

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**

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**So That Your Joy May Be Complete – a study of Second John**

**Godly Mothers Value Truth and Love**

**2 John**

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Today we celebrate our moms. And it's only right that we spend at least one day a year celebrating them because, for almost all of us in this room, no one celebrates us more than our moms. For most of us, she's been our biggest cheerleader our entire lives. When I play the scenes of our kids' childhoods in my mind, Emily is there on the front row cheering them on.

She celebrated them when they slept through the night. She cheered them on when they took their first step. She clapped her hands in amazement when they said their first words. Two of our three kids are adults now and Emily is still holding strong, celebrating all the milestones and cheering them on. No one celebrates us like our moms.

And as wonderful as that is, there are times when mothers can go a little overboard. Just attend any little league game on any field across the country. I guarantee there will be a kid who doesn't have the hand-eye coordination to tie his shoes, but his mom is on the sideline celebrating him like he's the next Babe Ruth – and she's yelling at the coach to play him more. Guaranteed.

And while that might seem harmless enough in little league, the reality is that it's a picture of something that can be exceptionally dangerous to our souls. Love becomes dangerous when it's disconnected from the truth. And that's what our text for this morning is about.

We are going to look at the book of 2 John – the entire book. It's only 13 verses, so we should be able to get you to Mother's Day lunch on time.

**Big Idea: Faithful followers of Jesus celebrate a commitment to truth and love.**

**2 John 1–13**

***The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, 2 because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: 3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love. 4 I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father. 5 And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. 6 And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. 9 Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, 11 for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. 12 Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and***

***talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. 13 The children of your elect sister greet you.***

Before we dig into the primary teaching points of this little letter that's not much more than a postcard, let's take a couple of minutes to talk about the opening line.

### ***1 The elder to the elect lady and her children,***

Without going into an in-depth discussion, "the elder" is pretty much universally accepted to be a reference to John the Apostle. This letter has all the characteristics of his writings and from the earliest day of church history, he has been identified as the author. There's not a lot of disagreement about that.

But there is debate about who the "elect lady and her children" are. Some scholars believe 'the elect lady' refers to an individual mother and her children; others believe it symbolizes a local church and its members. Either way, the application is the same: Faithful followers of Jesus celebrate a commitment to truth and love.

- 2 John is a call to be committed to the truth. 5 times in the first 4 verses, John references the truth.
- 2 John is also a call to be committed to love. Verses 5-6 explicitly say that the command of God is that we love each other.
- And 2 John is a celebration of those who are committed to practicing truth in love. In verse 5, John says he rejoiced to find that some of her children were walking in truth and love. He is celebrating faithful followers of Jesus who have committed their lives to the truth in love. That's the big picture of 2 John.

Now, let's walk through 2 John's twin themes of truth and love.

### **FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE COMMITTED TO THE TRUTH.**

We've talked about this throughout the book of 1 John. Christianity is not primarily about feelings and subjective, personal experiences. It isn't a collection of philosophies cooked up by brilliant men and women. Christianity is primarily about believing real, historical truths – truths that culminate around the identity and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And I want to show you three things John says about the truth that help you remain committed to it.

#### 1. Truth is knowable

##### ***v1***

***The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth,***

Don't take this for granted. We are living in a world in which it's hard to tell truth from fiction. Remember the saga of "balloon boy" back in 2009? A large, homemade helium balloon in the shape of a flying saucer was launched from a private home in Colorado. The parents of a 6-year-old boy claimed that he was trapped in a compartment on the bottom side of that balloon. The whole world watched as the balloon flew to 7000 feet. I remember praying for balloon boy and his safe return. It turns out, "balloon boy" was actually "attic boy." His parents had him hiding in the upstairs attic of their home. The whole thing was a hoax. You can't believe every news report.

And it isn't just news organizations that are unreliable. There is a long list of so-called "scientific studies" that have been proven to be fabricated to secure funding. Even politicians have been known to bend the truth from time to time. Human sources of authority fail us constantly. That's why we need a source of truth outside ourselves and outside the shifting claims of culture.

And the good news is that John says truth can be known. How can we know what's true? God wrote a book and it's the world's foremost guide to the truth.

*Psalm 119:160*

*The sum [or, entirety] of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.*

*John 17:17*

*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.*

You can know the truth because it is preserved in the word of God, the Bible. That means if we want to be committed to the truth, we have to be committed to the Bible.

2. Truth is absolute

**v2**

***because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever:***

John says the truth abides, or remains, in us and will be with us forever. It doesn't change from moment to moment or culture to culture. The truth is the truth. There's only one.

And this flies in the face of the religious pluralism and relativism of our culture. Religious pluralism is the belief that different religions can be equally valid paths to God. Relativism is the belief that truth, morality, and knowledge are dependent on your cultural or individual perspective. As if truth changes from time to time or culture to culture. And while there are cultural nuances that might influence how we practice certain aspects of morality, truth itself is not up for debate. For instance, the Bible gives us a moral imperative to submit to our governing authorities. That looks uniquely different in a democracy compared to a monarchy. But it doesn't change the foundational truth of that moral imperative. Truth is absolute. And, once again, that leads us back to the Bible. When we talk about marriage or sexuality or gender identity or anything else, ***if we are going to be committed to the truth, we need to begin and end those conversations with one question: What does God have to say about this in His word?***

3. Truth is practical

**v4**

***I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.***

John rejoices that these believers are walking in the truth. They are living their lives and making their decisions based on the truth of what God has to say. In other words, their commitment to the truth wasn't proven by what they said, it was proven by how they lived.

In 1957, the BBC aired a fake news story on April Fool's Day. The story was a report on Swiss spaghetti farmers. It showed spaghetti noodles hanging from trees. It's considered the largest media hoax in history. Phone lines at the BBC were jammed with people trying to get more information on how they could grow spaghetti trees of their own. They were told to put a "sprig of spaghetti into a tin

of tomato sauce and hope for the best.” And people did it. You know why? Because when people believe something is true, they act on it. Truth is practical.

So, let me ask you this? If someone were to observe your life, would they conclude that you believe the Bible is true? Would they conclude you believe Jesus is Lord and has the power to give you abundant and eternal life?

What we believe shows up in how we live. And that ties into the second theme of John’s letter.

### FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE COMMITTED TO LOVE.

**v5**

***And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. 6 And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.***

If you followed along in our series on 1 John, everything John says here will sound very familiar, so I’m not going to linger here. We are called to love one another. But there is something that stands out in the way John talks about love.

Notice that love is inseparable from the truth of God’s word. That’s exactly what verse 6 says – this is love, that we walk according to God’s commandments (which are found in His word, the Bible.)

**v1**

***The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth...***

Genuine love is inseparable from the truth of God’s word. Let me say that another way, truth and love are never in competition or contradiction with one another. It isn’t loving to withhold the truth of the Bible, and it isn’t in keeping with the truth of the Bible to be unloving. Truth and love are inseparably connected and completely complimentary to each other.

*1 Corinthians 13:6*

*[Love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.*

God-honoring love rejoices with the truth of God’s word. If our expressions of love don’t line up with God’s word, then they aren’t fully loving. Talk about a relevant word for today...

In the name of so-called love, we are living in an “anything goes” world. But genuine love doesn’t endorse or excuse or minimize sin. Genuine love doesn’t affirm religious views or philosophies that aren’t true. Genuine love doesn’t go along with the cultural current just to avoid a cultural clash. Genuine love loves the truth. Genuine love tells the truth. And Gospel truth is expressed in love. It forgives. It serves. It sacrifices. It warns. It bears burdens. It points people to Jesus Christ – the only One who can redeem and restore us from sin by His mercy and grace and resurrection power. Genuine love is rooted and grounded in the truth about Jesus that’s revealed in God’s word.

And that’s why John says what he says in verses 7-11.

***For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. 9 Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever***

***abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, 11 for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.***

False teachers were contradicting the truth about Jesus. It seems they were saying Jesus wasn't really a flesh and blood man. That denial of Christ's humanity would have huge implications on the gospel. If Jesus wasn't really a man, He couldn't represent mankind as our substitute and He couldn't die on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins.

So, John gives these believers a clear command in verse 8 – watch yourselves. Keep an eye on what you believe and don't be deceived by false teaching. Then, in verse 9, he says,

***Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.***

That phrase “goes on ahead” means “to go beyond” or “to run up ahead.” In this context, it implies going too far or going past a boundary. These false teachers claimed to have insights beyond the teaching of Jesus preserved through the Apostles in Scripture. So, John is saying that these false teachers were running so far beyond the teaching of God's word that they left God behind.

And the influence of those kinds of false teachers is so dangerous, John says not to receive them into your home or give them a greeting. In the First Century, there weren't an abundance of hotels. And most of the “hotels” throughout the Roman Empire were nothing more than houses of ill repute. So, traveling teachers usually tried to find a home to stay in that could become their base of operations in the city. On top of that, the early church often met in the homes. So, John is essentially telling these believers not to allow their homes to become the landing zone for false teachers. Don't embrace them in the name of hospitality in a way that could look like endorsing their heresy.

The danger of being influenced by false doctrines and philosophies is that it will lead you away from abiding in the truth of Jesus. And if you aren't grounded in the truth of Christ, you can't fulfill the commands of God's word – to love God and to love one another.

And that brings us all the way back to our big idea: faithful followers of Jesus celebrate a commitment to truth and love.

That's the message of 2 John. And, as we close, I want to leave you with 3 quick points of application.

1. Examine what influences your thinking.

When you think about the issues of your life and our world, is your primary question “What does God say?” or “What do other people think?”

Are you embracing influences that undermine the authority of God's word?

What would it look like if you committed yourself to regular, serious engagement with the Bible – not occasional inspiration, but daily formation?

2. Be careful not to separate truth and love.

Are you a person of truth? If so, is it always rooted in love? Is your speech gracious? Are your motives to build up with truth? Would you rather win an argument or win a soul to Jesus?

Are you a person of love? If so, is it always rooted in truth? Are there truths about the Bible that you tend to hedge on because you fear losing a friendship more than faithfully pointing people to Jesus? And to actually live in the fulness of truth and love, we don't just need to try and be more truthful or more loving. We need the Person of Truth who is Love Himself. We need Jesus. We need His mercy and grace to forgive us in how we've failed to align with truth and failed to be full of love. We need His power to enable us to be more and more like Him – full of gracious love and truth. And we don't just need Jesus, we have Him if we are willing to place our faith and trust in Him as our personal Lord and Savior. He will live in us, forming His truth in us and displaying His love in us as we draw our life from Him.

3. Celebrate those who are committed to truth and love.

Moms, what are you celebrating in the lives of your children? Their athletic or academic accomplishments or their commitment to Jesus and the truth of the gospel?

And for those of you who have moms who have been faithful to Christ-centered truth and love, use Mother's Day as a way to celebrate their influence in your life. Give them a call. Write them a note. Tell them how thankful you are they taught you that "Jesus loves us, this we know, for the Bible tells us so."