

Live in Truth

2 John

Review

Did anything you learned about prayer from the previous lesson motivate you to pray more or differently this week? Why are you confident (or not) that God hears and answers your prayers?

Memorize the Truth!

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

John used only 245 words to write this letter in the original Greek. It's the second-shortest book in the Bible. (Third John has 219 words.) At first glance, we might wonder why he took the time. But it's clear that he thought it was important to write it because he thought the false teachers who were visiting a local house church were an immediate danger to the believers. He said he wanted to come visit so he could talk to them face to face, but sometimes, there are things to say that just can't wait.

DAY 1 2 John 1-3—Knowing and Loving the Truth

Write God's truth for the week: 2 John 6.



Behind the Scenes

We're not sure who the "lady" John wrote to was. She may have been an actual woman that John knew. Or he may have used the word *lady* to refer to a certain church.

1. How many times does the word *truth* appear in these three verses?

2. Obviously, John wanted us to know how important truth is. Read the following verses and beside each of the references, write something you learn about truth.

- a. John 1:17
- b. John 8:32
- c. Ephesians 4:15
- d. Ephesians 4:25

3. John said that Christians should be people of truth—the truth “abides in us and will be with us forever” (2 John 2). What is true about people who do *not* know the truth or do not have it living in them?

- a. Psalm 5:9
- b. Romans 2:8
- c. 1 John 2:4

4. In addition to what you learned in questions 2 and 3, why would you say that truth is so important?



LEARN the TRUTH!

What does it mean to “love in truth”? Loving in truth requires a pure and sincere heart rather than loving others for selfish reasons. What would loving in truth look like in your relationships? As you love people this week, consider your motives. Ask God to give you a love for others that is sincere and pure. Plan to share your experience with your small group next week.

DAY 2 2 John 4-6—Walking in Truth and Love

Write God’s truth for the week: 2 John 6.

5. Why did John rejoice?

6. Read Galatians 4:19 and 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20. How would you explain John's reason for rejoicing?

7. How did John define *love*, according to 2 John 6?

8. Copy the three commands you wrote in your answer to question 5 from lesson 8 in the left column of the chart below. In the right column, explain how obeying that command shows love.

| A Command of God | How Obeying That Command Shows Love |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |

DAY 3 2 John 7-9—Abiding in the Truth

Write God's truth for the week: 2 John 6.

9. John wrote about the characteristics of deceivers and antichrists earlier. But here he does so again—this is just that important! How can you know if someone is a deceiver and not a person who really knows and loves Jesus? Put the answer in your own words.

10. What insights do the following Scriptures offer concerning Jesus's coming in the flesh—His humanity?

a. Luke 2:7

b. Luke 2:40-52

c. Luke 24:39

d. John 1:14

e. John 4:6

f. John 19:28

g. Hebrews 2:17

11. Describe the difference between those who do not abide in the teaching of Christ and those who do.

12. What difference could it make in the lives of believers to know that they have “both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9)?

DAY 4 2 John 10-11—Avoiding False Teachers

Write God’s truth for the week: 2 John 6.

13. How did John tell “the elect lady” to respond to false teachers who sought her hospitality? Why did he do this?

14. There are people today who don’t think Jesus is really God. Or that He wasn’t really a human being. Or that He didn’t rise from the dead. How might such a person try to use you to spread false teaching?

15. Read Acts 17:17-21; 18:26; and Titus 3:9-11. What can you learn about responding to people who do not know or teach the truth today?

DAY 5 2 John 12-13—Final Greetings

Write God's truth for the week: 2 John 6.

16. Why did John write such a short letter?

17. What are some of the ways people communicate most often today? List some below.

18. Can you think of times when sharing face to face would be better than some of the ways people usually communicate today? Explain.



APPLY the TRUTH!

We need to be wise about the people we associate with. Those who walk in truth and love will help us grow deeper in our own relationships with God. Those who do not will eventually drag us away. Think about the people who have the most influence in your life. Do they seek to love God and walk in His truth? This might be hard to hear, but if they do not, then you need to find some new friends. You can—and should—still love those who don't know Jesus yet. But fellow believers should be your closest friends, the ones you spend the most time with, the ones who influence you most. Are there any changes you need to make? Plan to talk about this in your Core Group.

DAY 6 Participate in Class

Live in Truth

2 John

“Don’t swallow gum. It will stay in your stomach for seven years.”

“Don’t go swimming for an hour after you eat. You’ll get cramps and drown.”

“Don’t crack your knuckles. It will give you arthritis.”

If you haven’t heard those “facts,” you can be sure your parents did. Just a few years ago, people thought all those statements were true. Now scientists say that none of them is. We can be certain that future discoveries will prove a lot of things we think are true today are just as false.

Real truth lasts for eternity. John said that “the truth that abides in us ... will be with us forever” (2 John 2). God’s truth is permanent and absolute. People come up with their own “truths” and philosophies to explain and better their lives. But those “truths” fail and soon become unpopular. As we’ve just seen, even scientific “facts” change as researchers discover more information. God’s truth never changes. What was true when Jesus walked the earth is still true today and will continue to be true throughout eternity. Human truth will constantly fail, but we can count on God’s truth to give our lives meaning and purpose.

Greeting (2 John 1-3)

John began this short letter by calling himself “the elder.” He was pretty old by this point, but that’s not all the word *elder* means. It was how people referred to an older person in a position of leadership, like a pastor. John never used his own name, but from the very early days of the church, people have agreed that the letter was

his. We can assume that the original readers knew who he was and would have accepted him as a spiritual leader.

John addressed his letter to “the elect lady and her children.” Some people think it’s possible that the woman’s name was *Eklektos* (or something very similar), which means “chosen” or “elect.” If that was the case, John may have been referring to her by name. He may have been writing to a woman and her own biological children, or to a woman and the people who were part of a church in her home. Some believe that John used the word *lady* to refer to a local church. Whatever the case, the apostles’ letters were passed around from person to person and place to place, so we know that we can, and should, pay attention and learn from John’s message.

Even scientific “facts” change as researchers discover more information. God’s truth never changes. What was true when Jesus walked the earth is still true today.

John began by writing about his love for the woman and her children—a love based “in truth.” He assured her that all who know the truth share this love “because of the truth that abides in [them] and will be with [them] forever.” By truth, John meant more than correct information. He was writing about the actual presence of Christ living in us. Jesus is Himself truth (see John 14:6). He lives in everyone who believes in Him. Because He is truth, when He lives in us and we allow Him

to lead us, He will guide our thoughts, feelings, and actions with truth.

If you are a Christian, this truth should be part of your relationship with other Christians—Christ unites us by living in us, both on this earth and throughout eternity. If you meet a Christian from another country, even if you don't speak the same language, you know that the two of you share the same Jesus, the same Holy Spirit, the same truth, and the same eternal home in heaven. In fact, you have more in common with that person than with a nonbelieving teammate on your soccer team.

When we love God, we show it by loving others. The way to tell for sure if people are really following God is to see if they are loving and truthful with others.

Having Christ's truth in us also protects us against false ideas and teaching.

John wanted his readers to have “grace, mercy, and peace ...” from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son. John was making a claim that Jesus is God (2 John 3). This is important, because he was warning his readers about false teachers who claimed that Jesus was just an emanation—something like an energy that flows out of God—and not the unique and only Son of God.



Think about . . .

ways that you can accidentally spread false teaching. Have you ever liked a friend's social media post because you thought it was funny, even if it made light of sin or made fun of Christians? When other friends saw that you liked it, they probably thought you agreed with it. And if they knew you were a Christian, you were spreading false teaching about what

Christians think—even if you would never do that on purpose. The Bible makes it clear that believers should avoid any type of evil. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:21-23.) Instead, the Bible tells us to chase after things that help others know Jesus better. (See Romans 14:19.)

Truth and Love (2 John 4-11)

John explained his reason for writing: to warn his readers that false teachers were traveling from place to place teaching dangerous messages. He had joy because “some” of the lady's children were walking in the truth. But his use of the word *some* seems to indicate that some of them were not walking in the truth—they were following the false teachers.

John said that those who were walking in the truth were doing what the Father had told them to do. He encouraged them to keep obeying the command that they had heard “from the beginning.” Unlike the false teachers who were just trying to get people to follow them, John was not claiming that his message was a new, secret mystery. Instead, he wanted his readers to stick with the information they already knew—God's original command to love one another.

John gave his readers a reliable way to know what true love looks like. He said, “This is love”: Those who know and love God walk in His commandments. John explained that when we love God, we show it by doing what He wants us to do, particularly by loving others. False teachers made all sorts of claims about how their “truth” worked. But the way to tell for sure if others are really following God is to see if they are loving and truthful with others.

After talking about those who walk in truth, John turned to the topic of those who weren't walking in truth. In 1 John, he wrote about deceivers who refused to acknowledge Jesus as God in the flesh. They invented a distorted view of the relationship between flesh and spirit. Some

of them taught that Jesus didn't really have a human body—He just made it look as if He did. Others taught that Jesus was a real man whose godliness only came upon Him at the time of His baptism and left when He died on the cross. Both of these views are far different from what Scripture teaches—that Jesus, the Son of God from eternity past, became a human being with a real, earthly body. He died a real death and rose from the dead. Since then, He has remained in His glorified, eternal physical human body in heaven.



Think about . . .

false teachers. John said, "Many deceivers have gone out into the world" (2 John 7). He referred to false teachers who were once thought to be believers but had wandered into heresy. Satan knows that if he can confuse church leaders and get them teaching falsehoods, he will also be confusing those who listen to them. This teaching can fool anyone. It's important that we respect leaders in church, school, and other places. But we each have to take responsibility for making sure that what we hear doesn't contradict what the Bible says (see 1 Timothy 4:16). And the only way to do that is to study the Bible and know what it says.

John didn't try to be nice about the false teachers. He called them deceivers and antichrists. He warned his readers against listening to them because falling for their lies would make them lose the full reward they had worked for. Christ has promised rewards to those who live in ways that please Him. But we can lose those rewards if we are disobedient, lazy, or focusing on the wrong things. The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, spoke on this theme. He said, "If anyone's

work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire."

John explained the difference between those who accepted and lived by Christ's teaching and those who continued to decide their own truth. Those who go their own way do not have God. But those who follow Christ's way have both God the Father and the Son.

John called the false teachers deceivers and antichrists. He warned his readers that listening to them and falling for their lies would lead to the loss of the full reward they had worked for.

John had a firm command for the lady and her children: when the false teachers come, she was not to allow them into her house or even greet them. In John's day, there weren't 20 motels at the entrance to every town as there are today. Travelers often stayed in people's homes. But to allow a false teacher to stay in your home would be a way of supporting his point of view and taking part in his wickedness. And if there was a church meeting in the lady's home, to invite known false teachers in would be the same as allowing them to preach. John did not want God's people to help the deceivers spread their false message in any way.

Conclusion (2 John 12-13)

John ended his letter by letting his readers know that he had more he wanted to say. He wanted to visit them himself and talk face to face. He knew that this would bring joy to him and them. It would have been obvious to his readers that John cared very deeply about them and their spiritual health.

When John wrote about losing "what we have worked for" (2 John 8), he wasn't talking about a believer's salvation. We can't achieve our salvation by works—there's nothing we can do to earn it. We are saved by God's grace alone as soon as we trust in what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross (see Ephesians 2:8-9).



PERSONALIZE the TRUTH!

Any one of us can be fooled from time to time. But the better we know God's truth, the easier it will be for us to recognize and defend ourselves from false teaching. How can you get more of God's Word into you? You need a plan to read it regularly, and not only read it, but also think about what you read and think about how it applies to your daily life. Come up with a plan to read, study, memorize, or pray through a passage of Scripture. Write down your plan and try it for a week.