

# Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



## “Love and Truth: You Can't Have One Without the Other”

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

### Devotion and Discussion Questions

**Key Texts (TLV):** 2 John 1-3; Ex. 34:6; Jn. 14:6; 1 Pet. 5:3; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-8; Ezek. 3; Ezek. 33; Joel 2:13; 2 Pet. 3:9

Second John is the shortest book in the New Covenant Scriptures, but it is not small in what it carries. In just a few words, John brings us right into the heart of what it means to be a people who belong to God: we are to walk in love, but never detached from truth; and we are to hold to truth, but never stripped of love. These two things are not enemies. They are not competing values. They are both rooted in the very character of God.

And that is where this becomes very personal for us. We all know what it feels like when someone tells the truth without tenderness, and it crushes rather than heals. We also know what it looks like when someone claims to be loving, but refuses to speak what is true because truth might make someone uncomfortable. John will not let us choose one side of that. He opens this little letter by showing us that real love lives in truth, real truth abides in us, and everything God gives us flows to us in truth and love.

#### 1. REAL LOVE LIVES IN TRUTH

John opens, *“The elder. To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth—and not I alone, but also all who have come to know the truth”* (2 Jn. 1). He identifies himself simply as “the elder,” not because he is trying to be distant, but because they know him. There is relationship here. There is pastoral care here. He writes as one whose life, character, integrity, and moral standing give weight to his words. And he writes to the “chosen lady and her children,” which most likely speaks tenderly of a local believing community and its members. This is not cold correction. This is a shepherd writing to people he loves.

But John does not simply say, “I love you.” He says, “I love you in truth.” His love is not empty sentiment. It is not just warm emotion. It is love within the framework of what is true. This reflects the character of ADONAI Himself, who revealed His name as *“ADONAI, ADONAI, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth”* (Ex. 34:6). Love and truth belong together because they are both in God. In the absence of truth, true love is not present. And truth without love does not truly represent the God who is both light and love.

#### 2. The Truth That Abides in Us Knits Us Together

John continues, *“because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever”* (2 Jn. 2). This is not merely the idea of truth, or a list of correct statements, though truth certainly includes what is correct. John is speaking of the truth that has come to abide in us because we have come to know the True One. Yeshua said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life! No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (Jn. 14:6). So when John speaks of

those who have come to know the truth, he is speaking of those who have come to know the One who reveals reality because He is the Truth.

And John says this truth “abides in us.” That is language he loves to use. It is the language of remaining. Yeshua said, “Abide in Me,” and John carries that same idea here. The abiding truth is in us, and it will be with us forever. That truth is what knits us together. It is not personality, preference, shared background, or outward religious activity that ultimately holds the people of God together. It is the truth of Messiah Yeshua dwelling in us. And because that truth abides in us, we must continue in it. We do not get to wander from Messiah’s teaching and still claim to be walking in the truth.

### **3. GRACE, MERCY, AND SHALOM COME IN TRUTH AND LOVE**

John then writes, “*Grace, mercy, and shalom be with us, from God the Father and from Messiah Yeshua, the Father’s Son, in truth and love!*” (2 Jn. 3). In English, this can sound like a standard greeting: “Grace, mercy, and peace be with you.” But John’s wording carries a stronger confidence. The previous verse ends by saying the truth will be with us forever, and then this verse continues with the same kind of assurance: it will be with us—grace, mercy, and shalom. In other words, where the abiding truth remains, everything that flows from God’s character comes with it.

Grace is God’s favor and strength given to us, not because we have earned it, but because He is generous. Mercy is His compassion, His tenderness, His refusal to treat us as our sin deserves. Shalom is not simply the absence of conflict; it is wholeness, fullness, and well-being even in the middle of the storm. And John says these come from God the Father and from the Son, Messiah Yeshua. The Father and the Son are not in opposition. What we receive from the Father, we receive from the Son. What we enjoy from the Son, we likewise enjoy from the Father. The Father and the Son unite in extending grace, mercy, shalom, love, and truth to the children of God.

### **CONCLUSION**

So John’s opening words prepare us for the whole letter. Love and truth. Truth and love. You cannot have one without the other. Love without truth is not love. It may make people comfortable for a moment, but if it hides the danger, if it refuses to warn, if it lets people walk toward destruction because we do not want to disturb their peace, that is not love. The watchman on the wall is not loving the city by staying silent when danger is coming. Love says, “I care about you too much not to tell you the truth.”

But truth without love is not truly true either. It may be doctrinally correct, but if it is harsh, arrogant, crushing, and empty of tenderness, it misrepresents the heart of God. God does not delight in judgment. His desire is that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. So today the invitation is not to choose between being loving or being truthful. Come before the Lord and let Him form His own character in us, so that the fullness of His love and truth are flowing in you and through you.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. John says, “*whom I love in truth*” (2 Jn. 1). Why is it important that love be held together with truth?
2. What are some ways believers today can confuse being “loving” with avoiding hard truths?
3. Have you ever experienced truth spoken without love? How did it affect you, and what would it have looked like for that truth to be spoken in the character of God?
4. John says the truth “abides in us and will be with us forever” (2 Jn. 2). What does it look like in daily life to remain in the truth rather than simply agree with it intellectually?
5. Where do you personally tend to struggle more: speaking truth without enough tenderness, or showing kindness while avoiding truth? What might repentance look like in that area?

### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Avinu Malkhenu*, Our Father, Our King, thank You that You are compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth. Thank You that You have revealed Yourself fully in Messiah Yeshua, the Father’s Son, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Let Your truth abide in us, and let it shape the way we love.

Lord, forgive us for the times we have called something love when we were really avoiding truth. Forgive us for the times we have spoken what was true, but in a way that did not reflect Your loving heart. Fill us with Your grace, mercy, and shalom. Teach us to walk in truth and love, so that our lives rightly represent You to the people around us.

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