

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**11-22-17**

**2 John 1**

TRUTH and love are frequently discussed in our world but seldom practiced. From politicians to marketers, people conveniently ignore or conceal facts and use words to enhance positions or sell products. Perjury is common, and integrity and credibility are endangered species. Words, twisted in meaning and torn from context, have become mere tools for ego building. It is not surprising that we have to "swear" to tell the truth.

And what about love? Our world is filled with its words: Popular songs, greeting cards, media counselors, and romantic novels shower us with notions and dreams of ethereal, idyllic relationships and feelings. Real love, however, is scarce—selfless giving, caring, sharing, and even dying. We yearn to love and be loved, but we see few living examples of real love. Plentiful are those who grasp, hoard, and watch out for "number one."

Christ is the antithesis of society's prevailing values, that is, falsehood and self-centeredness—for he is truth and love in person. Therefore, all who claim loyalty to him must be committed to these ideals—following the truth and living the truth, reflecting love and acting with love toward one another.

The apostle John had seen Truth and Love firsthand—he had been with Jesus. So affected was this disciple that all of his writings, from the Gospel to the book of Revelation, are filled with this theme: Truth and love are vital to the Christian and are inseparable in the Christian life. Second John, his brief letter to a dear friend, is no different. John says to live in the truth and obey God (1:4), watch out for deceivers (1:7), and love God and each other (1:6).

Second John will take just a few minutes to read, but its message should last a lifetime. As you reflect on these few paragraphs penned by the wise and aged follower of Christ, recommit yourself to being a person of truth, of love, and of obedience.

**VITAL STATISTICS PURPOSE:** To emphasize the basics of following Christ—truth and love—and to warn against false teachers

**AUTHOR:** The apostle John

**ORIGINAL AUDIENCE:** To "the lady chosen by God" and her children—or possibly to a local church

**DATE WRITTEN:** About the same time as 1 John, approximately A.D. 90 from Ephesus

**SETTING:** Evidently this woman and her family were involved in one of the churches that John was overseeing—they had developed a strong friendship with John. John was warning her of the false teachers who were becoming prevalent in some of the churches.

**KEY VERSE:** "And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love" (1:6).

**KEY PEOPLE:** John, the chosen lady, and her children

## **THE BLUEPRINT**

1. Watch out for false teachers (1:1-11)

2. John's final words (1:12-13) False teachers were a dangerous problem for the church to which John was writing. His warning against showing hospitality to false teachers may sound harsh and unloving to many today. Yet these men were teaching heresy that could seriously harm many believers—for eternity.

## **MEGATHEMES**

### **Truth**

**EXPLANATION:** Following God's Word, the Bible, is essential to Christian living because God is truth. Christ's true followers consistently obey his truth.

**IMPORTANCE:** To be loyal to Christ's teaching, we must seek to know the Bible, but we may never twist its message to our own needs or purposes or encourage others who misuse it.

### **Love**

**EXPLANATION:** Christ's command is for Christians to love one another. This is the basic ingredient of true Christianity.

**IMPORTANCE:** To obey Christ fully, we must believe his command to love others. Helping, giving, and meeting needs put love into practice.

### **False Leaders**

**EXPLANATION:** We must be wary of religious leaders who are not true to Christ's teaching. We should not give them a platform to spread false teaching.

**IMPORTANCE:** Don't encourage those who are opposed to Christ. Politely remove yourself from association with false leaders. Be aware of what is being taught in your church.

## **To The Elders - Verses 1-6**

<sup>1</sup> The elder, To the lady chosen by God and to her children, whom I love in the truth—and not I only, but also all who know the truth— <sup>2</sup> because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever: <sup>3</sup> Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love. <sup>4</sup> It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. <sup>5</sup> And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. <sup>6</sup> And this is love: that

**we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.**

**1:1** The "elder" is John, one of Jesus' 12 disciples and the writer of the Gospel of John, three letters, and the book of Revelation. This letter was written shortly after 1 John to warn about false teachers. The salutation "To the lady chosen by God and to her children," could refer to a specific woman or to a church whose identity is no longer known. John may have written this from Ephesus.

**1:1-2** John wrote this second letter (which probably fit on one sheet of papyrus) to warn believers against inadvertently supporting false teachers. The number of itinerant evangelists and teachers had grown by the end of the first century; mixed in with the legitimate missionaries were others who were promoting heretical ideas about Christ and the gospel. Little has changed in two thousand years. Advocates of unorthodox beliefs still exist and still attempt to confuse and deceive the people of God. This letter, 2 John, should serve as a wake-up call to believers to be alert, to be careful, and to be solidly grounded in the faith. Are you prepared to recognize false doctrine?

**1:3-4** The "truth" is the truth about Jesus Christ, as opposed to the lies of the false teachers (see 1 John 2:21-23). John refers to truth five times in the first four verses of this brief letter. In contrast to so many in our culture who dogmatically deny truth ("There are no ultimate realities") or absurdly define it according to personal preference ("Your truth is your truth and my truth is my truth"), John declared the existence of an Absolute. God is that ultimate standard by which all else can be judged. God is true, his words and ways are true, and whatever or whoever contradicts or opposes him is false, deceptive, and dangerous. Christian leaders, teachers, and parents must engage now in the difficult but critical battle for truth. To paraphrase a familiar saying: "All that is required for Deception to triumph is for the people of the Truth to do nothing." Begin an intentional campaign to teach those under your care how to distinguish between truth and error.

**1:5-6** The statement that Christians should love one another is a recurrent New Testament theme. Yet love for one's neighbor is an old command, first appearing in the third book of Moses (Leviticus 19:18). We can show love in many ways: by avoiding prejudice and discrimination; by accepting people; by listening, helping, giving, serving, and refusing to judge. Knowing God's command is not enough. We must put it into practice walking "in obedience to his commands" (See also Matthew 22:37-39 and 1 John 2:7-8).

### **To The Elders - Verses 7-13**

**<sup>7</sup> I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. <sup>8</sup> Watch out that you do not lose what we<sup>[a]</sup> have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. <sup>9</sup> Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. <sup>10</sup> If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take**

them into your house or welcome them. <sup>11</sup> Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work. <sup>12</sup> I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete. <sup>13</sup> The children of your sister, who is chosen by God, send their greetings.

**1:7** In John's day, many false teachers ("deceivers") taught that spirit was good and matter was evil; therefore, they reasoned that Jesus could not have been both God and man. In strong terms, John warns against this kind of teaching. Many false teachers still promote an understanding of Jesus that is not biblical. These teachers are dangerous because they distort the truth and undermine the foundations of Christian faith. They may use the right words but change the meanings.

**1:7** The term translated "deceivers" can also be translated "impostors"; it carries the idea of leading another astray. Notice that the verse refers to "many" such charlatans and pretenders. The great danger of deceitful leaders is that they seem so sincere and believable. They are not easy to spot in a crowd. Usually they are winsome and attractive; otherwise, how would they gather people to themselves? We do not want to become paranoid and suspicious about everyone we meet, but we do need to be wise in evaluating the character and conduct of those who would seek to influence people. The way your teachers live shows a lot about what they believe about Christ. For more on testing teachers, see 1 John 4:1.

**1:8** To be "rewarded fully" refers not to salvation but to the rewards of loyal service. All who value the truth and persistently hold to it will win their full reward. Those who live for themselves and justify their self-centeredness by teaching false doctrines will lose that reward (see Matthew 7:21-23).

**1:10** John instructs the believers not to show hospitality to false teachers. They were to do nothing that would encourage the heretics in their propagation of falsehoods. In addition, if believers were to invite them in, such action would show that they were approving of what the false teachers said and did. John is condemning the support of those who are dedicated to opposing the true teachings of God, not condemning hospitality to unbelievers. John adds that a person who supports a false teacher in any way shares in the teacher's evil work.

**1:10** False teaching is serious business, and we dare not overlook it. It is so serious that John wrote this letter to warn against it. Because our world has so many false teachings, we might be tempted to take many of them lightly. Instead, we should realize the dangers they pose and actively refuse to give heresies any foothold.