

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“When Love Has to be Tough”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): 2 John 7-13; 1 Jn. 2:18-23; 1 Jn. 3:7-8; 1 Jn. 4:3; Jn. 6:39-40; Jn. 17:12; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; Rev. 2:18-25

There are moments when love feels tender, warm, and affirming. But there are also moments when love has to tell the truth, even when that truth is hard to hear. A parent who loves their child cannot simply give a thumbs up to something destructive. A shepherd who loves the sheep cannot allow wolves among them because he does not want to hurt the wolf's feelings. Real love is not just the willingness to comfort; it is also the willingness to protect.

That is the heart of Second John. John has been speaking about truth and love together. He rejoices that some are walking in truth, and then he asks them to walk in love. But then he tells them why this matters so much: *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world—those who do not acknowledge Yeshua as Messiah coming in human flesh. This one is a deceiver and the anti-messiah”* (2 Jn. 7). In other words, walking in love means walking in truth, and walking in truth sometimes means refusing to affirm what leads people away from Messiah.

1. LOVE REFUSES DECEPTION

John says, *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world”* (2 Jn. 7). He is saying, “I am asking you to walk in love because there are those who are leading people into error.” These deceivers were not simply confused about some minor issue. They were denying Yeshua Messiah coming in human flesh. And that's no small matter. That is deception, and that deception is consequential because it leads people away from the truth, away from the Father and the Son, and away from the One who is love.

John's concern here connects directly with what he has already said in First John: *“Who is the liar, if not the one who denies that Yeshua is the Messiah? This one is the anti-messiah—the one who denies the Father and the Son”* (1 Jn. 2:22). This is not love versus truth. This is love because of truth. Those leading people away from the truth are not being loving, even if their message sounds spiritual, freeing, or appealing. A love that is rooted in God cannot affirm what is against Messiah.

2. LOVE WATCHES AND REMAINS

John's first direct command is simple and strong: *“Watch yourselves, so you do not lose what we have worked for but receive a full reward”* (2 Jn. 8). There is a seductiveness to false teaching. It can lure people into a fog if they are not vigilant. The congregation had brought John great joy because some were walking in the truth, but there was also the potential for great sorrow if they failed to guard the truth and continue living in it.

Then John says, *“Anyone who goes too far and does not remain in Messiah’s teaching does not have God. Anyone who remains in this teaching has both the Father and the Son”* (2 Jn. 9). The issue is not innovation for innovation’s sake, running ahead into something new and impressive. The issue is remaining in Messiah’s teaching. To remain in His teaching is to walk in truth. To walk in truth is to walk in love. And to go beyond His teaching is not spiritual maturity; it is departure from the very truth that gives life.

3. LOVE REFUSES TO ENDORSE WHAT LEADS PEOPLE ASTRAY

John continues, *“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not welcome him into your home or even give him a greeting”* (2 Jn. 10). At first, that can sound harsh, especially coming from the same John who speaks so deeply and repeatedly about loving one another. But John is not contradicting himself. He is showing us that love does not give a platform, a welcome, or an endorsement to teaching that leads people away from Yeshua.

He explains why: *“For the one greeting him shares in his evil deeds”* (2 Jn. 11). A greeting here is not just being polite to a stranger. It is a rejoicing welcome, a public sign of fellowship, alignment, and endorsement. In our world, it may look like giving the thumbs up, sharing the post, handing someone the microphone, or saying, “Yes, we are in agreement,” when what they are teaching is leading people away from the truth. That is not love. It may make people feel affirmed, but it is not loving to lie. It is not loving to call darkness light.

CONCLUSION

John closes by saying, *“Although I have much to write to you, I don’t want to do it with paper and ink. But I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that our joy may be full”* (2 Jn. 12). Even after such a strong warning, his heart is still relational. He wants fullness of joy. He wants face-to-face fellowship. He wants the body protected, restored, and walking in truth and love together. Tough love is not about being harsh for the sake of being harsh. It is love that refuses to affirm what destroys, while still longing for repentance, restoration, and fullness of joy.

So today, the invitation is to let the Holy Spirit search our hearts. Are we walking in truth and love, or have we separated the two? Have we excused what God calls destructive because we wanted to seem loving? Have we spoken truth without love, or offered love without truth? Come before the Lord with honesty. Ask Him to give you a heart that remains in Messiah’s teaching, a love that is redemptive, and the courage to refuse every deception that would lead you or others away from Yeshua.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why does John connect walking in love with guarding the truth in 2 Jn. 7–13?
2. What makes false teaching so dangerous, especially when it sounds spiritual or loving?
3. John says to “watch yourselves.” What are some ways believers today can be lured into a fog if they are not vigilant?
4. In modern life, what are some ways we may unintentionally “endorse” something destructive through social media, relationships, platforms, or silence?
5. How can we practice tough love in a way that is truthful, protective, and still redemptive rather than angry or self-righteous?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King, help us to walk in truth and love together. Keep us from separating what You have joined together. Give us discernment to recognize deception, humility to remain in Messiah’s teaching, and courage to refuse what leads people away from You.

Spirit of the Living God, search our hearts. Correct what needs to be corrected. Guard us from pride, fear, and compromise. Teach us to speak the truth in love and to love in a way that is faithful to the truth. May our lives, our words, our homes, and our community remain centered in Messiah Yeshua.

B’Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.