

Lesson 3

Walking in Truth

Introduction

The opening four verses of 2 John contain five references to the word *truth*:

The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father, 2 John 1-4.

The same is true for 3 John as well:

- *To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth*, v. 1.
- *For I was very glad when fellow believers came and testified to your fidelity to the truth, how you are walking truth*, v. 3.
- *I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are walking in truth*, v. 4.
- *Therefore, we ought to support such people so that we can be coworkers with the truth*, v. 8.
- *Everyone speaks well of Demetrius – even the truth itself*, v. 12.

It becomes obvious very quickly that John writes both very short epistles emphasizing the priority of living and walking in truth. They are two personal letters of John, the first (2 John) written a lady, and the other (3 John) written to Gaius. Both are directed to live and walk in the truth.

John is the writer of five books of the New Testament. In his gospel and epistles three constant themes are stressed: love, truth, and joy. A few years ago, Wilson Adams captured this thought in his writing on 3 John and I would like to share it here as to how these three principles are stressed in John’s teaching:

	John	1 John	2 John	3 John
Love	13.34-35	4.7-11	5	1
Truth	1.17; 8.32; 14.6; 17.17	1.6	1-4	3, 8
Joy	16.24; 17.13	1.4	12	4

Says Adams:

Truth binds our hearts in a common love resulting in a fellowship of inexpressible joy. Perhaps we need to return again and again to the apostle's threefold simple equation: *Devotion to revealed truth + love for one another = joy of the Christian life.*¹²

Living in Truth, 2 John 1-4

Again, an examination of these verses will find the word *truth* used five times. It is clearly the theme. Truth is of paramount importance. It should dominate our spiritual life. It should compel us to move forward being the motivating factor behind all we do. We live in it. What does this mean?

Truth unites us, v. 1

What bound the elder (John) with the recipient (the elect lady and her children)? Truth. That is the connection that binds. Note that the connection is not a church or a group of churches. It is not a personality. It is the body of truth, the revealed truth that brings us together.

Briefly summarized, the truth is God's revealed word concerning the gospel, who God is (and all it encompasses), who Christ is (and all it encompasses), who the Spirit is (and all it encompasses), the mission of Christ on earth, salvation, the resurrection, eternal kingdom, and God's standard of morality and righteous living. These are the things that tie us together. Note, it is not an institution or organization that binds us together ... it is truth; our common knowledge of and belief of the divinely revealed word of God.

Over the last few years, I have been blessed to travel across a large part of the country meeting brethren from all parts of the United States and around the world. We have met brethren at lectureships, gospel meetings, singings, youth conferences, and gatherings large and small. Many of them I've never met before. But it doesn't matter. There is a love we commonly share that goes far beyond personal acquaintance or long-term friendship. It is a knitting together of hearts around the truth. There really is a unique shared affection for one another. I saw this recently at a gathering of over 10,000 Christians who were asked to pray for a brother struggling with cancer. Most of us did not know this brother very well, but we all joined our hearts together in prayer ... bonding together in the truth of God's sustaining power over His children.

This is what John is referring to when he says, *to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth – and not only I, but also all who know the truth*, v. 1. The truth binds us to one another because we all share the same spiritual life. Our affections, sympathies, care, compassion, and concern for each other is experienced because we are tied together in truth.¹³ So you see, truth and love are inseparably connected.

The Truth Lives in Us, v. 2

The truth indwells us: *because of the truth that remains in us and will be with us forever*, v. 2. Here John identifies the purpose of this short letter. He is writing for the purpose of truth. It really is the basis for all

¹² Adams, Wilson. *New Testament Postcards: Tender Touches of Admonition*. Waynesville, OH. Spiritbuilding Publishers, p. 14.

¹³ See McArthur, John. "Truth: The Sphere of Existence." *John MacArthur Sermon Archive*. Panorama City, CA: Grace to You, 2014.

we are in Christ. Our spiritual life is built on it. It was Jesus who said that truth abides in us and will be with us, John 14.17. While we share a common love that flows from our shared eternal life in Christ, we must always maintain our commitment to the truth of God's word. It lies within all aspects of our individual life, as well as that of the church in all its preaching, outreach, and edification.

We are Blessed by Truth, v. 3

Grace, mercy, and peace are familiar terms in many New Testament epistles. Paul loved to use these. Here John uses them as well. All three illustrate the progression of God's plan of salvation. *Grace* sees us as sinners in need *mercy*. We were unable to remove ourselves from the situation and are only who we are because of God's deliverance. His work, and our response to it, has brought *peace*. These divine blessings from *God the Father* and *from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father*. They are present in us when the truth dominates our heart and mind, resulting in genuine love.

The Truth Controls Us, v. 4

Not only must the truth be believed, but it must also be lived out. There are many passages in the New Testament that call us to obedience. It was Jesus who said:

For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother, Matthew 12.50.

Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and keep it, Luke 11.28.

If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them, John 13.17.

Walking in truth refers to the kind of life that is controlled by truth. It is the same thing as *walking in the light*, 1 John 1.7. In the New Testament, *walking* is a term that refers to a way of life. Christians are instructed to:

- Walk in newness of life, Romans 6.4.
- Walk by faith, not by sight, 2 Corinthians 5.7.
- Walk by the Spirit, Galatians 5.16, 25.
- Walk in good works, Ephesians 2.10.
- Walk in a manner worthy of the calling they have been called, Ephesians 4.1.
- Walk in love, Ephesians 5.2.
- Walk as children of light, Ephesians 5.8.
- Walk in wisdom, Ephesians 5.15.
- Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all things, Colossians 1.10.
- Walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls them into his own kingdom and glory, 1 Thessalonians 2.12.
- Walk in the same manner as Jesus walked, 1 John 2.6.
- Walk according to his commandments, 1 John 2.6.

So here in 2 John 4, John's expectation to walk in the truth is a general expectation to obey the whole of Scripture. Obedience to God's truth is not optional. We are not free at our pleasure to believe or

disbelieve it, or to obey or disobey it. What God has revealed carries with it the responsibility to follow through.

Conclusion

Will we live consistently with the truth we believe? We will allow it to pull us together? The only true basis for unity in the church is the truth of God's word that indwells, blesses, and controls the lives of individual believers. And it is only those Christians who are firmly planted on the solid foundation of truth who will be able to withstand all that life deals out, i.e., persecution, temptation, and false doctrine. Are you standing on truth?

For Thought and Reflection

1. What is the priority of 2 and 3 John?
2. How does truth unite us?
3. What does it mean that the truth lives in you? By what means does it live in you?
4. How have you been blessed by the truth?
5. Why is it of such importance that we obey the truth?
6. How can we use this lesson to sharpen our focus on being knit together?