

2 John • No Truth, Then No Love

Introduction

The problem with the western civilization's use of the word "love" is that it's been overly romanticized. To "fall in love" is commonly believed to be something that either happens by sheer luck when the right people find each other, or by fate that the right people are brought together. That's not the definition of biblical love, and definitely not the basis for how God's love is supposed to be exhibited in our Christian walk. God's love is so deeply based on abiding in His truth that regardless of our emotions or feelings, true biblical love does not exist in the absence of God's truth.

¹The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, ²for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: ³Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

[Read v.1-3]

Q: What is the key word repeatedly used in this opening paragraph?

A: "Truth".

Q: What is John's love based on? What can we learn from this?

A: "...I love in truth" (v.1). The roots of biblical love are grounded in the truth, not one's feelings.

Q: What group is singled out as having a special love for this letter's recipient? What can we learn from this?

A: "...all who know the truth" (v.1) Personal relationships developed according to the biblical principles of love are grounded in the truth, not common feelings.

Q: Why is it so important that biblical love works this way?

A: "...for the sake of the truth which abides in us..." (v.2) The love we practice and receive sustains the truth by which we live; it's a reinforcement of Christ within us.

Q: Finally, how does John characterize his own blessing of the letter's recipient?

A: "...in truth and love" (v.3)

Application:

- What does this teach us about biblical love: Is it something that "just happens" or is it developed?
- Evaluate your closest relationships. How important does "truth" factor into them? How about **BIBLICAL** truth?
- Have you ever thought "love" was destroyed at the expense of truth? Do we sometimes have the order reversed, wrongly believing love is more important than truth? What is the correct response?

⁴I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father. ⁵Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. ⁶And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. ⁹Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; ¹¹for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

[Read v.4-6]

Q: Why is John happy that only “some” are walking in truth? Why doesn’t he appear to be upset that it’s not ALL?

A: No matter how good the parent or teacher, the choice to follow the truth is the final decision of the child or student. If the truth has been properly taught, the parent or teacher has done their job and should be commended for those who have chosen to walk accordingly. It’s also a further compliment that this person is grounded in Christ’s truth, having taught others the same.

Q: What is the word used in this paragraph that can be closely associated to “truth” as used above?

A: “Commandment”. This is God’s truth as revealed through His Word.

Q: What is the visible evidence that love exists in one’s life?

A: “...we walk according to His commandments.” (v.6) In a word: Obedience. This is the practical application of **knowing** the truth, that it is put into practice in the actions and behavior of one’s life.

Application: *What has the teaching to this point taught you about the true nature of biblical love? How does this compare or contrast to your own love?*

[Read v.7-11]

Q: According to v.7, what is the chief identifier of the spirit of deception, broadly labeled the antichrist?

A: Perversion of the truth. The specific example provided is teaching that Jesus did not come in the actual flesh. But their general identifying behavior is to replace the truth with a lie.

Q: Is it possible for believers to be deceived?

A: According to v.8, yes, if we let our guard down and don’t stay vigilant.

Point: *Remember this teaching whenever someone tells you something like, “Doctrine is not important—it just divides people.” This is a sure sign of a false teacher trying to change God’s truth.*

Q: What is the defining difference between those who follow false prophets and those remaining with Christ?

A: Those following false prophets do “not abide in the teaching of Christ”; the one who continues to follow “abides in the teaching”. It’s another way of stating whether or not one adheres to the truth.

Q: How are we supposed to deal with those who we’ve identified as embracing the spirit of the antichrist, the spirit of deception?

A: The first thing is “do not receive him into your house” (v.10). That is, we are not to have a personal relationship with them.

The second thing is “do not give him a greeting” (v.10). That is, we are not to give them even a hint of legitimacy by recognizing them.

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Q: What do you suppose is the purpose of our taking these measures against such deceivers?

A: In the first place it's the best personal protection we can achieve by not allowing them into our life and making sure they understand to keep their distance. Secondly, it's a witness to others that such individuals are, indeed, false teachers and destructive influences who should be shunned and avoided by everyone.

Q: Why is taking action against bad spiritual influences such an important part of John's teaching?

A: As we learned above, there is no true biblical love without truth and obedience to same. If someone successfully attacks the truth in our life, biblical love ceases to exist.

Application:

- Do you think it "harmless" to watch **any** "Christian" television program or listen to **any** "Christian" recording or read **any** "Christian" book? How should you exercise discrimination?
- What possible influences have you allowed entrance in your life that need to be removed?
- Should any and all who come in the name of Christ be recognized by you? What happens when you don't comment at all?

[Read v.12]

Q: What is the goal of John's teaching in Christ?

A: "...so that your joy may be made full."

Application: Do you see the end result of abiding in God's truth as not just producing love, but joy? What is the biblical definition of "joy"?

[Read v.13]

Q: In light of this whole letter's teaching on the relationship of truth to biblical love and relationships, what is significant about the word "chosen" as used here?

A: It indicates replacing worldly relationships with spiritual by choosing to associate closest with those who mutually abide in Christ's truth. It's a recognition of the practical application of what John has been teaching.

Overall Application

- What has been your standards for allowing various personalities influence over your life through their activities, teaching, books, etc.? Are there any such relationships that you need to change?
- What has been the basis on which you've continued in personal relationships? How soundly are they based on the biblical definition of love? Are there any such relationships that you need to change?
- How have **YOU** been a biblical example of love to others? Are there any changes you need to undertake personally to bring the relationship up to biblical standards?

¹²Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full.

¹³The children of your chosen sister greet you.