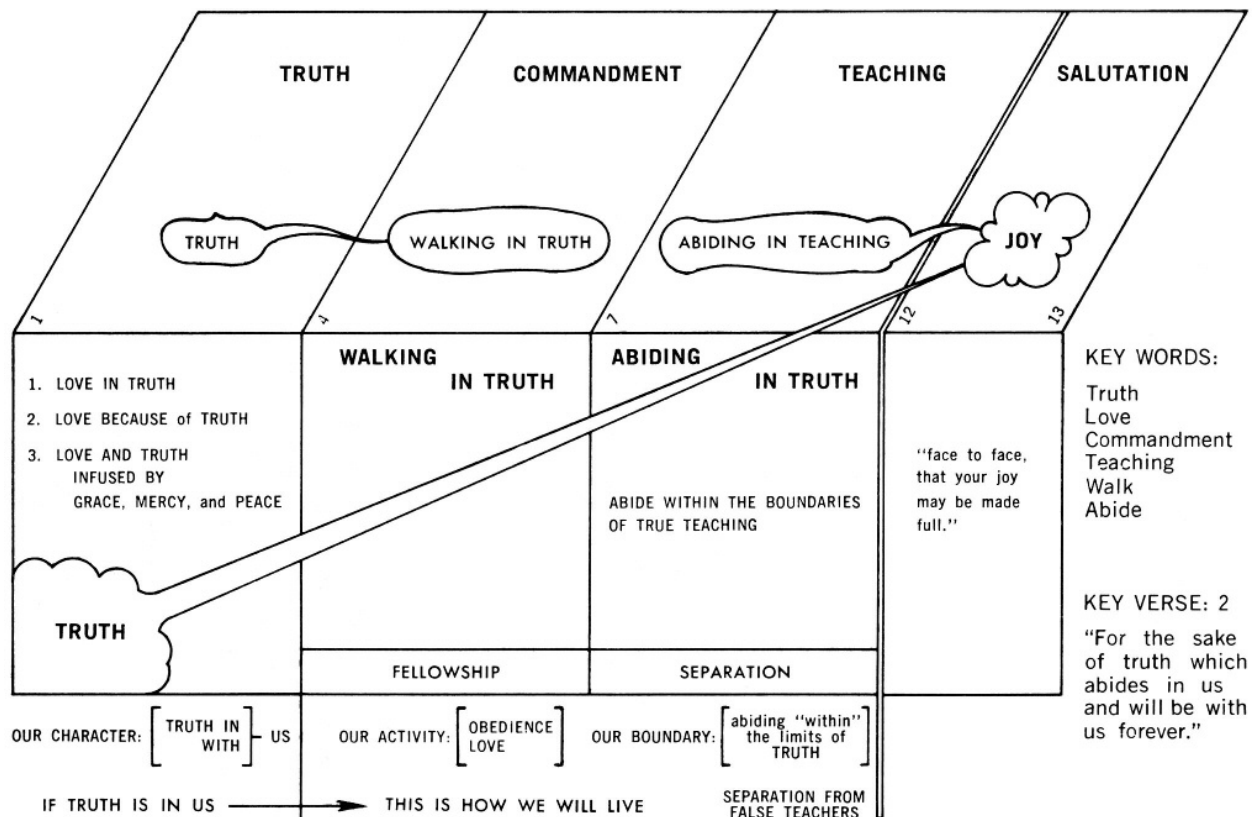


## Week 11 – 2 John

### Walking in Truth and Love

***“And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.” (2 John 6,ESV)***

### 2 John Topic Structure



### Overview

2 John deals with the same problem as 1 John: False teachers influenced by Gnostic thought were threatening the church. These people denied Jesus as the sovereign Son of God. 1 John identifies no specific individual or church, whereas 2 John has a particular individual or house-church.

The focus of 2 John is that false teachers were conducting an itinerant ministry among John's congregations, seeking to make converts, and taking advantage of Christian hospitality to advance their cause. Apparently, *“the elect lady”* exercised love at the expense of truth. John may have believed that the false teachers would attempt to take advantage of her kindness.

John warns his readers against showing hospitality to such deceivers. Hospitality does not advance error. Love must be discerning. We must focus hospitality and kindness on those who are adhering to the fundamentals of the faith. Otherwise, Christians may aid those who are attempting to destroy those basic truths of the faith.

Sound doctrine must be the test of fellowship and the basis of separation between professed and faithful believers. There is a close relationship between truth and love in the Scriptures. Love should never violate truth; instead, genuine love upholds truth.

The word “**truth**” is the keyword in this letter. It is found five times in this short letter of 13 verses. The word “**love**” occurs five times. Truth and love are inseparable.

Christians are known by their commitment to truth. Truth is a vital force that lives in us. Because it comes from the living God, truth is a dynamic power that abides with believers, enabling them to know what is true. And because truth comes from God, it exists forever and remains with the faithful, just as God exists eternally and remains in a relationship with the faithful. Only as the truth abides in us do we abide in the truth.

There are two equally extreme misconceptions that many people have concerning what it means to be a Christian or to live the Christian life of truth in love.

- Misconception 1: It doesn’t matter what you believe if you are sincere and loving. (This is not Truth.)
- Misconception 2: It doesn’t matter how you live if you believe the truth. (This is not Love.)
  - a) The reason both views are just as wrong is that the Word of God binds both truth and love inseparably together. We must never accommodate truth to the situation, because the truth is more valuable than the situation.
  - b) Nowhere will you see this perspective more clearly than in 2 John.

➤ **2 John 1-3** – *“The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father’s Son, in truth and love.”*

The word for “*lady*” (Greek: [Kurìa](#), or *Kyria*) was also a proper name, so that those who think John addresses “*the elect Kyria*” are at liberty to do so.

Another interpretation is that “*the elect lady*” refers to a particular church. “Church” derives from the Greek “*Kuriake*,” akin to *Kuria*, or *Kyria* here; the latter word among the Romans and Athenians means the same as *ecclesia*, the term appropriated to designate the Church assembly. From this interpretation, the “*children*” would be the congregation.

Since the name of “*the elect lady*” is not given, it is not absurd to suppose that the dangers of the times, or family persecution, may have made it advisable to withhold both her (or the church’s) name and that of the writer. The messenger would supply both deficiencies.

The Bible will never go out of existence. The truth will be with us forever in consort with Christ’s promise. No one can escape its truth.

*“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”* ([Matthew 24:35](#), ESV)

Truth is the motivation and context of genuine Christian love. True biblical love is always bound by truth.

*“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”* ([2 Timothy 2:15](#), ESV)

We never outgrow our need for God’s grace, mercy, and peace. We could no more operate our Christian lives effectively without these graces than we could exist without food and water.

“Grace” is the favor of God conveying fully every spiritual blessing ([Ephesians 2:4-9](#)); “mercy” is the pitifulness that sympathizes with man and is longing to forgive his sins ([Psalms 103:1-5](#), [Luke 10:30-37](#)); “peace” results from the reception of these two gifts in the heart, the untroubled calm of a conscience void of offense before God and men ([John 14:27](#); [Romans 5:1](#); [Colossians 3:15](#)).

- **2 John 4** – *“I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.”*

The truth John speaks of is from above. Truth as it is in Christ Jesus. We are to walk in the truth, not just admire it.

Faithfulness to God’s Word is the foundation of Christian living. Believers walked according to the truth of God’s revelation, His Word, but false teachers made inroads into the Christian community to distort this truth.

- **2 John 5** – *“And now I ask you, dear lady – not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning – that we love one another.”*

Before John sounds a warning about the false teachers, he challenges Christians to practice divine love.

Love is the Christian’s moral disposition of mind, which embraces all other virtues and graces. It implies faith, founded on Christian principle, and tested by a right belief. It implies purity, modelled on the love of God.

John reasons in a circle in verses 5 and 6. In verse 5, the application of truth to experience results in love toward other Christians. In verse 6, love also lives according to God’s principles. God tightly weaves together living according to the principles of His Word with love.

*“The love of Christ controls us.”* ([2 Corinthians 5:14](#)).

From this truth we will *“love one another.”* This love is genuine and not subject to change.

- **2 John 6** – *“And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.”*

Some believe that love is a vague, immeasurable feeling, differing only in intensity; but the Christian disposition of agape love is that practical and enlightened result of faith that naturally acts and expresses itself by following God’s will in all things. ([1 John 4:7](#); [1 John 4:16](#).)

God’s commandments are a statement of His will. Love for other Christians is doing the will of God. Keeping God’s will out of a sense of duty and little love for God is not true love. True love is a response to God from the heart. Love for God is keeping His commandments ([John 14:15](#), [31](#); [15:10](#), [14](#)).

Love presents the test of the genuineness of belief. Love is hard to counterfeit. We can tell whether our belief is genuine by the nature of our love. We measure the integrity of our Christianity by our love for one another. The proof of our love is in our walk.

*“Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”* ([1 John 3:18](#), ESV)

- **2 John 7** – *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.”*

John now moves to his reason for writing this letter – safeguarding of truth. The appearance of false teachers is the reason for this warning. It is a challenge to resist these false teachers.

Many false teachers traveling to the churches would not confess that Jesus Christ was here in the flesh. This “*is a deceiver and an antichrist*” (see also [1 John 4:1–2](#)). They did not believe in the humanity of Christ and denied His incarnation. John clarifies that if you call Jesus Lord but deny His deity, you are a liar and an antichrist.

The thrust of John’s argument is that Christians should be cautious with their hospitality. Many of these teachers were imposters. People committed to the truth should not give hospitality to false teachers who were roaming the territory. The essential error rampant in John’s day related to the doctrine of Christ. All of Christianity revolves around this doctrine.

Some of these false teachers taught Gnosticism, which held that, since matter is evil, God could not dwell in human flesh ([1 John 5:1](#)). These deceivers would also include both those who denied that Jesus was the Messiah and held Him to be only a phantom, declaring the Incarnation to be an impossibility. They could not conceive of the fact that Jesus was both truly God and a perfect man.

The presence of false teachers proves damaging to the exercise of mutual love because their teaching negates the essence of Christianity, the incarnation.

- **2 John 8** – “Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.”

Following these false teachers will cause loss of the fellowship with the Father and the Son in truth and love. (The Galatian church had similar problems: [Galatians 3:1-4](#).)

*“So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.”* ([Ephesians 4:14-15](#), ESV)

The reward they would lose would be “*the peace of God which passes all understanding*” ([Philippians 4:7](#)), the blessed stability, firmness, and joy which truth and love communicate. ([Colossians 3:23-24](#))

- **2 John 9** – “*Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*”

The picture in John’s mind seems to have been that of the false teachers who claimed Christians do not have the whole truth. It is common even today for false teachers to claim that those who do not agree with them are still intellectual infants. John warned his readers of the danger of forsaking truth to embrace error ([1 John 2:23-24](#)).

Apply this test to some of the popular religious movements of today: Christian Science, Spiritualism, Universalism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, and so on. They deny all or at least parts of the Christ doctrine.

Know what people believe & teach before you support them!

- **2 John 10-11** – “*If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.*”

The Christian community of the day was severely persecuted. In the culture of John’s day, philosophers and teachers relied on the people to whom they spoke for lodging and financial help ([Acts 18:2-3](#); [Acts 21:7](#)). Paul’s exhortation for hospitality in [Romans 12:13](#) called the early church to pursue Christian strangers who found themselves in need.

However, John is warning of false teachers who took advantage of the situation. As a result, he called for careful discernment in providing this hospitality.

John commands to not be friendly with or entertain false teachers, for by doing so you share in “*their wicked works*.” Those who had never heard nor received instruction in the doctrine of Christ would be less dangerous.

The apostle Paul shared a similar, but more general, warning to Timothy:

*“For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.”* ([2 Timothy 3:1-7](#))

He means those who deliberately altered the Apostolic teaching.

John did not advocate the persecution of heretics but strongly counseled his readers to give them no aid nor encouragement in their destructive ministry. Although called to love unbelievers, in the sense of earnestly desiring that they might come to a knowledge of the truth, it would be wrong to hold out to the false teachers the right hand of fellowship if they insist on changing or weakening your Christian beliefs.

This may seem severe, but it is the position of others, including Jesus ([Matthew 7:15-20](#)). It supplies an important instruction in the theory of Christian social conduct.

*“We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also. Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God.”* ([2 Corinthians 6:11-16](#))

“...takes part in his wicked works” means to condone his false doctrine. The host puts himself in a position to accept the false teaching by sympathizing with him. They lower their whole moral standard, doing an injury to God, Christ, the Church, the truth, individual communities, and their own soul.

Applying this teaching to modern times, we should remember that John is speaking of those who deliberately distort the doctrine of Christ.

➤ **John 12-13** – *“Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. The children of your elect sister greet you.”*

John is hoping for a personal visit with “*the elect lady*.” He implies he is in touch with the sister of “*the elect lady*.” He may have been staying at this second lady’s house.

As discussed in verse 1, it is also possible that “*the elect lady*” is a particular church. If we believe “*the elect lady*” is a metaphor for a particular church, “*the children of your elect sister*” means that the Christian members in the sister church sent their greetings along with his own to his readers.

## 2 John Commentary – Precept Austin

[https://www.preceptaustin.org/2\\_john\\_commentaries](https://www.preceptaustin.org/2_john_commentaries)