

## 2 John

One-Page Letters, part 2

August 16, 2020

### DAY 1: The truth

1. For the last fifty years in the western world the pendulum has swung FROM philosophy being most concerned about discovering answers to the great questions of life, of the pursuit of the truth about God, life, humanity, our purpose and destiny TO giving up on absolute truth and going all in on relative truth. Worse, academia ridicules those who claim absolute truth.

2. The results reverberate through the western world today. If there is no absolute then there are no answers outside ourselves that anchor us, give us meaning, and answer the great questions of life. There are no answers to quiet restless hearts, to calm feelings of our smallness in the universe or give us any reasons to live other than

(a) “Leave this world a better place than you found it,” or

(b) “Create your own purpose for life.”

3. These “answers” to the great questions of life are thinly veiled veneers to cover over the catastrophic truth. If there is no absolute truth there are no real answers and there is no real meaning to life. It is no wonder that suicide rates have increased, opioid addiction and overdose deaths skyrocket.

4. The Christian religion is built on the basis of absolute truth. It does provide answers to the great questions of life.

*John 14:6 “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*

5. 2 John is a short letter written as a warning to guard the truth, to not be deceived away from the truth of Jesus Christ that anchors us. Here’s how this letter begins.

*2 John 1:1 The elder, To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth--and not I only, but also all who know the truth--<sup>2</sup> because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever: <sup>3</sup> Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love. <sup>4</sup> It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.*

6. List every item John teaches about the truth.

7. What strikes you about “truth”?

## DAY 2: Truth → obedience → love

2 John 1:1 The elder, To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth--and not I only, but also all who know the truth--<sup>2</sup> because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever: <sup>3</sup> Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love. <sup>4</sup> It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.

1. What do you think John is teaching about truth in each of these phrases?

a. "I love in the truth..." –

b. "... know the truth..." -

c. "...the truth which lives in us..." -

d. "...the truth that will be with us..." –

e. "...God... and Jesus... will be with us in truth and love" –

f. "...walking in the truth just as the Father *commanded* us." -

2. What was John's greatest joy? (v. 4). Would that be your greatest joy?

2 John 1:5 And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. <sup>6</sup> And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

3. On the heels of strong teaching on truth, John makes sure we are not just concerned with theoretical truth or even doctrinal truth that somehow misses how we are to live! What strikes you about God's commands and the necessity of obeying them?

4. Re-read vv. 5-6. Underline the word love. What do each of these phrases mean to you?

a. "love one another" –

b. This is love: that we walk in obedience to His commands" –

c. "...walk in love." -

5. What connections do you make between truth, obedience, and love?

### DAY 3: Warnings about moving away from the truth!

*2 John 1:7 Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

1. John now turns to what can derail us—turning away from the truth. How can that happen? One way we can turn away from the truth is to turn away from the essence of Christian truth, which is what theologians call “the person and work of Christ.”

a. As to the “person of Christ,” the scripture teaches both the full humanity of Jesus and the full divinity of Jesus. The incarnation of Christ is the event of Jesus, the Son of God coming to earth “in the flesh” as a human being.

b. As to the “work of Christ” the central work of Christ was in the cross of Calvary, taking on our sins upon Himself, in our place.

2. In John’s day, there were false teachers, “deceivers” who tried to lead genuine Christians away from the truth of the gospel, usually by cleverly sounding arguments that exalted themselves.

3. What did John call them at the end of v. 7?

*2 John 1:8 Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.*

4. Paul tells us in Philippians 2 to “work **out** our salvation (**not** work **for** your salvation), with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you...” He is talking about the initiative and effort we are to make to grow as a Christian.

5. John says we can “lose what you have worked for,” meaning we can take significant backward steps, backsliding, by abandoning the truth of the person and work of Christ.

*2 John 1:9 Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*

6. There is another warning about sliding away from the truth of Jesus Christ. John warns against “running ahead” and not “continuing in the teaching of Christ...” What do you think John means?

7. One way false teachers “run ahead” of the truth is by offering “trouble-free Christianity.” The inference is that whatever it is that weighs you down can be instantly turned around with some spiritual “secret.” Sometimes, that’s true. If you have a headache taking Advil can relieve your headache. But what if you’re facing stage 2 breast cancer? Trouble-free Christianity is not going to help you. Instead, **anchoring truth** does **not** remove trouble but it **enables** you to **walk through trouble**.

*Psalms 23 “Yea, though I walk through the shadow of death thou art with me.”*

8. Are you expecting a “trouble-free” Christianity, or a “walk through trouble” Christianity?

## DAY 4: Truth vs. feelings

2 John 1:10 *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. <sup>11</sup> Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.*

1. Another way we walk away from truth is by letting our feelings dictate “truth,” and what dictates our choices and obedience in life.
  
2. In the western world the pendulum has swung from truth to feelings.
  
3. When we feel close to God, and feel His presence it is wonderful. But what happens when we don’t feel His presence? What happens when we feel His absence? You ask, “Is that possible?” Well, it happened to His own Son! “Why have You forsaken Me?”
  
4. Sometimes I feel close to God, but other times my feelings are “troubling.” I can feel the deadening feelings of apathy, complacency, and a low level discouragement. Sometimes feelings are loud and pronounced like the fiery feelings of temptation.
  
5. Have I assumed that the farther down the road of spiritual maturity I walk the easier it will be? That I will feel more spiritual passion, and more spiritually alive? Have I made spiritual passion an end in itself, something that only benefits me? And, is it possible that the kind of spiritual life I want from You will make me less useful to others? More self-focused, more self-centered?
  
6. 2 John 1:10 continues the warning from yesterday’s devotional. To elevate our feelings over truth, to be guided by our feelings instead of truth is to run a great risk of torpedoing our faith. What does John tell us to do if someone is teaching contrary truth?

2 John 1:12 *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. <sup>13</sup> The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.*

7. John ends this letter, not just with a lovely closing, but with an important one.
  - a. He makes an important statement about joy. What is he saying?

- b. This may sound familiar! Remember v. 4?

<sup>4</sup> *It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the **truth**, just as the Father commanded us.*

8. The kind of joy John is talking about has to do with how **others** are doing!!!
9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

## DAY 5: Anchoring truth

2 John 1:1 The elder, To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth--and not I only, but also all who know the truth--<sup>2</sup> because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever: <sup>3</sup> Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love. <sup>4</sup> It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.

1. This is a fallen world, with fallen people including my own fallen nature. Life is not easy.

2. Being a Christian does not mean “smooth sailing.”

3. Like everyone else we can expect rough seas.

Isaiah 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

4. The truth of the gospel is not that we are guaranteed protection from trouble, but that we are guaranteed the power to walk through trouble.

5. This takes *anchoring truth*. Anchoring truth will hold you steady.

6. But if you are relying on your feelings to anchor you prepare to be blown about with every buffeting wind. Remember Jesus, hanging on a cross, aware of God's felt absence, yet persevering through incredible physical pain, personal pain, and relational pain for the higher purpose of our salvation.

Isaiah 33:6 He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation, wisdom and knowledge. The fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure.

7. How does the notion of anchoring truth help you to understand the purpose of gospel truth?

8. What stands out to you about 2 John?