that we spend our entire lives growing up into the realization that we are God's beloved. I think how far I have come in my journey of faith and understanding. I know that I still have much to learn. I hunger and thirst to grow closer to God through Jesus Christ—my spiritual compass, heart of my own heart, my best thought.

Jesus' baptism was for Him a revelation from God that brought new certainty and self-understanding of His messianic mission. He was God's Beloved Son and His human life was transformed as His ministry began. A new creation was about to unfold.

In one word, God is love. Scottish theologian George MacDonald said, "The love that foresees creation is itself the power to create." We who live in love and know that we are God's beloved have been shown the source of all that God has intended us to become.

God Speaks: You are My beloved. Live daily in the circle of My love.

Prayer: Dear God, as Your beloved and forgiven child, empower me to be Your new creation. Amen.

Mary Bickerstaff

Mark 3:16

These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter). (NIV)

The twelve men who were chosen were special. They were ordinary men, but they were special because they were selected by Jesus! What an honor to be called to walk with Him day by day.

Simon was certainly one of the most vocal. He often expressed his humanness with words of awe. In Matthew 16:16 he said, “Truly you are the Son of God.” Simon also promised that he would never deny Jesus even though Jesus knew that His beloved disciple would (Matthew 26:34–35).

That is one of the joys of reading God’s Word. Our humanness is seen in those ordinary men. We can identify with some of their positive traits and actions, but also their negative ones.

People have denied Jesus for centuries by refusing to receive Him as their Lord and Savior. Even the Christian who loves and serves Him, sometimes yields to self-will and not God’s will.

God Speaks: See yourself in the twelve ordinary men I chose.

Prayer: Thank You, God, that even when I deny You and choose my way, Your love for me is constant and beckons me back. Amen.

Lucy N. Adams

Mark 3:16

*And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: And Simon he surnamed Peter.** (vv.14–16 KJV)

Peter had the attributes he needed for the job he was called to do. He had strength, fortitude, steadiness, firmness of mind, and consistency. We have the qualities God wanted when He called us. Just like Peter, we can do the job God has called us to do.

According to Mark 3:13, Jesus sovereignly chooses “whom he would.” He does the choosing. As He told the disciples in John 15:16, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

God Speaks: I called you and you responded. I am faithful and responsible. I will guide you and see you through.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for choosing me. I look to You for what I need to fulfill Your purpose in my life. Amen.

Nathan Tracy

*Please read verses 17–19 for the names of the other eleven disciples.

Luke 3:16

John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (NIV)

Who was coming? John the Baptist knew! He knew who Jesus was, why He was more powerful, and why he was not worthy to "untie the thong of His sandals."

John's first encounter with Jesus occurred when Mary, Jesus' mother, visited Elizabeth, John's mother (Luke 1:43–44). He leaped in his own mother's womb when Mary appeared because even then he knew whom Mary carried within her womb.

The water baptism John performed was only a prelude to the baptism of greater power. Jesus would be filled with the Spirit of the Holy God, the Holy Spirit, so that He could fulfill the purpose for which He was sent into the world.

The word *fire* doesn't refer to a real fire. It describes a supernatural event that would occur on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3).

God Speaks: All of the words I spoke from the beginning of creation were coming more alive with this event.

Prayer: O God, I am thankful for the birth and obedience of John the Baptist. Help me be obedient, too. Amen.

Lucy N. Adams