

June 11, 2017 "John: Do temperament and personality change?"

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Everyone has their own "personality". Some people's character is "sociable" and some are said to be "quiet". "Temperament" is a word used like "personality". What is the difference between "character" and "temperament"? If you investigate, you may find the difference.

In other words, "temperament" is what we have inherently; it seems to be our response to something inspiring. By observing what sort of things to do or to say when something happens instantly, we can find out someone's temperament. Whereas, "Character" and "Personality" are of acquired feelings and will, in addition to this innate temperament.

A guide dog is mainly a medium size dog like a Labrador Retriever or Golden Retriever, because the temperament is calm, and it is faithful to the owner. We have never seen a Pomeranian as a guide dog. Police dogs are smart, agile, and faithful. They are mainly German shepherds. We have never seen a Chihuahua as a police dog. That is because the temperament that Retrievers and Shepherds have are inherently suitable for the roles of guide dogs and police dogs. On top of that temperament, the character they acquired afterwards adds to the individuality of each dog.

Likewise, each one of us has temperament and personality. Because our temperament and personality are different from each other, various dramas are born to human society. And, of course, each one of the disciples of Jesus Christ had temperament and personality.

When Jesus started his missionary activities, he chose 12 disciples. Jesus ate and slept together with them and trained them for three and a half years. As I mentioned last week, there was a man named Peter who was the leader of the disciples. Peter was a passionate man who mistook the direction of his passion and often caused problems.

Also, among the disciples there was a man named Simon, who belonged to the Zealot Party. The Zealot Party was an extremist organization trying to accomplish its purpose by choosing any means to win autonomous independence of Judea from Rome. It is said that Barabbas who received

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amnesty instead of Jesus, while being sentenced for murder at the time of the riot was also a member of this party.

Judas who betrayed Jesus was called "Judas of Iscariot". It is said that his "Iscariot" is a word that signifies the land name of "Carioté" or "assassin". If the meaning is "assassin", Judas might have been also a member of the Zealots, since the Zealot members to whom Simon belonged always hid daggers in their bosoms. It is surprising that the men like terrorists who hid daggers in their bosoms were among the twelve disciples of Jesus.

As you can see, Peter, Simon and Judah all had a passionate temperament. Being passionate is very important, because things will not happen without passion. However, because of their temperament, they responded too quickly to situations, and when they reflected their emotions and intentions, they mistook the direction of their passion and often caused problems. Yes, they were unable to properly use that temperament.

Besides these people, I could describe the temperament and personality of other disciples, but today I would like to pay particular attention to John who was thought to be the youngest of the twelve disciples. John was inherently short-tempered. He could not suppress his emotions and intentions, and often exploded when his blood came up to his head, due to his temperament.

When Jesus spoke to John at the shore of Lake Galilee with his brother James, he immediately gave up his boat and his family and joined the twelve disciples and followed Jesus. (Matthew 4:21-22) John was the youngest man among Jesus' disciples, but he was called "Boanerges" which means "son of thunder". It is like Judas' "Iscariot", but the nickname represents a personality of the person. What kind of person was John who we imagine from the nickname like "son of thunder"?

Even in Southern California, we hear thunder and lightning several times a year. Sometimes, we see lightning strike very closely like severing the heaven and earth. We can almost imagine what kind of man John was by thinking about the sight of lightning. John would have often exploded like a thunder tearing apart the heaven and earth, before the elder disciples, and even before Jesus.

One time, when Jesus was traveling, they passed the town where the

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Samaritans lived, but at that time they did not welcome Jesus. In response to this, John, the son of thunder, was angered and said to Jesus: **"Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?"** (Luke 9: 54) Just because the Samaritans did not welcome them, John wanted to call fire from heaven to destroy them. His blood had completely gone up to his head against the Samaritans. "Let's burn them down" is a fierce word.

Also in Luke 9:49, John told Jesus, **"Master, we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us."**

In one place, John saw the people who were driving out evil spirits using the name of Jesus, and his blood rose to his head. Probably John said to them, "Hey guys, who allowed you to use the name of our boss? Stop it, stop it now!" He forced them to stop it. At that time, John would have been intense like that.

Like an instantaneous water heater, John's blood instantly rose to his head, and once he was in such a condition with his temperament, no one could stop him. But ever since John met Jesus Christ and became his disciple, he was trying to be closer to Jesus more than anyone, never leaving Jesus. Jesus' words really attracted him. Even when Jesus was at Peter's house (Mark 1:29), even when the daughter of the synagogue was resurrected (Mark 5:37), at the mountain of transfiguration (Mark 9:2), at Mt. Olive (Mark 13:3), and at Gethsemane with Jesus in agony on the spot (Mark 14:33), John was always there with Jesus. He was a "son of thunder", but he did not leave Jesus and Jesus' words burned into his heart.

At the last supper, John sat close to Jesus leaning against the breast of the Lord (John 13:23, 25). When Jesus was caught, all the other disciples fled and scattered, but only John did not leave Jesus. (John 18:15) He was the lone disciple, who was at the foot of the Cross with Mother Mary. He watched Jesus until the end, and Jesus entrusted Mother Mary to John. (John 19:26, 27)

John was clearly temperamental, but with his temperament, he was determined to follow Jesus who he thought "this is the One". And this decision later developed his character. Yes, he gained the character of always observing things carefully. The great prophet Isaiah once prophesied the appearance of Jesus, writing, **"He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in**

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his appearance that we should desire him." (Isaiah 53:2) Isaiah prophesied how the people of this world viewed Jesus, but John said, **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."** (John 1:14) John was seeing the essential appearance of Jesus.

In the morning of Jesus' resurrection, John went to the grave of the Lord with Peter, and while Peter furiously ran into the grave, John was observing the grave without entering the grave. (John 20:3-6). When Jesus was standing on the shore of Lake Galilee, it was also John that recognized Jesus earlier than anyone, crying out "He is the Lord!" (John 21:7)

Because he was able to observe things clearly in this way, he later foresaw the history of thousands of years while on Patmos Island, observing the glory of the Lord's Second Coming, and recorded it in the Revelation of John. Because of his ability, God gave him the big role of writing the Revelation for future generations.

He was the only one who called himself "Jesus' beloved disciple" among the 12 disciples. (John 21:20) He had the sensitivity of being loved by Jesus, and continued to live there. God created his figure in His hand.

John observed the whole thing of Jesus' crucifixion from the beginning to the end near the cross. He heard the seven words on the cross told by Jesus who was nailed on the cross, and stayed in the spot where he could talk directly with Jesus as Jesus entrusted his mother Mary directly to John.

On the Cross, Jesus said, **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."** (Luke 23:34) And the words that Jesus told the robber placed on the cross next to Jesus: **"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."** (Luke 23:43) John would have seen and heard everything as he stood by the cross. Only the Gospel of John recorded the words of Jesus on the cross, **"I am thirsty."** (John 19:28) and **"It is finished."** (John 19:30), which could have been missed from being heard because they are short words. Yes, he heard those words directly from Jesus, not through others.

Long after these things happened, John wrote "The First Letter of John". However, there is a very strange thing written as follows: **"This is how we know**

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what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us." (I John 3:16)

It is a mysterious word. John said here that we know and understand what love is by the fact that **"Jesus Christ laid down his life for us."** By that, he knew and understood love.

Yes, that is the figure of Jesus on the cross that he looked up. There was Jesus in a miserable form on the cross in front of John. A few hours ago, Jesus was sitting next to John in a second-floor room in Jerusalem. He saw Jesus break the bread in front of his eyes, watched closely as Jesus poured wine with his hands; the hands which the nails were driven through.

Why was Jesus subjected to such a crucifixion? John knew that Jesus was crucified for him. When he realized that, he knew the real love for the first time in his life. He understood what love is.

At one time, John's mother came to Jesus asking a favor as follows: **"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." "** (Matthew 20: 20-24)

Yes, John's mother said this to Jesus. I wonder if you would like my dear children to be the first and the second disciples of yours? Although she is an honest parent, this is obviously not something commendable, for that pushes other disciples out of place. I can imagine how much this mother loved her children. John had a gentle mother who would become blind for her children.

There was also the brother James always acting together with John. And his father Zebedee also did not blame them when his two sons left the house to follow Jesus. (Matthew 4:21-22) It seems that he was a father who put trust in his sons. According to the Bible, there were servants in the house of John (Mark 1:19-20), and he is an acquaintance of the high priest (John 18:16), and he was considerably wealthy. It seems that John would have been brought up in such a family with love and benefits. In addition to his native temperament, perhaps because he was raised without being condemned due to his parents' blind love, his personality became such that he was called a "son of thunder".

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Such a John said, "I knew love, I understood love!" When he understood this, he would have given up the nickname "son of thunder". When he realized that he was loved by the Lord, he was filled with that love and he could not retain it inside, so he wrote "Love" over and over in that letter many times.

John changed, because he knew Jesus' love, and his heart was filled with that love. Therefore, the first letter of John that is said to be written in his later years is called "the book of love". The word "love" is actually written 47 times in chapters 3 and 4 of this letter alone. Indeed, John changed into a man who talked about love whenever he opened his mouth.

People are striving to love others, but in fact, that is difficult. It is because the essence of love is that people can love only when people are loved. Love is not something to produce, nor something to squeeze out from within, but the feeling of "being loved" comes up before loving someone. It is exactly what Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke. **"The mouth speaks what the heart is full of."** (Luke 6:45)

The temperament and personality of John was like a son of thunder. However, the son of thunder became the disciple of Jesus Christ, and he was always at the side of Jesus so that he would not miss any of the words of Jesus Christ, and burned Jesus' figure into his mind. While spending time with Jesus like that, his temperament was changed, and his character was also changed. Jesus' love completely changed the temperament and personality of John who was once called a son of thunder.

According to legend, it is said that John later took care of Jesus' mother Mary in Ephesus as asked by Jesus. Once the youngest man among the disciples, now became an old man. Once he was a son of thunder, but now he came to a meeting being lead by his disciples. It is said that John repeatedly said, "My children, you love each other!" in such a meeting. The son of thunder, who had cried "Fire from Heaven!" was changed and became a person who only talked about love. Touched by the love of Jesus, John was changed to an apostle of love. There will be various encounters in our lives. However, there is nothing better than the encounter with Jesus.

John said in I John 4:10 as follows: **"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."** There is

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love here. Even in this age when the value of the word of love is diminishing, Jesus' love at Calvary 2000 years ago will never be vanished.

That person does good things for me. He is kind. Jesus' love is not that level of love, but he loved us so much that he sacrificed his own life for us. Here is the love of Christ. Like a doctor examines the patient's body and prescribes the necessary medicine for that patient, what we really need when we seriously look at our hearts is this love of Christ. In other words, we live our daily lives without receiving that kind of love. Everyone needs this love of Christ.

The title of today's message is "Do temperament and personality change?" I will tell you the conclusion. Temperament and personality can be changed by Jesus Christ. What will change our temperament and personality? The love of Christ will change our temperament and personality. Do you believe this?

Luke wrote about what Jesus did in selecting 12 disciples as follows: **"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."** (Luke 6:12-16).

Every one of the twelve disciples of Jesus did not volunteer and became his disciples. Peter, Simon of the Zealot party, Judas Iscariot, and John the son of thunder, were all chosen by Jesus and became disciples. While knowing their temperament and personality, Jesus prayed to God throughout the night for that, and at dawn when he rose from the place, those names were in the heart of Jesus. Yes, those men had rough personalities and repeatedly made mistakes because they did not know how to control their temperaments. But because of Jesus' love, their temperament and personality were changed.

From a human vantage point, there might have been many talented people with better temperament and character than the disciples. From a human resources standpoint, they were not the best men. But from the eyes of Jesus, they were men full of potential. Jesus knew what was going to happen when Peter, Judas, Simon, John's sources of passion and the directions had changed. Jesus remodeled the roughly cut material in His hands, making the apostle of

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love, John, and also changed other disciples. It is not John, nor the disciples, but the Lord Jesus who changed them all to be praised.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord! How about our temperament and personality? Probably, there is no perfect person on this matter. What I would like to point out from my message today is that Jesus took advantage of what seemed to be the defects of his disciples, and led them to a life to express the glory of God. Wouldn't you be moved by the passion of Christ for us, when you know that He is praying for you all night, while knowing your temperament and personality to the fullest? Yes, why don't we let the only masterpiece that we can make in this life, our "self", to be made complete in God's hands. Let's pray.

Translated by Hideyuki Honda