

Twelve Ordinary Men
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A Study in Transformation

- Another look:
 - The son of thunder gets the nickname “the apostle of love.” What three areas of love does John write extensively about? (p. 96)
 - The Christian’s love for Christ
 - Christ’s love for His church
 - The Christian’s love for one another
 - What are examples of John’s black and white thinking? (p. 97)
 - Light and darkness / life against death
 - Kingdom of God vs. the kingdom of the devil
 - Children of God vs. children of the devil
 - Judgment of the righteous vs. the wicked
 - Resurrection to life vs. to damnation
 - Receiving Christ vs. rejecting Christ
 - Fruit vs. fruitlessness / obedience vs. disobedience
 - Love vs. hatred
 - 2 John 9
 - Quote from p. 96. What explains the change that took place in John? (p. 100)
 - Jesus has three years and transforms his character
 - A self-centered fanatic to a mature man of balance
 - A son of thunder into an apostle of love
 - When does the apostle learn the balance of truth and love? (p. 105)
 - Mark 9:38
 - Second John: First half is on love, second half on loyalty to God’s truth
 - To Peter Jesus said, “Feed My sheep.” What did the dying Savior say to John? Why did Jesus choose John for this task? (p. 115)
 - “Take care of My mother.”
 - As far as we know, John was the only one at the crucifixion
 - Jesus trusted John because he learned to be a humble and loving servant
- Biblical connections:
 - Does John tell us that Christians are incapable of sinning? (1 John 1:8-2:1; 3:5-6)
 - How does that compare to Paul? (Rom 7:14-24)

- John is concerned with the overall pattern of a person's life – righteousness is to mark the believer's life
- Paul is concerned with exceptions that occur in a person's life because we live in an imperfect world
- Mark 9:1-38 – The transfiguration story
- Why do the events on the mountain fulfill the prediction made in 9:1?
 - Appearance of Moses and Elijah with the glorified Jesus
 - The disciples witness the kingdom in a special way
 - Jesus was not speaking of an end-of-world experience
- Why would it be difficult for these ambitious men to not talk about this experience?
- Why would such an experience make it easy to start debating issues of status?
 - They would want to add this to their list of achievements
 - This meant prestige among their peers
 - That is why they talked about it with themselves
 - They milked this ego-boosting moment for all it's worth
- John celebrates the gift of forgiveness (1Jn 1:9) as we confess sin. Jesus helped John discover forgiveness earlier...
 - Mark 9:33 – Jesus does not ask what they were talking about because he did not know, he wanted to provide them an opportunity to confess their selfish actions
 - Mark 9:35-37 – John is convicted of his sectarianism when he hears Jesus extol the virtues of servanthood. John confesses his guilt.
- Paul paints a picture of spiritual maturity (Eph 4:13-15)
- What suggests this is a lifetime process?
- Was it a lifetime project for John?
- Lesson highlights:
 - John was a seeker of truth like Andrew, traveling far to see John the Baptist. In spite of John's disciplined search for truth, why was he a difficult person to be around?
 - He was lacking in love and compassion for people
 - He had to learn that knowing truth and living according to the truth were different things
 - John had a low aptitude for tolerance, and did not score too well in humility. What makes you think that Jesus had a remedial student on his hands (Mark chapters 9-10)?
 - In light of Mark 9:35-37, we understand why John's favorite term for his readers is "my little children."
 - Was this an indication that he finally caught on?

- They wanted to be important, Jesus said to become like children
- Now they fuss about seating arrangements, (just like children)?
- Which indicator strikes you as the evidence that he caught on to humility? (p. 110-111)
 - In his gospel he never mentions his name
 - He never paints himself in the foreground as a hero
 - Only John includes the servanthood of Jesus washing the disciples' feet
 - The letters mention "little children" and "beloved" and he calls himself a brother and fellow child of God
 - In the Revelation he writes he is a brother and companion even though he is the last surviving apostle
- Lasting implications:
 - John appeared to have grown up in spiritual maturity. What qualities do you normally associate with someone who is spiritually mature?
 - Our best characteristics can become an occasion for stumbling...ambition not balanced with humility can lead to pride. How might these qualities get corrupted by sin?
 - Dedication to job
 - Financial generosity at church
 - Sensitivity to the feelings of others
 - What is the risk of preaching about love and tolerance at the exclusion of issues the Bible clearly speaks against?
 - What qualities of children do you think Jesus had in mind when he called John to become more like them?
- Mark 9:38-41
 - What did John confess he had done?
 - How did Jesus respond?
 - If this was your first encounter with John, what kind of person do you think he is?
 - When are you most tempted to protect your group's way of doing things?
 - Which describes how our church welcomes new people?
 - Are you sure we're the church you're looking for?
 - What took you so long? We've been waiting for you.
 - Follow me. I'll show you around.
 - You're new? I didn't know.
 - We're excited about the new ideas you will bring to our church.
 - What does this say about our attitude toward guests?

- Romans 6:6-7
 - What is the Christian's relation to sin?
 - Read Rom 7:14-24, is this a description of a slave to sin?
 - Read Heb 12:1-2 and write out a description of an ensnaring sin.
 - What ensnaring sin can be a battle ground in our church?
 - What advice does John give? (1Jn 1:9)
 - What is God's response to our confession of sin?
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-5
 - Paraphrase Paul's words so you can understand.
 - Why would a person from an affluent background (like John) have difficulty digesting this definition of love?
 - Which characteristic do you still lack?
 - Which is he building in your life right now?
 - When are you most in need of being reminded that loving means giving up your rights?
 - Even with Paul's love chapter, John writes more about love. What verse stands out to you?
- Luke 14:7-11
 - What setting does Jesus picture here?
 - Where was he when he gave these instructions?
 - What elements of the instructions seem counter-cultural in our society?
 - What suggests that our humility may not go unnoticed?
 - What should be our response if we take the lowest seat and no one seems to notice?
- Revelation 1:9
 - What words does John use to describe himself?
 - How are these self-effacing terms?
 - Other than siblings, who else do you consider your brothers and sisters?
 - In what ways are those terms more than just a handy means of address?
 - Why is this kind of relationship necessary in order to balance a life of love and truth?