

John [The Apostle]

John was the son of Zebedee, most likely the younger son because he is mentioned after his brother James, except in the days of the early church when he was closely associated with Peter, [Luke 8:51; Luke 9:28; Acts 1:13].

That John's mother's name was Salome is an inference from Mark 16:1 and Matthew 27:56, for the third woman who is said to have accompanied the two Mary's to the tomb is designated Salome by Mark and "*the mother of Zebedee's children*" by Matthew.

Salome is usually regarded as the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus Christ, because in John 19:25 four women are said to have stood near the cross, the two Mary's mentioned by Mark and Matthew, the mother of Jesus Christ and His mother's sister. If this identification is correct, John was a cousin of Jesus Christ on his mother's side.

John's parents would appear to be well-to-do, for his father, a fisherman, had "*hired servants*," [Mark 1:20] and Salome was one of the women who "*provided for Jesus Christ out of their means*" [Luke 8:3 RSV; Mark 15:40].

John has often been identified with the unnamed disciples of John the Baptist, who with Andrew was directed by John the Baptist to Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, [John 1:35-37].

After their subsequent call by Jesus Christ to leave their father and their fishing, [Mark 1:19-20], James and John were nicknamed by Jesus as "*sons of thunder*," [Mark 3:17], probably because they were high-spirited, impetuous Galileans, whose zeal was undisciplined and sometimes misdirected, [Luke 9:45].

This aspect of their character is shown by their outburst after a Samaritan village refused their master's entrance, [Luke 9:54].

Moreover, their personal ambition was, it would seem, untempered by a true insight into the nature of the Kingdom of God and this lingering trait of selfishness, together with their readiness to suffer for Jesus Christ regardless of self, is illustrated in the request they made to Him, encouraged by their mother, [Matthew 20:20-23; Mark 10:35-40].

On three important occasions in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, John is mentioned in company with his brother James and Simon Peter to the exclusion of the other apostles, at the raising of Jairus' daughter [Mark 5:37] at the transfiguration, [Mark 9:2] and the garden of Gethsemane [Mark 14:33].

John is not mentioned by name in the fourth gospel, though the sons of Zebedee are referred to [John 21:2] but he is almost certainly the disciple called "*the disciple whom Jesus loved*" who lay close to Jesus Christ's at the Last Supper, [John 13:23], who was entrusted with the care of Jesus Christ's mother at the time of Jesus Christ's death, [John 19:26-27], who ran with Peter to the tomb on the first Sunday after the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the Sabbath and was first to see the full significance of the undisturbed grave – clothes with no body inside them, [John 20:2, 8] and who was present when the risen Jesus Christ revealed Himself to seven of His disciples by the Sea of Tiberius [John 21:20-24]. This gives evidence that John lived to a great age and was author of this fourth gospel.

According to the early narratives of Acts, John together with Peter were closely associated and had to bear the brunt of Jewish hostility to the early Christian Church, [Acts 4:13; Acts 5:33, 40]. Both men showed a boldness of speech and action which astonished the Jewish authorities, who regarded them as "*uneducated men*," [Acts 4:13].

John, it seems, continued to play a leading role for some years in the church at Jerusalem.

On behalf of the other apostles John and Peter laid hands on the Samaritans who had been converted by the ministry of Philip, [Acts 8:14-17].

John was described as a “pillar” of the church at Jerusalem by Paul when he visited the city some fourteen years after his conversion, [Galatians 2:9].

We do not know when John left Jerusalem, nor where he went.

Some of the greatest statements about God’s loving nature were written by John the apostle who experienced God’s love in a unique way.

John, Jesus Christ’s disciple, expressed his relationship with the Son of God by calling himself as “*the disciple whom Jesus loved,*” [John 21:20].

Although Jesus Christ’s love is clearly communicated in the gospels, in John’s gospel it is the central theme.

Because of his own personal experience of Jesus Christ’s love was so strong John was sensitive to those words and actions of Jesus Christ that illustrated how the One who is love, [1 John 4:8, 10] loved others, [1 John 4:19].

Being aware of God’s love is a great motivator for change in our lives.

God’s love is **not** given in exchange for our efforts.

John 3:16-17 [New King James] “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*”

This includes a world that is the enemy of the Creator God who gave them life.

Romans 5:6-11 [New King James] “*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*”

It is through the life of Jesus Christ in us, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that we receive the power to change our lives to one that is acceptable to a Holy God.

John knew this by personal experience of both the love of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit whose first characteristic is love, [Galatians 5:22-25].

Those who, like John, realise how much they are loved by God, seeing this love in the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are able to love much.

When God changes a life, as He did that of John, He does not take away personal characteristics but redirects them, refined by love, to be effectively used in His service.

Have you accepted the love of God as John did and changed your lives to reflect that love in your relationship with other human beings as John encourages us to do in his writings?

Remember true love is not simply warm feeling for others, it is an attitude of mind and spirit that is expressed in the actions we take in life.

By helping when it is **not** convenient.

By giving when it hurts.

By devoting energy to others' welfare rather than our own.

By absorbing hurts from others without complaining or fighting back.

This is what true love is even when we find it hard to do, and know we need supernatural help from the Holy Spirit.

We find a beautiful description of this love in **1 Corinthians 13:4-13**.