2 John | Sunday May 17, 2026

I admire someone who can share what is on their mind with very few words. 2 John is a tiny letter; it has less than 300 words in the Greek and most likely was written on a single sheet of papyrus. Yet, this small letter has important truths for us to see. John expands on a lot of the same themes we have already seen in 1 John.

2 John 1-3 ESV

> (1) **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,**
> (2) **because of the truth** that abides in us **and will be with us forever:**
> (3) Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.

John introduces himself as the elder. This referred to His role of leadership within the church and also to the fact that John was old. He writes to the elect lady. There has been a lot of speculation as to who or what this refers to. It is hard to know if the "elect lady", which in Greek were common names at the time, should be taken **as a specific woman or if it is referring to a church**. Both suggestions fit the context because women served in prominent roles within the early church (Col 4:15), and the church is referred to as a bride (2 Cor 11:2). It would be similar to reading a letter by Benjamin Franklin that was addressed to Virginia. This could refer to a specific lady or to the entire colony of Virginia. Either way, John's audience were believers he knew well and cared deeply for. This connection is rooted in the shared truth they believe in. **This truth will be with us forever.**

John 14:16-17 ESV

> (16) And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, **to be with you forever,**
> (17) even **the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him**, for He dwells with you and will be in you.**

John 17:15-20 ESV

> (15) I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. (16) They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.
> (17) **Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.**

All believers are given the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth. He dwells with us, will never leave us, and He guides us into the truth found in the Word. No matter how bad this world gets or how much it resists, **God's truth will never be defeated**. **The truth will be with us forever!** God's truth will never fail. The Spirit will keep guiding us to the Word, to Jesus. The church is to be rooted in this truth.

1 Timothy 3:14-15 ESV

> (14) I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that,
> (15) if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave **in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.**

The church does not belong to any one person but is the household of the living God. The church is to be a pillar and foundational support of truth. Too many believers and churches today lose sight of this calling and the unity found in it. We cannot compromise on truth. With this calling, we must

be careful to maintain the balance of truth and love.

2 John 1-3 ESV

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> (2) because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever:
> (3) Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, **in truth and love.**

John has brought up love a lot throughout his first letter, and this letter is no different. What is unique, though, is this time love is not alone. He loves in truth. Truth is emphasized as the guiding light and boundary to Godly love. **Godly love can only be expressed within the limits and context of God's truth**. Truth and love are not opposed to each other but serve as the perfect balance to each other. **Love can grow soft if not strengthened by truth. Truth can grow hard if not softened by love.** One without the other is dangerous. We find examples of both errors in scripture.

1 Corinthians 5:1-2; 6 ESV

> (1) It is actually reported that there is **sexual immorality** among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.
> (2) **And you are arrogant!** Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.
>
> (6) **Your boasting is not good.** Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

The Corinthian church had separated truth from the love they thought they were showing. A man was committing open sexual immorality, and the church thought the most loving thing they could do was stay in fellowship with and approve of him. They were even boasting and proud about how loving they were. Love not based on truth has no basis and can foolishly encourage people in their sin and away from a walk with Jesus. The modern church is often guilty of this thinking. **True biblical love is guided by the truth of the Word.** On the other side, the Ephesian church was emphasizing truth without love.

Revelation 2:2-4 ESV

> (2) "'I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, **and found them to be false.**
> (3) I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for My name's sake, and you have not grown weary.
> (4) But I have this against you, **that you have abandoned the love you had at first.**

The Ephesians were standing on truth. They were careful to test teachers and remain steadfast to the Word of God. What is easy to miss is that they had a serious issue just like the Corinthians did. **The Corinthian's error is more public and easier to see, yet the Ephesian's error is just as dangerous**. They had abandoned a love for Jesus, and in doing so, they had also abandoned a love for people. **Truth without love can become embittered and harsh.** Both churches are called to repent and walk in a balance of truth and love. As believers, we have the most amazing message ever to live in and share. We have grace, mercy, and peace. We cannot change this message or be harsh in it.

2 John 4-6 ESV

> (4) I rejoiced greatly to find some of **your children walking in the truth**, just as we were commanded by the Father.
> (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.**
> (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.

John is thrilled to find these believers are walking in the truth. A relationship with Jesus is practical and should be reflected in every part of our life. He reminds them once again to love one another. This is the **sixth** time John has repeated this command (1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12). In John's gospel he records Jesus giving this command **three** times (John 13:34; 15:12, 17). The command to love one another is repeated so many times because it is something we struggle with. **Godly love does not come naturally to us.** It is not primarily an emotion but is unselfish, self-sacrificing service. The Holy Spirit produces this love in us as we draw close to Jesus and walk in His commands.

Psalm 119:44-45 ESV

> (44) I will keep Your law continually, forever and ever,
> (45) and **I shall walk in a wide place,** for I have sought Your precepts.

Walking in God's commandments, in His truth, is where true freedom is found. It is out of this freedom, in truth, that enables us to show God's love to others.

2 John 7 ESV

> (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.

Walking in truth and love is important because there are many false teachers who are trying to deceive us. **"Deceivers" means "wanderers."** As the Greeks would map out the stars, it is the name they gave to stars that moved around weird and wandered off the path (these wandering stars were actually planets). These teachers are wandering from the path of truth and are denying that Jesus fully took on humanity. This denial is so important because it also denies that Jesus paid for our sins. **If the messiah did not take on full humanity, then He would not be able to die and offer the payment for sin**. This is not a small change to truth that can be tolerated but is antichrist. This is the same false teaching that the future antichrist will teach as well. The best way to avoid being led astray by these deceivers is to walk in truth and love.

2 John 8 ESV

> (8) Watch yourselves, **so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.**

False teaching has such a high cost in the life of a believer. Following these lies would cause believers not to receive all the eternal rewards that God has for them. **False teaching leads to immature believers and loss of rewards**. This is why walking in truth and love is so important; it helps us walk in the eternal things God has for us. **Walking in truth and love helps us receive eternal rewards**. We can be uncomfortable when scripture uses rewards as a motivation. For some it feels selfish or not spiritual. Yet, we need to remember that these rewards were not our idea.

Matthew 6:19-21 ESV

(19) “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,
(20) but **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
(21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This is not a suggestion but a command. Jesus commands us to store up rewards in heaven. **Rewards were God’s idea, and we are commanded to pursue them**. John is concerned that false teaching will cause believers not to get their full reward. **He is not worried that they might lose their salvation** by accepting false teaching. Full reward means a full day’s pay. He wants us to receive everything God has for us. He is not worried that we will lose rewards we already have.

Mark 9:41 ESV

(41) For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ **will by no means lose his reward.**

We are promised that we will not lose a reward once it has been walked in. John does not want us to stop with just a few rewards**. He wants us to keep growing in truth and love and receive the fullest possible reward we can**. These believers were even tied to John’s rewards. Their growth and maturity were part of what God had for John. John wants his full reward too. Paul had the same desire.

Philippians 2:14-16 ESV

(14) Do all things without grumbling or disputing,
(15) that you may be blameless and innocent, **children of God** without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,
(16) **holding fast to the word of life**, so that in the day of Christ **I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.**

Children of God are called to grow and mature even in the midst of a sinful world. We are to hold fast to the word of life. **False teaching or no teaching will always interrupt a believer's walk.** Paul wanted the Philippians to receive their full reward so that his labor and ministry to them would not be in vain. He desired their growth. When they received a full reward, he in turn would also receive a full reward. **Believers who do not grow are vain, empty, without purpose or result.** Paul did not want His ministry to be without result. We tend to be so focused on achievements, money, and rewards here. It should not be for us to accept that God wants us to be focused on the rewards He has for us where true life begins, with Him in eternity. Eternal rewards are to be motivating to our walk with Jesus. False teaching is serious and gets in the way of our close walk with Him.

2 John 9 ESV

(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 false teachers were progressive and had gone ahead of the true teaching about Jesus. These false teachers had moved on from the truth and redefined Jesus and what it meant to love others. Instead of rooting to the stable Word, they kept looking for the newest thought. **True progress is moving toward Jesus, not advancing past Him.** Following this false teaching would cost a believer their fellowship with God. They were changing who Jesus was, so without Jesus, then you

are not in fellowship with the Father. **This does not mean they would lose their salvation.** We are saved by believing in Jesus (John 6:37-40). If we do not continue to believe, we are still saved but not in fellowship, which is very serious.

2 John 10-13 ESV

> (10) If anyone comes to you and does not **bring this teaching**, **do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting,**
> (11) **for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works**.
> (12) 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.
> (13) The children of your elect sister greet you.

John kept the letter short to conserve papyrus and ink. He planned to see these believers in person. Yet these warnings were so important and pressing that he included them in the short letter. At the time there were many traveling teachers that would go from city to city. Inns were notoriously dirty both physically and morally. So believers would let traveling teachers stay with them. They would also have them share at the local church that would meet in someone's house. **John wants to make sure that false teachers are not shown this hospitality.** These false teachers should not be allowed to share in church, and they should not help them by accepting them into their home. John says not to even greet them. Greetings were more than saying hello; they were a prayer of blessing, "Peace be with you." **John is very clear these false teachers could not be blessed in this way.**

This comes from the same man who reminded us 6 times to love one another. Now He commands us not to greet and accept false teachers into our house. **Truth is this important**. **This command does not undo all the commands to love. John is showing how love with truth is put into practice.** There is a story from church history that is hard to know whether it is true or not, but it is well documented. The apostle John was in a bathhouse in Ephesus, and **Cerinthus,** one of these false teachers who denied that Jesus the Christ came in the flesh, showed up to the same bathhouse. When John saw **Cerinthus,** he took off running and left the bathhouse as quickly as he could and yelled, **"Let us fly, lest even the bathhouse fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within!"**

John's warning is not aimed at the followers of false teaching **but against its leaders** who are active in sharing falsehood. Truth is too important; as believers, we cannot partake or have fellowship with the lies that they share. **False teaching will hinder believers growth and keep them from receiving a full reward.** We are called to walk in truth and love as we pursue a deep walk with Jesus and the rewards He has promised.

1 Corinthians 15:57-58 ESV

> (57) But thanks be to God, **who gives us the victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ.
> (58) Therefore, my beloved brothers, **be steadfast, immovable**, always abounding in the work of the Lord, **knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.**
