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“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments,” II John 6.

## Walking In Truth

**Lesson Aim:** To note that Christ left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

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**Topic:** Discipleship; Obedience; Truth: Of God.

## INTRODUCTION

The believer should walk in the truth. But what is truth and how does one walk in it? One definition of truth would be “that which is according to fact.” Since God is ultimate reality, truth is that which accords with the nature of God. As one knows God he is able to identify truth.

The believer walks in truth when he lives according to the principles which are in agreement with God's nature and will. This manner of life will be determined by the commandments of God. All of life will be marked, however, with a walk that is straight, steady, with a purpose and according to divine directions. He who walks in truth will rejoice in upright conduct, pure thoughts, true doctrines, and will grow in the likeness of the Lord Jesus who said, “I am the truth,” John 14:6.

Today's study surveys the Second Epistle of the Apostle John. The epistle is addressed to **eklekta kuria** which may be either a proper name or a descriptive phrase. If the former, it was sent to Eklekta, a lady, and is the only New Testament epistle addressed to a woman. If the latter, it refers to the church (under feminine terminology). It seems wise to suggest the epistle was written by the aged Apostle to a devout lady who lived probably in Pergamos. The epistle was written from Ephesus.

Two key words occur in this epistle. “Love” occurs four times and “truth” five times. The epistle was apparently written to warn believers against heresy and association with false teachers. A discourse on truth and

error is the theme of the book. Divine truth is discussed in verses 1-6 while heretical error is discussed in verses 7-11. Personal expressions conclude the epistle's last two verses, 12-13. Read the book carefully and prayerfully, then read the comments which follow.

## EXPOSITION

### I. FELLOWSHIP, 1-3.

John begins his second epistle with thanksgiving for Christian fellowship. He points out that men who abide in the truth enjoy fellowship with one another. Without any impropriety, John expresses his love “in the truth” to the lady to whom the epistle is addressed. He further points out the scope of her reputation for loyalty to the Lord Jesus because all who have known the truth love her and her children also. He recognizes that the truth in the Lord unites the hearts of believers as nothing else can. To love one another in the truth means to have enduring fellowship.

The beloved Apostle looks upon truth almost as if it had personality. He writes of truth dwelling with the believer as well as in the believer. It so abides eternally, verse 2. This is a wonderful truth for Christians to ponder. The believer is related to God through Jesus who is the Truth; he is led into all truth under the instruction of the Spirit of God, John 16:13; he is assured that he will abide eternally in the truth.

Fellowship in the truth is not only fellowship with men, but also fellowship with God, verse 3. An ancient prophet asked the question, “**Can two walk together, except they be agreed?**” Amos 3:3. No, neither two men nor one man and God, two cannot walk together except they be agreed. But how sweet is the fellowship with our brethren and with our God when there is unanimous agreement in the truth.

Grace, mercy, and peace flow freely unto the believer because of truth and love. Grace and mercy flow out from God for the redemption of sinful man. But redemption is based upon truth and love.

God cannot deny Himself nor His own law. Truth made Him stand by the law that the soul that sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:4), but love moved Him to provide the way of salvation in Jesus Christ, John 3:16.

The truthfulness of God is the basis of Christian assurance. If God constantly fluctuated between truth and error, a believer would never be sure of Him. But there is no error nor shadow by turning in Him, James 1:17. He who abides in the realm of truth and love knows he is in the realm where God constantly abides. There is, therefore, increasing fellowship with God

for the man who walks in that way.

Fellowship and worship of God is impossible to anyone who does not walk in truth. Suppose a man whose life is impure and false tries to worship God without confession and forgiveness of his sins. He is intimating that God is impure and false, as he is, and that truth and purity make no difference with Him. Remember the words of Jesus: **“God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”** Only in the realm of truth can one meet God and have fellowship with Him. **“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,”** I John 1:6-7.

## II. OBEDIENCE, 4-6.

A man walks in truth as he obeys the commandments of God. Walking in truth is more than merely believing correct doctrines. It is both belief and conduct guarded and directed by the principles of God. Not only does the devout Christian believe the truth, he likewise practices it in daily living.

John joyfully writes of his delight “that I found thy children walking in truth.” The obedience of an entire family, that they walk in the truth, is a real occasion for joy. The life of truth is determined by the commandments of God. So here was a family which was faithful to God's word.

It matters not how honorable and respectable a man's life may be, he does not walk in truth unless he walks as God commands. This is not the difficult course that it may sound like. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous,” I John 5:3. “How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Saviour; Stepping in the light!”

God's truth and commandments are revealed in His Word, the Holy Bible. If a man desires to walk in the truth he must associate himself with God's Word. Not even love, apart from conformity to God's Word, will satisfy God. Jesus prayed, **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,”** John 17:17.

To walk in obedience to the truth will necessitate a walk in love, verses 5-6. In Christian obedience, truth and love cannot be separated. There is no substitute for the grace of love if a believer walks in the truth. God knows the heart's attitude as well as the body's actions. If a man's deeds are correct and honorable, but his heart is wrong, God does not honor the truthfulness of his deeds. Honorable deeds inspired by impure motives are not honorable at

all in God's eyes. Only a life of obedience motivated by love will truly please the Lord.

The love which motivates one to walk in truth is more than sentiment. Sentiment is weak and fickle and subject to changing. The love which inspires a life of truth must be the holy love which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It must be a self-giving love. A truthful walk sometimes works physical discomforts and material disadvantage. Only one who loves God and his fellow man unselfishly will find the fortitude to stay in the way of truth. But the **agapa** kind of love creates Christian forbearance and promotes Christian growth, Ephesians 4:2, 15-16. It furnishes the dynamics for a life well lived in the truth.

Let God speak from His Word on the importance of love. **“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,”** John 15:12-13. **“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you,”** I Thessalonians 3:12. There can be no substitute for obedience prompted by love and exercised in truth.

### III. ORTHODOXY, 7-13.

The Second Epistle of John is a call to orthodoxy. To be orthodox is to hold to the doctrines taught in the Bible. In verses 7-11 a call is made for loyalty to the truth and a non-fellowship with false teachers. It is a call to be orthodox.

1. Need.—**“For many deceivers are entered into the world . . .”** verse 7. The more deceivers there are abroad the more careful Christians must be to remain true to the Word. How do false teachers arise? There are two primary ways. Some people in the Christian religious system have not had a personal experience with the Lord Jesus. They are “false brethren” of whom Paul writes in Galatians 2:4-5. Some people will follow them. A second way error comes in is through the mistakes of true brethren. Paul writes of some brethren who were carried away by the hypocrisy of Peter in a moment of weakness, Galatians 2:11-14. However it arises, error is always serious.

The point at which Satan attacks is regarding the deity and incarnation of Jesus Christ. This strikes at the very foundation of the Christian faith. Liberal theologians are today engaged in a teaching campaign which, if successful, would destroy the faith of multitudes. John says such teachers are motivated by the spirit of “the deceiver and the antichrist.” **“For they**

**that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple,”**  
Romans 16:18.

2. Diligence.—“**Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward,**” verse 8. To ignore the danger and to make no effort to defend the truth will result in loss. The loss will not be personal salvation but rewards. Love in a believer's heart makes him naturally inclined to do good to everyone. Sometimes designing persons will impose on them. The believer must live so close to the Lord that he will be able to determine the true from erroneous spirit. **“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are, gone out into the world,”** I John 4:1.

But how can the ordinary church member who loves the Lord Jesus defend the truth against false teachers? Consider these suggestions: (1) Love the truth as it is in Jesus and saturate one's own heart and mind with it. (2) Give careful instruction to one's own family that they may not fall liable to heretical teachings. (3) Encourage the teaching ministry of your local church and encourage every person possible to enroll and hear that instruction in the truth. (4) Refuse to give any sort of aid or encouragement to those who promote error. (5) Give a loving and fervent witness for the Lord Jesus at every possible opportunity. (6) Purchase and spread literature which gives correct instruction in the truth. (7) Support the missionary program of your church and denomination that others may hear the truth and believe it.

The responsibility upon believers is heavy. But if believers do not defend the truth of God no one else will. Each one must be “set for the defense of the gospel,” Philippians 1:17. This does not mean to be stubborn and argumentative. It means to be humble and loving and steadfast in loyalty to Jesus and the Bible.

Ephesians 4:14 encourages Christian growth by pointing out that without it we will be as children blown to and fro and carried about by every changing doctrine and the cunning of men. Believers must be firmly settled on the Word. They must not sleep as do others, but must be alert and exercising self control, I Thessalonians 5:5-6. Paul draws it all up in this pertinent admonition: **“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue, thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them,”** II Timothy 3:13-14.

3. Guideline.—Verse nine sets out a basic rule to use in identifying false teachers. Read it carefully. It says, “Whoever departs from the

teachings of Christ does not have God. Whoever remains in those teachings is a faithful child of God.” Those who depart are not “falling from grace” and losing their salvation. They rather are as those whom John describes in I John 2:19, **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”**

New doctrines are often enticing, sounding learned and attractive. They may appear to make the doctrines of God's Word outmoded and archaic. If followed, however, they blast the spiritual life, make shipwreck out of faith and leave a man without hope. False teachings have “new” knowledge which goes beyond God's word. Believers must remember that nothing of truth goes beyond that Word.

Watch out for false teachers who, appearing as wolves in sheep's clothing, have a new doctrine to proclaim. They are zealous. They are dangerous. Do not encourage their fellowship. Do not take their literature. Do not listen to their doctrines. Most modern sects are parasites which prey upon the established churches and lead weak members into their fold. They do not win people to Jesus but to their own doctrines.

Some of the “new revelations” deny the sacrificial atonement of Jesus; others deny the reality of sin; others deny the existence of an eternal hell; others spread one heresy or another. Remember the words of the Apostle John: **“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God,”** Solemn word!

4. Attitude.—The Christian must in no way aid in the promotion of false doctrines, verses 10-11. His duty is clear. If one comes who does not hold to the truth, do not receive him into the house. Take a stand of courage and firmness, though in love. If one comes into the house and then is revealed as a false teacher, send him on his way without bidding God's blessings upon him. To welcome, fellowship, and supply needs of a false teacher is to encourage him in propagating his evil teachings and so to share in his deeds.

It is not necessary for believers to be acquainted with the doctrines of various sects. Indeed, it is sometimes dangerous for a weak believer to do so. The purchase of their literature will finance further publications. The receipt of free literature will expose the home to their pernicious doctrines. To receive kindly and listen politely to their witness, without giving a faithful and positive witness for Jesus, will encourage them to continue their work. On the contrary, **“Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,”** Ephesians 5:11.

The Bible repeatedly admonishes the believer concerning his

relationships to those who do not hold to the truth in belief and in practice. **“Avoid them,”** Romans 16:17. **“Withdraw yourselves,”** II Thessalonians 3:6. **“From such turn away,”** II Timothy 3:5. **“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself,”** I Timothy 6:3--5.

5. Fellowship.—Christian fellowship is to be based upon mutual belief of the gospel and a redeeming experience with the Lord Jesus, verses 12-13. So important is it to fellowship those who hold the truth and reject those who promote error that John could not wait for a visit to discuss this with “the elect lady.” It was not enough to write, however, for John adds that he will soon come for a personal visit to discuss the matter further. This adds to the emphasis he has made to be sure to hold pure doctrine and fellowship only true believers in the Lord Jesus. The believer's major concern must be with knowing God's Word and sharing its blessed truths with others. In such a ministry the fellowship between believing brethren is real and precious. **“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ . . . if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,”** I John 1:3, 7.

## CONCLUSION

This study is a call to Christian commitment. Believers are challenged to know the truth, to live the truth, to defend the truth against error, and to propagate the truth. Love does not make one any less loyal to the truth. Loyalty to the truth does not make one love any the less. Love and loyalty are partners.

Each believer bears a responsibility to know and propagate the truth. Too many are willing to let the Pastor and a few Church leaders be the Bible students and witnesses of the Word. This is a responsibility for all, without which one will not be set for the defense of the gospel. **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear,”** I Peter 3:15.

## QUESTIONS

1. What is truth?
2. Why should the believer walk in truth?
3. How are love and truth related?
4. What is the basis of Christian fellowship?
5. What is orthodoxy?
6. What is heresy?
7. What is the believer's attitude toward false teachers?
8. How can the believer defend the truth against false teachers?
9. What is the true basis of Christian fellowship?
10. How can this study be of practical help to you?