

The disciples of Jesus: John – the disciple whom Jesus loved

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was far from the soppy sentimental loving type that we would picture when we talk about love nowadays. John was a rustic fisherman with a flaring temper. He was transformed into the man who we know had a high view of Jesus. But did Jesus only love John, or was John merely the most confident that Jesus loved him?

John 19: 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

1) John the fisherman

- Mark 1: 19 – 20 When Jesus had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.
- John was a fisherman, probably from Capernaum, which is on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.
- He was the son of Zebedee, and the brother of James, who Jesus also called to be an apostle. As James is always mentioned first – James and John – in the Gospels it’s likely that James was the elder of the two.
- It’s possible that Zebedee wasn’t very poor as he could afford to hire men to work with him and his sons. However, as they also worked on the boats and the nets themselves, they probably weren’t wealthy either.
- Being a fisherman John was a hardworking rough man.
- As Jesus had moved from Nazareth to live in Capernaum, he had probably observed the fisherman and understood their lifestyle, how they fished, their way of mending the nets and how hard they worked.
- He had probably also observed each of them and got to know their temperaments, which probably wasn’t always all that pleasant to watch and listen to.
- Jesus called James and John “the sons of thunder” probably because of their explosive temperaments.
 - Mark 3: 17 James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”)
- It is against this background that Jesus called John to follow him and he left his work and his father and he followed Jesus.
- He made a sacrifice to follow the one who loved him, or is it a sacrifice to be with the one who loves you, and the one whom you love

2) John the disciple whom Jesus loved

- John was one of Jesus’ three closest disciples, along with James and Peter.
- When Jesus went to heal the daughter of a synagogue leader he only took the three of them.
 - Mark 5: 37 He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James.
- When Jesus went up the mountain where he was transfigured he only took the three of them.
 - Matthew 17: 1 – 2 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.
- When he was in the Garden of Gethsemane he called the three of them aside.
 - Matthew 26: 36 – 37 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

- Although the three of them where Jesus' closest disciples John was the one whom Jesus loved. It is mentioned in five places that John was the disciple who Jesus loved.
 - John 13: 23 One of them, **the disciple whom Jesus loved**, was reclining next to him.
 - John 19: 25 – 27 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and **the disciple whom he loved** standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.
 - John 20: 1 – 2 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, **the one Jesus loved**, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"
 - John 21: 7 Then **the disciple whom Jesus loved** said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.
 - John 21: 20 Peter turned and saw that **the disciple whom Jesus loved** was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?")
- John's identity as a disciple was in the fact that he knew that Jesus loved him.
- It is unlikely that Jesus loved John more than the other disciples, but John perceived and understood Jesus' love for him, and he rested in that love.
- John did what he did – left everything and followed Jesus, rested on Jesus' chest, was the only disciple that never abandoned Jesus at the cross – because he knew the love of Jesus above all else.
- Where does your identity lie?
 - Is it in your family, your family heritage, your community, your work, your ministry?
 - Or is it in who you are in Christ and the fact that Jesus knows everything about you and still loves you?

3) John the theologian

- While Matthew, Mark, and Luke focused on the works of Jesus, John focused on the person of Jesus.
- The person of Jesus was a priority over what he did.
- He saw Jesus as:
 - The Word of God who was with God in the beginning and through whom all things were made
 - The One who gave himself for the sins of the world that in whom is eternal life for all who believe.
 - The bread of life, the light of the world, the door to life, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way the truth and the life, and the true vine
 - He is the one from above, not from this world
 - He opens the eyes of the blind – he removes spiritual blindness.
 - He is the servant leader who washes his disciples' feet
 - He is a comforter and would send another comforter after his ascension into heaven
 - He is the assurer of doubters
 - He is the restorer of the fallen
- Through John we have come to know who Jesus is and how he touches each one of us in a special way.
- Do you believe in the entirety of who Jesus is that you may have salvation in his name that he had for Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, the love that had for John, the assurance that he had for Thomas, the restoration that he had for Peter?
- If we truly believe we will be like John and follow Jesus wherever he may lead, and be faithful to him even when others desert him.