

John the Beloved

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by Toni Babcock



The John we see walking the dusty trails with Jesus in his early ministry does not appear to be the same John who later wrote his gospel, and his letters to the church. An amazing transformation had taken place.

The Apostle John wrote eloquently about the love of God, and our duty to love. The theme of God's love wove its way through all of his writing, perhaps because at one time he had experienced its antithesis even though he was a follower of Jesus. As a disciple, he still had to grapple with fear, hate, pride and prejudice, just as we do.

The gospel of Matthew and Luke give an intriguing glimpse into the heart and mind of this beloved disciple when he was at his worst. They were recorded in the scriptures so we could learn how any one of us can respond when God is not in control of our hearts, our minds, our will, and our emotions.

In the Gospel of Matthew, John and his brother James appeared before Jesus with their mother. She asked Jesus (perhaps at the brothers prodding?) if her sons could have the honor of sitting on his right hand and his left in his kingdom. Jesus explained it was not up to him, but up to his Father to decide who was going to sit where.

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The other disciples became indignant with James and John and their mother's request, (Matthew 20:20-24). I picture the three of them quietly slinking back to the far end of the dinner table that evening!

Jesus used this little tiff among the disciples to teach an important kingdom principle: "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many," (Matthew 20:27-28 KJV).

In another instance, James and John were indignant that a village in Samaria would not receive Jesus when he was on His way to Jerusalem. "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" they asked the Lord.

"You know not what manner of spirit you are of," replied Jesus. "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them," (Luke 9:52-56 KJV). It is no surprise the Lord had surnamed these two disciples Boanerges, which is to say, "the sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17 KJV).

In another incident, John said to Jesus, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us." And Jesus said unto him, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us," (Luke 9:49-50 KJV).

To his credit, John didn't want just anybody ministering in Jesus name. He was protective of Jesus and his gospel. Jesus let John and the rest of the disciples know; if He needed their assistance in this regard, He would certainly ask for it. The disciples were beginning to learn that the scope of Christ's ministry was much larger than they had imagined. In the meantime they were going to have to trust Him.

Here we see a different John in contrast to the "son of thunder" portrayed in these incidents as we later read his words to the church:

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another," (John 4:8-11 KJV).

Toni Babcock is a freelance Christian writer from South St. Paul. She enjoys writing short stories for children and young people, as well as memoirs, poetry and spiritual essays.

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