

John's Letter to the Chosen Lady



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 20:1–17; Romans 6:17; 2 Thesalonians 2:10; Hebrews 13:2; 2 John; Revelation 2:14, 15; Revelation 14:12.

MEMORY VERSE: “Some people run ahead of others. They don't [do not] follow the teaching of Christ. People like that don't [do not] belong to God. But those who follow the teaching of Christ belong to the Father and the Son” (2 John 9, NlrV).

JOHN'S SECOND LETTER IS ALMOST THE SAME AS THE FIRST ONE IN MANY WAYS. It is shorter, but many of the same words are used. The same themes (topics; ideas) and the same concern for believers are in this letter. A personal touch is also found in both.

But the second letter clearly is written in a letter form, with both a formal introduction and ending. The main part of the letter holds praise and gives encouragement to love and to walk according to the commandments. And there is a part dealing with the antichrists¹ too. The shortness of 2 John, as well as 3 John, may have been limited by the size of a papyrus (paper) sheet. If this is true, John must have chosen his words carefully as the Holy Spirit moved upon Him to write.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What is John's basic message? How is it like his first one? How does John connect the idea of love with the idea of truth? What is the connection between love and keeping the commandments? Why does John take the issue of false teachings so seriously? Why does John tell members not to be too friendly to false teachers?

1. antichrists—those who are against Christ.

SUNDAY—SEPTEMBER 13**IN LOVE AND TRUTH (2 John 1–4)**

How is 2 John almost the same as 1 John? What is the important message?

A quick reading of 2 John suggests the letter is written to a group of believers and not to a single woman. This makes good sense because in other places in the New Testament the church is pictured as a woman (Ephesians 5:22–32; Revelation 12:1–6). These believers, then, are mature (adult) Christians, not real children.

What word appears again and again in 2 John 1–4, and how is John using it? Read also 2 Thesalonians 2:10.

Notice, too, that John's use of the word *truth* is combined with love in verses 1 and 3. To understand the nature of true love among Christians, we need *truth*. Love can be interpreted in a purely emotional and physical way. But Christian love is *true* love. This is love shown in the frame of truth.

If we talk about truth we are reminded of God; of Jesus, who is the Truth (John 14:6); and of the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit is with the believers forever (John 14:16), so truth is with them forever (2 John 2). Both truth and love point back to God and belong together in Christian faith and experience.



In 2 John 1–4, Christian love is shown in the frame of truth.

At the same time, truth and love are the main themes of 2 John. Love is discussed in verses 5 and 6. Truth is necessary for understanding false ideas and their results (verses 7, 8). Truth is also necessary for remaining true to the teaching of Christ (verses 9, 10).

We often think of the idea of *love* as something good in and of itself, no matter what the frame is. But, when can love be very destructive? Have you ever experienced how love can be so terrible without truth? How does that experience help you better understand the importance of love in the frame of truth, rather than out of it?

MONDAY—SEPTEMBER 14**WALKING ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENTS (2 John 4–6)**

Verse 4 is an encouragement for both the church and John. It is inspiring and encouraging for church members to hear that the elder (John) is glad that they are “living by the truth”

(NirV). It encourages them to continue their Christian life “in truth, just as the Father commanded” (NIV) them. The commandment to walk in the truth may be found in 1 John 3:23. In this verse John is calling us to believe in Jesus and to love one another.

How do 2 John 5, 6 show that love and the commandments are connected with one another? Why is this very important to us as Seventh-day Adventists? Read also Revelation 14:12.

After showing he is glad (verse 4), John makes a request that is also a warning (verses 5, 6). John again talks about a commandment (verse 5). It is the commandment (one) to love one another. So, he moves from the idea of *commandment* to the idea of *love*. This commandment has love as its frame.

In verse 6, John continues the other way around. He starts with love and moves on to commandments (many). Love is shown by keeping God's commandments. In other words, we have this commandment, and this commandment is to love one another. And we show this love by keeping the commandments.

How does keeping the commandments (Exodus 20:1–17) show love for one another?

How interesting that something such as keeping the law, the rules, and the dos and the do nots would be



The commandment to love one another in 2 John 5 has love as its frame.

so closely connected with love. But it makes perfect sense. Love is not just what we feel. Love is what we do. It is how we act. It is how we connect with others. Yes, love is more than just obeying the Ten Commandments, but true love cannot be separated from the principles (rules) found in the law.

Think about someone you love. How do you treat that person? What things do you say and do that show your love? In what ways could you even better show your love to that person? How does your own selfishness sometimes get in the way of showing this love as you know you should?

TUESDAY—SEPTEMBER 15

GOING BEYOND THE TEACHING OF CHRIST (2 John 7–9)

What is John warning us about in 2 John 7–9? What can be the

results of falling for the false teachings he is warning about?

With verses 7 through 9 we are back to the false teachers and their false understanding of Jesus. It seems to be the same situation that we have already faced with 1 John. It is so bad that many people have left the church and even have become false teachers themselves. Sure, there are those who are still walking in the truth (verse 4). But a shepherd (pastor) mourns for everyone who has left God and His church.



A true shepherd (pastor) mourns for everyone who has left God and His flock (church).

The antichrists' views of Jesus are different from the apostles'² teaching. Church members have to watch out so they are not to be influenced

by³ them and their false views. John makes it very clear here that believers can lose their way and that there is no such thing as "once saved, always saved."⁴

What is John saying in 2 John 9 about the importance of having correct doctrine (beliefs)? Read also Matthew 16:12; Acts 2:42; Romans 6:17; Revelation 2:14, 15.

John knows very well that doctrine is very important. For him, false teaching can lead to the loss of one's eternal (forever; without end) life. So, doctrine is important!

In our verses above, it is clear that the apostles' teaching about Jesus is being challenged. Those who accept this Bible teaching and faithfully remain in it have the Father and the Son. God the Father and Jesus are placed as Equals. If a person does not accept this teaching about Jesus, he also loses the relationship with the Father.

What has been your own experience with false teachers and false doctrines? Were you able to know, from the beginning, where these teachings could have led you? What have you learned from these experiences that could help others struggling with almost the same experience?

2. apostles'—belonging to the disciples (followers) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel (the good news about Jesus) after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven.

3. influenced by—to be affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.

4. "once saved, always saved"—a false teaching in which many Christians believe that once they are saved, they can never be lost or lose salvation.

WEDNESDAY—SEPTEMBER 16**REFUSING TO OFFER
HOSPITALITY?⁵ (2 John 10, 11)**

The Bible encourages hospitality (Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9). Jesus mixed with tax collectors, Pharisees, and others who might not have the correct doctrine (belief) or lifestyle. How does this match with what John is saying in 2 John 10, 11? Read also Matthew 10:14, 15; Matthew 18:15–17.

Hospitality is a positive Christian custom. But there are limitations. If hospitality encourages supporting false doctrines, it must be stopped. In the first century A.D., teachers were traveling around, preaching in different places, and staying with church members who would give them food and a place to sleep.



Hospitality is a Christian virtue (custom).

If such a teacher would teach false doctrines, hospitality probably would seem to mean an encouragement of

his position and would help his work. Suppose a well-known church leader invited a false teacher to stay as a guest at his or her place. This might confuse weaker church members and influence⁶ them to make wrong decisions (choices) on their beliefs.

John is not suggesting to hate these people or to avoid them. But we must understand that our welcoming behavior could be understood to support false teachings. If this is true, we must be very careful.

It has been suggested that in verses 10 and 11 John is more concerned about the entire church. The “house” in verse 10 may not be a private home but the place where the church meets for worship. The church should not encourage a teacher who preaches false teachings.

To welcome a false teacher would seem to be an encouragement of what he or she teaches. Today we may have lost the sense of how heresies⁷ can cause a serious problem. Some people may think it is not proper to even talk about heresy at all. But the Bible discusses this topic often. John reminds us that there is a basic difference between truth and error.

Think about how your actions may influence others. Think about how easily your example can influence others for good or for evil. What kind of example of Christ do you present? In what ways could you do better?

5. hospitality—welcoming guests into your home for a meal or a night.

6. influence—to have power or an effect over persons or things.

7. heresies—false teachings.

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 17**COMMUNICATING WITH ONE ANOTHER (2 John 12, 13)**

With verses 12 and 13 we have reached the end of 2 John. These verses close the letter and let us understand John's personal interest in his readers and his desire to meet with these believers in person.

Read what John has written in 2 John 12, 13 (NKJV). What advantages does speaking face-to-face have over writing a letter? What hint can you find from John's words "that our joy may be full" as to why he wanted to meet with them? Read also Acts 2:42–47.

The message that John communicates (writes) is quite strong. When it comes to the antichrists, John leaves no room for a compromise.⁸ We remember Paul's attitude (feeling) when he wrote to the Galatians (Galatians 1:6–9).

John may have been able to share his message face-to-face. But there also are advantages of letters:

- Letters by the apostles were recognized as having special importance and authority (power) and were taken seriously.
- The letter may have reached the believers earlier than a personal visit would have. Important situations demanded a quick answer.

- The message in the letter could be saved for other churches and later generations that found themselves in almost the same situations. John even asked that the letter be shared with another church (verse 13).
- A letter can be written very carefully and often can be better prepared than a speech.
- The Holy Spirit led John to record his message in writing.

But John still would like to meet with them face-to-face.

Why is face-to-face communication often so important for developing good relationships? What are the advantages of this kind of personal meeting? What kind of example of personal meeting did Jesus leave us? How can you improve your face-to-face meetings with others?

FRIDAY—SEPTEMBER 18

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read the following verses: Galatians 2:11–16; 1 Timothy 4:1–7; 2 Timothy 2:14–19; Revelation 2:1–3, 12–16, 18–25.

“John teaches that while we should show Christian courtesy [kindness], we are authorized to call sin and sinners by their right names. This shows true charity [love]. We are to love the souls for whom Christ died and work for their salvation.⁹ But we should not make a compromise with sin. We

8. compromise—giving up something to get something else.

9. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.

are not to unite [join] with rebellious people and call this charity [love]. As John did in his time, God requires His people in this age of the world to stand firmly for the right over soul-destroying errors.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life*, page 65.

“The greatest need of the world is the need for men. We need men who will not be bought or sold. We need men who in their inmost souls are true and honest. We need men who are not afraid to call sin by its right name. We need men whose minds are as true to duty as the needle to the pole. We need men who will stand for the right until the heavens fall.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 57.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Discuss the idea that doctrine, or teaching, is not that important. What is important is how kind and loving and accepting we are. What should we think of this idea?
- ② Go back over the idea of how obeying the Ten Commandments shows love. Try to imagine what it would be like showing love while breaking the Ten Commandments. How well would that work?
- ③ In class, ask the question, What is truth? Make sure the members do not just give examples of truth but look for a good description that covers the whole meaning of truth. What can you learn from this discussion?
- ④ What do you do with the question of “calling sin by its right name”? How can we deal with weak members without accusing them unfairly? At the same time, are we not avoiding our Christian duty if we do not face brothers or sisters in the church who are doing wrong? How do we deal with this difficult subject?
- ⑤ How well does your local church do in the area of hospitality? How can you help the church do better in that area, if necessary?