

## 2 John ▪ Priorities of Truth and Love

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Ryan Perz ▪ January 10, 2021

1-3 John

The church is called to make truth and love a priority, which calls for making progress and protecting truth and love.

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Intro: What are your priorities? That's a good question for you to ask a friend or even ask yourself.

I don't do new year's resolutions anymore, but I do write in my journal several things I want to prioritize.

- *Priorities lead to productivity.* The most productive people I know seem to be able to set the right priorities and keep on task.
- Priorities are also set in Scripture

E.G.

Jesus is asked: what is the greatest command

### **Matthew 22:36–37 ESV**

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

Or,

### **Matthew 23:23 ESV**

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

- 2 John is an intro into our next series, and really a theme we will focus on in 2021: Priorities of Truth and Love
- If you've wondered why start in 2 John—this letter sets those priorities.

Truth and love have an organic interconnection. They are interrelated.

To illustrate: My family just traveled to and from Western PA two weeks ago. To get 6 of us plus 2 dogs to our destination, we needed two things. GPS and a truck.

Truth is like the map or GPS. Love is like the vehicle that gets you to your destination. Take away the GPS and you may start going in the wrong direction.

But without the truck, we would not make the progress. If the truck breaks down, we are stuck on the side of the road.

Both the vehicle and GPS work together. So do truth and love.

Context of 2 John:

—John refers to himself as “The Elder”. Tradition has him doing pastoral ministry, either in or around Ephesus.

He writes to the “elect lady”, which could either be an individual (like Paul writes to Philemon), or “elect lady” is a metaphor of the church.

That seems to fit better—especially since John uses the plural throughout the letter.

E.G. (v8) “Y’all watch yourselves”.

Furthermore,, the church is described as a bride in Eph 5, Rev 21, and 1 Pet 5:13.

- › The purpose of this short letter to the church is to refocus the church efforts around to vital areas of truth and love.

We will see that truth and love are vital things we must have in order to survive.

First call:

### **Prioritize Truth and Love (1-3)**

- The first few verses are standard introduction.
- We see how the themes of truth and love drive the first part, and direct us to the main themes:

“I love in the truth”

“all who know the truth”

“truth abides in us...”

\*\*Even the covenantal blessings of “grace, mercy, and peace” —are from Jesus “in truth and love”.

Sum: We see that the main thing on the heart of the Apostle John is to prioritize truth and love.

The rest of the letter encourages us how:

By making progress and protecting truth and love.

## Progress in Truth and Love (4-7)

- Here we see what makes a pastor happy: when believers are walking in the truth.
- In the early church, there was a constant threat of false teaching; distorted views of Jesus.

—From the Jewish side: Jesus needs to come alongside of the law.

—From the Greco-Roman culture: Gnosticism— denying Jesus was a flesh and blood person.

Apply: What do you think are some of the threats in our day? What kind of distorted views of Christ?

—Self-esteem has been king in our culture; so this promotes a Jesus who exists to merely build up our self-esteem.

—A Jesus who was mainly a political and social reformer, neglecting the fact that his mission was to save sinners and call people to repentance.

Metaphor: Walk (v4)—it's a biblical picture of personal conduct. How we walk is how we live. If you know someone well enough, you can identify them from far away by how they walk.

When we walk, we also make progress.

### 1 Timothy 4:15 ESV

Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.

Apply: This letter celebrates the fact that some were progressing in the truth.

Meat (v5) - "that we love one another"

- V6 ties in the walk metaphor.

God's children are not just to progress in truth, but also in love, since the two are so interconnected.

- Now NT letters are occasional. It means usually there was some problem that needed addressed.
  - We see one problem mentioned in v7. It's a problem with the truth. A heresy started circulating that Jesus did not come as a true human. It is a heresy called Docetism; tied to early Gnosticism.
  - Yet v5 also hints at a love problem.
- › We use a romantic phrase "fall into love" —actually we fall into dissent and discord way easier than we fall into love.

We do well to hear and heed Jesus' words to the church at Ephesus:

### Revelation 2:4 ESV

But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

How do we re-prioritize love?

- First, love is *concrete action*. (v6)—specifically in obeying Christ’s commands.
- › Love is not mainly a feeling or emotion; love is action—action that gets direction from Jesus’ commands.

\*\*The second part of this series in late 2021 will be the Sermon on the Mount. As we drink in the words of Christ, we learn or re-learn the standard of love that God call us to.

### **Galatians 6:2 ESV**

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Apply: The acid test of knowing if we are making progress in love is how outwardly focused we are becoming.

- \*Note something striking—*some* of your children are walking/making progress.

That should strike us. Shouldn’t all God’s children be walking in the truth? Not just some.

One of the very eye-opening things for me when I began in ministry 10 years ago was the “some” factor. I was naive and thought that most, if not all members of the church would be fairly zealous, mature—or at least desiring maturity.

But it tended to be just “some”.

- › God’s desire is that all of his children make progress in truth and love.

### **Protecting Truth and Love (8-13)**

- The other way the priorities of truth and love are maintained is by protection—spiritual protection

Watchfulness.

We tend to be very watchful over the things we value.

Twice in the last 4 months our bank account has been hacked. We are not sure how. We have all the security in place. Pretty routine in shopping.

Since then, I’ve been overly watchful. Checking our online banking several times a day.

We are very watchful over the things we value...like our bank accounts, homes, kids.

Friends, how watchful are you over truth and love?

Watchful in the truth—are you careful what comes into your mind? What you consume—news media, entertainment that all shape your worldview? Do you consume those things uncritically and without discernment?

Watchful in love —are you watchful with others? How you think, talk about, treat others. Careless with gossip, slander, rudeness, impatience.

Even when small doses of those things slip in, it really begins to deteriorate love inside of us.

Finally, at the close John shares his pastoral joy. What gives him joy? (v12)

Face to face—we need real flesh and blood to truly love.

Virtual and online offerings are nice, but they are not a permanent replacement of being in each other's presence.

### Conclusion

There are at least 3 different places our hearts can be in today.

1. Careless and cold. We can grow careless regarding the truth and cold of our love. If that's the case, ask God to do some major repair work. Renew, re-prioritize.
2. Faithful laborers. Some have made constant progress and protect. Know that God is pleased, even if you don't see immediate fruit. Keep on and keep humble.
3. Lost heart. Truth and love seem like a foreign language. You may be asking: where do I look? You won't find truth and love by looking deep within yourself. You won't find it in the broader culture and politics.

*You will find truth and love by looking to Jesus; He is truth and love. It's his very nature and our only hope.*

What's at stake?

2 John is really written as a warning. What happens when we don't take warnings seriously?

I had a freeze warning come up on my weather app late Dec. I didn't think much of it. Now it looks like we have a dying hibiscus. The death of a local church and its' witness are at stake if we don't take the warning seriously.

### **Revelation 2:5 ESV**

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.