

# ***“We BE... In Truth & Love”***

2 John 1:1-3

August 11, 2016



## **Lovers & Liars**

The Book of  
2 John

**INTRO:** What do you see in our series graphic?  
Do you see **relational irony**?

**Today is all about... DEFINITIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

***Black and White*** - both colors

***Up and Down*** - both directions

***Everything and Nothing*** – both measure things

***Dead and Alive*** – both report on life

Even ***“EXACT OPPOSITES”*** – both are exact

Did you notice... **they all have something in common?**

The irony is that the only thing that they all have in common is that they ALL have something in common



# Lovers & Liars

The Book of  
2 John

*Lovers & Liars have ONE thing in common...  
their relationship with Truth that defines them*

BOOK / Series Theme:  
*God gave us 2<sup>nd</sup> John to teach us that....  
HIS Truth & Love are to Gird, Guide & Guard  
Christ's Church!*

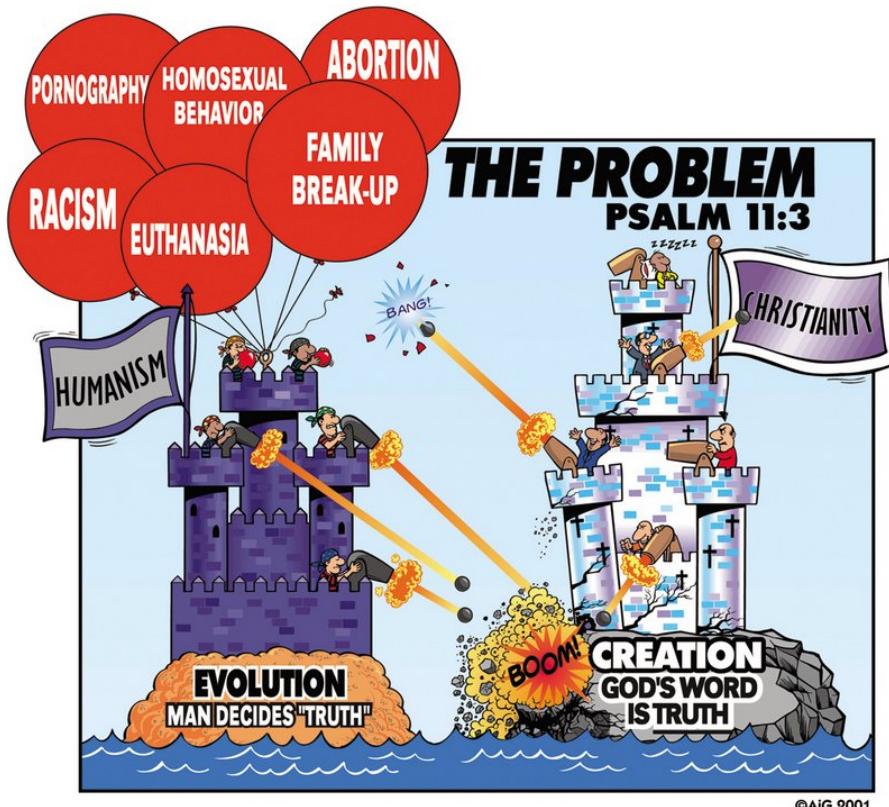
## Series Outline:

1.    **1:1-3**        *We BE... In Truth & Love*
  
2.    **1:4-6**        *Walking In Truth & Love*

- 3. **1:7**      *Wanting Worldly Truth & Love*
- 4. **1:8**      *Warning In Truth & Love*
- 5. **1:9-13**    *Warring the Wicked For Truth & Love*

*Truth is the cornerstone of the Church... upon which the Lord builds His believers.*

*Consequently, truth is the number one target of the enemy.*



## CONTEXT:

1. Continuation of 1<sup>st</sup> John “ministry”
  - a. Define & Defend the Church!
  - b. Beliefs & Behaviors are like roots & fruits
  - c. Beware the wolves!

2. Contemporary of 3<sup>rd</sup> John “ministry”
  - a. Another “postcard epistle”
  - b. Truth & Love...
  - c. Doors open too much vs. not enough
3. 2 John 1:1-3 = defining greeting & prep for warning
4. Early Church... late 1<sup>st</sup> century... Apostle John...
  - a. Writing from Ephesus...
  - b. In the context of Revelation ch.2&3
  - c. Writing to a woman or a church... not the issue.

**BIG IDEA:**  
***Truth & love define, develop, & deploy  
the Church!***

### **PREVIEW:**

- 1. Truth & Love DEFINE the Church**
- 2. Truth & Love DEVELOP the Church**
- 3. Truth & Love DEPLOY the Church**

### **TEXT:**

<sup>1</sup> *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,* <sup>2</sup> *because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever:*

<sup>3</sup> *Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father’s Son, in truth and love.*

## I. Truth & Love DEFINE the Church

*<sup>1</sup> 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,*

The terms “elder” & “elect” (or “chosen”) speak to a relationship between: **truth & love; Christ & Church... grace & God’s children!**

- [Mark 13:20](#); [Acts 13:48](#); [Rom. 8:28-30](#); [Eph. 1:4-5, 11](#); [2 Thess. 2:13](#); [2 Tim. 1:9](#); [James 2:5](#).

The New Testament often refers to believers as the elect.

\* Jesus did in Matthew 24:22 \*

**As for LOVE... Jesus put it best...**

*“If you love Me, you will obey My commandments.” – Jn 14:15*

*Love is the experiential element of truth...*

**T/S:** ...a bit of a biblical refresher on “Truth”

**Love is truth's treasure!** - JDP

*Truth & love complete each other... - JDP*

*Truth is the empowering element of love... - JDP*

**The Bible**, the Word of truth, majors on the theme of truth.  
([Ps. 119:160](#); [John 17:17](#); [2 Cor. 6:7](#); [2 Tim. 2:15](#); [James 1:18](#)).

**God is the "God of truth"** ([Ps. 31:5](#); [Isa. 65:16](#)),

**God abounds in truth** ([Ex. 34:6](#))

**God always speaks the truth** ([2 Sam. 7:28](#); [Titus 1:2](#))

**Christ IS the truth** ([John 14:6](#); [Eph. 4:21](#))

**Christ is full of truth** ([John 1:14](#))

**Christ revealed the truth** ([John 1:17](#))

**Christ spoke the truth** ([John 8:45-46](#))

**Christ testified to the truth** ([John 18:37](#))

**The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth** ([John 14:17](#); [15:26](#)[16:13](#);  
[1 John 5:6](#)).

**God's truth is eternal** ([Ps. 117:2](#))

**God's truth is infinite** ([Pss. 57:10; 86:15; 108:4](#))

**God's truth is saving** ([Ps. 69:13](#))

**Salvation comes from faith in the truth** ([2 Th. 2:13; 1 Tim. 2:4;](#)  
[2 Tim. 2:25](#))

**Believers are sanctified by the truth** ([John 17:17](#))

**Believers love the truth** (cf. [2 Thess. 2:10](#))

**Believers are set free by the truth** ([John 8:32](#))

**Believers worship in the truth** ([John 4:23-24](#))

**Believers rejoice in the truth** ([1 Cor. 13:6](#))

**Believers speak the truth** ([Eph. 4:15, 25](#))

**Believers meditate on the truth** ([Phil. 4:8](#))

**Believers manifest the truth** ([2 Cor. 4:2](#))

**Believers obey the truth** ([1 Peter 1:22](#))

**Believers are guided by the truth** ([Pss. 25:5; 43:3](#))

**Believers walk in the truth** ([1 Kings 2:4; 3:6; 2 Kings 20:3;](#)  
[Pss. 26:3; 86:11](#))

Believers must be committed to the truth... because Beelzebub is the "father of lies" (**[John 8:44](#)**), who strives to keep sinners AND saints from firmly & fully understanding & believing the truth...

**See [1 Corinthians 2:14](#) & [2 Corinthians 4:4](#)**

### **Unbelievers are universally:**

"men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth" ([1 Tim. 6:5](#)),

"oppose the truth" ([2 Tim. 3:8](#))

"turn away their ears from the truth" ([2 Tim. 4:4](#))

"they exchanged the truth of God for a lie" ([Rom. 1:25](#)).

### **Psalm 55:21**

***“His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.”***

### **1 John 2:18-26 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. <sup>19</sup> They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. <sup>20</sup> But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. <sup>21</sup> I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. <sup>22</sup> Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. <sup>23</sup> No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. <sup>24</sup> Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. <sup>25</sup> And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. <sup>26</sup> I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

Professing churches that fail to rightly define & righteously defend the truth will face God's judgment—just as the Jews did for failing to uphold and live the Old Testament truth entrusted to them (cf. [Rom. 2:23-24](#)).

**REMEMBER:** martyrdom is not an excuse for cowardice, its an example of Christ-likeness!

See [Hebrews 11...](#) & [Church history...](#)

**In a world of lies, the church is called to be  
the "*pillar & support of the truth*" (1 Tim. 3:15).**

**"Obedience to Truth validates love...  
&  
Love verifies Truth!" - JDP**

## **II. Truth & Love DEVELOP the Church**

*<sup>2</sup> because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: <sup>3</sup> Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ*

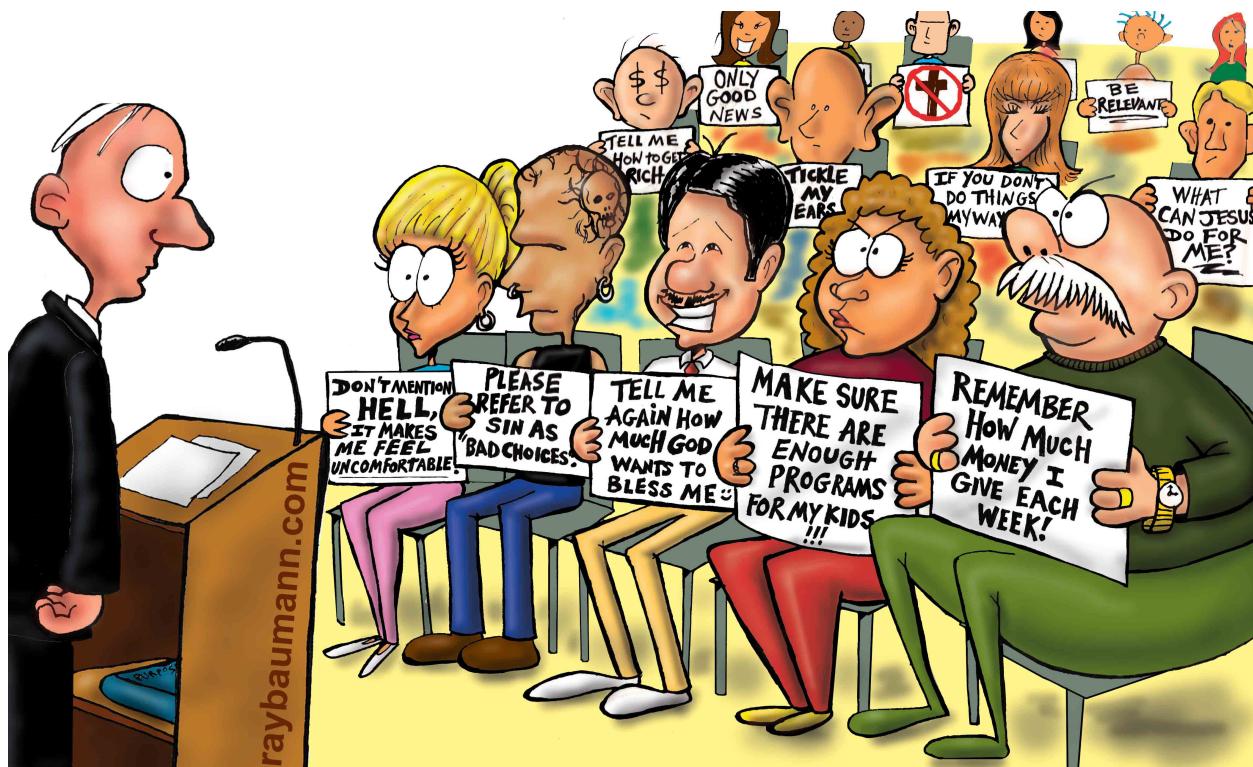
**The truth of the Word, which abides in believers forever, gives them "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16).**

*Truth is the well-spring of love... - JDP*

*It is their common belief in the gospel truth that unites all believers.*

## **QUOTE:**

*We can have no **real** communion with those who reject the truth of the gospel, since we share no common spiritual life with them. Such people are outside the fellowship of believers, because it is only those who "have in obedience to the truth purified [their] souls" who can have "a sincere love of the brethren" ([\*\*1 Peter 1:22\*\*](#)).*



\*\*\* NOTE this “bad example” from [\*The Murren Group\*](#)

*“I can help you hit that mark. Really it is just about doing the right things.”*

**My response...**

Your theology is dangerously wrong. See Acts 1:8!

*Because salvation requires belief in the truth, it is critically important for the church to proclaim the right message.*

T/S: **VIDEO:** “*Normal Church for normal people*”

*God's grace caused Him to grant mercy, which results in peace.*

**ALL divine blessings come exclusively from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.**

“**from**” & “**from**” emphasize Christ’s **deity** & the **Trinity**!

**III. Truth & Love DEPLOYS the Church**  
*the Father’s Son, in truth and love.*

**Read: John 3:3; 16; 36**

**John 8:32 & 36**

**John 14:15**

**John 17:17-21**

**17**“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. **18**“As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. **19**“For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. **20**“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; **21**that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

**CLOSE:**

*The true Church is God's transformed train that travels down  
the timeless tracks of Truth & Love!*

- JDP

**John 20:21**

***“As the Father has sent Me, SO now I send YOU!”***

***Let's Pray!***

## Study Notes:

### Introduction

**Second John is the second shortest book in the New Testament. It has only 245 words in the Greek text** and would have easily fit on a single piece of papyri. Today we might call it (and 3 John) **a “postcard epistle.”** It is an excellent example of hortatory (or exhortation) discourse, for **the author’s intent is to motivate his audience to action.**

1. **The recipients must continue to walk in the truth,**
2. **love one another, and**
3. **be on guard against false teachers (e.g., the deceiver and the antichrist of v. 7).**

The letter follows the normal epistolary pattern of the New Testament period with opening (salutation), body, and closing.

**The body of the epistle (vv. 4–11) consists of three sections that comprise the heart of the correspondence.**

- A. Verse 4 introduces a commendation similar to that in other letters of the Greco-Roman culture.
- B. The two constituents that follow
  - i. (vv. 5–6 and
  - ii. 7–11) contain three commands;
  - iii. one is located in vv. 5–6, and the other two are in vv. 7–11.

**Although there are only two imperatives in the epistle: “watch out” (*blepete*) in v. 8 and “do not take” (*lambanete*) in v. 10, “Love one another” in v. 5 virtually bears an imperatival force, in part because of the close proximity of the word “command,” which occurs four times in vv. 4–6.**

John also builds this epistle around unifying key words. In these thirteen verses **John repeatedly uses “truth” (five times), “love” (four times), “commandment” (four times), “walk” (three times), “teaching” (three times), and “children” (three times).**

He also utilizes **a rare word, “antichrist,”** which appears in Scripture only in 1 and 2 John (see [1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7](#)).

In essence, **John tells his children to**

- (1) walk in the truth,**
- (2) obey the commandments,**
- (3) love one another, and**
- (4) guard the teachings of Christ so that they will not be deceived by antichrist.**

**The spiritual safety of the believing community is confidently affirmed**, being further heightened by the fact that

**John begins and ends his letter with a reference to their election or chosen position** (vv. 1, 13).

A first century letter, whether Christian or non-Christian, was different in form and structure from modern correspondence. Actually, the ancient pattern makes more sense because it identified the author at the outset. Jewish or Greek, an ancient epistle began with a salutation or word of introduction that followed a threefold formula of: (1) the name of the sender, (2) the name of the recipient, and (3) a word of greeting.

**The salutation was by no means merely perfunctory or insignificant. It would often establish the mood of the epistle and contain in “seed form” major themes or concerns the author wished to address.**

- New American Commentary

## Chapter 1

The apostle here salutes an honourable matron and her children (v. 1-3). Recommends to them faith and love (v. 5,6). Warns them of deceivers (v. 7), and to take heed to themselves (v. 8).

Teaches how to treat those who bring not the doctrine of Christ ([v. 10,11](#)). And, referring other things to personal discourse, concludes the epistle ([v. 12,13](#)).

## **The Apostle Here Salutes an Honourable Matron and Her Children**

[1:1-3](#)

Ancient epistles began, as here, with salutation and good wishes: religion consecrates, as far as may be, old forms, and turns compliments into real expressions of life and love. Here we have, as usually,

I. The saluter, not expressed by name, but by a chosen character: The elder. The expression, and style, and love, intimate that the penman was the same with that of the foregoing epistle; he is now the elder, emphatically and eminently so; possibly the oldest apostle now living, the chief elder in the church of God. An elder in the ancient house of Israel was reverend, or to be reverenced, much more he who is so In the gospel Israel of God. An old disciple is honourable; and old apostle and leader of disciples is more so. He was now old in holy service and experience, had seen and tasted much of heaven, and was much nearer than when at first he believed.

II. The saluted-a noble Christian matron, and her children: To the elect lady and her children. A lady, a person of eminent quality for birth, education, and estate. It is well that the gospel ha got among such. It is a pity but lords and ladies should be acquainted with the Lord Christ and his religion. They owe more to him than others do; though usually not many noble are called.

Here is a pattern for persons of quality of the same sex. The elect lady; not only a choice one, but one chosen of God. It is lovely and beautiful to see ladies, by holy walking, demonstrate their election of God. And her children; probably the lady was a widow; she and her children then are the principal part of the family, and so this may be styled an economical epistle.

Families may well be written to and encouraged, and further directed in their domestic love, and order, and duties. We see that children may well be taken notice of in Christian letters, and they should know it too; it may avail to their encouragement and caution. Those who love and commend them will be apt to enquire after them. This lady and her children are further notified by the respect paid them, and that,

1. By the apostle himself: Whom I love in the truth, or in truth, whom I sincerely and heartily love. He who was the beloved disciple had learnt the art or exercise of love; and he especially loved those who loved him, that Lord who loved him.

2. By all her Christian acquaintance, all the religious who knew her: And not I only, but also all those that have known the truth. virtue and goodness in an elevated sphere shine brightly. Truth demands acknowledgment, and those who see the evidences of pure religion should confess and attest them; it is a good sign and great duty to love and value religion in others. The ground of this love and respect thus paid to this lady and her children was their regard to the truth: For the truth's sake (or true religion's sake) which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. Christian love is founded upon the appearance of vital religion. Likeness should beget affection. Those who love truth and piety in

themselves should love it in others too, or love others upon the account of it. The apostle and the other Christians loved this lady, not so much for her honour as her holiness; not so much for her bounty as her serious Christianity. We should not be religious merely by fits and starts, in certain moods and moons; but religion should still dwell within us, in our minds and hearts, in our faith and love. It is to be hoped that where religion once truly dwells it will abide for ever. The Spirit of Christianity, we may suppose, will not be totally extinguished: Which shall be with us for ever.

III. The salutation, which is indeed an apostolical benediction: Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love, **v. 3. Sacred love pours out blessings upon this honourable Christian family**; to those who have shall more be given. Observe,

**1. From whom these blessings are craved,**

(1.) From God the Father, the God of all grace. He is the fountain of blessedness, and of all the blessings that must bring us thither. (2.) From the Lord Jesus Christ. He is also author and communicator of these heavenly blessings, and he is distinguished by this emphatic character—the Son of the Father; such a Son as none else can be; such a Son as is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, who, with the Father, is also eternal life, **1 John 1:2.**

**2. What the apostle craves from these divine persons.**

(1.) Grace—divine favour and good-will, the spring of all good things: it is **grace** indeed that any spiritual blessing

should be conferred on sinful mortals. (2.) **Mercy-free pardon and forgiveness**; those who are already rich in grace have need of continual forgiveness. (3.) **Peace-tranquility of spirit and serenity of conscience**, in an assured **reconciliation with God**, together with all safe and sanctified outward prosperity. **And these are desired in truth and love**, either **by sincere and ardent affection** in the saluter (in faith and love he prays them from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ), or as productive of continued truth and love in the saluted; **these blessings will continually preserve true faith and love in the elect lady and her children**; and may they do so!

- Matthew Henry's Commentary.

## 1. The Salutation ([vv. 1–3](#))

### (1) The Sender ([v. 1a](#))

**1a** This epistle is anonymous with the author providing as simple and direct an identification as is found in the New Testament (this also is true of 3 John). This **introduction of the author as “the elder” is unique to 2 and 3 John. “The elder” (*ho presbuteros*) emphasizes his position and personal relationship with the recipients of the letter.** This is more important than his name. No doubt those receiving this letter were quite familiar with the author, and his title conveys the respect and authority he held with the “chosen lady and her children.”

In its basic use “elder” simply means “an old or aged man.” As utilized **in the context of the Christian community, the word took on the meaning of one who possessed authority and leadership by virtue of his character, integrity, and moral standing.** **An elder was a man whose life was exemplary and thus an example** (1 Pet 5:3) **worthy of the church’s imitation.**

The fact that the apostle John was by now an old man and that he also held a special position and authority as the last surviving apostle makes this title especially fitting. **He had no need to assert his apostleship. That was common knowledge** and he could appeal to them in a more tender fashion. **His standing with those to whom he was writing was well established.**

## (2) The Recipient (vv. 1b–2)

**1b** This is a unique designation for the recipient of a New Testament letter, and it has engendered significant discussion. **Interpreters are divided over exactly who *eklektē kuria kai tois teknois autēs* is, and the following views have been offered:**

- 1. It is a figurative reference to a local church and its members.** Verse 13 would likewise refer to another local church.
- 2. It is a reference to the church universal** (a view favored by Jerome).
- 3. The recipient is an individual lady and her children.**

**The majority of scholars, especially recent ones, have favored the first option**, believing the phrase to be a metaphorical or symbolic means of identifying a local church and its members. This probably is the wisest option.

**Regardless of how one interprets these words, however, the basic application of the epistle remains unchanged.** What the author would expect in belief and behavior of a lady and her children he would also expect of a local church and its members.

**“Chosen Lady” is a term of endearment and respect. Lady (*kuria*) is the feminine form of “lord.”** Marshall notes that **there may be a hint of the church as the bride of Christ** ([Eph 5:25–27](#); [Rev 19:7–8](#)) “so that her children are the spiritual offspring of the Lord and his church.” She is “chosen” because God elected her to belong to himself. God called the lady and those who comprise her family to be his own. **The fact that she is chosen [“by God” is clearly implied] indicates the initiative of her election was with God and that her privileged position is not accidental.**

**The spiritual status believers enjoy is the result of God’s grace and goodness.**

*Two key words drive the early part of this letter: love (*agapē*) and truth (*alētheia*).*

John wishes to establish an intimate connection with his readers considering the circumstances that have prompted this letter.

His expression of love would certainly appeal to their heart and emotions and make them more receptive to the words he would share. **“I” is emphatic, and “love” is in the present tense. “Whom I, myself, love as a constant expression of my heart” is what John is saying.**

**Even if the letter contains some “hard sayings,” his affirming love should move them to hear what he has to say.**

*If love would appeal to their hearts, then truth would appeal to their minds.*

*The neglect of this epistle throughout the history of the church has been unfortunate because no letter more beautifully balances the twin Christian graces of “love” and “truth.”*

- Dr. Danny Akin

**Paul admonished the Ephesians to speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15) in the context of each member of the body doing his part as the church grows and matures.**

**John's concern is certainly corporate, but it is also relational and individual.**

John loves this community personally and devotedly. As a good elder his heart is knit to theirs. This is not mere sentiment and emotion. **Truth is the framework, the principle, that guides and gives genuine meaning to his expression of love.** In the absence of truth, true love is not present.

**John knew that both love and truth are essential and not optional.**

John will go on to explain that **love walks in obedience** to God's commands and is expressed in relation to one another (in this context **note Paul's magnificent description of love in 1 Cor 13:4–8**).

*Truth, interestingly, is related to both belief and behavior. John's interest in truth is not so much philosophical as it is spiritual and personal.*

**Truth is that which is embodied in Jesus Christ** ([John 14:6](#)), who he is and what he has done. **John is especially concerned with the person of Christ in this letter** (v. [7](#)).

Truth mattered to John. **If deception and error slip into a fellowship, the results are always tragic and devastating.** The reason for this commitment to the truth is that the truth has seized them as a permanent and abiding reality.

In the past John and his fellow witnesses came to “know the truth.” The result of that experience has stayed with them to the present and will remain with them forever. **“All” is used in a general sense and is not specific. John is simply affirming that those who “know the truth” as a practice of their Christian faith do love each other.**

**2** In a sense John provides his own commentary concerning the significance of the aorist tense of the word “know” in v. **1**. Two things are affirmed:

(1) the truth lives or remains (*menousan*) in us as the community of faith devoted to the Father and his Son, Jesus, and

(2) this truth literally “with us will be unto the ages” (eternally). The truth of God the Father revealed in his Son Jesus is truth that has an abiding reality. It has come to stay. It is dynamic and personal, for it lives in us. God’s revelation of himself is something we now possess as our very own.

It is also ours in assurance.

Smalley points out that this phrase “adds an important eschatological dimension.” “With us” is brought to the front in the Greek text. It is the truth that will be with us, truth that is eternal, truth that is

abiding and unchanging because its source is the one true God.

Hiebert writes, “In saying ‘with us,’ John again joins himself with those who have this blessed assurance for the future.”

*Our security is as sure as the truth and character of God. His truth will forever remain in us and with us as a constant companion.*

As we renew and appropriate this wonderful truth on a daily basis, we equip ourselves to stand against the deceivers and false teachers who would snatch away the abundant reward God has for his children (v. 8).

### (3) The Greeting (v. 3)

3 Though he has followed the pattern of a typical first century letter, John’s greeting is filled with Christian graces and a subtle but significant theological affirmation.

John’s greeting is similar to those in Paul, though his inclusion of “mercy” is paralleled only in 1 Tim 1:2 and 2 Tim 1:2 (see also Jude 2).

John does not express a wish in this greeting, for he is confident these Christian blessings “will be with us,” which appears first in the Greek text for emphasis.

John again identifies himself with his audience as one who, like them, is a recipient of God's favor.

**John offers a triple blessing**, beginning with grace (*charis*).

1. **"Grace"** is God's unmerited and undeserved kindness, which he freely bestows on persons who are unworthy of such attention. It is everything a holy and righteous God does for sinners that they do not deserve.
2. **Mercy** (*eleos*) occurs only here in the entire Johannine corpus. It speaks of God's compassion and pity, his tenderness and readiness to forgive sin.
3. **Peace** (*eirēnē*) is a Hebrew concept emphasizing wholeness and well-being of life in all its aspects. It conveys ideas such as safety, rest, and the absence of hostility (cf. [Rom 5:1](#); [Phil 4:9](#)).

**Grace is God doing for us what we do not deserve, mercy is his not doing to us what we do deserve, and peace is God giving us what we need based upon his grace and mercy.**

*The word order is significant. God's grace is always prior. Mercy & peace flow from it.*

John points out that these Christian graces come *from God* the Father and *from Jesus Christ*, the Father's Son.

**The repetition of the preposition “from” is important. It places the Father and Son on an equal standing and at the same time distinguishes their separate personhood. Jesus Christ is God the Father’s Son, but he is also God.**

*Spiritual blessings flow equally from the Father and the Son.*

What we receive from the Father we receive from the Son. What we enjoy from the Son we likewise enjoy from the Father. Any theology that would set the Father in opposition to the Son is faulty theology.

*There is a oneness of essence and purpose as God the Father and God the Son unite in*

*extending grace, mercy, peace, love, and truth  
to their children.*

God's title as Father takes on new meaning in the coming of his Son, in the person of Jesus Christ ([John 1:14, 18](#)). God is a good Father who desires to have a loving, intimate, and personal relationship with all people.

*The beautiful relationship that exists between  
the Father and the Son is a picture of the  
relationship God desires to have with us.*

“Jesus” is the human name of our Lord, the Greek counterpart to the Hebrew “Joshua.”

**The name “**Jesus**” is descriptive of why the Son came into the world and took upon himself a sinless human nature ([Matt 1:21](#)), for it **means “the Lord saves.”****

**Christ is equivalent to the Hebrew “Messiah” and means “the anointed one.”**

Jesus is God the Father's Son, his Messiah/ Christ.

**The greeting closes with the repetition of the words “truth and love.”**

**The placement of these words here allows John to emphasize their importance through bracketing (see v. 2) and prepares the readers for the main theme of the epistle.**

**QUOTE:** *To maintain a healthy and growing community the church must exhibit a fidelity to the truth that knows no compromise, and they must love one another in a way that knows no boundaries. Grace, mercy, and peace “flourish in an environment where truth and love prevail. Truth unites the Christian community when it faces the common foe of falsehood; it is evident among Christians when they demonstrate their unity in showing love toward one another.”* - Dr. Danny Akin

- New American Commentary

## Introduction

The second epistle of John advises "the elect lady" (either a reference to a congregation or to a woman who owned a house where the congregation met) to be fervent in Christian love ([v. 5](#)) and watchful of deceivers ([vv. 7-8](#)). The writer planned to visit the congregation soon ([v. 12](#)).

## Circumstances of Writing

**Author:** "The Elder" ([v. 1](#)) is a title that the apostle John applied to himself late in life. (The apostle Peter referred to himself the same way; [1Pe 5:1](#).) **No one other than the apostle John was ever suggested by the early church as the writer of 1 John.** Since there are so many similarities between 1 and 2 John, it is generally accepted that John also wrote the second letter.

**Background:** Second John likely was written during the last two decades of the first century. During this era, John gave pastoral leadership to churches in the area of Ephesus. We have no way of precisely dating 2 John,

...but it is reasonable that it was written around the same time as 1 John or slightly afterwards.

Its tone reveals it to be a highly personal letter that reflects John's affection for these believers and his deep concern for their welfare.

## Message and Purpose

Like Jesus, who wept over Jerusalem ([Lk 19:41](#)), and Paul, who wrote of "the daily pressure" of his "care for all the churches" ([2Co 11:28](#)), John was concerned about this congregation.

- Would they neglect to embody God's love for one another?
- Would they fall prey to false teachers?

- Second John was apparently written to help readers follow through on their commitment to follow Christ.

John used six key words to tie together this epistle. He repeatedly used the words "truth" (five times), "love" (four times), "commandment" (four times), "walk" (three times), "teaching" (three times), and "children" (three times).

John's message is clear: He told his children to

- (1) walk in the truth,
- (2) obey God's commandments,
- (3) love one another, and
- (4) guard the teachings of Christ and they would not be deceived by the antichrist.

John confirmed the spiritual safety of the believing community with a beginning and ending reference to their election by God ([vv. 1,13](#)).

## Contribution to the Bible

*It is easy for congregations to get off track.*

*Second John reminds readers of the high priority of the most basic Christian outlook and activity—mutual love.*

*Yet another priority is no less critical—true Christian teaching.*

This epistle strikes a short but strong blow for steadfastness, assuring that attentive readers would take the right steps to "receive a full reward" ([v. 8](#)).

## Structure

Second John is an excellent example of hortatory or exhortation **discourse, which has the intent of moving readers to action.** It follows the normal NT pattern for a letter with an opening, main body, and closing.

There are **only two commands** in this short letter: a call to "watch yourselves" ([v. 8](#)) and the command, "do not receive" those who plant false teaching ([v. 10](#)). There is the reminder to "love one another" in [verse 5](#). This bears the force of an imperative, in part because of the close proximity of the word "command," which occurs four times in [verses 4-6](#).

## Outline

- I. Greeting and Blessing ([vv. 1-3](#))
- II. Exhortation to Christian Love ([vv. 4-6](#))
- III. Warnings About False Teachers ([vv. 7-11](#))
- IV. Impending Visit and Blessing ([vv. 12-13](#))

- HCSB Study Bible.

## 2 John

*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 chosen lady" 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:**

"Love means doing what God has commanded us, and he has commanded us to love one another, just as you heard from the beginning" ([1:6](#)).

## **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.*

<b>MEGATHEMES</b>		
<b>THEME</b>	<b>EXPLANATION</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>
<i>Truth</i>	Following God's Word, the Bible, is essential to Christian living because	To be loyal to Christ's teaching, we must seek to know the Bible, but

	<p>God is truth. Christ's true followers consistently obey his truth.</p>	<p>may never twist its message to our own needs or purposes or encourage others who misuse it.</p>
<i>Love</i>	<p>Christ's command is for Christians to love one another. This is the basic ingredient of true Christianity.</p>	<p>To obey Christ fully, we must believe his command to love others. Helping, giving, and meeting needs put love into practice.</p>
<i>False Leaders</i>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

## Chapter 1

**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. For more information about John, see his Profile in [John 13, p. 1783](#). **This letter was written shortly after 1 John to warn about false teachers.** The salutation "to the chosen lady 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.**

- Life Application Study Bible.

2 John

## **Chapter 1**

### **Verse 1**

**1 tn** The word “From” is not in the Greek text, but has been supplied to indicate the sender of the letter.

**2 tn** Or “presbyter.”

**sn** The author's self-designation, *the elder*, is in keeping with the reticence of the author of the Gospel of John to identify himself. This is the same self-designation used by the author of 3 John.

**3 tn** This phrase may refer to an individual or to a church (or the church at large). Some have suggested that the addressee is a Christian lady named “Electa,” but the same word in [v. 13](#) is clearly an adjective, not a proper name. Others see the letter addressed to a Christian lady named “Kyria” (first proposed by Athanasius) or to an unnamed Christian lady. The internal evidence of 2 John clearly supports a collective reference, however. In [v. 6](#) the addressee is mentioned using second person plural, and this is repeated in [vv. 8, 10](#), and [12](#). Only in [v. 13](#) does the singular reappear. The uses in [vv. 1](#) and [13](#) are most likely collective. Some have seen a reference to the church at large, but [v. 13](#), referring to “the children of your elect sister” is hard to understand if the universal church is in view. Thus the most probable explanation is that the “elect lady” is a particular local church at some distance from where the author is located.

**sn 2 John is being written to warn** a “sister” church some distance away, referred to as *an elect lady*, of the missionary efforts of the secessionist false teachers (discussed in 1 John) and the dangers of welcoming them whenever they arrive.

**4 tn** The prepositional phrase ἐν ἀληθείᾳ (*en alētheia*) in [2 John 1](#) is similar to [3 John 1](#), although it is not qualified there as it is here (see [3 John 1](#)). This is not merely the equivalent of an adverb (“truly”), but is a theological statement affirming the orthodoxy of Gaius, to whom the letter is addressed. **“Truth” is**

**the author's way of alluding to theological orthodoxy in the face of the challenge by the opponents** (see [1 John 3:19](#)).

**5 sn *All those who know the truth* refers to true Christians who are holding fast to the apostolic Christology in the face of the secessionist opponents described in 1 John.**

## **Verse 2**

**sn While *truth* certainly has a doctrinal aspect in this context, the following phrase *that resides in us and will be with us forever* suggests more than doctrine is involved.**

A close parallel is [John 14:16-17](#) where Jesus promised his disciples that the Spirit (Paraclete) would be with them forever: “He remains with you and will be in you.”

**The “truth” the author speaks of here is a manifestation of the Spirit of Truth who is permanently with the believer.**

## **Verse 3**

**7 tn “And” is not in the Greek text. It is supplied for smoothness in English.**

**8 tc** Most witnesses, including some early and important ones (N P 33 鱼 sy), have κυρίου (*kuriou*, “Lord”) before Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (*Iēsou Cristou*, “Jesus Christ”), but this is a typical

scribal addition, motivated by pietistic and liturgical concerns. Further, early and excellent MSS (A B Ψ 048 0232 81 323 1739 *al*) lack κυρίου. Thus, both internally and externally, the shorter reading is strongly preferred.

- NET Bible.

## Introduction to 2 John

### Occasion and Purpose

The two brief epistles of 2 and 3 John are the shortest New Testament books. Each contains fewer than 300 words in the Greek text and could have fit on a single papyrus sheet (cf. [2 John 12](#); [3 John 13](#)). They closely approximate the conventional letter form of the contemporary Greco-Roman world.

But despite their brevity, both epistles are significant in that they **stress the importance and boundaries of loving in the truth.**

### CRITICAL CONTEXT to grasp:

**Second John addresses the same basic historical events as 1 John: false teachers were assaulting the congregations under John's care (v. 7).**  
**Having left the fellowship of believers (1 John**

**2:19), the heretics were traveling from church to church, taking advantage of Christian hospitality as they spread their venomous lies.**

The lady to whom John addressed this letter may have inadvertently or unwisely shown them hospitality. John cautioned her (as a model for all believers) against participating in false teachers' evil deeds by showing them hospitality.

## **Author, Date and Place of Writing**

This letter's close affinities with 1 John (e.g., [v. 5](#) and [1 John 2:7](#); [3:11](#); [v. 6](#) and [1 John 5:3](#); [v. 7](#) and [1 John 2:18-26](#); [v. 9](#) and [1 John 2:23](#); [v. 12](#) and [1 John 1:4](#)) make it clear that it also was written by John the apostle (see the discussion under The Author of 1 John in the Introduction to 1 John).

**Second John was most likely composed at Ephesus at about the same time or shortly after 1 John (c. A.D. 90-95).**

## **Destination and Readers**

Many commentators believe the phrase "the chosen lady" ([v. 1](#)) refers metaphorically to a local church. The more natural understanding in the context, however, is to take it as a reference to an actual woman and her children, whom John knew

personally. The letter's obvious similarity to 3 John, which clearly (v. 1) was written to an individual, favors the view that 2 John also was written to an individual. Further, it would be unnatural to sustain such a figure of speech throughout the whole letter. Such an elaborate metaphor is also not in keeping with the letter's simplicity and the tenderness of its tone. Finally, the change from the singular form of the personal pronoun "you" in v. 5 to the plural form in v. 12 applies more naturally to a woman and her children than to a church and its members.

## Outline

- I. The Basis of Christian Hospitality ([1-3](#))
- II. The Behavior of Christian Hospitality ([4-6](#))
- III. The Bounds of Christian Hospitality ([7-11](#))
- IV. The Blessings of Christian Hospitality ([12-13](#))

## Living in the Truth ([2 John 1-4](#))

When Pilate asked cynically, "What is truth?" ([John 18:38](#)) he reflected the view of many today.

Postmodernism views the concept of truth with skepticism. Many believe that there is no such thing as absolute truth or, if there is, that it cannot be known. Certainly, they argue, there is no religious truth; religion is merely a personal preference, like one's taste in art, music, or literature.

But truth—**absolute, divine truth—does exist, and it is the most important reality in the universe.** When Martha complained that her sister was not helping her with the serving, Jesus replied, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" ([Luke 10:41-42](#)). There was no higher priority than for Mary to be "seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word" of truth ([v. 39](#)). **Truth is a precious commodity, more valuable than any earthly riches** (cf. [Pss. 19:7-10; 119:72, 127](#)); once found, it is to be held on to at all costs. Thus [Proverbs 23:23](#) exhorts, "***Buy truth, and do not sell it.***"

## **QUOTE:**

**The Bible, the Word of truth ([Ps. 119:160](#); [John 17:17](#); [2 Cor. 6:7](#); [2 Tim. 2:15](#); [James 1:18](#)), majors on the theme of truth. God is the "God of truth" ([Ps. 31:5](#); [Isa. 65:16](#)), who abounds in truth ([Ex. 34:6](#)) and always speaks the truth ([2 Sam. 7:28](#); cf. [Num. 23:19](#); [Titus 1:2](#)); Christ is the truth ([John 14:6](#); [Eph. 4:21](#)), is full of truth ([John 1:14](#)), revealed the truth ([John 1:17](#)), spoke the truth ([John 8:45-46](#)), and testified to the**

truth ([John 18:37](#)); the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth ([John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13](#); [1 John 5:6](#)). God's truth is eternal ([Ps. 117:2](#)), infinite ([Pss. 57:10; 86:15; 108:4](#)), and saving ([Ps. 69:13](#)). Salvation comes from faith in the truth ([2 Thess. 2:13](#); cf. [1 Tim. 2:4](#); [2 Tim. 2:25](#)); believers are sanctified by the truth ([John 17:17](#)), love the truth (cf. [2 Thess. 2:10](#)), are set free by the truth ([John 8:32](#)), worship in the truth ([John 4:23-24](#)), rejoice in the truth ([1 Cor. 13:6](#)), speak the truth ([Eph. 4:15, 25](#)), meditate on the truth ([Phil. 4:8](#)), manifest the truth ([2 Cor. 4:2](#)), obey the truth ([1 Peter 1:22](#)), are guided by the truth ([Pss. 25:5; 43:3](#)) and, most comprehensively, walk in the truth ([1 Kings 2:4; 3:6](#); [2 Kings 20:3](#); [Pss. 26:3; 86:11](#)).

**Believers must be committed to the truth**, because we exist in the world, which is the realm of Satan ([1 John 5:19](#)), the "father of lies" ([John 8:44](#)). He strives to keep sinners from understanding and believing the truth; he is "the god of this world [who] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" ([2 Cor.](#)

[4:4](#)). As a result, "**Everyone deceives his neighbor and does not speak the truth, they have taught their tongue to speak lies**" ([Jer. 9:5](#)).

**Unbelievers are:** "men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth" ([1 Tim. 6:5](#)), who "oppose the truth" ([2 Tim. 3:8](#)) and "turn away their ears from the truth" ([2 Tim. 4:4](#)) because "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie" ([Rom. 1:25](#)).

**In a world of lies, the church is called to be the "*pillar & support of the truth*"** ([1 Tim. 3:15](#)).

Paul's metaphor would have been readily understood by Timothy and his congregation at Ephesus. Located in that city was the temple of Diana (Artemis; [Acts 19:23-28](#)), one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The temple's immense roof was supported by 127 pillars, which rested on a massive foundation. Just as that temple was a monument to the lies of Satan, so the church is to be a monument to the truth of God. The church's mission is to immovably, unshakably live, uphold, guard, and proclaim the truth of God's Word. It is to proclaim the "whole purpose of God" ([Acts 20:27](#)), not merely that part of divine truth that is inoffensive to the surrounding culture. In the words of Martin Luther, a stalwart champion of necessary controversy,

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not *confessing* Christ, however boldly I may *be professing* Christ. ***Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.*** (*D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Briefwechsel*, 18 vols. [Weimar: Verlag Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1930-1985], 3:81, emphases added)

**Any so-called church that fails to exercise its stewardship of His truth faces God's judgment—just as the Jews did for failing to uphold and live the Old Testament truth entrusted to them (cf. [Rom. 2:23-24](#)).**

**But throughout its history, the true church has clung tenaciously to the truth, despite the storms of persecution, the sting of rejection, and the assaults of enemies both from inside and outside its ranks (cf. [Acts 20:29-30](#)).**

And **countless thousands have suffered martyrdom rather than compromise or abandon the truth.**

Strategically, the final epistles of the New Testament emphasize the priority of the truth (2 and 3 John), and the need to contend for it in the face of apostate liars (Jude).

**John wrote his two brief letters—more postcards than letters—to stress the importance of truth.** *Aletheia* ("truth") appears five times in this opening section of 2 John and six times in the more brief 3 John. **Though each is a personal letter to an individual, John was writing the inspired revelation of God that was to God's people throughout time.** Recognizing that all the readers of his letter faced and always would face a world of lies and deceit, **he wrote to call them to live in God's truth, to love within the bounds of truth, and to be loyal to and look out for the truth.**

**John reveals four features of living in the truth: the truth unites, indwells, blesses, and controls believers.**

## The Truth Unites Believers

*The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, (1)*

By the time he wrote this epistle, John was a very old man, the last surviving apostle. Even so, his reference to himself as **the elder** (*presbuteros* with the definite article) stresses not so much his age as his position of spiritual oversight for the church. In the New Testament the term, borrowing from familiar Old

Testament usage (cf. [Lev. 4:15](#); [Num. 11:25](#); [Deut. 25:7-8](#), etc.), generally refers to the office of elder (the exception is in [1 Tim. 5:1](#), where it refers simply to an older man); the related term *presbutēs* (translated "old man" in [Luke 1:18](#) and "aged" in [Philem. 9](#)) describes an older man without reference to a leadership role. John's description of himself reinforces the truth that he wrote this epistle; someone impersonating him would likely have chosen the title "apostle," while a writer not trying to impersonate him would not likely have called himself *the* elder (cf. Alfred Plummer, *The Epistles of St. John*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1911], 175). John did not need to refer to himself as an apostle because his readers knew and accepted him as such, though in the experience of the church, he served them as their pastor.

In the New Testament, churches were always taught and ruled by a plurality of elders ([Acts 11:30](#); [14:23](#); [15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23](#); [16:4](#); [20:17](#); [21:18](#); [1 Tim. 5:17](#); [Titus 1:5](#); [James 5:14](#); [1 Peter 5:1, 5](#)). But though there were other elders serving with John in Ephesus (cf. [Acts 20:17](#); see the Introduction to 1 John in this volume for evidence that John wrote his epistles from that city), he was the patriarchal elder, whose authority and oversight extended well beyond Ephesus. Like Peter ([1 Peter 5:1](#)), John was both an elder and an apostle; as the last of the apostles, he was *the* elder, the most distinguished of all elders; the only living elder who was chosen to be an apostle by the Lord Jesus Christ and was a member of the innermost circle of the twelve apostles; the one self-confessed as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" ([John 20:2](#); cf. [13:23](#); [19:26](#); [21:7, 20](#)). **In contrast to the false teachers, John was the torchbearer of apostolic tradition.**

As noted in the Introduction to 2 John, the **chosen lady** to whom John addressed this letter was an actual woman, not a church. **Lady** translates the feminine form of the noun *kurios* ("lord" "sir"). **The husband is the "lord" of the household as its divinely ordained head** (cf. [1 Cor. 11:3](#); [Eph. 5:23](#)), but the lady has her sphere of authority and responsibility as well (cf. [Titus 2:3-5](#) and [1 Tim. 5:14](#), where "keep house" translates a Greek verb that literally means "to rule or manage a household"). That her husband is not mentioned may indicate that she was a widow. In any case, she was responsible for providing hospitality in the home, as is clear from [1 Timothy 5:9-10](#). Since John addressed her **children** too, they may still have been living at home with her. Families typically shared a common house, even after the children were married.

**Chosen** translates a form of the Greek word *eklektos* ("elect," "chosen," "choice"). The term describes those selected by God for eternal glory, whether Christ ([Luke 23:35](#); [1 Peter 2:4, 6](#)), the holy angels ([1 Tim. 5:21](#)), or the redeemed ([Matt. 22:14; 24:22, 24, 31](#); [Mark 13:20, 22, 27](#); [Luke 18:7](#); [Rom. 8:33](#); [Col. 3:12](#); [2 Tim. 2:10](#); [Titus 1:1](#); [1 Peter 1:1; 2:9](#); [2 John 13](#); [Rev. 17:14](#)). The only other time outside of this epistle that it is used of an individual is in [Romans 16:13](#), where Paul described Rufus as a "choice [from *eklektos*]man in the Lord."

**John's description of this woman (and her sister; v. 13) as chosen reflects the biblical truth that God sovereignly chooses believers for salvation** (in addition to the vv. cited above, see [Mark 13:20](#); [Acts 13:48](#); [Rom. 8:28-30](#); [Eph. 1:4-5, 11](#); [2 Thess. 2:13](#); [2 Tim. 1:9](#); [James 2:5](#)).

Unlike those who hold a weak view of divine sovereignty, the New Testament writers did not hesitate to refer to believers as "the elect."

In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself did so in **Matthew 24:22**: "*Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.*" The term is no less appropriate than the more popular terms "child of God," "saved," "born again," "believer," or "Christian."

John's statement **whom I love in truth** reveals his personal connection to this family (the relative pronoun *hous[whom]* is plural and encompasses both the lady and her children). *Ego (I)* is emphatic, stressing the apostle's personal, ongoing (the verb is in the present tense) **love** for them.

The love in view here is that willful, spiritual devotion and service conveyed by the familiar verb *agapaō*. The phrase **in truth** explains and qualifies the sphere of John's love for them.

*It does not refer to his sincerity; he was not merely claiming to "truly" love them, though he obviously did. Rather, truth refers here to the embodiment of truth in the gospel.*

It is parallel to the frequent New Testament expression "the faith" ([Acts 6:7](#); [13:8](#); [14:22](#); [16:5](#); [1 Cor. 16:13](#); [2 Cor. 13:5](#); [Gal. 1:23](#); [Eph. 4:13](#); [Phil. 1:27](#); [Col. 1:23](#); [1 Tim. 1:2](#); [3:9](#); [4:1](#); [5:8](#); [6:10](#), [21](#); [2 Tim. 3:8](#); [Titus 1:13](#); [Jude 3](#)). John's expression is similar to Paul's exhortation to Titus, "Greet those who love us in the faith" ([Titus 3:15](#)); that is, in the objective truth of the gospel.

***It was the truth that bound not only John, but also all who knew the truth to this lady and her children. It is their common belief in the gospel truth that unites all believers.***

**John's statement encapsulates the main theme of this brief epistle, that truth must always govern the exercise of love.**

***Christians' deep, mutual affection flows out of their shared commitment to the truth.***

In his first epistle John wrote, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him" ([1 John 5:1](#)). We can have no real communion with those who reject the truth of the gospel, since we share no common spiritual life with them. Such people are outside the fellowship of believers, because it is only those who "have in obedience to the truth purified [their] souls"

**who can have "a sincere love of the brethren" ([1 Peter 1:22](#)).**

*Because salvation requires belief in the truth, it is critically important for the church to proclaim the right message.*

**QUOTE:** A simple, accurate presentation of the gospel is sufficient, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, to bring about salvation. On the other hand, the most carefully crafted, smoothly polished presentation of anything less than the gospel will not save.

John's linking of love and truth shows that they are anything but incompatible, as some are always eager to suggest. **Believers are to speak in love, but they are also to speak the truth** ([Eph. 4:15](#)).

**To minimize the truth in the name of love is to abandon biblical love, which is based on the truth.**

*God's purposes will never be accomplished by compromising His truth; love for souls is never manifested by minimizing the truth.*

## The Truth Indwells Believers

*for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever (2)*

In keeping with his passionate commitment to the truth, John wrote this epistle *for the sake of the truth*.

**His concern was that the Christian lady to whom he addressed it might compromise truth in the name of hospitality.**

Christian love, fellowship, and hospitality are vitally important, since they manifest the transforming power of the gospel (cf. [Rom. 12:13](#); [1 Tim. 3:2](#); [Titus 1:8](#); [1 Peter 4:9](#)).

**Believers share a spiritual love that flows from their common eternal life in Christ. But they cannot genuinely manifest that love apart from an unswerving commitment to the truth of God's Word.**

**QUOTE: Truth permeates all aspects of the church's individual and corporate life, underlying all of its preaching, evangelism, and fellowship.**

In language reminiscent of Jesus' promise concerning the Holy Spirit ([John 14:17](#)), John wrote that the **truth... abides in us and will be with us forever**. The parallel is appropriate, since the Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of truth" ([John 14:17](#); [15:26](#); [16:13](#);

[1 John 5:6](#)). Though in a lifetime we cannot comprehend the vast depth of all biblical truth, all true Christians know the truth of the Scripture that saves. They know that they are sinners, facing God's just judgment, and that forgiveness comes only by divine grace, apart from works, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice and resurrection.

If they did not comprehend those facts, they would not be Christians since, as noted above, understanding the truth is necessary for salvation.

In his first epistle, John taught that all believers are able to discern the truth from error:

*You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it.... As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.* ([1 John 2:20-21, 27](#))

**Menō (abides)** is one of John's favorite terms, appearing more than sixty times in his writings. It is used in a theological sense to refer to the truth that resides in believers ([1 John 2:14, 24-27](#); cf. [John 5:38](#) where Jesus upbraids the unbelieving Jews for not having the Word abiding in them), to true believers abiding in the Word ([John 8:31](#)) and thus not being in spiritual darkness ([John 12:46](#)), to the Spirit abiding in believers ([John 14:17](#); cf. [1 John 4:12, 15, 16](#)) and, most significant, to believers abiding in Christ ([John 6:56; 14:10](#);

[15:4-7, 9-10](#); [1 John 2:6, 10, 28; 3:6, 24; 4:13](#)). **The truth of the Word, which abides in believers forever, gives them "the mind of Christ"** ([1 Cor. 2:16](#)).

## The Truth Blesses Believers

*Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. (3)*

Although they appear together only here and in Paul's letters to Timothy ([1 Tim. 1:2](#); [2 Tim. 1:2](#)), **grace**, **mercy**, and **peace** are familiar New Testament terms. They are often used in the salutations of the epistles. **Grace** combines with **peace** in [Romans 1:7](#), [1 Corinthians 1:3](#), [2 Corinthians 1:2](#), [Galatians 1:3](#), [Ephesians 1:2](#), [Philippians 1:2](#), [Colossians 1:2](#), [1 Thessalonians 1:1](#), [2 Thessalonians 1:2](#), [Titus 1:4](#), [Philemon 3](#), [1 Peter 1:2](#), [2 Peter 1:2](#), and [Revelation 1:4](#); **mercy** with **peace** in [Jude 2](#). The three terms summarize the progression of the plan of salvation:

*God's grace caused Him to grant mercy, which results in peace.*

**Grace** views sinners as guilty and undeserving ([Rom. 5:20](#); [Eph. 1:7](#)); **mercy** views them as needy and helpless ([Matt. 5:3](#); [Rom. 11:30-32](#); [Eph. 2:4-5](#); [Titus 3:5](#); [1 Peter 1:3](#)); **peace** is the result

of God's outpouring of both ([Acts 10:36](#); [Rom. 5:1](#); [Eph. 2:14](#); [Col. 1:20](#)).

**These divine blessings, like everything in the Christian life, come only from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.**

From God, "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" comes down "every good thing given and every perfect gift" ([James 1:17](#)). And through the Son, all "the promises of God... are yes" ([2 Cor. 1:20](#)). They are present when divine **truth** dominates the mind and heart, resulting in genuine **love**.

**The twofold repetition of *para* (from) stresses Jesus' equality with the Father.**

**John emphasized Christ's identity as God's Son because the false teachers were denying that truth** (cf. the discussion of the false teachers and their heretical teaching in the Introduction to 1 John).

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary  
Introduction To  
The Second Letter of John

## 2 John

### Author and Title

Ancient manuscripts uniformly identify this as a second letter by “John.” Due to the writing style, position in the Canon, and theological outlook, it is best viewed as written by the apostle John (see [Introduction to 1 John: Author and Title](#)). The document itself identifies its author as “the elder” ([v. 1](#)).

Theories that this was some “elder John” different from the apostle are interesting but lack compelling support. “Elder” was a common term for pastoral leaders of local congregations in the early church. In calling himself “the elder,” John is simply affirming his pastoral role, as Peter also does (“fellow elder,” [1 Pet. 5:1](#)), not somehow disqualifying himself from being identified as Jesus’ disciple and ultimately an apostle. (See also [Introduction to 3 John: Author and Title](#).)

## Date

**Like 1 John, 2 John probably was written in the vicinity of Ephesus near the end of the first century A.D. Ancient sources suggest John spent the closing decades of his life in this area, ministering to churches like those listed in Revelation 2-3.**

## Recipients

John writes to “the elect lady.” This more likely refers to a congregation than to an individual, because much of 2 John is written in the second-person plural. It is also questionable whether John would write to a female Christian that he and she should “love one another” ([v. 5](#)); the phrase makes better sense

if addressed to a church. There are three additional reasons why “elect lady” may refer to a whole congregation. First, the word “church” in Greek is feminine in gender, and “lady” would go along with that. Second, the church is depicted as “bride” elsewhere in John’s writings ([Rev. 21:2, 9; 22:17](#)). Third, the Greek word *kyria* (“lady”) referred to a social subunit in the Greek city-state. John may use this word for a local congregation instead of the more common feminine word *ekklēsia*.

[Verse 13](#) of 2 John suggests that John writes to one congregation from another, which he terms “your elect sister.”

## Theme

**The focus of 2 John is living in the love of God in accordance with the truth of Jesus Christ.** This love extends not only to God but to other people. **It is also discerning; it does not “go on ahead” of biblical revelation ([v. 9](#)), and it does not lend aid to enemies of the gospel message ([vv. 10-11](#)).** Instead, Christ’s followers “walk according to his commandments” ([v. 6](#)) and through faith “win a full reward” ([v. 8](#)).

## Purpose, Occasion, and Background

**John writes to urge readers to love each other ([v. 5](#)) and beware of deceivers ([vv. 7-8](#)).** He offers practical counsel on showing hospitality to traveling missionaries ([v. 10-11](#)) and seeks to prepare “the elect lady” for his anticipated visit in the near future ([v. 12](#)).

## **Key Themes**

- |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| <b>1. The truth of Jesus Christ is eternal.</b>   | <u>2</u>               |
| <b>2. Christian love and compliance with God's commandments are inseparable.</b>  | <u>6</u>               |
| <b>3. False teaching about Christ abounds.</b>  | <u>7</u>               |
| <b>4. Purveyors of false teaching have to be identified and left to their own devices, not welcomed and supported by upholders of authentic Christian teaching.</b> | <u>9-</u><br><u>11</u> |

## **History of Salvation Summary**

Now that Christ has accomplished salvation, believers are to follow him and his teaching. (For an explanation of the “History of Salvation,” see the [Overview of the Bible](#).)

## **Literary Features**

In format, this brief book is a conventional NT epistle, consisting of a salutation, a body, and a conclusion. As in most epistles, the body of the letter consists of mingled instruction and commands, and although readers do not find the concentrated list of commands that comprise the familiar *paraenesis* (set of ethical commands) of NT letters, [verses 8-11](#) have affinities with that conventional motif.

## **Outline**

1. Greeting: The Elder's Love ([1-3](#))

2. The Elder's Joy and Request ([4-6](#))
3. The Elder's Concern ([7-8](#))
4. The Elder's Warning ([9-11](#))
5. Closing: The Elder's Farewell ([12-13](#))

## **2 John 1**

**[1-3 Greeting: The Elder's Love.](#)** Love frames the opening section, appearing in [vv. 1](#) and [3](#).

**[1 The elect lady and her children](#)** probably refers to a local congregation and its members (see [Introduction: Recipients](#)). The word **truth** is prominent in John's greeting, perhaps because early Christians saw themselves as being in close communion with Jesus, who called himself "the truth" (see note on [John 14:6](#)) and whom they acknowledged as such, and perhaps because John knows he will shortly write about the untruth of spiritual deceivers ([2 John 7-11](#)).

**[2 abides in us.](#)** The gospel that unites John and his readers is personally present. "In us" could be translated "among us." Christian faith is shared and is not just a personal conviction.

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