

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: EPISODE 6

SECURE IN FAITH; BOLD IN ACTION
BALANCING LOVE AND TRUTH
2 JOHN 1-13
07/16/2017



MAIN POINT

God's chosen people are to walk in the truth, love one another, and guard against false teaching.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What might be your response to someone who said, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere and loving"?

What might be your response to someone who said, "It doesn't matter how you live as long as you believe the truth"?

These two statements are clearly opposites, yet each can be attributed to some people's understanding of the Christian life. Nevertheless, both are wrong. The reason why is because the Word of God binds both truth and love together. They are friends, not enemies. Nowhere will you see this more clearly than in 2 John. John's major purpose is to demonstrate how love and truth are designed to support and complement one another and give Christians practical wisdom in living out this truth.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 JOHN 1-3.

In verses 1-3, notice how many times "truth" and "love" are mentioned together. How do we go about loving someone "in the truth" (v. 1)?

What does it mean to love them "because of the truth" (v. 2)?

Do you find it easier to love only those Christians who agree with you? Why or why not?

John closes his greeting with the repetition of the words "truth and love." The placement of these words here allows John to emphasize their importance and prepares the readers for the main theme of the epistle. To maintain a healthy and growing community, the church must exhibit a fidelity to the truth that knows no compromise, and they must love one another in a way that knows no boundaries. Yes: Christians are called to genuinely love their enemies. But grace,

mercy, and peace flourish in an environment where truth and love unite, not where truth is compromised in an expression of “love” for an enemy. It is truth that unites the Christian community when it faces falsehood. Truth is evident among Christians when they demonstrate their unity in showing love toward one another.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 2 JOHN 4-6.

What does it look like to “walk in the truth” (v. 4)? What spiritual disciplines do you currently practice that help you do this? Which do you need to work on?

According to this passage, what is the relationship between walking in the truth and loving one another in the church?

Walking in the truth (obedience) and love for one another go hand in hand. The absence of one will ensure the absence of the other. Christians must love one another. This love is the basis of Christian living to which all believers constantly need to recall. For John, it meant practical, costly caring for the needy, including readiness to sacrifice oneself for the sake of others, while simultaneously requiring real affection for one’s fellow believers.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 2 JOHN 7-11.

In verses 7-11 the unity of truth and love is applied to our relationships with unbelievers. By denying that Jesus had come in the flesh (v. 7), what biblical truths were the false teachers rejecting?

What false teaching have you been exposed to in your life? What relationship did those experiences have with your local congregation?

In the digital age, there is ample opportunity for false teaching to infiltrate any member of any congregation. But false teachers do not need television, radio, or the internet to make an impact on any given local church. The teaching itself can be so enticing that it can quickly spread like a virus. Only a congregation that knows the truth and how it applies can reject false teaching consistently and firmly.

John was motivated by the prospect of obtaining a future reward for faithful service (v. 8). In what sense does the prospect of receiving a reward from Jesus Christ motivate you to walk in truth and love?

Has there ever been a time in your life where you struggled to believe that the grace of God in Christ was enough?

How does John say we must treat those who bring false teaching to the church? Have you ever experienced this personally? If so, share with your group.

Showing hospitality or verbal agreement would be to participate in their evil work. Although there is to be no rudeness on the part of a believer, neither is there to be the slightest encouragement to these teachers who spread the cancer of false teaching. The issue of truth is crucial. It must be preserved. When love is present, lies are not welcome. To act in any other manner would be to invite spiritual death.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Would you identify yourself as someone whose truth needs to be balanced by love or whose love needs to be balanced by truth? Explain.

What can you do to gain a better balance?

Through this study, have you become aware of any false teaching you might be entertaining? What should you do in response?

PRAY

Pray that your life would reveal an understanding of both truth and love.

COMMENTARY

2 JOHN 1-13

1–3. John described himself as an “elder.” The term may refer either to an official title (see 1 Pet. 5:1), or it may describe John affectionately as an old man.

John designated his recipients as “the chosen lady and her children.” Some have felt that her name was “Kyria” and others have chosen “Electa.” If her name were “Electa,” we would have to say that she also had a sister of the same name. If the recipient were an individual, she would likely be anonymous. The phrase is more likely a reference to some local church over which the elder had authority. The “children” were members of that church. John’s statement of love and the command to love would be more suitable for a church than for a person. The command not to host false teachers is also more suitable for a local church than for a single home.

The feature that united John with his readers was their common love for the truth (vv. 1b–2). Grace indicated God’s provision of salvation, and God’s gift of mercy demonstrated the depth of human need of it. Peace is a description of the character of salvation.

4–6. John had met some of the children of the lady, perhaps members of the church, in his travel. Their conduct had impressed him. The meeting led to a single request: Love one another. That request led John to consider the link between love and obedience. If we love God, we will obey Him. Our love for Him expresses itself in our obedience.

7–11. John warned against deceivers who led others astray. The doctrine they stressed involved a denial of the incarnation. Christians affirmed the genuine humanity of Jesus when they said, “Christ has come in the flesh.” Jesus did not become Christ at the baptism or cease to be Christ before His death. He was Christ come in the flesh.

John warned his readers against losing their reward for faithful service by falling into doctrinal error (v. 8). He affirmed that one who erred at this important point did not have God.

John included an additional warning in verses 10–11. He warned against providing any sort of official welcome for those who erred in their doctrine of Christ. John was not promoting intolerance, nor was he violating his earlier appeal to “love one another.” He was warning against extending any form of support for those who erred at the point of the genuine humanity of Christ. We should not apply John’s words to cause us to separate from those whose opinions we happen to dislike.

12–13. Although John had much he desired to communicate to his readers, he did not want to use another sheet of papyrus for writing. He preferred to speak face to face so that he could not be misunderstood. He anticipated a time of future visitation so that they might experience a future completion of joy.

John’s concluding word in verse 13 sounds more like a message of greeting from members of one church to the recipients to whom he wrote.