

2 John 1:1-3 “The Priority of Disseminating the Truth?”

9.6.17

Tonight we are going to look at the first three verses of 2 John. It's a wonderful little epistle. In fact it's only 13 verses long. It's one of the shortest books in the New Testament. Here they are in order:

1. 3 John (219 words)
 2. 2 John (245 words)
 3. Philemon (335 words)
 4. Jude (461 words)
-

The apostle John wrote this book near the end of the first century. He was an old man by this time and he's desperately trying to keep the churches in Asia Minor on track. There has been such an attack on the truth by false teachers that John ends up writing these three short epistles, 1, 2nd and 3rd John to address this false teaching. He's got to make sure the truth of Jesus Christ is preserved and passed on correctly.

You may remember from our time together in his first epistle, that he told the churches scattered in Asia Minor how they could be sure they were saved and going to heaven. He centered them on the TRUTH, not the lies of the false teachers who were saying Jesus was not the Son of God.

Now, here in this second epistle John is writing again about the truth. Interestingly, this time the false teachers are trying to worm their way into the churches by way of the kindness and the hospitality of the believers. Watch!

2 John 1:1-3

¹The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, ²because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: ³Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.

Now, who is John writing to? It says, “to the elect lady and her children.” Who is that? Is it a lady or a church? Well, it's about a 50/50 split depending on which commentator you read. Some say it's actually a lady and some say it's “code” for the “church” at large. John refers to this lady's “chosen sister” at the end of this letter in verse 13, which again, may be code for a greeting from either this lady's children or simply members of another church or group of churches.

To me, it doesn't really matter one way or the other. But, since he didn't write in some sort of “code” in 1 John or 3 John (which we'll get to later), I don't believe it's a church. I believe it's an actual lady in a church. In fact, I believe it's most likely a lady where a church is meeting in her home. And so he is going to instruct her NOT to allow false teachers to come stay in her home and deceive the church.

Listen carefully church family, do you see John's theme? John's sole theme and goal in 1st, 2nd and 3rd John is to proclaim the truth and **protect the truth**. We saw that throughout 1st John and we will see it again in 2nd and 3rd John. In fact he says this:

2 John 4

⁴I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.

And also in 3 John, which is one of my favorite verses in the Bible.

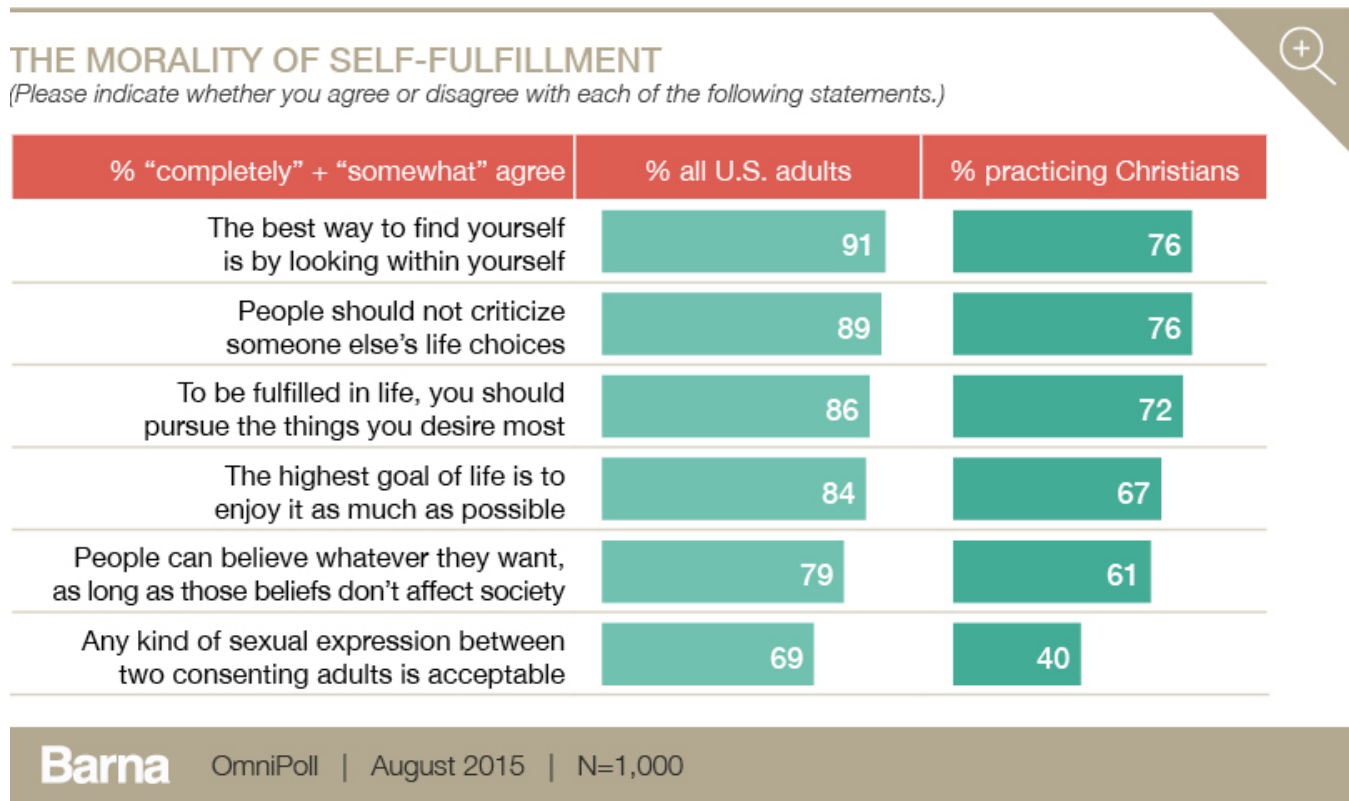
3 John 4

⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

So John felt a great weight on his shoulders to make sure the truth of Jesus Christ was protected and disseminated correctly and he was ecstatic to hear that many were walking in the truth, but it's his concern that this lady and in 3 John, a man named Gaius must not allow themselves to be used as "shelters" for "false preachers of the Gospel."

And you see, dear church family, this is at the heart of the mission of the church. You see, of all the issues we could talk about in the church, the priority must be to get the truth to the next generation. Remember, we talked about this last week. We've got to make sure we get THE TRUTH to the next generation and not some false version of it.

Remember the chart from last week about the "New Morality" sweeping Christendom? According to Barna Research, the average American and the average Christian think almost the same on most issues...



Listen church family, if we don't know the truth and we don't live for the truth we WILL lack discernment, and the church in America will die a death from a thousand illnesses. If we have a low commitment to learning, teaching and living by the Truth of God's Word, we'll become impotent and powerless to change lives. We'll simply be nothing more than a relief agency like the Red Cross. In fact, that's what many mainline protestant churches have turned into today.

I've told the story before about the Methodist minister who asked me if our church wanted to partner with his church to distribute food in the county? I said, "Sure, how are you thinking of sharing the Gospel when delivering the food?" He looked at me like I had four heads and said,

“Oh no...we’re not going to ‘share the Gospel,’ we’re just going to deliver food...we don’t want to offend people.” I was stunned and I said, “No thanks!”

I told him the church of Jesus Christ is much, much more than a relief agency (oh we do that), but we’ve got to distribute help along WITH the Gospel. Listen to me carefully. I’m all for soup kitchens and food pantries and clothing closets...but, what I KNOW FOR SURE is this: God has not called the church to JUST pass out food...no...we’ve got to GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES and to do that we’ve got to share, yes, a box of food in one hand and the Gospel in the other!

You see, church family, it’s not a plate of food that’s going to save a soul BY ITSELF ...it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, it might be offensive to share the Gospel with someone...to say to them that they need to be willing to turn from their sin and trust Christ by confessing and repenting of that sin...but, DEAR CHURCH family...if we don’t do that...then I’m afraid there’s going to be a lot of people going to hell with a full belly.

Look back at verse 1 and notice the word TRUTH. It’s the truth that must be disseminated.

2 John 1:1-3

¹The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, ²because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: ³Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.

That word: TRUTH, used 4 times in 3 verses. It’s the Greek word (A-lay-THAY-ah), *aletheia*, and it means: **“absolute, divine truth, for a certainty.”** That’s the truth we have to offer... not A truth...we have THE truth...Jesus Christ who said, “I am THE way, THE TRUTH and THE life...” We have the truth to offer to the lost soul...the truth that Jesus loves you and will save you from your sin!

Listen carefully, every human being alive lives in one of two realms. You either live in the realm of the truth of Jesus Christ, or you live in the realm of the lies of the world. And church family, the role of the church is defined by the fact that we are carriers of THE truth and we’re disseminators of the truth! We carry the antidote for the sin of the world.

Turn to 1 Timothy 3.

Do you remember when we were studying Paul’s letter to Timothy who was in Ephesus, in 1 Timothy? Do you remember what was in Ephesus? This thing...the massive Temple of Diana.



That temple had 127 pillars holding up that massive roof, where perversion and filth was taught as truth. Now watch what Paul would tell Timothy...

1 Timothy 3:14-15

¹⁴I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Do you know what a buttress and a pillar do? They hold up stuff, don't they? It's kind of like this waiter.



He's a buttress for those plates. He's holding them up. Listen, that's what the church is to do with the truth of God's Word.

Oh Church...I can't describe to you the solemn responsibility I feel to share the truth of God's Word without wavering, without compromise, unshakably upholding up the truth. Yet, I'm afraid, we're wavering as a Church in America...we've become intimidated and we're afraid today to speak the truth.

You see, I'm convinced the church in America is abandoning biblical doctrine at warp speed because we're afraid of the cultural elites of our land. Many churches today have disconnected themselves from Biblical theology and instead have embraced the lie that you can win people to Christ by never telling them they're a sinner in need of a Savior.

Therefore, the Church in America is adrift because we've pulled up the anchor of the truth of God's word and replaced it with the changing winds of the values of the culture (and I'm telling you...those values will change again next year, and the next and the next year! 30 years from now we'll be voting to allow boys to be married to men. You watch it! LGBTQ-P is next). Oh church family, if there was ever a time when we need to call the church back to the truth of God's word, it's now!

And that's what John was saying. See it again...

2 John 1:2

²because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever.

Let me ask you a question tonight: **"Which is more dangerous...ISIS or compromise to the church?"**

South African Evangelist, Angus Buchan said this about the Church:

"I would urge you to keep your eyes fixed on the truth of the Word of God. It is the only thing that will keep us sane when there are so many rumors and so many different

interpretations of the Bible, which are totally unacceptable... I fear compromise in the Church more, than I fear Isis. Isis is cut and dry, black-and-white. We know exactly who the enemy is, but with compromise in the Church, it is so subtle, and the rules can be bent so easily; but if you keep your eyes on the Lord Jesus and you follow the Word of God, you cannot go wrong.” Angus Buchan, S. African Evangelist

Yet, Researcher George Barna, whom I quoted earlier says this about the Church in America:

“We see the seeds today of a watered down gospel because of a desire for consumer satisfaction that has lowered the standard of righteousness in many of our churches. And make no mistake about it, this methodology, this new philosophy of ministry, is altering the message the church conveys to the world.

Unfortunately, this market-driven philosophy appeals to the very worst mood of our age. It caters to people whose first love is self and who do not care for God unless they can have Him without disrupting their lifestyles. Promise such people a religion that will allow them to be comfortable in their materialism and comfortable in their self-love and sin and they will respond in droves.” George Barna, *Barna Research Group*

Oh Church family, hear me tonight... the truth of God’s Word must be preached no matter what the world says! No matter what the false teachers say...no matter which way the cultural winds are blowing. No, we better stop being concerned about being on the right side of history and start being concerned about being on the right side of Jesus Christ and His Word.

I remember about 20 years ago reading about how the Anglican Church in England had ordained a couple of homosexual bishops and at the same time they legitimized same-sex marriages. I remember thinking, “Wow...that’s amazing...but, that’s in England...it’ll take a long time before something like that ever happens here.” **Boy was I wrong!** This tidal wave of unbiblical perversion hit our shores within just a few years. And today, the truth of God’s word about men and women, marriage and even if it’s okay to use pronouns like: “boys and girls” have all come into question.

Therefore church, because of this tidal wave, let me tell you what is starting to take place in America with orthodox-bible, teaching churches. We are coming together in an effort to seek to speak the truth in love about what the authoritative and unchanging truth of God’s Word says about all kinds of issues. We are having to state what is truth, which just 20 years ago would never have been questioned as truth. You know Barack Obama said in 2007 that marriage was to be between one man and one woman. He told Rick Warren that in an interview at Saddleback Church, in California. But, that’s all changed today. In fact this entire area of marriage, sexuality and gender...we’re now having to restate the truth of God’s Word, because the false teachers have duped us all! So, last week I signed a statement called the “Nashville Statement.”



More than 150 national and prominent evangelical leaders like Russell Moore, James Dobson, John Piper, Francis Chan, Rosaria Butterfield, John MacArthur, Al Mohler, Danny Akin, Thom Rainer, JD Gear, have signed the statement since it was released on August 22nd. The statement was published by the *Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* and coincided with the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission annual conference in Nashville, Tenn. The document reiterates and reinforces the biblical definitions about men, women, gender, and marriage. Let me be clear, the purpose of the document is to be clear on what the Bible says...i.e., what God says. So, here in part is what it says:

In the hope of serving Christ's church with the truth, we make these declarations:

- 1. God designed marriage as a covenantal union of only a man and a woman and that is the sole context for marriage and sexuality.**
 - 2. God created male and female as equals but with differences intended for human flourishing.**
 - 3. Adoption of "a homosexual or transgender self-conception" is inconsistent with God's purposes.**
 - 4. Same-sex attraction is not part of God's original design, but people who experience such attraction may live fruitful lives through faith in Christ as they practice purity.**
 - 5. God graciously empowers sinners "to forsake transgender self-conceptions" and "accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female."**
 - 6. People born with a sex development disorder possess the same "dignity and worth" as all other image-bearers of God.**
-

You see, it's sad, but true that a statement like this has become necessary in our day and age, simply because the truth of God's design for marriage, sexuality and gender has been hijacked and corrupted by the world!

Of course, immediately there was an outcry last week about the document. *Chicago Tribune* writer, Rex Huppke, wrote his own manifesto in response and in rejection of the Nashville Statement.

"I believe God gave humans the ability to learn and grow and expand their understanding of each other and the world. The Nashville Statement says that being gay or lesbian or transgender is an offense to God. I believe it's an offense to God to not acknowledge that all humans are different, to ignore the fact that telling LGBT people that they're sinners, that their identity is wrong, that they're somehow imperfect, is wildly and dangerously damaging, not to mention a sin in and of itself." Rex Huppke, *Chicago Tribune*

Now church, let's understand this: Mr. Huppke is writing from his own worldview and his own conviction that the Nashville statement is horrifyingly out of step with what human beings NOW know or are NOW supposed to know or think they know about marriage, sexual relations and gender. And did you notice that he puts his argument in moral terms. And you know what, that's okay. At least he's being honest in offering his own moral statement. He backs up his statement with his own understanding of the world, while the authors of the Nashville Statement back up their understanding of the issue with the Word of God. Let's see Huppke or God?

So here's the point: what you really have here is not just a disagreement over sexuality, gender, and marriage. You do not merely have here a clash of worldviews over these things... Instead what you have here is an absolute clash of worldviews over the very issue of truth. You see, for Mr. Huppke, sees religion as something that's framed by human beings instead of God. But this runs right into conflict with the Bible's definition of what it means to know God, to hear God, and to obey God. It runs right into a collision with biblical Christianity, which as its most fundamental premise acknowledges God as the source of all truth and looks to God's word, the Holy Scriptures, as the purveyor of that truth to humankind.

So, we have two completely different worldviews reflected here. So far as the media is concerned, the argument over sexual relations, gender and marriage, is actually a clash over who is the authority? Man or God?

According to the progressive liberals of the world, religion must be reshaped to match the current culture, the demands of the current moment! After all, we must be on the right side of history! But we all know that biblical Christianity is exactly the opposite of that worldview. What we have is the fact that God has already spoken on these matters and it is God who is the author and creator of the entire world, and it is God who has the right to tell us who we are, and how we function. After all...He's the Creator and we are simply the created!

You see biblical Christianity affirms that God has spoken in his Word precisely so that we can know not only who He is, but also who WE are. So what appears to be merely a debate, a controversy over sexuality, gender and marriage turns out to be a debate over who we are to look to for the truth!

You see, nothing has changed in 20 centuries. That's exactly what was happening in John's day with the false teachers of his day. **Church I want to show you four ways that people respond to things like the Nashville Statement.** Take a look:

Response #1:

They know it's biblically true, and it needed to be said and will emphatically support it.

Response #2:

They know it's biblically true, but they wonder if it really needs to be said so emphatically.

Response #3:

They don't think it's right, but they're not sure why, but they wish it hadn't been said.

Response #4:

They emphatically say it's wrong and will openly correct and repudiate the claims.

Where do you fall? So many today are in the ***Muddled Middle*** at Responses 2 and 3.

Which response are you regarding the claims of Scripture regarding sexuality, marriage and gender? You see, I'm RESPONSE #1 on the Nashville Statement. But, as I showed you earlier and last week with the Barna Research, our younger generation is having a harder and harder time with locking in on the Word of God because they don't want to be seen as unloving and unkind. So, it really comes down to simply not wanting to look bad in public and so, we'll just compromise on the Word of God and go with Response 2 or 3.

Let me tell you how we've gotten here...It started with the SEXUAL REVOLUTION of the 1960's and has steadily marched to the beat of the powerful progressive, liberal agenda of the elitists and the politicians and university professors telling us that the Bible is outdated and no longer relevant for our day. And thus with the steady help of the mainstream media they have won the day and their agenda has taken hold in America. To the point that I'll say this: I believe future historians will wonder how in the world did the sexual desires of less than 5% of the US population become the fulcrum on how an entire society ended up viewing marriage, sexual relations and gender.

I mentioned the media a moment ago, and I want to go further. The media along with Hollywood and athletes and musicians push this stuff on social media and in every way. And the Sexual Revolution is complete.

Just look at where we are on the issue of marriage. In 1996, according to Pew Research only 32% of Americans favored gay marriage and in 2001 it was still just 35%, but in just 16 YEARS the percentage now stands at 62%. The lie has taken hold! Just like John's day in Ephesus at the Temple of Diana...



No, we don't worship at the Temple of Diana in America. We worship at the Temple of political correctness hammered and jammed down our thoughts by the Social Media, by Hollywood, by sports-stars and politicians who tell us how to think, instead of the Bible!

Oh please listen, the truth of God's Word is being crushed! The Sexual Revolution has succinctly dethroned Christianity and the authority of God's Word in the minds of most Americans and UNFORTUNATELY, even many Christians! We've drunk the Kool-Aid folks. We've gulped down the Kool-Aid of the Sexual Revolution and its mantra, which says: "Nobody tells me who I can love and nobody tells me what I am...whether I'm male or female or something in between...No! I decide! I'm the authority! I'm my own god!" And thus every man does that which is right in his own eyes!

Well, I'll tell you... the Sexual Revolution cannot keep its promises, and watering down the truth will not grow the church. In fact mainline protestant denominations like Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians and Methodists have watched their numbers drop like a rock as they've thrown orthodox biblical teaching out the window, in hopes of wooing the younger generation to them. Instead, they're memberships are at all-time lows, while churches that preach the orthodox truth of God's Word are growing by leaps and bounds! You see, people want the truth!!

And so, when the Sexual Revolution fails and it will fail, just read Romans 1 says it will, we as a church will be here and we'll be ready to receive with compassion the many who are in need of the only hope, Jesus Christ!

You see, the secular spirit of our age is presenting the Christian Church with I believe what is the great challenge of our existence, much like what the Apostle John was dealing with in the first century with the churches in Asia Minor. **The question is:** Will we in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose our biblical conviction, and will we lose the courage to stand for the timeless, unchanging truths of God's Word, just so we can be inoffensive and blend into the culture...or will we hold fast to the word of God and HOLD IT UP FOR THE WORLD TO SEE and be SAVED.

I close with this thought. This is a picture of then Florida State quarterback, Jameis Winston (he's now the starting quarterback for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.)



They won the NCAA National Football Championship in 2014. That was the last year the glass football was awarded to the winning team. Do you see how carefully Jameis is holding that glass football? Why? It's precious and he doesn't want to drop it!

Church family, we're holding something a whole lot more precious than a glass football. We hold in our hands the precious, life-saving truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Oh, may we never forget that Christianity is just one generation from extinction. May we be like the Apostle John and make sure we get this precious truth passed on correctly to the next generation and may we be on guard so that we never become a shelter for false teaching and the lies of Satan.