

The Letters of John

LESSON SIX

As we move into John's second letter, we will see that much of what he has to say is a repetition of his first letter. This letter takes on a more personal tone, however, and is filled with a special tenderness. As we read John's opening lines, we find that, unlike his first letter, John begins this letter with a greeting. He identifies himself and he identifies his recipients with words that express his great love for them. Read through **2 John 1:1-13**. As you begin your lesson, please note that I am using the NKJV.

1. Looking at the first half of **verse 1**, how does John introduce himself to his readers, and how does he identify those he is writing to?

There has been much speculation on who this recipient is. Some believe that this may be an individual in one of the churches that John was especially close to, as he was to her children. Many others believe that this is not an individual at all, but is a local church and its congregation that John is calling "the elect lady" and her "children." Some scholars have suggested that because of the persecution of the church becoming more prevalent at the time John was writing this second letter, he chose to identify the church in this way rather than naming them, in case his letter was intercepted by the authorities and naming them would be placing them in harm's way.

2. Looking at the last half of **verse 1**, write down the tender greeting John gives to this church.
3. John refers to the special bond of love that exists amongst all true believers. As we look at **verse 2**, what does John say is the common element that binds us together?

4. As we consider the last words John writes in **verse 2**, what does he say about this **truth** which is within us?

David Guzik states, "The truth does not change. The truth will be true **forever**, and we will have the truth forever in eternity. Many people today think that the truth changes from age to age and from generation to generation, but the Bible knows that the truth **will be with us forever.**"

5. How do the following Scriptures confirm this truth? Look them up and write them down below.

Numbers 23:19 -

Psalm 119:160 -

Hebrews 6:18 -

Hebrews 13:8 -

James 1:17 -

6. This bond of truth brings a promise with it. Looking at **verse 3**, write down the promise John gives to his readers.
7. Truth is a main focus for John throughout all of his writings. He mentions "truth" over 37 times in his New Testament writings. John indicates here in verse 3 that "grace, mercy and peace" are found "**in truth and love.**" They are truth and love's **byproducts**. Looking now at **verse 4**, what does John say he greatly rejoices in?

8. The **direction** of our lives are to be in harmony with the **“truth.”** This is certainly something contrary to the culture we are living in, where truth is relative and often denied in favor of “tolerance” and “political correctness.” As we look at **verse 5** we see that John is emphasizing the truth as God’s commandment. Looking at the end of the verse, what specific commandment is he speaking of?

9. Again, John partners **truth** with **love**. While today we are so concerned about saying anything that might “offend” someone, what does **Ephesians 4:14 & 15** tell us to do?

10. **Warren Wiersbe** states, **“Truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy.”** Look up and record the following:

Proverbs 12:17 -

Zechariah 8:16 –

11. What definition does John give for **love** in the first part of **2 John 1:6**?

12. John never strays far from the **proof** of love being **obedience**. Looking at the next part of **verse 6**, how does he describe this commandment?

13. **“... as you have heard from the beginning...”** John makes a strong point again that the Gospel truth **never changes**. The truth they heard from the beginning is the truth that **still remains true** today and forever. What does he tell us we are to do with this truth, found at the end of the verse?

We are reminded once again that our “walking” in God’s Word is making it the direction of our life, the authority and standard of how we live.

14. In **verse 7**, John gives a warning concerning the most prevalent deceivers of his time, the Gnostics. What does he say about them?

15. As we discussed in previous lessons, these Gnostics denied that Jesus came in the flesh. In our time, we also have **many deceivers** who have infiltrated the church. We, too, must be careful to “**walk in the truth**” so we are not deceived by those who have twisted the truth of God’s Word. We must **know God’s Word** and we must believe in Him as He has revealed Himself in His Word. A false and substitute Jesus is a denial of Him. What warning does John give in **verse 8**?

16. Look up the warnings we receive from the following Scriptures.

Galatians 1:6 & 7 -

Galatians 1:8 -

Hebrews 10:35 -

Revelation 3:11 -

17. As we look at **2 John 1:9** what bold statement does John make? Look up this verse in several Bible translations and record them below.

NKJV -

NIV -

NASB -

NLT -

18. To “transgress,” to “run ahead,” to “go too far” or to “wander away” from the Gospel preached by Christ and His disciples is to have no relationship with God, John says. But those who “remain,” “continue” and “abide” in the doctrine of Christ have a relationship with both the Father and the Son. How important is it, then, that we know God’s Word and what this Gospel is? Has the study of God’s Word become an important priority in your life to guard you against false teachers? Share how becoming a student of God’s Word has affected your life and your relationship with Christ.

19. John warns us to not only “look to ourselves” but to **watch out for others**. Record his warning in **verses 10 & 11** below.

20. In John's day, there were many traveling preachers who relied on the hospitality of the local believers in the community they were visiting. The **Bible Knowledge Commentary** states: **"To some modern minds these instructions seem unduly rigid and harsh. A great part of the problem, however, lies in the modern inclination to be highly tolerant of religious differences. One must frankly face the fact that the New Testament writers did not share this spirit of toleration. Their commitment to the truth and their consciousness of the dangers of religious error called forth many stern denunciations of false teachers. Not surprisingly, this modern age, having a diminishing sense of the dangers of heresy, has lost its convictions about the truth."**

While the practice of taking in traveling preachers is something we may not experience much today, John's warning can apply to who we listen to, who we "quote" and what authors we read. If we associate ourselves with those teaching false doctrines, we are, in fact, "partnering with them" in the sense that our association is seen as an endorsement to those who are watching us. In that sense, we are helping to lead others astray. What kind of examples can you give where we might be misleading others by association?

While we need to take this warning John gives us seriously, it does not mean that we are to take on an attitude of spiritual pride, treat people unkindly who differ from us or behave unlovingly toward them. We need to speak the truth, but to speak the truth **in love**.

We also need to be careful to differentiate between doctrine that is **essential to salvation** and doctrine that is not. Christians can have differing views on many doctrines that are **non-essential** and agree to disagree without it breaking their fellowship. Some of those doctrines may include when the rapture takes place, the proper mode of baptism (total immersion versus sprinkling, etc.), the government of the church (pastor led, elder led, congregational led, etc.), the use of spiritual gifts and what spiritual gifts are valid for today, etc. And, of course, there are other non-essential opinions we can differ on that shouldn't divide Christians from one another.

What is included in **essential doctrine** is: The Bible is the inerrant Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit – There is one God and Jesus is the third Person of the trinity of the Triune God - Jesus was born of a virgin, sent by the Father, fully human and fully God – All mankind are sinners in need of a Savior - He died on the cross as the propitiation for the sins of mankind - He was buried and was bodily resurrected – He ascended into heaven and is seated on the Father's right hand – We are saved by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone - Christ alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and no one comes to the Father except through Him - He will come back physically to the earth to receive His church and establish His kingdom.

21. John concludes this letter with **verses 12 & 13**. Write down **verse 12** below.

22. As we look at the end of **verse 12**, I love how John emphasizes the importance of face to face fellowship and the joy that it brings. In a world where it is easy for us to just sit back and "do church" online, we are reminded here that nothing can take the place of that physical, corporate fellowship we have when we gather together in His name. Looking now at **verse 13**, the conclusion of John's letter, write down his final words.

23. If this “elect lady” John is writing to is actually a code name for a local church, as I believe it is, these final words remind us that we are all a part of the church and family of God that is universal. This particular church had a “sister church” that wanted to send their greetings, through John, to this “elect lady” and her “children.” What a beautiful expression of fellowship John ends with. What was your greatest take-away from John’s second letter?

This study was written and prepared by Shawn Van Hook, 2024