

The One

Read: James 4:8

The One (John) was closer to Christ than anyone else, and expressed Jesus heart more than anyone else.

(John 13:23)

John is the only disciple of whom the Bible says he is the one “whom Jesus loved.” He had a special, close, tenderness in his relationship to Jesus. Does this mean Jesus did not love the others as much, or that John simply responded to Jesus in a greater degree? Why or why not?

The One (John) was trusted with the things closest to Jesus’ heart.

(John 19:26)

John was entrusted with the care of Jesus’ mother. He, and no other disciple, was given this task. What do you think this says about Jesus’ trust for John, and for John’s devotion to Jesus?

Application:

The closer we come to Christ, the more like Him we become, and the more our heart will care about the things He cares about.

(Psalm 37:4, James 4:6, Romans 8:29)

The closer to Christ, the greater the authority.

(John 19:26)

In ancient Mid-East culture, the eldest son was regarded as the head of the family after the father died. Jesus had many brothers and sisters – but he entrusted John with the care of His mother, i.e., to lead His family.

Those closest to Christ are used the most.

John was used by Jesus the longest having lived longer than any other Apostle. Paul was used in more places and has influenced more cultures than any single Apostle.

Our level of use to God depends upon our closeness to Him, and how well we allow the Word of God and passion of Jesus to transform and guide our daily lives.

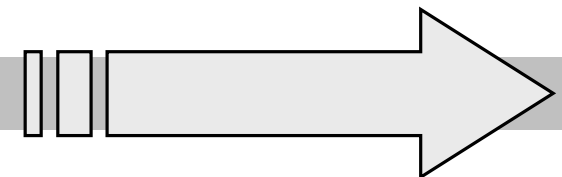
Five Levels of Closeness with God

Throughout the Bible there are many stories of people who were gifted by God with special authority, power, or responsibilities. Those who were truly close to God were given the greatest responsibility. Look at a few of these examples:

- Abraham was taken in his old age and given a family, and land, and promises that would lead to a nation and the Savior of the world. The Bible refers to Abraham as “the friend of God.”
- Moses freed his people. The Bible says God spoke with Him “face-to-face” as a man does his friend.
- David was chosen to lead his nation, and God promised his family the throne of Israel forever. The Bible says David was a “man after God’s own heart.”

Regrettably, only a precious few people in the Bible are spoken of as having such an intimate, personal closeness with God. However, God makes it clear that He has called many to such closeness. He even told King Saul, whom He later rejected, that He would have given him a Kingdom forever if he had only obeyed Him with his whole heart. Alas, Saul rejected God, and thus God rejected Saul in favor of David.

How close is your relationship to the One Living God? Did you know that it is possible to draw as close to Jesus as any of His closest disciples? The only thing stopping us is, us.



The Multitudes & The Seventy

The Bible provides an interesting illustration for those who say they respect, or even follow Jesus' teachings, but don't really know Him personally.

Multitudes followed Christ – but they did not know Him.

(Matthew 4:23-25, John 6:26)

Like the instance recorded above, many people followed Jesus to hear Him speak, or to have Him perform some miracle for them. But they did not know Him personally, or follow Him because of who He really was.

Are you primarily interested in Jesus' teaching as a philosophy or guide for life? Do you think there might be more to Jesus than just His words?

Out of the multitudes, God picks some to know Him.

(Mark 2:13-14)

There are some in the great throng of people who respect Jesus, who like His words, who want something more than a guide or philosophy for life. Levi was such a man. Notice that Levi did not ask to follow Jesus, rather, Jesus saw in Levi a man who wanted to follow Him, and Jesus called Him to Himself.

How has God called you to Himself? What persuades you that you need to know Jesus and follow Him?

The Seventy followed Jesus, some knew Him and were true disciples, some did not know Him and were not true disciples.

(Luke 10:1, John 6:58-66)

When the words of Jesus are nice and agreeable to us, or not too difficult to understand or justify, it is easy to say we believe in Him and follow Him. The real test of what we believe comes when the harder, even offensive sayings of Jesus ring in our ears – as it was with those who followed Jesus, but then withdrew from Him.

What difficulties do you have with some of Jesus' teachings? Are their passages in the Bible you don't believe, or don't want to obey? What will you do if God calls you to follow Him by living out such passages?

Write or discuss your personal reflections so far.

The Twelve & The Three

Of the many thousands that followed Jesus and listened to His words, there were only a precious few who really knew Him, and not only followed Him – but walked *with* Him. What set them apart from the others?

The Twelve are those whom Jesus chose that He wanted to be with Him.

(Mark 3:13-14, Matthew 13:10-12)

The first thing that marks someone who is close to Jesus is that Jesus wants him or her close to Himself. He has chosen us. Second, to those who come close to Jesus, He reveals truth that others cannot know.

Would you classify yourself as one that God has called to be close to Himself? If not, it may be that you have not yet received Jesus Christ as your Savior. Would you like to know Jesus personally? (4laws.com)

The Twelve had a level of personal relationship with Jesus that the Seventy did not have.

The 12 spent private time with Jesus as the Last Supper. He revealed secrets of His life to them. He entrusted them with His own mission and teachings.

How has God trusted you with His word? How can your relationship with God grow deeper?

The Three were Jesus' closest disciples and friends. They had a level of intimacy with Jesus that the others did not have. They knew Him best and were used by Him the most.

(Mark 13:3, 14:33-44, 5:37)

Peter, James, and John were Jesus' "inner circle." We might even call them His "best friends." James eventually lead the Apostles. Peter's passion won thousands to Christ. John served Jesus the longest, finally dying in his 90s.

How much do you want to be used by God? What steps can you take that will open you up to greater service and use by God?

The Three were more like Jesus than the others.

James exercised the leadership of Jesus. Peter exercised the passion for the lost. John exercised Jesus' heart of mercy. What qualities of Jesus belong to you? What qualities do you desire?