

The Books of 1, 2, and 3 John, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 10: Walking in Truth and Love

2 John 1-6

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Though brief, this opening of John's second letter carries an important doctrinal emphasis: the inseparability of truth and love. The teacher should show that, for John, truth and love are not competing values to be balanced grudgingly but a single way of walking. Love is grounded in the truth that abides in us, and love is defined as walking according to God's commandments. The teacher should also note John's joining of the Father and the Son as the common source of grace, mercy, and peace (v. 3), which quietly affirms the deity of Christ and His unity with the Father.

A second emphasis is the nature of walking in the truth. John rejoices not merely that believers hold the truth but that they walk in it, and he defines love as obedience to God's commands. This is once more the letter's consistent vision of a living, obedient faith: truth believed is truth lived, and love is concrete obedience, not mere sentiment. The teacher should resist any reduction of truth to bare intellectual assent or of love to feeling, presenting both as a way of life.

Formationally, the lesson aims to heal the common split by which believers choose either truth or love and grow either harsh or soft. Students should leave seeing that the two belong together, that walking in the truth is cause for great joy, and that real love expresses itself in glad obedience to God. The teacher should press the gap many feel between believing the truth and actually walking in it, and call students to a faith that is walked, not merely affirmed.

Question 1

Student Question:

John writes to those he loves "in truth," and speaks of the truth that "abides in us and will be with us forever" (vv. 1-2). What does this teach about the relationship between truth and love, and why does John ground his love in the truth rather than setting them against each other?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

From the first line John binds truth and love together. He loves these believers in truth, and his love rests on the truth that abides in them and will be with them forever. Love and truth are not rivals in his mind but partners; the truth is the very ground and bond of his love.

Explain why this matters. Our culture often pits the two against each other, as if loving people meant affirming whatever they believe, and as if holding to truth meant being unloving. John

shows a different way: he loves people most truly within the truth, and the truth he holds expresses itself in love. The two reinforce each other.

Note what the truth is and where it dwells. It abides in us, John says, and will be with us forever. This is the abiding gospel, the truth about Jesus, taking permanent residence in those who believe. The shared possession of this abiding truth is what makes John and his readers family and binds them in love.

Apply it to Christian relationships. The deepest bonds among believers are formed in shared truth and expressed in love. We are not asked to choose between caring for people and holding to the truth; we are called to love people in the truth, letting the truth shape and deepen our love rather than diminish it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The inseparability of truth and love
- Truth as the ground and bond of Christian love (vv. 1-2)
- The abiding gospel dwelling permanently in believers
- Against the cultural pitting of love against truth

Discussion Prompts

- Why does John ground his love in the truth rather than apart from it?
- How does our culture pit love and truth against each other?
- How does shared truth deepen rather than diminish our love?

Question 2

Student Question:

John loves these believers because of the shared truth that abides in them. Do you tend to lean toward truth at the expense of love, or toward love at the expense of truth, and what would more balance look like for you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question asks students to locate their own imbalance. Most of us lean one way. Some are truth-leaning: precise, principled, quick to correct, but prone to harshness, impatience, and a critical spirit. Others are love-leaning: warm, accepting, eager to keep peace, but prone to compromise and an unwillingness to say hard things.

Help students see that each lean has a characteristic blind spot. The truth-leaning person may be right and yet unkind, winning arguments while wounding people. The love-leaning person may be kind and yet unfaithful, sparing feelings while neglecting the truth that people most need. Neither alone is the Christlike way.

Point to Christ as the integration of both. He was full of grace and truth (John 1:14), never sacrificing one for the other. He told the truth that wounded in order to heal, and loved in a way that never excused sin. Growth means moving toward His wholeness from whichever side we lean.

Apply it concretely. The truth-leaning person grows by cultivating patience, gentleness, and genuine care for people, learning to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). The love-leaning person grows by gaining the courage to hold and speak the truth even when it is costly. Invite each to name their lean and one step toward balance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The two characteristic imbalances: truth without love, love without truth
- The blind spots of each: harshness versus compromise
- Christ as full of grace and truth (John 1:14)
- Speaking the truth in love as the path to wholeness (Ephesians 4:15)

Discussion Prompts

- Which way do you lean: toward truth or toward love?
- What is the characteristic blind spot of your lean?
- What is one step toward Christ's balance of grace and truth?

Question 3

Student Question:

John pronounces, "Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love" (v. 3). What does it teach us that John joins the Father and the Son together as the source of these blessings, and what does this say about who Jesus is?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

John names the source of grace, mercy, and peace as both God the Father and Jesus Christ the Father's Son, joined together. This casual joining is theologically weighty: Jesus is set alongside the Father as the common fountain of divine blessing, which no mere creature could be.

Draw out the affirmation of Christ's deity. Throughout his writings John insists that Jesus is the Son of God, truly divine, one with the Father. Here that truth surfaces in the form of a blessing: grace, mercy, and peace flow from the Father and the Son together. To receive from Jesus as we receive from the Father is to confess Him as God.

Note the phrase the Father's Son. The relationship of Father and Son is eternal and unique. Jesus is not a son in the way we are children of God by adoption; He is the Son, sharing the

Father's nature. This guards the truth at the heart of the whole letter against those who deny who Jesus is.

Apply it to worship and prayer. Because grace, mercy, and peace come from the Father and the Son together, we rightly honor, trust, and pray in the name of Jesus as we do the Father. The blessing John pronounces is a small window into the glory of Christ and the security of those who receive from Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Father and the Son joined as the common source of grace, mercy, and peace (v. 3)
- The deity of Christ implied in His being the fountain of divine blessing
- Jesus as the unique, eternal Son sharing the Father's nature
- The honoring of the Son as we honor the Father (John 5:23)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it imply that blessing comes from the Father and the Son together?
- How does this small phrase affirm the deity of Christ?
- How should this shape the way we honor and pray to Jesus?

Question 4

Student Question:

John links grace, mercy, and peace to a life lived "in truth and love." Which of these three, grace, mercy, or peace, do you most need to receive from God right now, and how might walking in truth and love open your heart to it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question invites students to receive, not just analyze, the blessing John pronounces. Distinguish the three gently. Grace is God's unmerited favor, His kindness to the undeserving. Mercy is His compassion toward our misery and weakness. Peace is the wholeness and rest that come from being right with God. Each meets a different need.

Help students discern which they most need now. The one weighed down by guilt may most need grace; the one struggling and weak may most need mercy; the one anxious and restless may most need peace. Naming the need is the first step to receiving the gift.

Connect this to walking in truth and love. John pronounces these blessings on a people walking in truth and love; the path of obedient, loving truth is the path on which grace, mercy, and peace are richly experienced. We do not earn them by walking rightly, but we position our hearts to receive them as we walk with God rather than away from Him.

Apply it as both gift and invitation. Encourage students to come to God for the specific blessing they most need, and to see that the way back to a full heart often runs through renewed obedience and love. Grace, mercy, and peace are God's to give, and He gives them freely to those who walk with Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Grace, mercy, and peace as distinct gifts meeting distinct needs
- These blessings experienced on the path of walking in truth and love
- Receiving God's gifts rather than earning them
- Renewed obedience and love as the way to a full heart

Discussion Prompts

- Which do you most need right now: grace, mercy, or peace?
- Why do you think that is the need of this season?
- How might walking in truth and love open your heart to receive it?

Question 5

Student Question:

John "rejoiced greatly" to find believers "walking in the truth" (v. 4). What does it mean to walk in the truth, as opposed to merely believing or defending it, and why does John treat this as cause for great joy?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

John's joy is sparked not merely by people who believe the truth or defend it but by people walking in it. The image of walking points to a way of life, a daily, step-by-step manner of living shaped by the truth. Truth, for John, is meant to govern the feet, not just furnish the mind.

Contrast walking in the truth with lesser substitutes. One can affirm correct doctrine and live carelessly. One can defend the truth vigorously in argument and yet not walk in it personally. Walking in the truth means our actual conduct, our choices, relationships, words, and habits, conforms to the truth we profess.

Explain why this brings John such joy. As a spiritual father, his deepest gladness is in the genuine spiritual health of his children, and the surest sign of that health is not orthodox words but a life that walks in the truth. He echoes this in 3 John: he has no greater joy than to hear that his children walk in the truth.

Apply it as a call and a comfort. The call is to close the gap between believing and walking, to let the truth reach all the way down into daily life. The comfort is that our faithful walking is a real joy to those who love us and to the Lord Himself. A walked truth, not merely an affirmed one, is what gladdens God's heart.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Walking in the truth as a way of life, not mere belief or defense
- The gap between affirming truth and living it
- The spiritual father's joy in his children's genuine health (3 John 4)
- A walked truth as what gladdens God and those who love us

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between believing the truth and walking in it?
- Where is the gap widest between what you profess and how you walk?
- Why does a walked truth bring such joy to those who love us?

Question 6

Student Question:

John was made glad by others walking faithfully with God. Whose faithfulness has encouraged you in your own walk, and whose walk with Christ might be strengthened or saddened by the way you are living?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question draws out the communal nature of the Christian walk. John's joy at others' faithfulness reminds us that we do not walk alone; our faithfulness gladdens others, and theirs strengthens us. Faith is caught and carried in community, not lived in isolation.

Invite gratitude first. Ask students to recall those whose faithful walk has encouraged them, a parent, a mentor, a friend, an elder, whose steady example gave them courage and showed them the way. Naming such people stirs thankfulness and honors the quiet power of a faithful life.

Then turn it outward and inward. Just as others have influenced us, our walk influences others. Someone is watching, a child, a younger believer, a friend, a spouse, and our faithfulness or carelessness affects their courage and joy. This is a sobering and dignifying truth: our ordinary walk is never merely private.

Apply it to responsibility. Encourage students to consider whose walk with Christ they are strengthening or saddening by how they live. The point is not paralyzing self-consciousness but a renewed sense that walking faithfully is a gift we give to others, and walking carelessly is a wound. We carry one another in the way we live.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The communal nature of the Christian walk
- The encouragement of others' faithful example

- The influence of our walk on those who watch us
- Faithful living as a gift to others, carelessness as a wound

Discussion Prompts

- Whose faithfulness has most encouraged your own walk?
- Who is watching the way you live with Christ?
- How might your walk be strengthening or saddening someone right now?

Question 7

Student Question:

John repeats the command to “love one another,” noting it is not new but one we have had “from the beginning” (v. 5). Why does John keep returning to this old command, and what does its age and familiarity teach us about the heart of the Christian life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

John acknowledges that he is asking nothing new; the command to love one another is one they have had from the beginning. He returns to it anyway, not because they have not heard it, but because it is so central that it can never be left behind. The most important things must be said again and again.

Address the danger of familiarity. We are prone to crave novelty and to treat well-known commands as beginner material we have moved past. John reminds us that love is not a lesson we graduate from; it is the lifelong heart of the faith. Its very familiarity tempts us to neglect it, which is why he repeats it.

Show what the centrality of this old command teaches. The heart of the Christian life is not the accumulation of new and advanced knowledge but the ever-deepening practice of love. Maturity is not moving on from love to something higher; it is loving more truly. The oldest command remains the greatest.

Apply it against spiritual restlessness. Some always seek the next deeper teaching while neglecting the plain command to love. John calls us back to the basics that are never beneath us. Encourage students to receive the familiar command afresh and to ask not whether they know it but whether they are doing it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The command to love one another as old, central, and never outgrown (v. 5)
- The danger of treating familiar commands as beginner material
- Maturity as deepening love, not moving beyond it
- Against spiritual restlessness that neglects the basics

Discussion Prompts

- Why does John repeat a command they already knew?
- How does familiarity tempt us to neglect the command to love?
- What does it mean that maturity is loving more, not moving beyond love?

Question 8

Student Question:

John says love is something we are commanded to do, not merely to feel. Is there someone you are called to love right now whom you do not feel like loving, and what would obedient love look like toward that person?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question rests on a vital truth: love is commanded, and therefore it cannot be merely a feeling, for feelings cannot be commanded. Biblical love is fundamentally a matter of the will and of action, a chosen commitment to seek another's good, whether or not warm feelings are present.

Free students from a common misconception. Many believe that if they do not feel love, they cannot love, and so they wait for feelings that never come. John says otherwise. We are commanded to love, which means we can love by choice and action even when feeling is absent, and often the feeling follows the doing.

Help them name the specific person. There is usually someone, a difficult relative, an irritating coworker, a person who has wronged us, whom we do not feel like loving. The command is not to manufacture a feeling but to act in love toward them: kindness, patience, prayer, practical help, the refusal of contempt.

Apply it with hope. Obedient love, practiced over time, often warms into genuine affection, but even when it does not, it is real love and it pleases God. Encourage students to choose one concrete act of love toward the person they named, trusting that love is something we do, by grace, before it is something we feel.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Love as commanded, and therefore an act of will, not mere feeling
- The freedom to love by choice and action when feeling is absent
- Feelings often following obedient action
- Concrete love (kindness, patience, prayer, help) toward the difficult person

Discussion Prompts

- Whom are you called to love that you do not feel like loving?

- Why is it freeing that love is something we do, not just feel?
- What concrete act of love could you choose toward that person this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

John defines love concretely: "this is love, that we walk according to his commandments" (v. 6). How does this passage tie love and obedience together, and why is a love that ignores God's commands not the love John is describing?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of this short lesson, and the teacher should draw out how tightly John binds love and obedience. He defines love itself in terms of obedience: this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. And he has just defined the commandment in terms of love. Love and obedience interpret each other; neither can be understood apart from the other.

Explain the two directions of the connection. On one hand, real love expresses itself in obedience: if we love God, we keep His commandments (John 14:15), and if we love one another, we will do toward each other what God commands. On the other hand, true obedience is itself an act of love, not cold compliance but the glad response of a loving heart. John will not let love float free of obedience or let obedience harden into mere duty.

Confront the distortion John excludes. A love that ignores God's commands, that claims to love while disregarding His revealed will, is not the love John describes. Our age often speaks of love as a feeling that overrides God's commands, justifying disobedience in love's name. John flatly denies this. Love that contradicts God's commandments is not love at all but a counterfeit. Genuine love walks the path God marks out.

Connect this to the letter's and the heritage's consistent vision of living faith. Throughout these letters, John has insisted that faith, love, and obedience are one fabric. Here that vision reaches a crisp definition: to love is to walk in obedience to God. This guards against both a lawless love that excuses sin and a loveless legalism that obeys without affection. The teacher should present obedient love as the heartbeat of the Christian life.

Apply it pastorally. Encourage students to test their notion of love by God's commandments, and their obedience by whether it flows from love. Where love is invoked to justify disobedience, it must be corrected; where obedience has grown cold, it must be warmed by love. The goal is a single, integrated life: loving by obeying, and obeying out of love.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Love defined as walking according to God's commandments (v. 6)

- Love and obedience interpreting each other, neither understood apart from the other
- Real love expressed in obedience (John 14:15); true obedience as an act of love
- Against a love that overrides God's commands as a counterfeit
- The integrated life of obedient love, against both lawless love and loveless legalism

Discussion Prompts

- How do love and obedience define and interpret each other in this passage?
- Why is a love that ignores God's commands not real love?
- Where might you be tempted to use love to justify disobedience?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across these verses, where truth and love are woven together into a single way of walking. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you, through this passage, into someone who walks in both truth and love, without sacrificing either.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the little letter's opening into a personal step. Trace the weave: John loves in the truth, grounds his joy in believers walking in the truth, and defines love as walking in obedience to God's commands. Truth and love are not balanced reluctantly but fused into one way of walking.

Press for one specific way Jesus is forming them. For the truth-leaning person it may be growing in patience and warmth; for the love-leaning person it may be gaining courage to hold the truth. For another it may be closing the gap between believing and walking, or choosing obedient love toward a difficult person.

Frame this as conformity to Christ, who was full of grace and truth. We do not achieve the balance by careful self-management but by becoming more like Him. As we walk with Jesus, His own integration of truth and love is formed in us.

Close by holding the two words together one last time. Encourage students to leave committed to walking in the truth and in love, letting neither crowd out the other, until, like John, they can hardly tell where truth ends and love begins. This is the way of the Lord they follow.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The fusion of truth and love into one way of walking
- Conformity to Christ, full of grace and truth (John 1:14)
- Closing the gap between believing and walking
- Obedient love as the integration of the Christian life

Discussion Prompts

- Which does Christ want to grow in you: truth, love, or the union of both?
- Where do you most need to close the gap between believing and walking?
- What single step will you take this week toward walking in truth and love?