

John

“A Simple Man who Experienced Christ’s Love”

“John lived his life in the shadow of others but found worth through Christ’s Love.”

“And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.” Matthew 4:21-22

I. Background of John Name means in Hebrew – “the Lord is gracious”

- A. John was the youngest son of a prominent family As mentioned when we studied James, it seems their family was better off financially and socially than most in Galilee. They had connections within the High Priest’s palace, and they owned a progressive fishing business. Also, it is wonderful to realize that both of John’s parents were supportive of their sons following Jesus. James and John are almost always mentioned with that of their father Zebedee and their mother is even mentioned as one of the women that followed Jesus and “ministered unto him.” (Mark 15:41) Scholars believe John was the youngest between him and James because he was always mentioned second, and James seems to take the early dominate position between the two.

- B. Many feel John was the youngest of the apostles Some reasons are – lived well past the other apostles; ran faster;

“And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.³⁹ But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.⁴⁰ For he that is not against us is on our part.” Mark 9:38-40

- C. Jesus called him and his brother James the “sons of thunder” Only twice do we see John appear and act alone. This is the first one. In this event we see John making noise and being rebuked by Jesus. Notice John’s elitist attitude – no one can work for you but us; no one has it right but us; no one is blessed but us; no one has the power of God but us! Jesus tells John firmly not to stop this man’s work. He was casting out devils in Jesus’ name, with Jesus’ power, even though he didn’t follow along with their group! He was a believer in Jesus the Messiah and was doing the work of Christ! Jesus knew the heart of this “one casting out devils” as He knows the hearts of all men. Jesus was the judge of the matter, not John and the other disciples! WOW, what a lesson for all of us to understand. Can we get an elitist attitude like John? How does this attitude play out and demonstrate itself in our lives? Criticism; refusing to recognize and fellowship with. Only our little group has it all figured out; only our little group does true work for God; Only our little group has God’s blessing on our lives; Only our little group has God’s power working through us! We must be careful, for just as with John in this event of Christ, we can feel that no one else has the power, blessing, and ability to do great work for God! That’s foolish, arrogant pride and God would rebuke us too! We are not talking about doctrinal differences but the different shades of how others look, work, and minister. This prideful attitude is part of the depraved default of man, and we must be careful not to fall to it! 3 John 11 seems like John got the lesson! (I Cor. 12:3)

- D. Seemed to be in a secondary position in groups and lists Gospels – James & John; Early Church – Peter & John
- E. Was part of the “inner circle” of disciples We find John’s name associated with Peter and James as the inner circle of disciples. They had special privileges and opportunities while traveling with Jesus that should have built their faith in Christ. Prayer time - Mount of Transfiguration; Garden of Gethsemane; Miracles – healing of Peter’s mother-in-law and Jairus’ daughter

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! ²⁷ Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” John 19:25-27

- F. Jesus entrusted John with the care of Mary, his mother This is the second time we find John singled out and apart from others. Christ calling on John to care for and watch over His mother going forward was a wonderful responsibility and speaks highly of John the apostle. She had been faithful to God from her youth, raised Jesus, and then traveled with Him during much of His ministry. Christ provided for her after His death, and John was that provision.

- G. Wrote more of the New Testament than any other apostle
1. Lived well past the other apostles I read that church history records he lived well into his late 80’s.
 2. Wrote the last of the gospel records - 50 years after Christ
 - Matthew, Mark, and Luke had long been circulating
 - John’s gospel was different – more spiritual and deep

There are **three themes** in the writings of John, **the first** we will highlight is **truth – the truth of God!** No one in all Scripture, except for Christ will speak more of truth than John! 40 times!

- John’s book desired growth and understanding of Christ’s purpose and plan
- John’s book desired unbelievers to come to a place of belief
- John’s book highlighted Christ’s deity – God-man

Read through John 1:1-18, the preface of the book of John.

3. Three Johns & Revelation written 60 years after Christ
 - 1 John – “That ye may know that ye have eternal life.” 1 John 5:13
 - 2 John – John sees good progress among the believers but desires more! v. 4-8
 - 3 John – To Gaius, encouraging him to continue in Christian service. v. 3-5,8
 - Revelation – Prophetic visions as seen by John and instructed to record v. 9-19

John will fulfill a unique and patriarchal role in the early church! We see this revealed within his books!

- H. Dominate place within the early establishment of the church
1. John’s name appears only second to Peter within New Testament - 50 times

2. John was second to Peter among early church leaders – Galatians 2:9 In this passage, John, along with Peter, and James are called the “pillars” of the church. Other translations have, “key leadership,” “backbone,” and I found “most important people.” Peter will always be named first before John, but when considering longevity and his contribution to the canon of Scriptures, John holds a very important position!

- I. Seemed Emotionally vs. logically based This could be based on personality but may also be founded in John’s age – or a combination of both!

Negatively: telling Jesus about another casting out devils – Mark 9; desiring to sit on the right and left of Jesus – Mark 10; would not go into the tomb – John 20

Positively: followed Jesus – Matt. 4; stood at the cross – John 19; took care of Mary – John 19; ran to the tomb – John 20

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. ¹²This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:11-13

II. Life and Growth of John while traveling with Christ

A. John learned love from Jesus

1. He enjoyed a special relationship with Christ I want to make note of a phrase we saw in the event of John standing at the cross. Remember, John never cites himself within his gospel. Instead, four times this is how he identifies himself, “whom he loved.” (John 13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20) In other words, John identifies himself by saying he was loved by Jesus. Isn’t that a wonderful identification? Really, all of us can say the same thing! “Jesus loves me, this I know!” This close, personal relationship is available to all of us, Jesus desires a special closeness with all His people. He will not force Himself on us but waits for us to seek it – Rev. 3:20; John 14:22 John had a heart desiring a close relationship with Christ and he enjoyed one!
2. He heard Christ’s teaching on love There in the upper room, as John reclined next to Jesus, Christ taught the importance of love for one another. (John 13:23, 34) But that was not the first time Jesus spoke on love, how about the sermon on the Mount? “**Love** your enemies, bless them that curse you,” (Matt. 5:44) To love God from the heart and one another is a theme of Jesus throughout His ministry.
3. He observed Christ’s example of love everyday!
 - Jesus’ pity and compassion toward sinners unlike the Religious Leaders of the day
 - Jesus’ loving miracles of healing
 - Jesus’ patient teaching of the disciples

The **second** theme we find within John’s writings is **love!** Just in his gospel alone, ch. 1-12 – 12 times but in ch. 13-21 he uses love 44 times! We see the wonderful combination of **truth and love!**

4. He wrote of Christ's love [Read through 1 John 4:7-21 – love defined; standard of love, motive to love](#)

“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” John 20:31

- B. John came to a place of belief in Jesus' deity [He observed the signs and wonders that proved Christ's deity and wrote a book to convince all that Jesus was the “Christ, the Son of God.” John chose seven miracles to include in his book that demonstrated Jesus' power over life and nature. The supreme sign was a detailed account of the resurrection!](#)

“Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. ³⁴A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John 13:33-35

III. Lesson from John's Life

“Jesus Christ has made it possible for us to be a part of a dynamic community of love that not only meets our own needs but demonstrates to the world that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God!” [Jesus was very specific about this topic in the Upper Room. Here are a few thoughts found in Ladies Studying Jesus concerning Jesus' teaching on love from John 13:33-35.](#)

“A new commandment” – [This commandment does not seem new! Lev. 19:18 All those who love God are called to love others. – In reality, it's like an old book being made into a “new edition” – corrected, expanded, and enlarged!](#)

“That ye love one another;” – [Gk – keep on loving – These men loved Christ, now He tells them to love each other! This love will be the support they will need without Him!](#)

Why this Command of Christ to love one another – [there are many commands of Christ--Great Commission – Go into all the world and give the Gospel and make disciples; Observance of the Lord's Supper, Service to others; Not only to love your neighbor but one another! This command carries special weight.](#)

1. The Example of Christ – [John 15:12-13 – Jesus left the Father; became a servant, this is our example and it should be our motivation, to be like Christ! As Jesus connects love among them and His going away it will be a wonderful benefit and support! Heb. 10:24-25 says the same thing concerning the church. “provoke” – spark, stimulate, incite, arouse, motivate, help, encourage, stir up, spur – to love and good works – why – we need love from each other in our spiritual walk here on earth!](#)
2. The Reputation of Believers – [Love is the “Badge” of the believer; the greatest character trait of believers is their love! God always set His people apart with evident signs:
Jews – circumcision, Sabbath, and restricted diet
Disciple of John the Baptist – Repentance and baptism](#)

Now the followers of Christ would be set apart with their love for one another and they would show the world Christ by it. There is no doctrine taught or action demonstrated that will show the world Christ more than the LOVE of His followers!

In the world – “everyman for themselves”

In Christ – “everyman for others” John 17:20-21; I John 2:5, 8-11; 4:21; 3:10

The **third** theme word of John is **witness**! He uses it 70 times in his books! Wow! **Truth and Love** together are a wonderful **witness** to the Gospel of Christ! Our lives and our churches should be a wonderful balanced witness of love and truth! Truth when given should never abandon love but also truth should not be deposed of in the name of love!

Revelation 1:4-7

“Such love will not only bring unbelievers to Christ, it will also keep believers strong and united in a world hostile to God” Life Application Bible pg. 1836

All italicized quotes are from
The Apostles Becoming Unified Through Diversity
By Gene Getz