

The Books of 1, 2, and 3 John

Lesson 10: Walking in Truth and Love -- 2 John 1-6

It is a short letter, the kind you could write on a single small sheet and slip into a friend's hand. Just thirteen verses. But do not let its size fool you. In these few lines the old apostle does something we badly need to relearn: he holds truth and love together so tightly that you cannot pry them apart. We tend to choose sides. Some of us pride ourselves on truth and grow harsh. Others pride ourselves on love and grow soft. John refuses the choice. He writes "in truth," and he loves "in the truth," and he calls the whole church to walk in both at once.

Listen to how warmly he opens. "The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth." Whether he writes to a particular Christian woman and her family or to a local congregation pictured as a lady and her children, the affection is real and the bond is the truth they share. He is not loving in spite of the truth or apart from it. He loves them in the truth, because the truth has made them family.

Then comes the thing that gladdens his heart most. "I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth." Not just believing the truth, not just defending it, but walking in it, living it out, step after ordinary step. For John, truth is never merely something we hold in our heads. It is a path we walk with our feet. And the proof that we are walking it rightly is love: "this is love, that we walk according to his commandments."

So this little letter sets two words side by side and will not let them part: truth and love. The truth keeps love from dissolving into sentiment that affirms anything. Love keeps truth from hardening into a weapon that wounds. John shows us a better way, the way he learned from the Lord he leaned against at the table: to walk in the truth and to walk in love, until we can hardly tell where one ends and the other begins.

Group Discussion: John holds truth and love together and refuses to choose between them. Why do we so often treat truth and love as opposites, and what goes wrong when we pursue one without the other?

Personal Reflection: John rejoiced to find believers "walking in the truth," not just believing it. Where is there a gap in your own life between the truth you say you believe and the way you are actually walking day to day?

Read 2 John 1-6

Study Questions

1. 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?

2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: John 8:31–32, abiding in Jesus’ word as the mark of true discipleship and the truth that sets free; Ephesians 4:15, speaking the truth in love and growing up into Christ; 2 John 1–6 alongside 3 John 3–4, the joy of seeing children walk in the truth; Psalm 86:11, asking God to unite our hearts to walk in His truth; John 14:6, Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life.