

## Week 9: John and Jude: Love One Another

### Hook

# TRUE FAITH

### Main Point: God's primary command is to love another.

Each year, *Forbes* compiles a list of the "World's Most Valuable Brands" (see footnote for methodology).<sup>1</sup> Break your LifeGroup into smaller groups and challenge them to identify the top five world's most valuable brands.

Answer: 1. Apple (\$241 billion brand value) 2. Google (\$207 billion) 3. Microsoft (\$162 billion) 4. Amazon (\$135 billion) 5. Facebook (\$70 billion)

Ask a few class members to come to the board and draw the logo of each of these brands from memory.

**Q: Was it easy to recall the brands' logos? What words would you use to describe the brands?**

**Q: What words would you use to describe the American church?**

**Q: Jesus tells us in John 13:35 "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Why is love so fundamental to the Christian?**

**RECAP:** Last week, 1 John concluded with John's reiterating the messages he had been repeating throughout the letter:

- There is a sharp difference between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, those who belong to the world and those who belong to God.
- False teachers are those who deny Christ – the antichrists.
- Real faith is fellowship with God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which also results in fellowship with other believers as the body of Christ.
- Those who have fellowship with God are children of God and will grow to be more like Him as they walk in the light.
- God is love, so those who really know God will love others self-sacrificially, the way Jesus loved. True love shows itself in action, not just words.

- Those who have fellowship with the triune God have no reason to fear the Day of Judgment. They will be saved and receive eternal life.

This week we'll start 2 John, which has some of the same themes but is a much shorter letter, so short that we will be able to cover it in only two lessons:

- Part 1: vv. 1–6: Love One Another
- Part 2: vv. 7–13: Watch Out for False Teachers

Second John may or may not have been written to the same people as 1 John, but even if they weren't the same people, they were dealing with the same thing – false teachers who were trying to lead them astray from Christ. John was reminding them of the simple truth of the Gospel and how to recognize false teachers among them.

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### Book

**Main Point: God's primary command is to love another.**

**2 John 1:1–2; John 8:31–32 and 42–47; John 14:6–7; 1 John 5:20 [Read]**

**Talking Point 1:** The children of God know the truth and the truth lives in them.

**Q: What is the truth that lives in the children of God? How does it set us free?**

**Q: Why don't the children of the Devil understand the truth?**

This letter doesn't explicitly say it was written by John; the greeting says, "the elder." But ancient manuscripts uniformly identify the author as John and due to the writing style, theological content, and order in the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament, most scholars agree that "the elder" is the apostle John who wrote the Gospel of John and the letters we call 1 John, 2 John and 3 John.<sup>2</sup>

The letter was written to "the lady chosen by God and to her children." This title is somewhat parallel to his referring to himself as "the elder" instead of explicitly as John, so most scholars think he was using "the lady" as a title or symbol for the local church and its members.<sup>3</sup> The Greek word for "lady" here is *kuria*, the female form of *kurios* – "Lord" – which is the most common title for Jesus in the New Testament, used over 700 times.<sup>4</sup> The only time *kuria* is used is here, in this letter, so it is more likely referring to the Bride of Christ than to a particular woman. Like titles in the ancient world and even in monarchies today, *lord* and *lady* go together: Christ is the *kurios* (Lord), the Church is His *kuria* (lady).

The use of the word *elect* as an adjective for *lady* also points to its referring to the Church. That word occurs 23 times in the New Testament, always referring to the "elect" or "chosen" of God, the Church. Another reason it's unlikely John was writing to an individual is that so much of 2 John is written in second person plural. The imagery of the Church as a lady and individual believers as her children also follows the imagery and style of 1 John, where John repeatedly called the believers in those churches "little children."

Second John seems to have been written to a particular church or group of churches, because he said he wanted to come and see them face to face (2 John 1:12). This would also explain why the letter is so short. He had much more to tell them but was saving it for when he saw them. The "elect sister" who greeted this church or group of churches is another church, by implication, the church from which John was writing, which most scholars believe was Ephesus.<sup>5</sup>

Since he was going to go to talk to them in more detail about the issues they were struggling with, John stuck to the basics in this letter, with two main points:

- vv. 1–6: God commands us to love one another.
- vv. 7–13: Beware of false teachers.

In the opening description of the elect lady and her children, John focused heavily on their relationship with truth:

- John loved them in truth.
- All of those who know the truth love them in truth.
- The truth abided in all of them and would be with them forever.

John had also ended his first letter with this same focus on truth: We “know him who is true; and we are in him who is true” (1 John 5:20). The historical context of these letters is that John was fighting false teachers. He wanted to be sure they knew that the Gospel is the truth, that they could stand firm on it and trust in it.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus called Himself the truth. It is not just the Gospel message that is true, but Jesus Himself is the Truth. He is the way to the Father; no one comes to Father except through Him (John 14:6). Again, the focus is the relationship, the fellowship with God through Christ. Our faith isn’t a set of rules we follow or a set of beliefs we confess. It’s a relationship with a person.

In John 8, when Jesus told the people that “the truth will set you free,” He also distinguished between the Father of truth and the father of lies in the same way John had spent so much of 1 John distinguishing between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, the children of God and the children of the world. Jesus said to those religious leaders who rejected Him yet tried to claim God as their Father, that if they really knew God, they would have recognized Jesus as His Son, because Jesus is God, the third person of the Trinity, God the Son. They did not recognize Him because they were really children of the Devil, the father of lies (John 8:42–47).

This may feel like a harsh truth, but these passages all teach that there are only two sides in our world. You are either a child of God or a child of the Devil. You either belong to the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of light. There is no in-between. Those who reject Christ don’t know the truth; they have bought into the lies of the Devil, the prince of this world. But knowing the Truth (Jesus) sets us free from the lies of the world and delivers us from the kingdom of darkness (Colossians 1:13–14).

John loved these people “in truth.” His love for them was not based in sentimentality, family, friendship or common interests. It was based in the truth of the Gospel and *the* Truth, Jesus Himself. Jesus is what bound them together and binds together all of us – in every time and place throughout all of church history – who know Jesus. The truth abides in us and will be with us forever. We can use the Gospel and the person of Jesus

as a standard by which to discern the lies of the false teachers. No matter what lies the world throws our way, we know the Truth.

**Q: What are some specific ways the world lies, deceives, or manipulates us?**

**Q: Why does knowing truth matter in our world today? How does confidence in the truth impact our personal witness?**

**2 John 1:3 and Colossians 1:15–20 [Read]**

**Talking Point 2:** Those who know the truth have grace, mercy and peace.

**Q: How is 2 John 1:3 worded differently than a typical greeting (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:3)?**

**Q: How does knowing truth lead us to grace, mercy and peace?**

A typical greeting wishes grace and peace to the recipients of the letter. This letter says definitively that grace, mercy and peace *will* be with us. John wasn't just wishing his readers well; he was making a promise. And he included himself in this guarantee. It wasn't just wishing these things "to you" but promising they will be "with us." This was John, emphasizing again the fellowship they had with each other through Jesus. As believers, we are all one body of Christ, and we all share in the spiritual blessings that come from fellowship with Jesus.

Grace and peace are typical greetings in the New Testament letters. "Peace" or *shalom* was a typical Jewish greeting while "grace" was a typical Greek greeting. The *shalom* we all are seeking comes through the grace of God. John added "mercy" to emphasize the message of the Gospel, that grace and peace come through the mercy of God in offering all people salvation through Christ.<sup>6</sup>

John also emphasized that all of this comes from the God the Father and Jesus the Son. John was fighting the lies of the "antichrists" of that generation who taught that Jesus was not divine, not the Son of God. John addressed this in more detail later in the letter, but from the beginning he emphasized that these spiritual blessings come from both the Father and the Son, making Jesus equal in status with the Father yet at the same time showing their distinct personhood. Jesus is not just the Son of God, He is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity.

All these spiritual blessings come to us "in truth and love." These two things encapsulate the Gospel and God Himself. Scripture tells us that God doesn't just show us love; He *is* love. Jesus doesn't just teach us the truth; He *is* the Truth. Spiritual blessings come when we know the truth and walk in love. These things come by fellowship with the Father

through His Son. So our church communities should be a place where people experience these things: grace, mercy, peace, truth and love.

**Q: Describe how you have experienced peace since you came to know Jesus.**

**Q: How does knowing Jesus give us peace even in the hardest times?**

**Q: How are truth and love connected? How can our church communities maintain a commitment to both truth and love?**

**2 John 1:4–6; 1 John 3:11; John 13:12–17 and 34–35 [Read]**

**Talking Point 3:** God's command is to love one another.

John reminded his readers again that love is the primary commandment of God, the one out of which everything else flows (Matthew 22:37–40). As he had done in 1 John, he reminded them that the commandment to love one another wasn't a brand-new concept in the kingdom of God. When Jesus called this commandment "new" in John 13:34–35, He was not creating a different or separate commandment. Rather, by pointing to His own life and ministry, He was offering a fresh perspective on the commandment to love one another.<sup>7</sup> God had been telling them to love one another since the beginning, since the time of Cain and Abel, and throughout the Old Testament.

What was new about Jesus' command in the foot-washing moment of the Last Supper was to love one another "as I have loved you." (John 13:34). Jesus provides the example of what loving others really looks like. Jesus was God in the flesh (John 1; Colossians 1). So, any time we wonder how God would treat the poor, the outcast, women, Gentiles, or arrogant religious leaders, we can just look at how Jesus treated them and know what it means to love others.

The night Jesus gave them the "new" command to love another, He showed them by the example of the foot washing that loving someone means humbling yourself and serving that person. But He showed them that same thing in everything He did throughout His life and ministry. Even coming to earth in the flesh was an act of humility, service and love (Philippians 2:1–8). His death was the ultimate act of true love (Romans 5:8).

John apparently interacted with some members of this church and the encounter brought him great joy. Those he met were walking in the truth and so the Elder began this letter with on a positive note of observation. John was a disciple-maker, and nothing fired him up more than to know that his spiritual children were walking in the truth (3 John 1:4).

**Q: In what ways does Jesus cause you to rethink what it looks like to love others?**

**Q: In what ways does discipleship bring joy to the one doing the discipling?**

**Q: John began his letter with encouragement. What role does encouragement play in the discipleship process?**

## **Week 9: John and Jude: Love One Another**

### **Took**

**Main Point:** God's primary command is to love another.

What words would you use to describe your LifeGroup? Teacher, take a moment to share a personal testimony as to how you have been impacted by the love your LifeGroup has demonstrated. Challenge each member in the room to outdo one another in love, so much so that your LifeGroup's positive reputation would be known throughout the church.

**Q: What prevents believers from loving each other well?**

**Q: What can you do this week to demonstrate the love of Jesus to someone?**

### **CHALLENGES**

**THINK:** Yet again, John was reminding us to love one another. Take some time to reflect on why love is so foundational to our faith and everything else we do. Then think about what love really looks like. Not the Hollywood version of love but true *agape*, Jesus' kind of love for others. If everyone loved one another that way, how different would our world be? If everyone loved you that way, how different would your life be? If you loved everyone else that way, what changes would you have to make to the way you live?

**PRAY** for the Lord to give you a deep understanding of what godly love really looks like. Ask Him to change your heart toward people who are difficult for you to love and show you where you need to serve others. Pray for His heart for the poor, marginalized, oppressed, abandoned, rejected and all "others." Ask Him to give you a heart that looks first at how you can serve others rather than your own desires. Pray for God to give you opportunities to love other people.

**ACT:** Encourage one another. Partner with someone in this group (or form groups of three) and commit to encourage one another to love and good deeds this week. Pray for one another and share ideas of how God may want to use you this week to love other people. Check with each other every day or even several times a day to see how things are going or to share an encouraging word or prayer for each other.

**NEXT TIME in 1–3 John and Jude:** Next week we'll look at the second half of 2 John, which focuses on how to discern false teachers (antichrists) from the truth.



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<sup>1</sup>“After looking at a universe of 200 global brands with a notable presence in the U.S., our first step in valuing the brands was to determine revenue and earnings before interest and taxes for each one. We then averaged earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) over the past three years and subtracted from earnings a charge of 8% of the brand’s capital employed, figuring a generic brand should be able to earn at least 8% on this capital. (*Forbes* also applied the corporate tax rate in the parent company’s home country to that net earnings figure.) Next, we allocated a percentage of those earnings to the brand based on the role brands play in each industry. To this net brand earnings number, we applied the average price-to-earnings multiple over the past three years to arrive at the final brand value. For privately held outfits we applied earnings multiples for comparable public companies.”; <https://www.forbes.com/the-worlds-most-valuable-brands/#163ddc00119c>

<sup>2</sup> *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [1](#), [2](#), [3 John](#), vol. 38, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 219.

<sup>4</sup> *NAS Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries* (The Lockman Foundation, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> William McDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006–2012).