

First Responders Bible Study

Week Two- John the disciple who became John the apostle

Day One

In the gospels we see a fiery John ready to take some heads off, for Jesus' sake. Christ nicknamed John and his brother, James, "the sons of thunder," for good reason. At the age of 24 he left his career as a fisherman to follow Christ. Those facts right there tell us much. First, professional fishing is a highly physical job done in outdoor elements. Fishermen were tough dudes in their day. Second, do you remember how all-knowing and immortal you perceived yourself to be in your twenties? Impulsive? Unwilling to take advice from elders? Something about Jesus utterly captured John and his brother James, such that they said, "Yeah we're out, Dad. We're gonna go work with this guy." Doesn't that sound like a twenty something?

So, how then did that reactive, feisty guy become the responsive apostle John of his writings? A man so humble, he couldn't name himself in his own gospel account. A man so filled with affection the word "love" is repetitive in his letters. A man so stable, God trusted him to transcribe THE revelation that reveals events at the end of time.

Read: Mark 1:19-20, Luke 8:51, Luke 9:28

1. Briefly describe what happened when Jesus called John and James, his brother, to follow him. If you were Zebedee how might you react or respond to your son's decisions?
2. What do Luke 8:51 and Luke 9:28 tell us about Jesus' relationship with Peter, James and John as compared to the other nine disciples?
3. In your opinion, do you think John's choice to follow Jesus was a snap decision or a response to something about Jesus? Why?
4. Can you remember a time when God asked you to do something and you quickly obeyed? Can you recall a time you dragged your feet?
5. What if John declined Jesus' invitation to take an adventure that day? What do you think happens when we say no to God now?

Prayer: God, let me recognize your voice today and obey you quickly.

Day Two-John

Read: Luke 9:51-56, Mark 9:38-40

1. If you coined a new nickname for John based on these passages, what would it be? Why?
2. John referenced a story about Elijah in his request to Jesus, concerning the Samaritans. Compare the sin of the Israelites in Elijah's day to the behavior of the Samaritans in John's day. (I Kings 18:21) What do you think about John's request? Retaliation or Justice? Does the punishment he suggested fit the Samaritan's crime?
3. What is Jesus' response to the Samaritan's behavior? Why do you think he rejected John's suggestion?
4. When John becomes upset with people outside Jesus' circle casting out demons, what do you think is his greatest concern? What is Jesus' response compared to John's reaction to "unauthorized" people casting out demons?
5. What is your first impulse when someone disrespects a leader you admire and follow? Can you think of a specific instance when this happened? How did you feel and behave?

Verse to Ponder: *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, Philippians 2:5-6 NIV.*

Prayer: Father God, help me not to take the bait of Satan the next time someone attacks a leader I respect. Instead, help me direct my passions into prayers.

Day Three-John

Read: Matthew 20: 20-28

1. Charles Spurgeon says of this passage, “He is thinking of a cross, and they are dreaming of a crown. He is speaking of being mocked and put to death, and they have ideas of royalty.” In your opinion, where did John and James think Jesus’ kingdom would exist. Where did they picture themselves as assistant rulers?
2. What do you think it says about John’s character that he didn’t ask Jesus about a spot in his kingdom directly, but instead asked his mother to do it? Why do you think he asked her to do this?
3. Does Jesus become angry at this request? What is his response? How does he use this as a teaching moment?
4. Who does react badly to this mother’s request? Why do you think this is?
5. Can you think of a time you did something unwise or mean-spirited, due to pride? Can pride ever be a healthy, redemptive emotion? How? (Hint: check out Luke 10:23 and Psalm 147:11)

Prayer: God help me to quickly recognize the difference between sinful pride and godly pleasure in the development and growth of those I lead and teach.

Day Four-John

Read: John 19:25-27, John 18:36, I John 1: 1-3

1. When John was asked, by Jesus, from the cross, to care for his mother, Mary, this spoke volumes about Jesus' opinion of John's character at this point. What changes do you think Jesus observed compared to earlier years when John wanted to call down fire on people and secure his spot in Jesus' new kingdom?

2. Why do you think John was the only male disciple who stayed by the cross with Jesus, until the end? What kind of character maturity at the age of 27, particularly for John, would one need to watch a beloved friend die this way? Bear in mind that women were not seen as a threat by Roman centurions, so they probably felt more freedom to approach the cross than male followers.

3. Clearly, by the time of Jesus' death, John's character underwent some deep changes. The old John would have asked Jesus to annihilate the Roman centurions at the crucifixion. The passage in 1 John and the John 18:36 give us large clues as to what facilitated this change in him. What did John come to understand and know about Jesus and his kingdom before the crucifixion?

4. As you consider the dramatic change in John, think about a time when you or someone you care for was harmed or mistreated unfairly, unjustly, and you did not behave rightly in response. What do you think God's perspective on that situation might be? What kind of response and behavior do you think he would like to see from you when the same kind of scenario occurs again? Make a list of negative behaviors you've demonstrated in the past and then, next to each one, write down a godly quality or behavior you believe God might want to see in you the next time you are confronted with sin and injustice.

Examples: Praying for the one who sinned against you *versus* saying ugly stuff on social media

Sending a snarky email to a wrongdoer *versus* speaking truth with grace, in an email

Prayer: God I can't change me. Only you can. Give me a greater revelation of you and your kingdom, as you did for John, that I may better represent your Name in the future.

Day Five-John

Read: 1 John 3:16-18, 1 John 4:19-21

1. The John who wrote the above verses is quite different from the one you studied on Day Two. What differences in his character do you see?

2. In 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 Paul lists these qualities of a believer filled with God's love: patience, kindness, lack of envy and jealousy, arrogance and rudeness, not insisting on its own way, not irritable or resentful, no joy in other's wrongdoing, lover of truth. In which of these qualities did John show lacking in his younger years with Jesus?

3. In the verses from 1 John, the apostle prioritizes love, just as Paul did in Corinthians. When we react to a person or circumstance, instead of responding in a Christ-like way, how specifically is that a betrayal of the law of love Christ charges his children to operate under?

4. Compare the younger you to the current you. Can you see growth in the area of reacting/responding? Where do you still need to grow?

Verses to consider:

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Romans 12:10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Prayer: Fill me afresh with your love today, God. Whatever or whomever crosses my path, let love rule over me and behavior.