

## 1-2-3 John, Part 16 – Truth and Error

In his last two letters, John addressed truth and error as the church was challenged by false teaching and an antichrist spirit. When the Apostles met in the Jerusalem council, they addressed some of these divisions, false teachers and doctrines. False teachers and groups were presenting doctrines that questioned the deity and humanity of Christ. 2 John encouraged believers to walk right and avoid deceivers and antichrist doctrines. 3 John addressed three individuals in the church and their actions.

**2 John 1-2 NKJV** The Elder, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

Elder refers to his spiritual position over the church. The text indicates that he was the founding pastor of this group of believers. The letter was written to an individual and her children, or to a specific local church and the members of that church. Either of these is possible. Whoever this woman was, her faithful service was noteworthy.

**2 John 3-4 NKJV** Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received a commandment from the Father.

Some of the believers in the fellowship were walking in truth and love. The word “walk” refers to the way they were living. Rather than falling into the division and heresy that was hurting the church, these believers were holding on to the truth. Notice the emphasis that is placed on love.

**2 John 5-6 NKJV** And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

**Note the repetition of the word “walk.”**

The truth is not something we simply study or believe. The truth is a motivating force in our lives. It is not enough to know the truth, our actions must show it.

**Specifically notice that they were to walk in love and in the truth.**

John defined Christian love in terms of obedience to God. Christian love is not an emotion but obedience to the Word of God.

**In John 14:15 NKJV Jesus said:** “If you love Me, keep My commandments”

The great sign that we are true believers and Christ’s disciples is that we love God and love one another. Truth and love cannot be separated. When we love God, we will love one another. The false teachers and deceivers that had arisen were bringing strife, division and confusion in the church. It is necessary for us individually and corporately to hold to the truth and love.

**2 John 7 NKJV** For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

The numbers of deceivers and variety of erroneous ideas made a substantial threat to the body of believers. The foundation of our faith rests on truth of the Word of God. The community of believers is still being challenged with doctrines that are foreign to the Word of God. Some are exchanging the truth of God's Word for fables and doctrines of man. The foundation of faith does not rest in individual experience, knowledge or what a certain group believes. Our faith relies on the inerrant and inspired Word of God. Jesus Christ is the solid rock on which we stand.

**2 John 8 NKJV** Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

This warning is important for every believer. Watch out for the disastrous spiritual effects that compromise and false teaching can bring. John warns that it is possible to lose the things that we have worked for in Christ. Antichrist and deceivers can have a negative impact on believer's faith and the work of the Lord.

[The easiest way to get detoured from your Christian walk and to lose the spiritual ground you have gained is to get involved with false doctrines.](#)

**John 10:10 NKJV** The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

We have been warned that many false doctrines and false teachers will arise in the last days and will deceive many. Jesus said, *"When the Holy Spirit comes, He will guide you into all truth."* One of the most needed gifts of the Spirit in a day of false doctrines and antichrists is the gift of discerning of spirits.

[In protecting the truth, we need to know those who depart from the faith.](#)

**2 John 9 NKJV** Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

The word "transgress" means "go beyond." The danger is spelled out clearly and is a warning to every believer. Specifically, any departure from Christ and the Word of Truth does not have God. We are called on to abide in the doctrine of Christ.

[It is dangerous to add to or take away from God's Word.](#)

It may seem insignificant, but it is a transgression of the Word of God. Some are going beyond what the Bible says and are trying to "improve on" what God has said. The Bible is historically reliable. We do not need another book to improve or add to what the Bible teaches. We are to "abide" in the doctrine.

[John warns us not to entertain false teachers in our homes or even to greet them, \(verse 10-11\).](#)

The modern inclination is to be highly tolerant of religious differences. New Testament writers did not share the same spirit of toleration. Their commitment to the truth required stern denunciations of false teachers.

**2 John 12 NKJV** Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

[In 3 John, he addresses one of the struggles within the local church that was having a devastating impact.](#)

This issue at hand was a case of moral failure. Diotrephes had developed an arrogant attitude that was negatively affecting even the faithful. John begins by encouraging Gaius for his faithfulness and generosity.

**3 John 1-8 NKJV** The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

[We thank God for church members like Gaius.](#)

John uses the word “beloved” four times when referring to him. The message of his good works preceded him. In the early church, the Apostles sent evangelists and teachers to assist, encourage and teach the doctrines to the church. Gaius faithfully helped these Christian workers. His love for Christ was expressed with love for others.

[Diotrephes is the second person mentioned, and he was consumed with pride and arrogance.](#)

**3 John 9-10 NLT** I sent a brief letter to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who loves to be the leader, does not acknowledge our authority. When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and the wicked things he is saying about us. He not only refuses to welcome the traveling teachers, he also tells others not to help them. And when they do help, he puts them out of the church.

Diotrephes was asserting control over the church out of personal ambition. He loved to have preeminence over everyone and had an inflated opinion of himself. When anyone disagreed with him, he put them out of the church.

**Hebrews 13:7 NLT** Remember your leaders who first taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and trust the Lord as they do.

**Hebrews 13:17 NLT** Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they know they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do

this joyfully and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

Diotrephes told lies and brought false charges against John. He refused to accept the leadership of the Apostles and those who were sent to instruct and help the church. He was destroying the unity and love in the church. Everyone can learn from what happened in this matter. One thing that we should take from this chapter is that in the midst of what this one man was doing, the church still had faithful people.

**3 John 11-12 NKJV** Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

In the midst of division, trouble and when faith is being challenged, there are always some faithful people with a good testimony. John said that Demetrius had a good testimony from all and from the truth itself. Too often one person destroys the unity, love and testimony of the whole congregation.

[John did what everyone in the church should do when trouble arises.](#)

He encouraged those who are doing good, and encouraged everyone to imitate what is good. Don't allow evil to spoil the good that is in you. Throughout the Apostles' letters, believers are encouraged to love one another and resist the evil. It is noteworthy that throughout church history, Satan has been attempting to destroy the unity and fellowship of believers.

**Romans 12:9-18 NKJV** Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

**Romans 12:21 NKJV** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

[One of the greatest blessings we have been given is the unity we experience and the love of fellow believers.](#)