



SERIES: Lessons from the 12

## **John and Love**

July 7, 2010

James (the brother of John) is a great illustration of what it means to be called by God. Being called means we are dedicated to Christ, signed on to His mission, and serious about the tasks He has called us to. This soldier-like relationship with God, however, is only half of the picture. On the other side is a deep, affectionate, loving relationship with God that is illustrated well by the disciple John. Some believers emphasize the duty of Christians; others emphasize the need to be motivated by love. The truth is that Christian living is *both* commitment to Jesus and impassioned love for Him.

John was likely the youngest of Jesus' disciples and yet one of the leaders among the twelve. We can assume that John had a selfish, aggressive personality that shone forth clearly on at least three occasions. The first instance was when John desired to call fire from heaven to burn up a town that had just rejected Jesus' entrance. Because of this, Jesus nicknamed John (along with his brother James) a Son of Thunder. The second instance is when John (again, along with James) sought out the seat next to Jesus in His coming kingdom, a request which Jesus was displeased with. The third instance is when John tried to stop other men from casting out demons in Jesus' name because they were not disciples of Christ, to which Jesus again was displeased.

It is evident that the 3+ years spent alongside Jesus turned John's selfish, aggressive personality into a loving and caring one. John, the author of 5 books of the Bible, spoke of love in his writings 87 times. He emphasizes it more strongly than any other Biblical author and is even known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved". It was John who sat next to Jesus during the Last Supper and whom Jesus entrusted the care of His mother to when hanging on the cross. John and Jesus' love for each other is a great example of what it means to love God and be loved by Him.

Love for God and others are the two greatest commandments, as designated by Jesus Himself. Not surprisingly, John reinforces this teaching in his letters, pushing men to love God and others sincerely. Some of the Bible's best insights on love are recorded by John's pen. Below are five truths about love:

### *1. God loves the world*

John 3:16-21 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest



his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

2. *Christians should be characterized by love*

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

3. *Love creates relationship with God*

John 14:23-24 ...If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words...

4. *Love is an act of worship*

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

5. *Love is defined by God*

1 John 4:7-12 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

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## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. The Christian life is about both commitment to God and love for Him. Which of these do you gravitate towards? Why do you think that is?
2. John was a naturally unloving person, but became more loving because of his time spent with Jesus. How have you become a more loving person because of Jesus?
3. The two greatest commandments are to love God and love others. What would the world be like if people followed this? Is this possible to accomplish?
4. Which of the five “love truths” talked about is most meaningful to you? Why?
  - God loves the world
  - Christians should be characterized by love
  - Love creates relationship with God
  - Love is an act of worship
  - Love is defined by God