



JESUS: OUR EXEMPLAR — During His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (and later just before His Death on the Cross), Jesus entrusted Himself to the Heavenly Father in prayer. We should do the same.

From the Cross to the Empty Tomb

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John the Beloved

Loyalty

At the very beginning of His public ministry, Jesus chooses John and his brother James as His disciples (see Mk 1:16-20). The two are the sons of Zebedee, a fisherman of some means. The name of their mother is not explicitly stated. However, tradition links Matthew's reference to the mother of Zebedee's children (see Mt 27:56) with Mark's parallel mention of Salome at the Cross (see Mk 15:40) and thereby names Salome, a younger sister of Jesus' own mother, as the mother of James and John. This would make John and his brother cousins of Jesus.

The gospels give John a position of importance among the Twelve Apostles. Beyond his preeminence as one of the first four disciples called by Jesus, he is set apart by the name Jesus gives him. Just as Jesus adds a second name to Simon and calls him Peter, He also gives an epithet to John. Because of their impetuous temper (see Lk 9:54), Jesus calls James and John "*Boanerges*." This Aramaic surname means "sons of thunder" (see Mk 3:17). It is a title that James and

John rightly earn by their quick judgment of others and eager enthusiasm for honor.

John's importance among the followers of Jesus can be inferred from the fact that Jesus singles him out three times for special attention, albeit for a rebuke. When John tells Jesus that the disciples forbade an exorcist who was not one of them from casting out a devil in the name of Jesus (see Mk 9:38-41; Lk 9:49-50), Jesus reprimands him for not understanding Jesus' true mission. When John asked for a special place of honor in the kingdom (see Mk 10:35-45), Jesus again rebukes him. When John and his brother want to call down fire upon the Samaritan village that would not receive Jesus on His journey to Jerusalem, Jesus again reprimands him (see Lk 9:51-56).

Jesus does not pass over lightly the faults of His closest friends. In fact, it is a mark of genuine friendship to correct a friend (see Prov 27:5-6). John clearly enjoys an intimate friendship with Jesus. He is one of the three disciples Jesus takes with Him when He raises Jairus' daughter from the dead, when He is transfigured in glory on the mountain, and when He privately gives His teaching on the end time. Jesus trusts John.

He allows him to see what others would not understand. Only in the context of authentic friendship is self-revelation possible.

From the very beginning of his call, John is found always in the company of Peter: at the cure of Peter's mother-in-law (see Mk 1:29-31), in the home of Jairus (see Mk 5:37), on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Mk 9:2), on the Mount of Olives (see Mk 13:3), in the preparations for the Last Supper (see Lk 22:8), in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Mk 14:33), and at the house of the high priest (see Jn 18:15). But there is one time Peter and John part company. During the Passion, both follow Jesus along the road to Calvary. But only John takes the journey to the foot of the Cross.

Some had followed Jesus with the hope of a political Messiah who would bring them security and freedom from Rome. They were looking for more bread, more wine, more good things of this world. Unlike these "friends," with Jesus when there is something to be gained, John remains with Jesus when every hope of worldly success has been stripped away (see Prov 14:20; 19:4). True friendship is unconditional (see Prov 17:17).

As Ruth remained bound to her mother-in-law Naomi in times of trouble, as David continued to love his closest friend Jonathan slain in battle, John loves Jesus to the end. John brings to life the words of Proverbs 18:24: *“a friend is more loyal than a brother.”*

False friendship ruins the human heart. But a friendship that is loyal and true reveals the very heart of the God who says to us who are so unfaithful *“Ephraim, how could I part with you: Israel, how could I give you up?”* (Hos 11:8). Faithfulness and loyalty are love in deed. John at the foot of the Cross is the loyal friend. Like John, we remain loyal to Jesus when we do not stop trusting in Him, loving Him, even in the midst of sufferings too great to understand.

