

## The Apostle<sup>1</sup> John



### SABBATH—AUGUST 9

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Matthew 8:21, 22; Mark 10:35–45; 1 John; 2 John; 3 John.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are living by the truth” (3 John 4, Nlrv).

**KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT:** The apostle John is one of the most loved characters (persons) from the Bible. What can we learn from him?

**A FAVORITE CHURCH STORY DESCRIBES THE APOSTLE JOHN** as an old man living in Ephesus.<sup>2</sup> Because of John's very weak health, his followers had to carry him to church. As they met together, his only spoken words were, “Little children, love one another.”

John's followers were tired of hearing John tell the same thing all the time. They asked, “Master, why do you always say this?”

“It is the Lord's command,” John answered. “And if this alone be done, it is enough!”

Whether true or not, this story shows how the hotheaded “son of thunder” was slowly changed into a “son of love and grace.”<sup>3</sup>

In John's three letters in the Bible, we find a man whose life is sparked by love and some of the most encouraging verses in the Bible. One of the most famous is “My dear children, I'm [I am] writing this to you so that you will not sin. But suppose someone does sin. Then we have one who speaks to the Father for us. He stands up for us. He is Jesus Christ” (1 John 2:1, Nlrv).

1. apostle—a disciple (follower) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel (the good news about Jesus) after Jesus returned to heaven.

2. Ephesus—a city founded in the tenth century B.C. by Greeks who came from the city-state of Athens. Ephesus later became part of the Roman Empire. It was one of the seven churches that John wrote to in the book of Revelation (Revelation 2:1–7). Today, the ruins (remains) of the city lie in what is now Turkey.

3. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

**SUNDAY—AUGUST 10****A SPECIAL CALLING (Mark 1:20)**

When Jesus called John and his brother James to follow Him, they were working in their boat fishing. “Right away he [Jesus] called out to them. They left their father Zebedee in the boat with hired men. Then they followed Jesus” (Mark 1:20, NIV).

**What important principles (rules) can we take from Mark 1:20 about what it means to follow Jesus? Read also Matthew 8:21, 22; Luke 14:26; and Philippians 3:8.**

John’s decision (choice) to follow Jesus and leave his father’s business would forever change his life. Luke gives the best description of Jesus’ call (Luke 5:1–11).

**How does Luke 5:1–11 teach us what it means to be a follower of Jesus? What, again, is the point that is being made?**

No question, those who follow Jesus need to make a full and complete surrender.<sup>4</sup> We owe all to Jesus as the Lord of all. But Jesus does not demand our hearts because He is selfish. No, not at all! Instead, Jesus knows how real the battle is that we are in. If there is any area of self we have not surrendered (given to Jesus), Satan will use it to try to destroy us. So, we need to surrender completely to the Lord.



**Jesus asks that we give Him our whole heart.**

John did this! So, John is not catching fish. He is spending the rest of his life “catching” people for the kingdom of heaven. From now on, John’s mission field was the world. He was to carry hope and healing and the good news to those who needed it very much. John would have some hard lessons to learn because he was faithful to Jesus. But he was in a good place to learn them, no matter the pain that would come.

**How faithful are you to Jesus? Have you surrendered all to Him? How can you know where your heart truly is? What changes might you need to make?**

**MONDAY—AUGUST 11****SON OF THUNDER  
(Mark 10:35–45)**

Jesus gave John and his brother James a special nickname—“the sons

4. surrender—the act of giving one’s whole life to Jesus to love and serve Him and to obey His holy law.

of thunder” (or *Boanerges* in Aramaic<sup>5</sup>). This name means that both brothers are hotheaded. But Jesus knows how to gently correct their hot tempers.

**According to Mark 10:35–45, what do James and John ask Jesus? How does Jesus answer them? What does this tell us about the character<sup>6</sup> of both of these men?**

John and his brother also showed an unhealthy pride. In answer to their question, Jesus asked if they could share His future end. “‘We can,’” they boasted (Mark 10:39, NIV).

During another event Jesus and His disciples (followers) were traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem. It was Jesus’ normal habit to go directly through Samaria rather than taking a longer route to avoid the hated Samaritans. Jesus sent James and John ahead to find a place for them to rest for the night. James and John arrived at one village. But when the people learned they were headed for Jerusalem, they showed no hospitality.<sup>7</sup>

**According to Luke 9:54, what does James and John’s answer to this insult show us about their characters? How much does the beloved John have to learn?**

What a big difference we find in the John shown in these stories and the one who writes the letters in the Bible later. What a changed man! What a different person! No doubt the change did not happen quickly. John had some hard lessons to learn that helped him to become a great missionary.<sup>8</sup>



**Jesus can turn us from “sons of thunder” into sons and daughters of God.**

**Remember some of your most recent hard lessons. What did you learn? What other ways could you have learned what you did other than through suffering? What other lessons do you need to learn? What changes do you need to make in your life now that could save you from having to learn them the hard way?**

5. Aramaic—the language common people used in Jesus’ time.

6. character—who someone is; all the things that a person does, feels, and thinks are what a person is made of; a person’s character is the sum of the choices he or she makes, such as the choice to be honest or to cheat.

7. hospitality—making visitors feel welcome in your home; welcoming guests into your home and taking good care of them by feeding them and giving them a place to stay.

8. missionary—a person sent out by the church to spread its religion in a foreign country.

**TUESDAY—AUGUST 12****THE WITNESS OF JOHN  
(John 21:25)**

John was an eyewitness who had spent much time in Jesus' company. So, he had much to tell.

**What message do you think John was trying to share with us in John 21:25? What hope can we find in that verse?**

John was not able to tell us everything. But with the Holy Spirit's leading, John does teach us one of the most important of all truths. That truth is the fact that Jesus Christ came as a human (person). That is something all philosophy,<sup>9</sup> science, and logic<sup>10</sup> could never tell us. Instead, God uses John to tell it to us.

In the first verse of his Gospel,<sup>11</sup> John speaks about the Word, or in Greek, the *Logos*. To the Jewish reader, the Word means the Word of God (Jesus) that created the world. The *logos* also means His teachings or laws that guide the way we should live our lives (read Deuteronomy 32:45–47).

For the Greek reader, *logos* had other meanings. The *logos* was a life force (power; energy) that kept the universe<sup>12</sup> together. Leaves, seasons, and stars in the sky were kept in balance by the *logos*. The Greek philosophers (thinkers) Heraclitus, Plutarch, Philo, and Plato wrote about the *logos*.

For both Jewish and Greek readers, John makes a shocking claim: This *Logos* is a person. The *Logos* became a human and broke into human history in a certain place at a certain time with a special purpose. This purpose was to bring salvation<sup>13</sup> to all people.

**What does John 1:1–3, 14 mean? In your own words, write out your best understanding of what the Lord is showing us here.**

Jesus, our Creator, entered into the world and became a human. That alone is almost unbelievable. Then we can add to it the reason He came to die for our sins. Then we have an example of the character of God<sup>14</sup> that should make us very humble in our prayer and obedience to God.

9. philosophy—the study of human thought about the meaning of life, how mind relates to matter, and the problems of right and wrong.

10. logic—the study of the rules of correct reasoning and of proving an argument by reasoning.

11. Gospel—one of four books in the New Testament of the Bible that tells the story of Jesus' life and His teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

12. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

13. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.

14. character of God—who God is; understanding and having the character of God is the same as being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God's laws (Ten Commandments) show us His character.

**WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 13****LIFE-GIVER (John 20:31)**

In John 20:31, John gives the reason he wrote his Gospel. He also explains that the entire purpose of his life is to lead people to believe in Jesus so that they might gain eternal (forever) life. All through the New Testament, a key theme (topic; subject) is that eternal life comes only from Jesus.

**Read the following verses to find some of the things John says about this key theme of “life”: John 6:35, 63; John 10:28; John 12:25; John 14:6; John 17:3. Where do you notice that the idea of “life” means not only eternal life but also present life?**

What makes these promises of eternal life so important? All creatures (people or animals) on earth die, but humans alone can understand the idea of eternity (life without end; forever). We alone can understand the great difference between our short life on earth and the hope of eternity. And we also can understand how death can happen to us at any minute of our lives from a clogged artery,<sup>15</sup> a drunken driver, or AIDS.<sup>16</sup>

But what a wonderful hope we have,

then, to know that death is not the end. Death is just a sleep that will seem like a second. And the next thing we know, we will be with Jesus for eternity.



What a wonderful hope we have to know that death is not the end.

**How should the hope of eternal life influence<sup>17</sup> how we live now? In what ways should you live this life differently because you know that you have the promise of eternal life?**

**THURSDAY—AUGUST 14****SPENDING TIME WITH JESUS  
(3 John 11)**

**What does John mean in 3 John 11 about those who had not seen**

15. artery—any of the blood vessels (tubes in the body) that carry blood from the heart to all parts of the body.

16. AIDS—a condition caused by a virus which destroys some types of white blood cells, leading to infections, some forms of cancer, and so on. The word AIDS comes from the full name of this condition, acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

17. influence—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

### God? What is his point? How does one see God?

John had spent much time with Jesus. But John still had much to learn from Jesus. Sometimes John put his own best interests ahead of Jesus'. John even had strong opinions of others. For example, John stopped someone from casting out demons in Jesus' name because he was not Jesus' official disciple (follower) (Mark 9:38). Jesus gently taught John that " 'Anyone who is not against us is for us' " (verse 40, NIV).

John grew in strength of character at the Master's side. At the time of Jesus' crucifixion (death on the cross), all the other disciples had fled. But John alone remained at the foot of the cross. The respect Jesus held for John is shown in the way He entrusted His



John was the only follower of Jesus to remain at the foot of the cross.

mother into John's care (John 19:26, 27).

### What important principle is found in 2 Corinthians 3:18? How can we use this principle in our own lives?

If you read the epistles (letters) of John, you will notice the kindness, gentleness, and mercy found all through them. What a sharp difference from the John presented in the Gospels. Truly something very wonderful happened to John. We know what changed him. John had been with Jesus, and his life and character had been greatly changed from the experience.

**Read quickly through the three Epistles (letters) of 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John. Note the character shown there. How did Jesus change John's life? What parts of your own life could use change too? What useful steps are you making to let God bring those changes?**

### FRIDAY—AUGUST 15

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, "John the Beloved," pages 539–545, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

"In the terrible attacks against Christians, the apostle John did much to support and strengthen the faith of

the believers. John gave a testimony<sup>18</sup> which his enemies could not argue against. That helped John's believers to face troubles with courage and loyalty. When the faith of the Christians would seem to weaken under the terrible attacks, the old, tried servant of Jesus [John] would again tell the story of the crucified [put to death on the cross] and risen Savior." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 568.

"John lived to be very old. He saw Jerusalem and the beautiful temple destroyed. John was the last of the disciples who had been closely connected with the Savior. John's message had great influence in establishing the fact that Jesus was the Messiah [Chosen One], the Savior of the world. No one could doubt John's faith. Through his teachings many were led to turn from unbelief." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 569.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Go through the three epistles (letters) of John again. What other parts of John's character can be found there? What strong words can

you find there for those who are not following truth? How does this help us understand what love is all about?

❷ How does Jesus change our characters? The Bible does show many acts of God. But, is there any event in which a person's character quickly is changed by an act of God? For example, the blind are given sight and lepers are cured. But did their characters change, as well? If not, why not? What does the answer tell us about the growth of character development?

❸ As a class, talk about the answers to these questions: How loving and accepting is your local church? What things can you do to help your church become more loving and accepting of others?

**SUMMARY:** John experienced firsthand the life-giving love of his Savior. Then he let that experience flow into all his words and actions. John's life and writings remind us of the important place of love in the Christian life. They show how it must be the basis of all our mission work.

18. testimony—the many good things a person tells to others about what God has done for him or her.