



LESSON 1: 1 JOHN 1:1-4

The book of 1 John was written by one of Jesus' closest friends, John. Before we get into what John wrote, let's spend a little bit of time learning who he was. The first time we meet John in scripture, he is not one of Jesus' followers. Please read John 1:29-37.

How did John the Baptist know that Jesus was the Messiah?

What did the two followers of John the Baptist do when they heard him announce that Jesus was the Son of God?

Why do you think they left John the Baptist to follow Jesus?

John is well known as being one of Jesus' disciples and also as being the writer of the Gospel of John, 1, 2, and 3rd John, and Revelation. However, he did have a career before he became a disciple which shows us a bit of who John was.

Please read Mark 1:16-20.

What was John doing when Jesus called for him to follow?

Verse 20 gives us a clue to the financial state of John and his family. It says that the two brothers left their father Zebedee “in the boat with the hired men and followed him.” These men were fishermen, but they were not lowly servants or men who were barely making ends meet. John and his family were well known and well-off men. We can see this in John 18:15. After Jesus was taken to Annas, Peter and “another disciple” (whom most biblical scholars agree is John) go to the high priest’s house. Remember that the high priest was the ultimate authority under the Romans. He was a very important and powerful man, and we read that this other disciple (John) knew him.

Based on this information, what things could you devise about John’s character?

As you might imagine, John was a very confident and bold man. Scripture gives us a few examples of times when we see the zealous heart that John had. Please read about them and answer the questions.

Mark 9:38-41

What did John see that upset him?

Why do you think this made him so upset?

What was Jesus’ response?

Luke 9:51-56

What did the people of the Samaritan village do, or not do, to upset John?

What was John's response?

What does this show you about his character?

What was Jesus' response?

This instances, and undoubtedly others not recorded in scripture, led Jesus to give John the nickname "Son of Thunder". (Mark 3:17)

What kind of person do you think John was based on Jesus' nickname for him?

John also suffered from a bit of an entitlement problem which Jesus addressed. Please read Mark 10:35-45.

What request did John and his brother make?

Why do you think they felt deserving of such a request?

How do you think Jesus' response, both directly to John and his brother and also to the other disciples, affect John?

John's motivation for writing the books of 1, 2 and 3rd John stem from the growing belief of the Gnostics. The Gnostics taught a duality of man principle which stated that the mental part of a man could transcend the sinful lifestyle they lived. It even encouraged sinful and debase behavior because they did not believe their actions affected their spirituality. They also taught that Jesus had never actually come to earth in the flesh. They believed that he was merely an aberration or illusion which appeared human but was more like a hologram and definitely not physical.

From what you have learned about John's character as a young man, how do you think he responded to the Gnostic's beliefs as an old man?

How would you respond if someone tried to convince you of the Gnostic's belief?

One of the ways that John responded was to sit down and write. It is interesting that he waited so long to write about the greatest experience he ever had. John wrote his gospel around the year 85 and the books of 1, 2, and 3rd John sometime later (between 85-95). By comparison, Matthew was written around the year 50. Mark was written about the year 65 to 70, and Luke was written some time between the years 59-63.

Why do you think John wrote so long to write his books?

Please read 1 John 1:1-4.

What appears to be the main reason John wrote this book?

How can his eyewitness account challenge the teaching of the Gnostics?

What have you witnessed and experienced that might just change someone's view of Christianity?

How can you share what you have seen, heard, and felt?