

## WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

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No: 72

### 2 John

#### Open:

When you were growing up, whose home could you drop in unexpectedly and know that you would be welcome? Why?

#### Read 2 John

#### Introduction

This short note is written to 'the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth' (1) to establish them in their faith and prepare them for a visit from the Elder (12). The writer designates himself simply by the title of the Elder, a term which can mean an older man or a church official who has an authority over the local church. There are a number of striking parallels between the language of 2 John and that of the Fourth Gospel, e.g. in the references to truth which add an appreciable argument in favour of the identity of authorship.

The 'lady' is almost certainly a church but it could possibly have been written to an individual. Verse 4 says that some of the children are walking in the truth. In verses 4, 8, 10 and 12, the word you is in the plural, which suggests a church (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13).

John begins the body of this brief letter by commending and encouraging the church in their love for one another which is to be in accord with the truth of the gospel (4-6). He tactfully combines truth and love here in order to lay the groundwork for the believers' attitude toward heresy. In these verses the old man gives the positive side of the coin: there can be no divine love apart from truth. Then the apostle presents the negative side: we must not extend our love to those who reject the truth. The church must not show them hospitality, the net effect of which would be to give them a platform for their error (10-11). By extending love beyond the bounds of truth in this way believers would be in jeopardy of losing the reward for their faithfulness.

#### Questions for discussion

1. How are John's twin themes of truth and love interconnected in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What are the things that bind all Christians together (v.1) \_\_\_\_\_

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and why is truth so important in our relationship as Christians?

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**Comment**

If we know and love the truth, we will love those who also know and love the truth - the truth which abides in us also lives in others who know the truth. This shows that what binds Christians together is not social, political or class compatibility. What binds us together is a common truth about the person and work of Christ.

This is why truth is important to Christians. The truth does not change. The truth will be true forever, and we will have the truth forever in eternity. Many people today think that the truth changes from age to age and from generation to generation, but the Bible knows that the truth will be with us forever.

3. If the lady addressed in this letter were to show hospitality to these false teachers who travel around, would the error in that be:
- (a) erring on the side of truth \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) Erring on the side of love \_\_\_\_\_

4. What's wrong with welcoming such wandering missionaries, taking into consideration the context of this letter?

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5. What in this passage gave the writer such great joy? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. In comparison to John, what are the usual things in our day-to-day living that give us great joy?

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**Comment**

John asks me where is my joy? What gives me greatest joy? Do I rejoice in spiritual growth in friends, or am I more joyful about other things- their children, their new job, their new car? All good things- but not the most important. And if my primary joy is not in their spiritual health, then it really shows what I am most interested in.

So consider your Christian friends, or your children or your grandchildren. What gives you most joy for them? Their recent holiday, their GSCE results, their first words. All good things. But what should really thrill us is their walk with Christ. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." Where is your joy, asks John.

7. How is love described in 2 John 6? \_\_\_\_\_  
and how do we love our brothers and sisters in Christ?  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. John says in 6:2: "This is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands." How do we love our Christian brothers and sisters? We find out what God commands us to do in the New Testament and then we put it into practice. It's that simple! So let identify a few examples of what God commands us to do in addition to what we've already heard from 1 John about helping our brothers and sisters financially. What are we also commanded to do in the following passages?...

(Colossians 3:16)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Galatians 6:2)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Ephesians 4:32)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(1 Thessalonians 5:11)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(1 Peter  
4:9).

\_\_\_\_\_  
(James 5:16)

9. How do John's exhortations to true believers (vv.4-6) help them resist the deception and wickedness of the religious frauds (vv.7-11)

10. What havoc are these heretics likely to cause to the young believers? (v8)

## Comment

The false teachers claimed to be developing Christianity, discovering more truly what it means. John insists that they are destroying Christianity and wrecking the foundation which has been laid and on which everything must be built. "John is not condemning progressive thinking; but he is saying that Jesus Christ must be the measure of all thinking and that whatever is out of touch with him can never be right." (W. Barclay)

11. What stern warnings are we given in verse 10 against false teachers? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Comment

No sensible human family would allow a dangerous person to exert any influence over its members. No one invites an unrepentant paedophile around for dinner. There is a healthy protectionism within a strong family unit. We take it for granted that parents rightly want to protect their children from the clutches of anyone who could do them harm. And yet what about in the church family? Do we have an equal concern to protect each other from the spiritual dangers we might face?

This was the dilemma faced by John. He saw what was a potential danger in these false teachers hence he advised that they were to be given no hospitality. This passage may seem to imply an attitude which is the exact opposite of Christian love. C.H. Dodd (a renowned Christian scholar) wrote some wise words about it.

*"It is by no means without parallel. When the saintly Polycarp, the second-century Bishop of Smyrna, met the heretic Marcion, Marcion said: 'Do you recognize me?' 'I recognize Satan's first-born,' answered Polycarp. It was John himself who fled from the public baths when Cerinthus, the heretic, entered them. 'Let us hurry away in case the building should collapse on us,' he said, 'because Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is here.'"*

The Church at that time dared not risk even appearing to compromise with this corrosion of the faith. Today, we have to find a way of living with those whose convictions differ from our own upon the most fundamental matters, without either breaking charity or being disloyal to the truth.