

2 John

Back to the Basics

Learning Objectives

- Christ calls us to love sacrificially
- Belief in Christ is essential to the Christian faith
- Involvement in a local church community equips us to showcase Christ's love and to grow as believers

Pray for your time together as a group.

Read Out Loud: 2 John (NIV)

¹ The elder, To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth—and not I only, but also all who know the truth— ² because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever:

³ Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love.

⁴ It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. ⁵ And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. ⁶ And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

⁷ Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸ Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. ⁹ Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. ¹¹ Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.

¹² I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

¹³ The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.

? What can we learn from John's use of plural pronouns like "us" and "we"?

Possible Answers: Christian faith is not just a personal conviction, but is to be lived out in a community of believers. John is also including himself, showing that this is not written to this specific group but to all believers.

Many biblical scholars believe that "the elect lady" was not a specific individual, but rather a congregation, and the "children" mentioned in verses 1 and 13 are members of that congregation. The word "church" in Greek is feminine, and "lady" would correspond with that. John also writes this letter in the second-person plural, making us believe that this is for a group of people, not an individual. "Your chosen sister" in verse 13 would be another church John oversees.

? What are some of the benefits and challenges of living out your faith in community? (verses 2 & 3)

Possible Answers: Having other people to share in your joys and sorrows, praying together, the opportunity to bear one another's' burdens, the challenge of being vulnerable with others, the knowledge that you will be hurt by others you are in community with

? In verse 3, John states with confidence that "Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us." Not can, not might, but will be with us. What does that mean for us, as believers?

Possible Answer: We have constant access to those attributes of Christ--His peace, grace, and mercy are always with us, that we may receive it and give it to others. We can have confidence that these attributes will remain with us regardless of our own actions.

Matthew 22:36-39 (NIV)

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

John 13:34-35

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

? What does it mean for us to walk according to Jesus' commandments? What are some ways we can act upon that command and display sacrificial love?

Leader's Note---Optional: Read Luke 6:27-36 for some examples straight from Jesus; Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 to find some attributes of love.

? John also speaks of antichrists (or deceivers) in 1 John 2:18 -- where he relates the importance of a continued allegiance to both God and Christ. What are we in danger of losing if we fail to continue on in the teachings of Christ?

Possible Answers: Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life." If we discount his life and example, there is simply no gospel to be spread. Many who have professed belief in the true gospel may be lead astray in the presence of those sharing a message contrary to the true gospel.

? When discerning the sincerity of fellow Christian believers, what core belief does John ask us to look for in particular? Why should the absence of this belief cause us to raise a red flag?

Possible Answers: John's command shows us that, first-and-foremost, a belief in Jesus Christ (the Son of God in flesh, killed for our sins, and raised by the Father) is at the core of a Christian worldview.

Differences in peripheral beliefs (the baptism of infants, manifestations of the Holy Spirit, etc.) are not to be considered insignificant, but since they do not ultimately contain the power of salvation, the presence of these beliefs should not cause us to overlook the absence of core ones. Instead, the absence of a faith in Christ raises a red flag because that belief underlies all other Christian beliefs, whether central or peripheral.

? In John's Jewish context, welcoming and accepting outsiders into your home was not a mere formality or gesture of hospitality -- it was a token of Christian brotherhood. With that in mind, is John at fault for asking Christians to abstain from allowing false teachers into their homes? Why or why not?

Possible Answers: No, given the potential consequences of doing so. If individuals looking to actively deceive Christians were welcomed in, the head of that household would not only be sending a message of approval, but he would also be subjecting his own family (and the community at large) to false teaching. These individuals should be kept out for the good of the entire body of believers.

? In the same vein, how can we respond to those who are "seekers" (those new to or unfamiliar with the Christian faith), in a way that is receptive and welcoming, while remaining steadfastly opposed to false "Teachers" (who have been given authority to instruct)?

Possible Answers: We should follow Jesus' example with both groups. Jesus welcomed Seekers (sinners) with open arms -- healing, dining, and conversing with those outside of his inner circle of disciples. On the other hand, Jesus openly rebuked the religious leaders of the day who denounced his teachings and authority. Regardless, Jesus did not withhold grace from either group (and we should still seek to share the gospel with everyone that we meet), but he was careful to select his disciples (and principal leaders of the early church) based on their loyalty to and belief in him.

? Near the end of the passage in v. 12, John tells the recipients of his letter that his joy will not be made complete until he meets with them face to face. In this digital age, why does it remain important for us to establish community with believers in our local contexts, and in what ways can the technologies at our fingertips be used constructively for that purpose?

Possible Answers: When John speaks of meeting with a group of people, he does not simply mean flying in for a weekend to preach a sermon or two. Like Paul, John was interested in living in and amongst these people as he taught them over lengthy periods of time. Similarly, building community with believers around us means a lot more than simply attending church on a Sunday morning. With regards to technology, we should look to supplement our local community with podcasts, videos, online communities, and other resources when they prove to be helpful.

For Discussion and Accountability

? Jesus was the ultimate example of sacrificial love; in John 15:13 he says, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lays down his life for his friends.” Although many of us won’t be called to literally give up our life for someone else, what are some tangible ways that we can display sacrificial love to others day-to-day?

? Specifically, how can we show sacrificial love within our small group?