

Love and Truth, Love and Error (2 John)

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[0 : 00] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank you for your word. We thank you that your word is living.

It's recorded so carefully and lovingly for us to read from. And God, we just ask that your presence be here as we share and as we just go a little bit deeper into your love, into your truth.

May these words be your words, and may they cut through to our heart. We offer up this time into your hands. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. I think there are two things they teach you when you become a parent.

Not that I'm a parent. I'm also not hinting at anything here. But maybe when you become a mom. And I didn't know that my mom would be here today. But I've been a professional son to my mother for about 27 years.

So I've learned one or two things. Firstly, she loves to ask the obvious. So every time I'll come home and then she'll be like, Oh, are you home?

[1 : 07] And I'll be like, No, mom. It's someone else. Looks like me. Sounds like me. Dresses like me. But it's not really me. Or I'll call her. And then she'll be like, Wait.

Is this Isaac? I'll be like, Also, no, mom. It's not Isaac. It's just I've got his phone and it sounds like me. And it's a little bit concerning sometimes when these two examples both require me to confirm it's really me before she starts talking.

And it makes me wonder what she's like when I'm not around. Maybe she's got something to hide from me. And secondly, she loves to repeat herself. So if it's cold, then she'll tell me to wear clothes like 10 times.

If I'm looking a bit tired, she'll tell me to sleep earlier again and again. And I just feel like, you know, now that I think about it, I think it's because she cares, you know.

And it kind of points towards her priorities. What she figures is kind of important. So she really wants to let me know again and again and again and again.

[2 : 18] And we've been going deeper into God's love for these past couple of months. But God is much more than just love, right? And John here shows us that love is actually intertwined with truth.

And to know one thing, to know love, you must also know truth. To know truth, you must know love. He also cautions us against some pretty dangerous situations, some danger, danger that we might run into.

So it's pretty important stuff. Let's go deeper into God's truth together today. Okay. So the verse starts off with John talking to us about this lady and her children.

So we don't really know who it is, but I don't think it matters too much. It just talks about the church. And yeah, I think some people believe that she, the lady, was the church and the children were other believers.

But John is just kind of greeting a group of believers here. Okay. So the greeting wraps up with this, right?

[3 : 24] John says, Whom I love in the truth, and not I only, but also all who know the truth. Because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever.

So can you spot what John's priority is, right? We know that in the Bible, repetition means something is very important. And much like my mom really cares about the cold, John really stresses the idea of truth three times in this very short two verses.

And not only this, but in 1 John, John's talking about truth 11 times and a total of five times in this passage. So the word truth or the idea of truth must be very important to John.

So we could probably ask ourselves, and it's a bit of a spoiler, but what is truth, right? Who is truth? And I think, well, I know the truth is Jesus.

Jesus is truth. John 14, right? He writes in the Gospel of John, Jesus answered, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

[4 : 39] You see, guys, to know truth is to know Jesus. To have truth in your life is to have Jesus in your life. Jesus lives in us and will be with us forever.

So this is the truth of God revealed in the Word and revealed in the living Word and recorded without error in the written Word. So John goes on after explaining this, and it says, He is given great joy that the believers are walking in the way, believing and following in Jesus.

So he's very happy that some of these people that he's writing to is actually following the truth and walking in the way of the truth. But I think we can see that there is a little bit, or a few people, or some that it was not the case.

And he sees a fitting to remind them of a command that they have known since the beginning. That is to love one another. I think this is a good place for us to stop and reflect a little bit.

So maybe we call ourselves Christians, right? And then we say that we are walking in the truth, that we profess Jesus as our Lord and Savior. But do we love each other?

[6 : 00] Do we love with the deep, real love that Jesus did? So these two things are linked together, right? Truth and love. If we say that we believe and we have Jesus, we should love.

So John praises some of the children for walking in the truth as the Father has commanded. And in verse 6, the Father has also commanded that you walk in love, right?

There's a lot of repetition in this. To walk in truth is to walk in love. So maybe you aren't a Christian here today, or you've come to church a few times, and you've heard of these kind of words being thrown around a lot.

Well, you might not even believe that there is truth to know. What is the truth? Isn't the truth just relative as well? You believe what you want to believe, and I'll kind of believe what I want to believe as well.

You might be asking yourself, can't I love people? Is love reserved for just Christians or just for people that follow Jesus? And I think to answer that question, we have to kind of know what love is as well.

[7 : 09] What is love? Very philosophical. You know, maybe you love wicked wings, like I do. Or you love bubble tea.

You love Earl Grey bubble tea. Maybe you love your phone, or you love your pets, or you love your parents. And in the Gospel of John, he explains it this way.

Jesus answers this question in chapter 15, verse 10. He says, If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's command, and remain in his love.

I have told you this, so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete. My command is this. Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

John also writes in his earlier letter, in 1 John, Whoever claims to love God, yet hates your brother or sister, is a liar.

[8 : 12] Whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command, anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

And I think that here's a crucial difference between the love that we might say we love all the time, and the love that we believe to be the truth.

A sacrificial love. Love that causes you to lay down your life for your brother or your sister. Now, you can ask yourself if bubble tea was drowning, and your friend was drowning, who you would save first, right?

If you only had time to save one. Now, how many of us can honestly say that we would lay down our life for the person sitting to the left, or if not then, maybe the person sitting to our right?

Take a look, you know. Who would you save first? Nah, you don't need to answer that. You don't need to answer that. I don't think this love comes naturally.

[9 : 16] You know, it is kind of counter-cultural. We talk about love having to, you know, it's good to love others, it's good to do things to others, but you have to look after yourself first, right?

This is not what Jesus is saying. You know, sometimes it is a struggle when it seems like the person you're trying to love is just so talented in making you lose your temper.

Or when you feel like someone doesn't deserve your love because they have hurt you, they have hated you. And I think one thing that we are to do, which helps in all of these circumstances, is think to Jesus.

Think of how he loves us, accepted us, even when all of us, me, I was a sinner. I am the worst. Think of how your brother and your sister, the one to your left or to your right, is just that.

A piece of this wonderful family joined together in Christ. Think that they have been wonderfully created and sacrificially loved by our Father in Heaven.

[10:21] And I think at the end of the day, ask your Heavenly Father, who loves to give good gifts to those that love Him. Ask Him for a greater understanding of this truth, a greater understanding of this love.

Maybe you don't know what it means to love, but if you do want to understand, ask Him. I think He will give it to you. Let's keep encouraging each other to walk both in truth and in love.

And definitely ask your leaders when we split off into groups. If this love is kind of strange or curious or just weird, you ask them, and I think they'll be completely happy to explain.

So that's truth and love. But there's another second half, and John actually warns us of a few things as well. The reason for our love in the first place is actually explained in the second half, starting in verse 7.

John says that because many deceivers who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh have gone out into the world.

[11:29] As we have just heard, a failure to love generally indicates a failure to know and practice the truth. One suffers when the other suffers, but one is strengthened when the other is also strengthened.

Now I believe in the earlier days, in that church that John was writing to, they were missing a few things. There was a crisis of truth, right? Some people might have walked in the truth, but they thought they walked in the truth, but they didn't love.

And John feels the need to caution the readers against the deceivers that have maybe infiltrated the church. They're causing division between these believers. John wants to encourage the church to greater measures of Christian love for one another.

Love like that can be one of the strongest defences against false teaching. So how many of us have explored the treasure site that is AliExpress?

Or have you walked down like a night market in Hong Kong or in Bangkok or in Vietnam? You can get lost in a world of Abbey Bass and Sten Wunds or Laura's Baton.

[12:46] You know, often fakes are so good, it's impossible to know what is truly authentic and what's just a replica. I think the trick is to know what a real one looks like.

When you know how to spell Adidas, it doesn't matter if it's Abbey Bass, Abbey Bass, whatever. You know what a real one looks like.

You know what a fake one looks like when it doesn't look like the real one. And just like that, I think we must familiarise ourselves with the truth, meditating on it constantly.

The Bible doesn't outline every false truth or every lie that there is to know, but it does tell us the truth. It's always confident that the truth will undermine and destroy any error.

So familiarise yourself with it. John does, however, give us two defences against these deceivers. Two characteristics that might help you spot those that would draw you away.

[13:53] So first defence, number one, he says that these deceivers do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. So these false teachers don't believe that Jesus came in the flesh.

They don't believe that God himself became human in the person of Jesus. They are against Christ. Quite literally, they are the Antichrist.

Interestingly, in 1 John 4.2, he mirrors the same idea. He says, this is how you can recognise the Spirit of God. Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. So here in 1 John, he uses the word, has come. Whereas in the passage we just read, he uses the words, had come.

Sorry, is coming. So some false teachers at the time believed that Jesus was a man who was just born normal, and God descended onto him during his baptism.

[15:03] But then God also left when Jesus went onto the cross. Because they couldn't believe that a God would come and die. I think what John wants to stress is, Jesus did come, but he is also coming, or is coming.

So he was both, was, and is still God. Watch out for anyone who doesn't believe the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ were both one.

These people are against the very core of Christianity. They are the Antichrist. So that's our first defence. Knowing that, or listening to someone, hearing someone, that doesn't believe Jesus Christ was God.

Man, but also God. Secondly, the second defence is, he stresses that these deceivers have gone out into the world.

These may mean that these people had gone out and become almost missionaries of this false gospel. But it could also mean that the world was just filled with people who were always trying to draw you away.

[16:16] Ones that deny that Jesus Christ is Lord. So they're out there. So you are to be careful. I think that's another reason why it's so important to come to church, to have unity, so we can protect each other in the truth.

Verse 8 counsels the church as one. Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. By using the word we, I think John stresses the importance of working together to encourage, to stay rooted, and to stay safe.

The fellowship that we have in our groups, or between us as believers, is not just for growth and support, but also for protection. We protect each other when we encourage each other in the truth. There may be times when you're too close to an issue, and it takes a brother and a sister to kind of help you and pull you out of it. Or times when collective wisdom is needed to make sound, godly decisions.

Whatever it may be, we are to watch out so we don't lose our reward by falling into the trap of false teaching. Listen to your leaders, listen to your pastors, and really just try and question everything you read or everything that you watch online.

[17:38] Is it really good? Is it really true? And if you're unsure, ask around. Be open and honest with each other. And remember that we are all in this journey together.

So let's help each other out as much as we can. But the question may also pop up, how are we to show love to these people? If there are false teachers out there, and if we are in contact with a lot of these that are out in the world, what are we to do?

As hard as it may be, these false teachers, if they don't believe, they may sometimes be our friends. They may sometimes be our family members, be our teachers.

Interestingly, or rather worryingly, they could also be some people that we look up to in a Christian sense. They might be worship leaders.

They might be other pastors. I think there needs to be sensitivity here. John is asking us not to ignore, diminish, or hate on anyone with different beliefs.

[18:39] Now, verse 10 tells us, if anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them to your house or welcome them. So back in John's day, these people, missionaries, would come far and wide, from long distances, and they wouldn't have a place to stay.

They would rely on other Christians to provide for them, to feed them, to give them a place to sleep, relying on the hospitality of other Christians.

So this is kind of what it means to welcome them into your house. When you welcome them to the house, you accept them and their teaching as well. So we are to be careful.

When we think of how that applies to us, it also thinks to us as a church. This is our home. Do we invite people with different beliefs to us, right, that believe in things counter to the truth that we believe in?

Do we endorse their message by inviting them into our church? It goes back to the truth, right? This is all John wants to stress.

[19:46] The beliefs of ours that are primary, that are instrumental, right? The truth we believe in, that Jesus Christ was and is God, that he died for our sins and rose again on the first day, that without his sacrifice and the resurrection, we would have no way to get into the Father.

These are non-negotiables. But everything else, some of these things may be secondary, right? Maybe interpreted differently.

Maybe sometimes it's the way we dress or the way we talk about smaller issues, right? These things may be negotiable. We may be able to talk and discuss and have different ideas, right?

So even though there are these people out there, we are still to love. If these people, are they continuing the teaching of Christ?

If yes, then they have both Father and the Son. And if we disagree, that's okay. It pays to be firm, however, if these people do or are deceivers and they are the Antichrist, to exercise caution and if need be, not to welcome them to the church.

[21 : 06] So John 2 reminds us that our love isn't based on what we think love should be. It's more than just a warm, fuzzy feeling.

It's more than a heart reaction that you might put on a picture or giving up and sacrificing your last piece of cake to your friend. Real love is founded on truth.

Founded on the fact that Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, died and rose again. Restoring a relationship between us and the Father. We love because the truth is He loved us first.

John also reminds us that where there is truth, there is also deception. Okay? So watch out. Hold up tightly to the truth. Love in all circumstances, even when the most loving thing may be to say no or to turn someone away.

So John finishes up this passage by saying this. I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face so that our joy may be complete.

[22 : 15] So as we break off into groups a little bit later as well, let's use our time together wisely. Let's discuss the things that are the truth. Encourage each other to hold tightly to the things that are the truth and to turn the things that aren't away.

Encourage each other to love because God loved us first. the end. Yeah, I'll pass this time back to Gary and the worship team.

Oh, let's pray. Sorry. Yeah, Heavenly Father, Lord, we just thank you for the truth.

We thank you that you've told us about this truth so explicitly, so black and white. and although there are a lot of things in this world which are grey, we know that your love, we know that Jesus dying for us is not.

So Lord, help us to understand this truth. Help us to love our brothers and our sisters as a response to this truth. Help us to hold tight to these things so that we may stand against people that might have that might want to deceive or draw away.

[23 : 39] Help us to be one, to be united as a church. Help us to protect each other and to always remind and encourage each other of the truth. Finally, teach us just to be, yeah, to love and to understand this love from you.

continue to encourage us as we love each other as well. Thank you, Lord.