

# Biography: John (the favourite?!?)

Reconnect – March 6, 2011



**Text:** I John 4:7-19; John 13:1

**Key Thought:** John shows us that the love that starts with God is unbeatable and unstoppable.

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (I John 4:7-8, NLT)

## Intro: Favouritism



- It's the ultimate bad taste in your mouth when you're on the wrong end of it, and guilty pleasure when you're on the "right" end of it – nepotism and all the other –isms – FAVOURITISM
- And something in us says, "this just isn't right"
- Maybe the first time it happened to you was in school, when you weren't part of the in crowd
- Or when you didn't get the last spot on the hockey team because your parents didn't know the coach
- Some people just seem to have "the touch" – where the bus always waits for them, the bosses always like them, jobs always open up for them
- And others couldn't catch a break if they were covered in Velcro
- Favouritism doesn't happen in a vacuum – it's a function of the level of security – or better, Insecurity – that we feel as a part of a group of people

- “Do they like me?” “Do I have a viable role?” “Am I essential to the group?” “Will they one day leave me behind?” and so on
- And as a result, there are “gatekeepers” of any group – those people who see their particular role as guarding the group – who is in, who is out, and what the “official” response will be to both groups

## John, “The Love Guy”:

- You might think it strange that I’d be starting a message on someone generally called “the love guy” with a section on favouritism
- After all, aren’t they exact opposites? You never saw Barney say to an annoying kid, “Beat it!”
- Instead, the friendly purple dinosaur would just sing it out with them – or dance it, or hug it – and everything would be fine – everyone had a place
- But if the life of John – sometimes called the Apostle, sometimes called the Elder, sometimes called the Revelator (that’s not a person who sells homes), sometimes called the Divine, sometimes even called “the disciple that Jesus loved” – if his life teaches us anything, it’s that love can change anyone

## Let’s talk John:

### John “YHWH is gracious” (AD6?-100)

- Son of Zebedee and Salome, and younger brother to James
- Born into an upper middle class family of commercial fishermen
- Gave up the business in his early 20’s to follow his rabbi cousin Jesus, becoming one of his closest aides
- Would go on to spread the message of Jesus across Asia, especially to Ephesus
- The only one of those closest to Jesus NOT to die a martyr’s death, he wrote five books of the New Testament that focused on the love of God and the theology behind Jesus’ coming



- John, son of Zebedee the fisherman and Salome, brother of James, cousin of Jesus on his mom’s side
- @AD6-100, grew up in Capernaum, on the Sea of Galilee in what is now Palestine
- Followed in his father’s footsteps as a fisherman along with his older brother James, part of a successful fishing company that did quite well for itself – boats, nets, employees – he grew up as an upper-middle class kid in a midsize town
- Life seemed like it would be pretty predictable, and he was winning at it – just like his name said, “YHWH is gracious” – until one day when his cousin Jesus came down to see them at the edge of the lake
- John had heard stories that Jesus was acting a bit strangely – about ten years older than John, Jesus had been a carpenter for some years now, supporting his mother and brothers and sisters
- But recently he had walked away from all of that and now he was teaching and speaking about God, like a rabbi would, instead of a carpenter

- It was the end of a long day, and John and his older brother James were preparing their nets for the next day's work, along with their partners Simon and Andrew
- There had been stories about what Jesus had been saying and doing – rumours, really, nothing more – but there was work to be done, and they didn't have time to run around and chase rumours like other people did – how would the bills get paid otherwise?
- So there they were, and Jesus came down to where they were working – and instead of small talk, or childhood stories, he simply said “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people”
- And in spite of himself, he and James jumped out of the boat they were sitting in and followed Him
- The adventure of a lifetime had begun

### **John the Disciple:**

- John would soon find out the life he had chosen – a disciple of a travelling rabbi – wasn't as glamorous as it seemed
- It was feast or famine – either it would be fancy dinners at the homes of rich people, or hungry stomachs as they travelled on the road, with nothing in their pockets and nowhere to sleep except where they stopped
- Either they were surrounded by adoring crowds, cheering and asking for more, or they were getting run out of town by angry mobs
- But not much seemed to faze his cousin, who pressed on “to do his Father's work” and who taught the disciples to do the same
- And the things John saw! He along with Simon (who Jesus had nicknamed Peter) and James became sort of an “inner circle” with Jesus, which he relished – they were privy to some of the most spectacular miracles that Jesus did – raising a little girl from the dead, being transformed into a shimmering being of light while he conversed with heroes of the past – and they were also his “go-to” people, running his most important errands and directing the affairs of the group, like their schedule
- Being in that inner circle also gave them exclusive access to his teaching, and when he would tell the crowds puzzles and brain-teasers, they would pull the answers out of him in private, even if they still didn't understand what he was saying sometimes
- John was the youngest of the disciples, and it made him feel pretty important to not only be a part of the group, but to be one of the leaders, too
- And that's where it started to go to his head, and he began to show the worst of himself, demonstrating the nickname that Jesus had given him and James: “Sons of Thunder”

### **Three Wrong Moves**

- 1) “not one of us” – trying to forbid people from helping others unless they were “in” the right club
- 2) Fire from heaven – wanting to call down fire from God and kill people who got in their way
- 3) Right and left side of Jesus in the end – Mark 10 – right after Jesus had said that He was going to suffer and be rejected and killed(!) - hiding behind his mom's skirt along with his brother when she asks Jesus to give them preferential treatment at the end of all things (Mark 10)

## A Demonstrated Love

- And then there's the whole "beloved disciple" thing
- In the book of John, the disciple John is never named – instead, he is called "the disciple that Jesus loved" about five different times, starting at the Last Supper
- So John – "the disciple whom Jesus loved" – he writes a biography of Jesus and this is how he describes himself? What are we supposed to make of that? Swelled head?
- Or brokenness at realizing the amount of love that Jesus had shown to all, most of all him... (after the fact) – meant to be a mark of humility in the ancient world, not a mark of vanity as it would be in our time – OR – it was given to him in the book AFTER his death, as a way of remembering him by his followers, who did put some finishing touches on the book (editorial bits)
- John 13 – called for the first time "the disciple that Jesus loved" – at the last supper – he starts to get the message of Jesus' love – it becomes real to him, and all the love that he's seen starts to soak in
- That's when things start to change, and he starts to act as if others are more important than himself
- Seems to know some members of the ruling household – gets himself and Peter in deeper towards the show trial – as a big provider of fish to the city?
- The only disciple at or near the crucifixion – Jesus entrusts his mother to him over his own brothers and family (John 19) and afterwards Mary becomes a part of his household (reinforces the cousin idea???)

## A Life Changed

- Preaching with Peter, leading the church in Jerusalem and then being sent up to Ephesus, the gateway to the west – with one message – love
- No more in and out, no more "not for you", no more bars on the windows and entry cards at the door – instead everything was wide open, the more the merrier
- John becomes Peter's companion in the book of Acts – Acts 3 healing the lame beggar, then preaching before the ruling council – seems like they had a real connection – the loud, impulsive one with the quieter thinker – and then we lose track of John in Acts after his brother is executed by Herod
- Pops up in Galatians 2 as Paul tells the story of how he went to Jerusalem to meet with the leaders of the Way after his conversion
- In late life – persecuted by Rome, miraculously survives being boiled in oil in the Roman Coliseum – then exiled to Patmos and writes Revelation
- Ultimately, he would be the one of the twelve NOT to die a martyr's death – instead, he would be telling the message of love his whole life, as he pastored the church in Ephesus, a major ancient city

## John's message:

- go through the text – "we love because he loved us" – no other love is possible, truly – it can only come out of us because of his love, whether in making us, or saving us – love has a starting point, and that's God, not our own self-serving imaginations – altruism is another part of the *imago Dei*

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love – not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us... We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them... We love because he loved us first. 1 John 4:7-19, NLT

- Wrote five books of the NT – Gospel, three letters, Revelation

### Why John?

- Jesus makes John “the favourite” because of something he sees in him – something that will make him the mouthpiece, the microphone for love – John is the one of the disciples that really “gets it” – he will live a life of love and show and tell everyone else around him the same –
- Everything Jesus did was intentional – because he knew he only had so much time to do it – i.e. Randy Pausch “The Last Lecture” – so the way that he related to the disciples was also extremely intentional, all for a reason
- Wrote letters to churches – on the theme of love – loving God, loving neighbour – Jesus’ example had “gotten through”

### Key Thought:

## TAKE IT HOME:

**John shows us that the love that starts with God is unbeatable and unstoppable.**

Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father.

He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he showed them the full extent of his love.”

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## Conclusion (show second National Geographic video)



- need to mention videos, work them in – for God, no-one is typical or insignificant – the God we serve knows us all, every one, and values us all, every one – His love is never in danger of running out, regardless of how many billions are on the earth at any given time
- We watch a video like that, and it’s geared to make us freak out – overpopulation! Unsustainability! Doom, disaster, the end of everything!
- But when we watch it with a different perspective, a different “set of eyes”, we see that each person is beautiful – their families, their dreams, their hopes, their lives – why would we ever say that a life wasn’t worthwhile? Wasn’t needed? Wasn’t necessary?
- Irenaeus – when John became too weak to walk, he was carried to church meetings. There he whispered again and again, “Little children, love one another” – he GOT THE MESSAGE
- John “figured it out” – that every life mattered, that every person had value to God and that He wanted all of them to be with Him, forever

## Response: Discussion

- (on love unbeatable, unstoppable) – over the last five weeks, their journey with God, spiritual passion, looking forward to Lent, etc.