

JULY  
2022

Donald J. Wills  
*Senior Pastor*

**FOLLOW**



ADULT CONNECT  
CLASS CURRICULUM

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to ***introduce*** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, ***instruct*** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, ***inspire*** them to serve for God's kingdom, and ***incorporate*** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## *A Note From Our Pastor*

Dear FBC family and friends,

This month we celebrate the independence of our nation from oversight without representation. With our independence as Americans comes the responsibility to represent our country well, conducting ourselves as exemplary citizens. This month we will study 2 and 3 John, two oft-overlooked letters, which outline our responsibilities as followers of Christ who have been set free from sin and death. We have been set free and called to walk in the truth—that is to live according to the standard found in His Word. We should never deviate from this truth. We must read it, know it, memorize it, and practice it! His truth should impact every area of our lives.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

As we study, may we closely examine our own lives to see how we walk. Do we walk in a way that reflects Christ and His holy character or do we walk in a way that reflects the mindset of the world? God has called us to distinguish ourselves from the world. He has called us to reflect His love, apply His Word, and participate in sharing the gospel. Let us be careful how we walk, examining everything we say, do, and believe according to the truth He has given us in His Word.

-Blessings  
Pastor Don



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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*July 3, 2022*



*Follow the Truth*  
*Part 1*  
*2 John 1:1-3*

Focal Verse:

*"Because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever."*

2 John 1:2

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## Introduce

When we order something online, we expect to have the exact item we purchased shipped to us. The type, size, color, and everything associated with what we buy is concrete, not relative, lest chaos result. These things don't deviate depending upon the eye of the beholder; they uniformly remain the same across the board. A small shirt doesn't suddenly become an extra-large one. A blue shirt isn't redefined or identified as a red shirt. Even if we attempted to dye it, it would just distort the color and cover over what is already there. What was once blue would become a shade of purple!

Along these same lines, we don't just want to receive something similar to the product we purchased. We want exactly what we bought! How would you respond to a company that substituted one item for another, didn't send you the item with the right specifications, or sent you the wrong item altogether? A few years ago, Bro. Dave Rutherford ordered a toolbox and had it sent to the church, but when the order arrived, he discovered three large traffic cones in lieu of the toolbox. Two things I know he didn't say and I can guarantee that none of us would say, "It's close enough to the original" or "Well, that's just how the company interpreted the order from their perspective—no harm, no foul."



After getting a good laugh and being puzzled about how such confusion could occur, he called the company to inquire what had gone wrong. Ultimately, he expected them to send the right order regardless of what may have happened! Of course, every one of us would take a similar approach, sending the errant order back and complaining that they did not fulfill it correctly! If intentionally deceptive in their practices, which some companies may be, we'd even legally challenge them for "bait and switch" or "false advertising." As part of the return process, we would then specify the exact reasons why they must make restitution or refund our money. We'd offer proof that it wasn't the color, the size, or the brand we'd ordered.

No matter where we shop, we have specific expectations in mind and won't accept anything less than exactly what we ordered. Several years ago, when I lived in an apartment in North Richland Hills, I decided to grab something to eat at a local chain restaurant specializing in chicken. Using the drive thru, I received an order, but didn't

## Introduce

pay much attention to it until I got home. I had ordered an all-white, three-piece meal with mashed potatoes and gravy and green beans. Opening the box, I discovered two legs and a thigh, coleslaw, and a cookie. Not one item in the order was correct! Either a company or restaurant gets the order right or they don't; in this case, there is no almost or in between. It was either right or wrong!

It doesn't matter how often people say something, how loudly and emphatically they proclaim it, or how many others they can persuade to agree with it. It doesn't change what we ordered! If there were no standard—nothing concrete with which we could compare what we ordered—we would have no recourse if someone chose to send us anything that they wanted marking it as the product for which we paid. Truth in the world must have a standard which we follow, not set by every individual as he or she sees fit, but by a universal set of guidelines unaffected by circumstances and various interpretations. Therefore, God, not man, determines truth because only He does not change and only He can uphold a perfect, timeless standard that also does not change based upon emotion or circumstance.

If we have such an attitude concerning the absolute nature of the things we order, why don't many today take this same unwavering approach to truth in life? We live in a world that elevates personal preference by seeking to redefine truth in a selfish way that most benefits them, even to the point of distorting and manipulating facts to conceal their sin. Truth does not, and should not, depend upon the perspective of the beholder and the expectations of individuals as they define it.

On the contrary, truth comes from God's expectations alone and He doesn't deviate from His expectations ever! Therefore, truth doesn't shift depending on the cultural climate of the time, but it remains valid throughout time because of who God is. With this call to remember the truth and examine what we believe, John writes this little-studied second letter to a group of believers—an unnamed church—whom he calls the elect or chosen lady! Therefore, let us follow the truth and not the deception the world tries to peddle as the truth—which has time proven dysfunctional and destructive, time and again.

Key  
Question

What impact does the truth of God's Word have upon your life?

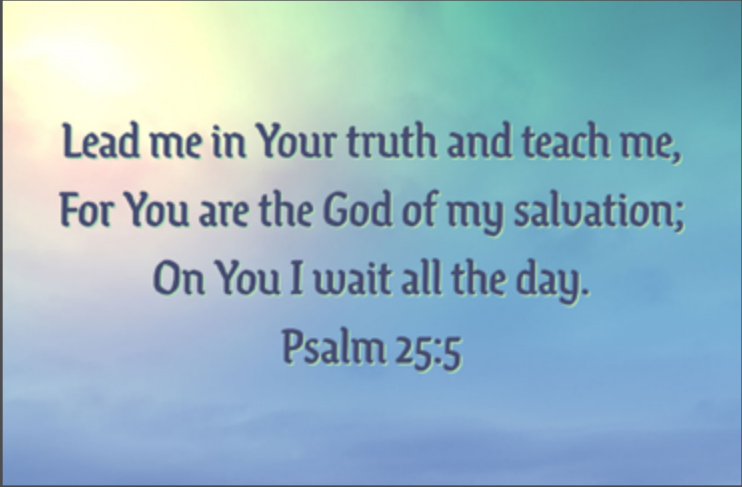


### 2 John 1:1-3

#### **THE TRUTH REVEALED:**

John, who identifies himself as **the elder** probably in reference to his advancing age, writes this brief letter to inspire these believers to remain in the **truth** and not deviate or depart from it. He can refer to the church as **the elect lady** because God has chosen them to abide or remain in the **truth** of His Son. As people who should remain in the **truth**, God has chosen the church to live righteously. Misunderstanding the idea of election, however, can sometimes give people a false confidence that they bear no responsibility for their actions. In a sense, they wrongly surmise that fate, under the guise of God's sovereignty, determines the course they take; they are but innocent pawns in life. But nothing could be further from the **truth!** Scripture does not teach that we bear no onus concerning what befalls us in life! God has given us the choice; it's up to us to choose the path that we go! And we must take responsibility for our choices, enduring the consequences which come along with them.

Since we have responded to the **truth** and have a relationship with Christ, we have a responsibility to abide by or practice it. In this sense, John can therefore say that God has **elected** us or chosen us as His people. He has chosen us to do good works in Him and to follow His commandments obediently ([John 15:10](#)). In his first letter, John puts it this way, "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Paul, in [Ephesians 2:10](#), explains this result of our salvation in a more positive light: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." The **truth** influences how we live and compels us to walk in the light as Christ Himself has shown us ([1 John 1:7](#)).



Lead me in Your truth and teach me,  
For You are the God of my salvation;  
On You I wait all the day.  
Psalm 25:5

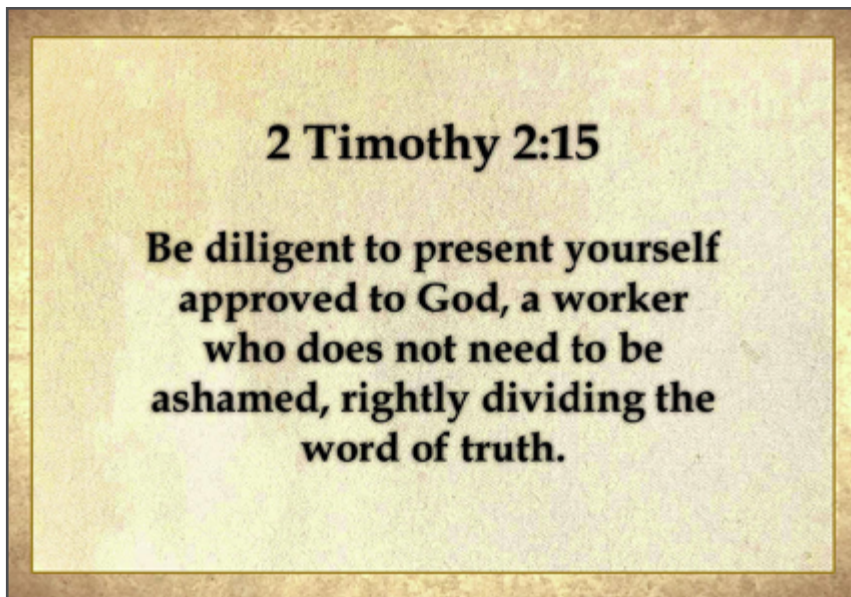
How has knowing God's truth changed the way you live? How do you reflect the truth of Christ in the way you walk?

Question  
# 1

## Instruct

Furthermore, John emphasizes the fact that those to whom he has written already know the **truth** (v. 1). Because they have come to know the **truth** in the past, they are now even more culpable for practicing it. Now, they must apply it! They have no excuse. Too often, people know the **truth**, but they deliberately choose to reject it; they don't apply it. Every one of us knows that familiar red, octagonal sign at an intersection with the four white letters scrawled in capital script: "S-T-O-P." We know what it means; it means to cease all motion. Yet, many people disregard these signs. Some may blatantly run them altogether as if they weren't even there.

Several months ago while penning this lesson, I noticed an article the day after writing the previous paragraph on the news about a Tesla recall where some of their



autodrive cars were running stop signs.\* Even computers do it! Like computers ignoring the command to stop altogether, some people only do a "rolling stop" where they slow down and continue through an intersection as if they were yielding in a round-about. Technically, slowing down doesn't constitute stopping! If pulled over for running a stop sign, then, some

people will attempt to give an excuse as to why they didn't obey. Some, on the other hand, will try to argue, attempting to redefine what it means to have truly stopped—even claiming, "I stopped" when they didn't. We see one such commandment that we

### In Reference



David Shephardson, "[Tesla Recalls Nearly 54,000 Vehicles that May Disobey Stop Signs](#)," Reuters (Feb 1, 2022), available from reuters.com.

The case is definitive—either we fully stopped and applied the correct principle or we didn't. There isn't any in-between—no sort-of stopping no matter how we desperately attempt to define it. Regardless of the circumstances or our perspective about what it technically means to stop, we are responsible for our actions in relation to rules of the road. The same applies to us when following Christ—either we have obeyed what

He has commanded or we haven't. We are responsible for our actions no matter what excuses we may make or how we attempt to redefine our actions in response to His commands.

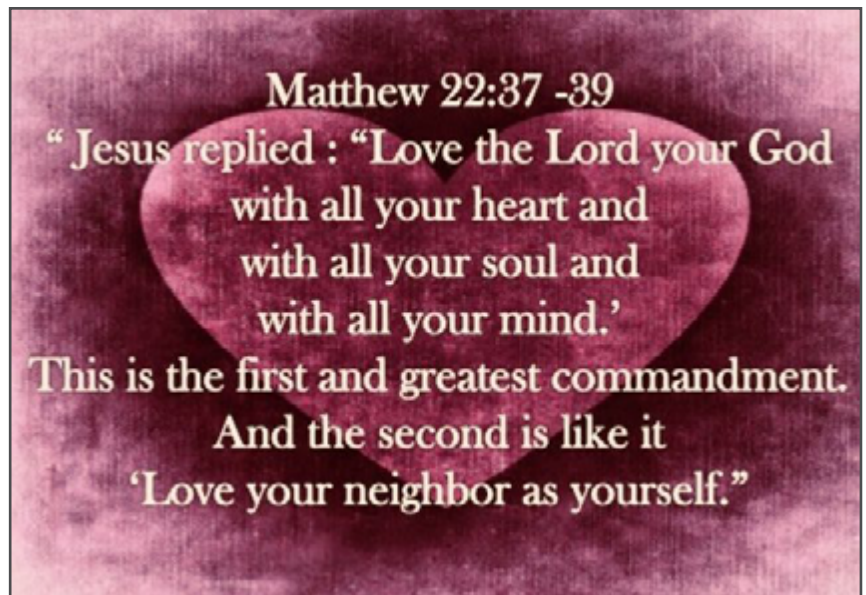
What principles or commands do you find the hardest to keep? Where do you face the most temptation?

Question  
# 2

We see one such commandment that we must follow which John explicitly reminds us in [verse 4](#). But he prefaces it here in verse 1 by noting that he loves the ones to whom he writes **in truth**. Some have attempted to translate the phrase **in truth** as an adverb. In other words, they argue that John truly or really loves these people from the bottom of his heart. He may **love** them in this manner, but that's not the principle which he wishes to underscore. Rather, the expression that he loves them **in truth** means he loves them according to the standard set forth by God Himself. In other words, John doesn't **love** them with a worldly understanding of what it means to **love** one another; he loves them with the understanding which comes from God and is outlined in Jesus' teaching.

This is very important for us to understand today because the world has a confused concept of what it means to **love**. God's Word tells us specifically how to **love**. And, as such, we are responsible for knowing and practicing His standard—not following the pattern promoted by the world.

God showed us visibly how to **love** by sending His Son to die for us ([Rom 5:8](#)). This is how we can know what **love** is and what **love** does; we have seen it in action. We have no excuse not to know what it means to **love** in the right way because we have a concrete example who lived it before us. To help us understand, let's look at



what it means to **love** from a biblical perspective in contrast to that of the world.

The world wrongly encourages us to **love** things whether our possessions, our passions (hobbies), or its philosophies (ideas). Consequently, the world uses the terms "like" and "**love**" synonymously in a way that leads to a skewed perspective about life! People



## Instruct

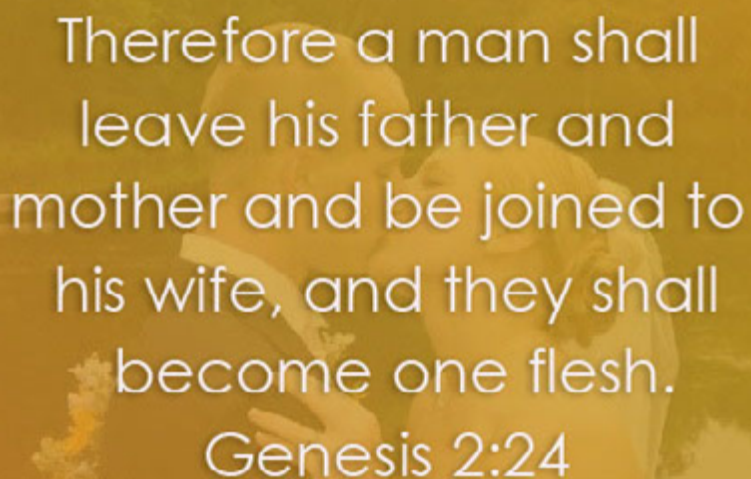
will exclaim that they **love** pizza or a certain type of food, they **love** their car, they **love** football, they **love** to fish, or they **love** a number of other inanimate things. Scripture, by way of contrast, tells us that we should **love** God and people—not our possessions or things. Through His Word, God has commanded us to **love** Him first and then **love** others; we are to **love** our neighbors ([Matt 22:37-39](#)), our families—both our physical and spiritual family; husbands are to **love** their wives as Christ loved the church ([Eph 5:25](#)); and we are even to **love** our enemies ([Matt 5:43-44](#)).

Never does the Bible permit us to **love** something other than God or a person created in His image. Anytime that someone loves some possession or inanimate object in this way it leads to trouble! Scripture, for example, asserts, “For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” ([1 Tim 6:10](#)). Money itself isn’t the cause of the evil, but the **love** of it propels people to evil because it misdirects our focus from the Lord. Likewise, Jesus condemns Jewish leaders in His day for the **love** of praise. When we **love** our possessions, passions, and philosophies, it always causes problems! In his first letter, John goes as far as to say, “Do not love the world or the things in it. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

What do you love most in life? What evidence is there that you love it the most? How does your love reflect the biblical truth?

Question  
# 3

As a result, the world has a very skewed view of what it means to **love** which is opposed



Therefore a man shall  
leave his father and  
mother and be joined to  
his wife, and they shall  
become one flesh.  
Genesis 2:24

to the **truth** of God in every way. Scripture certainly teaches that we are to **love** everyone, but it does place certain stipulations on what constitutes proper **love**. God doesn’t just leave us to understand **love** according to our own flawed perspectives. He has expressly defined the context in which we express certain kinds of **love**. Most obviously, in our world, we see a

distortion of the physical aspect of **love**, namely it doesn’t matter with whom one has a

physical relationship as long as they **love** them.

Scripture, however, is clear on this issue. Physical **love** should be exercised within the confines of marriage between one biological man and one biological woman for life. In a brief look at our culture, we can immediately see how pervasive the disillusionment of physical **love** has become. God designed this type of physical intimacy to be shared with only one other person in life—as a life-long helpmate—not in multiple partners, not in lustful thoughts, and not in living together outside of marriage. Accordingly, we must forsake the physical **love** of anyone else except a husband or wife, maintaining the integrity and purity of the relationship with which God has blessed us. One need not experiment to find this principle to be true! God created us biologically different and His Word clearly defines what practices are an abomination to Him.

The world also has a skewed idea about the permanence of **love**. God designed **love** to emanate from the core of our being; it should define who we are. Therefore, **love** doesn't depend upon a feeling; it's not tied to our emotions, but it's a characteristic of who we have become in Christ. The world, in contrast, errantly attaches **love** to a feeling or emotions. Thus, one will only **love** another person if his or her **love** is reciprocated or returned. In the 1970s, a popular song which I can recall from movies and commercials, best summarizes the world's view of **love**: "Hooked on a Feeling." The lyrics interject, "I can't stop this feeling deep inside of me. Girl, you just don't realize what you do to me. When you hold me in your arms so tight, you let me know everything's alright." This verse then leads into the oft-repeated refrain: "I'm hooked on a feeling. I'm high on believing that you're in love with me." Feelings come and go. This is why the world can talk about falling in and out of **love** and we hear people complain, "You just don't love me anymore." The scriptural command to **love**, however, demands that we **love** unconditionally from the depths of our being as we walk in Christ, imitating the **love** He has for us ([Eph 5:1-2](#)).

How does your love reflect the unconditional love of Christ?

Question  
# 4

The world also misconstrues the permissiveness of **love**. According to Scripture, **love** doesn't keep a record of wrongs ([1 Cor 13:5](#)). We **love** unconditionally just as Christ so exhibited His **love** for us. Although we **love** unconditionally, this doesn't mean that we cannot speak the truth in **love** ([Eph 4:15](#)); it doesn't mean that we cannot lovingly correct someone who is in error ([Heb 12:5](#)). Condoning or accepting someone doing



something dangerous is not loving. It's hateful. If we fail to warn someone about the danger which they face as a consequence of their choices, it's the most unloving thing that we could do. Teaching our children that they must work hard, live with integrity, and trust in Christ is the most loving thing that we can do for them. In contrast, giving children whatever they want and failing to discipline them is the most egregious thing we could do to them.

The world also misappropriates what it means to **love** someone sacrificially. Relationships have become "disposable" in our culture. Rather than attempting to work something out, we simply throw people away and move on in life as if nothing happened. It's easy to unfriend and block someone online or screen their calls. Rather than talk and work things out, when people upset us, we just dispose of them. We don't have anything to do with them. Many relationships are based on what benefits we receive—a self-centered perspective! We ask, "What do I get out of the relationship" rather than "What can I contribute or give?" Christ loved us and died for us even when we didn't reciprocate **love** to Him. We'll look more at the command to **love** next week when we look at "The Direction Required to Walk."

How do you guard yourself from becoming self-centered in your outlook concerning what it means to love?

Question  
# 5

God has given us clear boundaries for the expression of **love** in our world today. He has communicated the **truth** with us about what it means to **love**! Culture, however, has attempted to shift the goal posts about what constitutes **love**. And that shift has caused complete dysfunction. If we wouldn't accept a wrong order at a restaurant or a different item shipped to us than the one which we purchased, why should we accept the world's false notion of what it means to **love**? The world's idea of **love** is corrupt; it's self-serving. The world has attempted to redefine what it means to **love**—not because they want a more peaceful, unified world in which everyone loves one another—they want to do so because they want to conceal their sin. What the world calls **love** is actually lust; it's lust for self-fulfilling pleasure.

Only when we have a relationship with Christ and we intimately know the Father through Him can we begin to comprehend unconditional **love** in the biblical sense. For this reason, John concludes the greeting to this epistle with, "**From God the**

**Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love”** (v. 3). It’s through this **love** which we can know the **truth**. We can see what it means to **love** through the example that Jesus showed us. Therefore, let us emulate His **love**. Let us abide in His **truth** so that the world may see His **love** in us—a **love** distinguished clearly from their corrupted view.

How can we effectively convey what love means according to God’s standard to the world?

Question  
# 6

## *Inspire*

When it comes to the truth, therefore, it is either right or wrong based upon the standard found in God’s Word. We often become sidetracked with the so-called gray areas in life. If there is a question about the truthfulness or morality of an action, it is most likely wrong. There is never any question about what is right! We only debate those areas in which we rely upon personal opinion or deviate from the universal true standard. If we want to know what truth is, we only need to look to Christ to assess the validity of what we believe and how we live! Through both the written Word (Scripture) and the living Word (Christ), God has clearly revealed truth. Of Jesus, John writes, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Let us follow the truth and pattern our lives after the love He has shown us.

## *Incorporate*

What times have you had to correct the world’s misunderstanding about love? How did you communicate the biblical truth about love? How was it received or what happened?

How do you show your love for Christ through the local church? How have others in the church shown the love of Christ to you?

*July 10, 2022*



*Follow the Truth*  
*Part 2*  
*2 John 1:4-6*

Focal Verse:

"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."

2 John 1:6

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## Introduce

Everyone in the world desires and seeks two primary things in life. First, people attempt to find their purpose which seemingly gives value and meaning to life. As a result, they look for a cause to champion or support—something typically with which they can identify through personal preferences and experiences. Second, people long for love, whether to be loved or to find someone else whom they can show love. The way people respond to these two quests depends upon their outlook and understanding.

Many adopt the world's view which primarily uses pleasure as the litmus test. They participate in things that make them feel good both emotionally as well as physically. For example, promoting a cause, regardless of its morality and future ramifications on society, can give someone a false sense of joy and accomplishment even though it may lead to ruination by destroying the nuclear family in the way God designed it from the beginning. Others adopt God's view, finding their purpose and fulfillment in Him which assuredly leads to an abundant life which builds a cohesive community in Him. We choose one of these two paths. There is no middle ground in these two pursuits. We either follow the Lord or we follow the world.

While watching videos on YouTube, I ran across a clip titled "Canadian Police Chase" which was taken from an old Midas car repair commercial. Focused on a close-up

of a spinning tire, the camera eventually panned out to show a motionless suspect vehicle pursued by a patrol car also prohibited from advancing because of icy, snow-packed roads. Both cars sat spinning their wheels only to go nowhere fast! Suddenly, the passenger doors on both vehicles flung open. The suspect in the first car jumped out and ran to the back of the car to begin pushing with all his might. The officer in the patrol car followed the lead of the suspect only seconds behind, going to the back of the vehicle to begin pushing!

No matter how hard they pushed, the cars wouldn't budge. They were stuck just



## Introduce

spinning their wheels. Rather than engage in a foot pursuit which would have been wise and prudent given the circumstances, both the suspects and the police tried to do what they had always done. They tried to free the cars to continue the chase! This ultimately failed because they continued to do the same things which produced the same results. The vehicles simply sat motionless uselessly spinning their wheels. In life, many people take the same approach. They try the same things repeatedly and find themselves stuck with the same disastrous consequences. They trust in the foolishness of man rather than the wisdom which God has provided in Scripture. Apart from the Lord, man has no fruitful plan which leads to a fulfilling life; he just spins his wheels uselessly, mired in his wrong-headed way of thinking. He may experiment and try different things, but the results are always the same! In this short second epistle by the Apostle, John reminds the church that we are to follow God's plan for living in the truth by applying His Word, particularly in our practice of love.

Key  
Question

What routines or habits have you developed in which you have found the same results disastrously repeated? How did Christ help you overcome them?



## 2 John 1:4-6

### ***THE DIRECTION REQUIRED:***

In the body of this second letter, John outlines the direction required for us to proceed. We must abide by the **truth** that God has revealed directly to us through His Word. Not only must we know it cognitively, but we must also practice it! As a result, John begins on a positive note by commending the church as a whole because he has **found some** of them **walking in truth** as they have **received it from the Father** (v. 4). Despite this positive affirmation to the church as a whole, it serves an indictment of others because only **some**—not all—are practicing God’s **truth**. God hasn’t called some to live by His **truth** and others not. He has called us all to practice it.

The phrase “**received it from the Father**” emphasizes the source of the **truth**. God Himself, not mere man, designed and instituted these principles by which to live. Thus, they are holy, righteous, and perfect, useful to apply in any situation we may encounter. Therefore, it becomes imperative that we follow the Lord’s plan rather than the secular culture, for when we adopt a view that conflicts with Scripture, we disagree with God Himself! And God has the character and authority to judge according to what He has promised in His Word. As a result, John urges them to continue practicing **love** in the biblical sense.

How can we as believers ensure we walk in the truth? Why do we need accountability amongst other believers in the church to do so? What does this look like?

Question  
# 1

Therefore, John pleads with them all to **love one another in the truth** according to God’s standard (v. 5). He reminds them that he hasn’t penned a **new commandment**—something which they haven’t **heard**. Rather, he is reminding them of that **which they have heard from the beginning**—a theme he also shares with his first

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

1 John 4:9 NKJV

## Instruct

letter ([1 John 2:4-11](#)). **Love**, consequently, signifies the very foundation of life. **Love** has existed from the very **beginning** because it is who God is; it's His very essence—the core of His being—which we see borne through His character ([1 John 4:16](#)). **Love**, therefore, compelled Him to make a plan to send His Son to redeem us even though He knew that we would sin ([1 John 4:9-10](#)).

The command to **love one another** is also not **new** in the sense that it did not originate with John. He didn't postulate it; he didn't initiate or invent this **commandment**. John, and the church by extension, **received** this command to **love** from God Himself! It originated in the Old Testament with God and was repeated in the New Testament by Jesus because it truly summarizes the entire Bible! When asked the greatest **commandment**, Jesus asserts, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." The second greatest, He points out, is like the first, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" ([Matt 22:36-40](#)).

Moreover, Jesus frequently talks about the importance of godly **love** throughout His ministry on earth. By the way we **love** one another, Jesus says, others can recognize that we belong to Him ([John 13:35](#)). And even more importantly, Jesus teaches our obedience demonstrates our **love** for Him. Just prior to His crucifixion, He beckons His disciples, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" ([John 14:15](#)). The command to **love**, therefore, originates with God—not man and not John! God initiated **love** and shows us what **love** is because it defines His very character. By His transformative power in Christ, God allows us to **love** in the right way as He has instilled it within us.

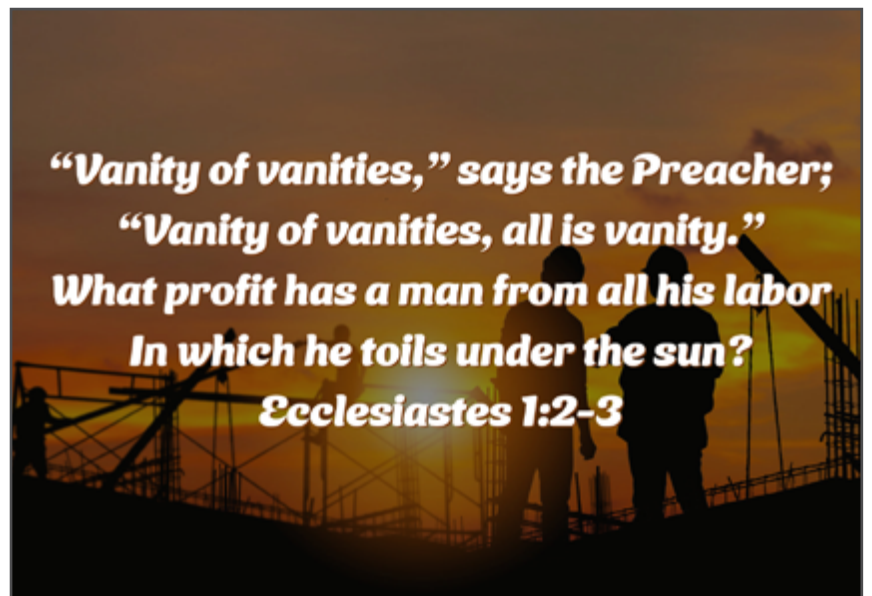
In what ways has Christ shown you love? How does the love of Christ in your life compel you to love others?

Question  
# 2

Before we turn our attention to our obedience in practicing **love** in the way God intends, we must examine why John emphasizes the origin of the command and the fact it has existed **from the beginning**. God has clearly told us and shown us what **love is from the beginning**, but man has perverted its practice and interjected his own ideas about what it constitutes! This type of "innovation" by mankind always leads to dysfunction and often gets us in trouble. However, we live in a world that values innovation and prides itself on its independence—doing its own thing regardless of the consequences. Yet, man's understanding and practice of **love** usually leads to

broken promises, selfish pursuits, and a focus on immediate gratification. Because man considers himself innovative and ingenious in forging his own path and controlling his own destiny, people want something they consider new and exciting. If it's new, exciting, and entertains them, they don't spend much time evaluating its effect on them; they do it simply because it feels good and they enjoy it. This type of "innovation" has led culture to get rid of tradition or anything it considers old-fashioned or obsolete. It wants to reinvent or redefine something according to standards which it assigns in order to remove the stigma of immorality and placate the conscience for participating in sin. Sin, therefore, becomes celebrated and paraded—portrayed as normal and wholesome! As a result of this skewed thinking, morality and consequences often don't matter or at the least they play a secondary role in the decision-making process. What matters most is that the person has defined it as something beneficial to him or her!

The Bible condemns such kind of innovation! In Romans 1:30, Paul speaks against "inventors of evil things." Innovation often leads to trouble because people omit God altogether from their decisions and their walk; they don't consider His will or the boundaries by which to live. In his pursuit of such innovation and meaningfulness to life, Solomon, the "preacher" who wrote Ecclesiastes, describes the vanity, incompleteness, and despair of a life which omits the Lord ([Eccl 1:2-3](#)). Nothing new under the sun really exists, but only that which leads to fruitlessness, discontentment, and heartache ([Eccl 1:9](#)). So, when mankind searches for fulfillment apart from the Lord who has given us His plan **from the beginning**, we find nothing but dissatisfaction, dysfunction, and death.



How does following God's plan bring you contentment even in the midst of struggles at times?

Question  
# 3

## Instruct

Our world wants to tear down or dismiss the relevance of doctrine and discipleship in the church. Unfortunately, some churches no longer teach God's Word unapologetically and have gone astray in their practices in pursuit of being relevant to the culture. The New Testament warns against allowing the culture to guide our practices and dictate our thoughts! Some churches, such as Corinth, even went beyond the profane practices of the culture to do things not even done among the Gentiles ([1 Cor 5:1](#))! Not only did they engage in these wicked acts, but they celebrated them ([1 Cor 5:2](#))! As God's people called to live righteously, we must exercise great caution in upholding the **truth** He has given us. We can be relevant without changing His message. We can be relevant without rejecting His timeless truths which do not shift with the winds of our ever-changing culture.

When someone starts proclaiming something "new" and innovative, we must examine it closely. Often, it will contradict God's Word. Something can be said for following the "old" principles which God has espoused in Scripture. We have centuries of written historical proof that God's ways work! Look around us at the "innovation" and "education" with which the world acts. It has failed. It has created division, chaos, and uncertainty. It hasn't led to liberation and freedom, but it has enslaved us to sin!

What process and what tools do you use to assess what someone says, especially if they claim it is a "new" word or revelation?

Question  
# 4

Although the message of the gospel and the principles for righteous living found in



Scripture remain constant, we can be fresh and innovative in the way that we present and teach them as long as we do not change their meaning! In our 155 years as a church, we've had some innovations which have helped us to proclaim the Word. While we have found innovative ways to proclaim the gospel, we have stood firmly upon its principles



without changing them even in the face of an all-out cultural war. Rather than attempt to preach a “**new**” **commandment**, let us repeat that which is of old which we **have heard from the beginning** and which we **have received** directly **from** the Lord Himself through His Word. At the same time, may we seek guidance from the Lord to make His message relevant and refreshing to the culture who clamors for something **new** without changing the meaning of what God has given us to proclaim!

In what ways can we present the gospel and its principles as relevant to our culture without changing the meaning or condoning sinful practices?

Question  
# 5

The world has a skewed view of what it means to **love** even though it claims to be truthful! We see this fallacious view portrayed in popular movies and songs which has greatly influenced real-life practice. For example, I’ve heard the title, but have not personally seen the movie: “The Truth about Love,” so I googled it to find a summary. One anonymous entry on IMDB recounts, “As part of a drunken bet with her sister, a happily married woman sends an anonymous Valentine’s card to her husband to see if he hides it. When he does, what was a prank leads to a series of events and revelations that puts her marriage at risk, and leaves her looking for revenge.” Although this movie may accurately portray the way the world struggles with the concept of **love** at times, it also exposes much of its dysfunction apart from God’s plan.

So many problems exist with the premise of this movie that we find in this short blurb, starting with the propensity to consume alcohol to the point of becoming drunk. Alcohol, in any amount, alters our judgment and impedes our ability to act with wisdom and make responsible choices. Scripture warns against becoming inebriated, allowing it to consume our thoughts and distracting us from the Lord (Eph 5:18). Also, what was meant as a harmless prank leads to bitterness, jealousy, and revenge rather than forgiveness and reconciliation ([1 Cor 13](#)). The Bible designates all these actions and attitudes as sin and prohibits them.

Likewise, much of the music that dominates culture has lyrics which expressly contradict the biblical idea of **love**. I’m familiar with the popular song by the title, “Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places,” but I’ve never really paid attention to the lyrics other than hearing them in a commercial or amongst the background din of a restaurant or store. Having searched for the lyrics online, I found that the first stanza clearly describes all that’s wrong with the world’s search for **love**: “Well, I spent a





lifetime lookin' for you; single bars and good time lovers were never true; playing a fool's game, hopin' to win and tellin' those lies and losin' again." The world can never find **love** because it looks in all the wrong places; even more importantly, it cannot know what **love** truly is apart from God! Movies and music have a profound impact upon our society. We

often claim that they simply depict societal trends and portray life as it really is. However, they wield much influence over people. They don't merely describe or depict, but compel people to follow their example. Yet, many, including believers, don't understand the danger of how these mediums can influence our thinking and in turn dictate our behavior. Therefore, we must be extremely careful about what we consume—what we watch and what we listen to!

How does culture influence our thinking and our actions? How specifically has it influenced you especially when you compare yourself to Scripture?

Question  
# 6

Given the sexual immorality which has been glorified and even normalized through movies and media, people have continued the dangerous downward spiral of dysfunction away from God's definition of **love**. Although this type of immorality has been in the heart of man since sin entered the world as described in the sinful acts of mankind in Scripture, we see a lack of shame and remorse over it today, so much so that people no longer classify many forms of sexual deviancy as sin outside of the marriage of one biological man and one biological woman for life. Culture and the media have had a tremendous impact on shaping the worldview of mankind in opposition to specific scriptural principles which we **have received from God** Himself. When writing these lessons back in February, I saw a disturbing headline on a national news website outlining how several student groups on college campuses chose to commemorate Valentine's Day by sponsoring "Sex Week" events and seminars.\* The

topics and activities in these events hosted on campuses are so vile, profane, perverse, and repugnant, going against the **truth** Scripture teaches us about **love**. I encourage you, however, to be informed and know what's going on, so you can lovingly speak against it rather than ignoring it with silence. We need to proclaim the **truth**. These same "tolerant" college groups who spew this vulgarity and immorality in the name of acceptance would most likely be vehemently opposed to a meeting which advanced God's teaching on sexuality, marriage, and relationships.

### In Reference



Adam Sabes, "[Universities Nationwide Host 'Sex Week' Ahead of Valentine's Day](https://www.foxnews.com)," (February 7, 2022), available from [www.foxnews.com](https://www.foxnews.com).

**Love**, as defined and demonstrated by God, is not something merely physical or pleasurable—although He did create those elements to be enjoyed within the context of marriage. **Love**, on the contrary, is expressed in a state of being through our character; it's who we are. We don't have to experiment to find **love** and purpose. **Love** has already found us in the person of Christ. **Love** has already come down to us in a visible form whom we can emulate. Christ sought us when we were sinners; He demonstrated His **love** for us by providing the way of redemption. Therefore, we can know what it means to **love** only when we follow Him and abide by His plan.

Having reminded us to **love one another**, John now defines what it means to **love** according to God's **truth**. He doesn't leave us to wonder; he doesn't require us to figure out the definition on our own. He spells it out very plainly to us. **Love** entails that we obediently follow God's commands. Thus, John specifies, "**This is love, that we walk according to His commandments**" (v. 6). Although John doesn't detail all the characteristics of **love** here, his command sufficiently covers them all! If the Bible plainly gives us a command, we must practice it because our **love** for God spurs us to obedience and faithfulness ([Prov 3:3-4](#)). We must not allow our personal desires or peer pressure to determine what we believe and what we do. We must follow the pattern Christ has set for us!



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## Instruct

Even though we cannot sufficiently cover the characteristics of **love** from the biblical perspective in a single lesson, we can identify a few of the most important. **Love** is first and foremost sacrificial. Christ exhibited this characteristic most clearly to us. In a similar way, we are to see others through God's eyes and think about their needs just as we would our own—whether in marriage ([Eph 5:22-33](#)) or whether in church ([Phil 2:3-4](#)). The Old Testament makes provision for those who cannot care for themselves or who have no one to care for them ([Ruth](#)). The New Testament also makes this same provision for widows and orphans ([Acts 6](#); [1 Tim 5:3-16](#); [Jas 1:27](#)). Therefore, **love** compels us to look for opportunities to serve others sacrificially. As long as it is within biblical boundaries, here's an opportunity where we can be as creative and innovate as God leads in showing love to others!

Second, **love** edifies or builds. Our speech should be constructive rather than critical. It should heal rather than hurt. It should uplift rather than put down. It should bless rather than curse. Scripture talks much about our speech: whether to avoid coarse joking, swearing falsely, or speaking inconsistently—with the same mouth both blessings and cursings should never pour forth according to James ([Eph 5:4](#); ([Jas 3:9-12](#))). In addition, Scripture informs us that we are to use our spiritual gifts in **love** to build the body. We are to serve with **love** in such a way that it helps the church as a whole to grow spiritually while at the same time introducing people into a relationship with Christ. **Love** encourages others when they experience heartache and hurt. It offers comfort and hope regardless of the circumstances. **Love** rejoices when others victoriously triumph in life.

Part of edification is that **love** also speaks the **truth**, which John emphasizes here in this letter, and offers correction when needed ([Eph 4:15](#)). **Love** doesn't puff up with pride falsely; it doesn't speak things that give false impressions, but rejoices in the **truth** and speaks it in every situation ([1 Cor 13:3-6](#)). We must speak the **truth** in the right way and with the right motives; we cannot remain silent when we see sin and we see people heading in the wrong direction. **Love** exposes sin, not merely to point out the faults in others, but to point others to the **truth** in Christ which leads to salvation and life. Third,

With the love of Christ, how do you participate in edifying or building up others in the church?

Question  
# 7

**love** is unconditional; it forgives and seeks reconciliation—not revenge. This doesn't mean that it enables others to sin. Rather, **love** is patient; it forgives numerous times. It doesn't hold grudges; it doesn't keep a record of wrongs. We live in a society, however, that retaliates. When they feel an injustice has been done unto them, they seek to get even rather than to forgive and extend **love** toward those individuals. They “cancel” others and sever relationships in the name of retaliation!

Finally, we see that **love** serves rather than waits to be served ([Mark 10:45](#)). We live in a society with a consumerist mindset that looks at things from the perspective of what they can get rather than what they can contribute or give. **Love** motivates us to look for opportunities to serve. When you **love** someone, for example, do you wait until they ask you to show them love before you demonstrate it? Of course not, you act without being asked. You show it without being prompted. In the same way, we ought to view our acts of service. We ought to serve without being asked. We must work within the boundaries in which we have been given and represent Christ by serving others as He gives opportunity in and through the church! With this biblical understanding of what it means to **love**, may we put into practice that which we **have received from** the Lord so that we might be **found walking in the truth**.

## *Inspire*

The world has a bad habit of repeating the same folly and experiencing the same outcome. We live in a world that claims to be educated, enlightened, and intelligent. However, repeating the same mistakes betrays how foolish and unwise it actually is. In fact, the definition of insanity, according to the old saying, is repeating the same thing over and over and expecting different results. The world has become hopelessly stuck in its own pattern according to its own deviant devices. Instead of recognizing the truth, they seek to redefine it and cover up their mistakes! God has revealed the truth to us. If we want to live an abundant life which is satisfying and fulfilling, we will walk in the truth which He Himself has revealed to us. We will follow the plan which He has given to us. His plan will never deviate, but it will always work if only we would obediently follow it walking in the truth of His Word.

## ***Incorporate***

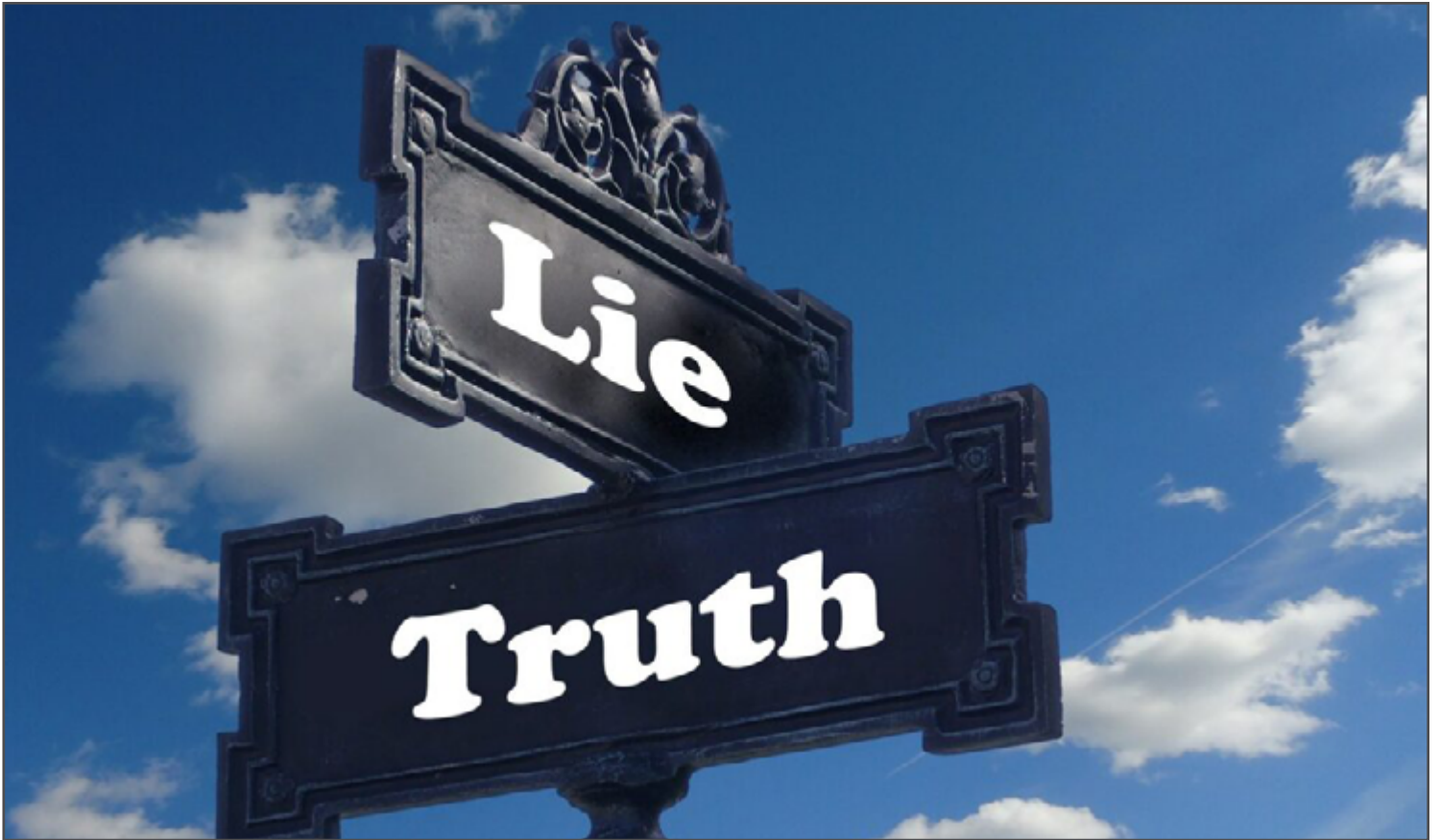
How would you assess the direction you're headed in life right now? How easy or difficult is it for you to maintain that direction? What distracts you at times?

What Christ-like characteristics of love are most evident in your life? Upon which ones must you work or need to see improvement?

How does love serve as your motivation for obeying what God has commanded? Would others, like the Apostle John, find you walking in the truth? How would they characterize your walk?



*July 17, 2022*



*Follow the Truth*  
*Part 3*  
*2 John 1:7-13*

Focal Verse:

"Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward."

2 John 1:8

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## Introduce

With the shortage of many basic goods and the high demand leading to uncontrolled inflation, certain commodities, like cars, have become difficult to find and extremely expensive to purchase. After receiving insurance compensation for a recent accident which hardly paid to replace the totaled vehicle, Kcarb Uckles was on the hunt for a good used car equivalent to the one rendered inoperable. Cars, like houses here in North Texas, sell almost instantaneously if they have any value at all. Locating nine used cars which the family wanted to test-drive and assess, they arrived at the various lots only to find that five of them had already been sold. Consequently, they had to expand their search. They looked everywhere in their search, including classified ads, like Facebook Market Place.

One ad looked promising, so they contacted the individual and agreed to meet at a Kroger parking lot to inspect and test-drive the vehicle. The car drove great. Outwardly, everything seemed in order and a deal looked imminent. Kcarb, however, had a neighbor who was a practicing mechanic and had access to detailed information about the



VIN (vehicle identification number) which provides the history of the car. The mechanic graciously told him that he should always call before purchasing a car so he could run the VIN. After running it, the mechanic texted to inform the family that the car's milage had actually been rolled back a few years ago. From the report, he discovered that the car had over 300,000 miles rather than the advertised 98,000.

Upon receiving this information, the family kindly rejected any deal, leaving the seller exasperated and confounded. So, he inquired, "May I ask why you're no longer interested in the car?" Kcarb showed the seller the text from his mechanic about the vehicle's milage. This led the seller to begin vociferously ranting about how his "uncle" had sold him this car a few years ago. He couldn't believe how conniving and deceptive his uncle was. He then lamented how his own family member could treat him so poorly and con him about the true condition of the vehicle!

## Introduce

Truth be told, however, it probably wasn't the man's uncle who was deceptive in this deal, but the seller himself. He had been caught red-handed in trying to deceive a potential buyer about the actual condition of a car. Rather than admit the truth, he likely concocted this story about an uncle who had deceived him. As bad as this deception is, a much greater deception has inundated this world and held it captive from the very beginning; this deception leads only to ruination and destruction. Jesus Himself warns of this great deception and identifies the one who perpetrates it when he addresses the folly of the Pharisees in **John 8:44**. He explains, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." In our series, on 2 John, Follow the Truth, we'll expose this great deception which has gripped the world and blinded it, leaving it devoid of hope apart from Christ.

Key  
Question

In what ways do we see how deceived the world is today?  
How has that deception influenced the church?

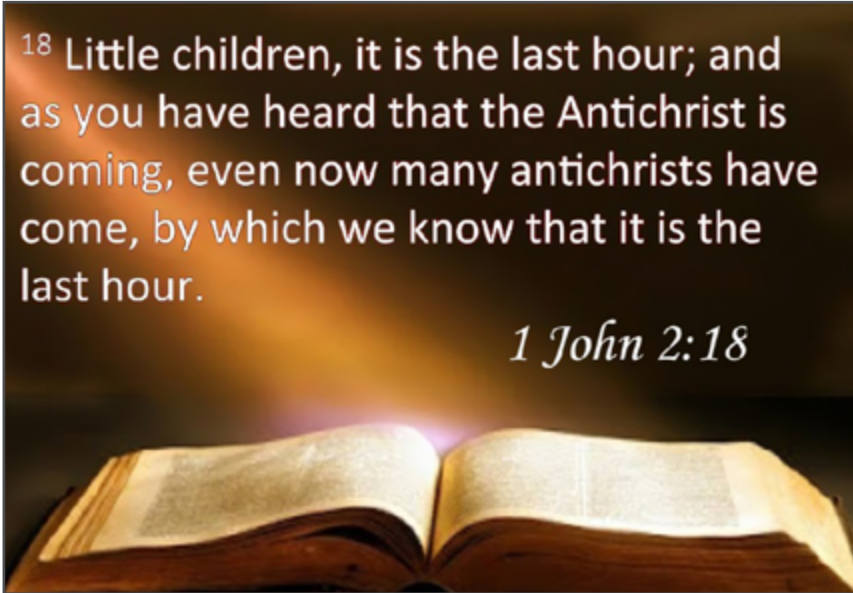
### 2 John 1:7-8

#### **THE DECEPTION REBUKED:**

If we follow the world's pattern, we will ultimately discover that we have been deceived when our life comes to an end. As he does in his first letter, John reminds us that **many deceivers** already exist **in the world** ([1 John 4:1-3](#)). And he takes great care to expose their errant philosophy. He defines the one who stands opposed to Christ as denying that He has come **in the flesh**, literally calling him a **deceiver** and an **antichrist** (v. 7). Based on [Revelation 12 and 13](#), we often picture the **antichrist** as a single individual who yields to satanic influence, deceiving the world into thinking he's the "savior" in the last days. We become so obsessed with looking for this one charismatic individual of which the Bible warns, seeking to ascertain his identity, that we miss the fact that **many** antichrists are already in our midst!

Although the Bible does present such a picture of deception

concentrated in an individual who craves power and influence, it never directly calls him the **antichrist**. The actual term **antichrist** is reserved for those who reject the deity of Christ and the salvation He offered by becoming **flesh** and dying for our sins. Even though many attempt to dispute the historical coming of Jesus as myth or even redefine His person simply crediting Him with being a man who was a good teacher, to have any hope at all we must believe that He came in person as the perfect Lamb of God who died for our sins ([1 John 2:22](#); [John 1:29](#))!



<sup>18</sup> Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

*1 John 2:18*

In what ways does the world try to dispute the historical existence of Jesus as well as deny His divinity?

Question  
# 1

We clearly live in a world which stands opposed to the teaching of Christ, calling it "indoctrination." Whenever we stand for the truth as believers, the world cries foul. Yet,

## Instruct

it too engages in the very same “indoctrination” of people—a practice that it claims to be against. The world seeks to indoctrinate people according to its own errant standards; it doesn’t technically take a hands-off approach allowing individuals to make up their own mind as it claims, but from a very early age it seeks to influence the mind and shape the behavior! It promotes its very own worldview!

In recent days, both schools and businesses have promoted an unbiblical agenda which targets children, particularly seeking to desensitize them to sin. Books and assignments have been required of children that push a specific view—the very definition of indoctrination! They promote the misconception of human sexuality and gender identity along with a particular political view. At other times, some have sought to re-write history to classify the intuitions of the United States as inherently evil and fraught with inequality. Certain groups of people have become vilified, denigrating a hard work ethic for “privilege.” Parents and citizens who stand against such ungodly teaching are threatened, insulted with derogatory terms, and labeled as opponents to democracy and progress.

In what specific ways do you see the world attempt to indoctrinate people today?

Question  
# 2

To help us understand, let’s look at a specific instance in which the world opposes Christ, attempting to deny His existence and label Scripture as mythology rather than truth. Those involved in this endeavor use both deception and indoctrination to achieve this goal! Recently, I read an article which described how an after-school

*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.  
Ephesians 5:6*

“Satan Club” was formed in opposition to The Good News Club which it tried to condemn as religious indoctrination.\* Based on a Supreme Court decision to allow after-school clubs like The Good News Club, Jane Addams Elementary School and the Board of Education in Moline, Illinois argued that the Satan Club fell into the same category of protected



speech and stressed that it was not officially sanctioned by the school, the board, or any specific teacher; therefore, they had the same right to meet as The Good News Club. Although I don't want us to debate the constitutionality of having such an after-school club in this lesson, I do want to expose how the Satan Club uses deception to achieve its purpose.

In the article, "After-school 'Satan Club' Takes New Aim at Archenemy: Christian Clubs for Kids," Lauren Green refers to and cites The Satanic Temple and its spokesman, Lucien Greaves, who outlines the intent behind promoting the club.\* Notice the deceptiveness of their position based on their own words. They claim that "students would be offered activities such as science and crafts projects, puzzles and games—and that they would learn about benevolence, empathy, critical thinking, problem-solving and creative expression too." Greaves proposes, "I'm hoping that with our presence, people can see that good people can have different perspectives, sometimes on the same mythology, but not mean any harm." He goes on to say, "We're not including items of religious opinion . . . We're not teaching children about Satanism. They're just going to know that this is taught by Satanists."

The article then notes that "The Satanic Temple says it's really an atheist organization, despite depicting its leader as a tall human with a goat's head and horns and two children looking on adoringly. It says its followers don't believe in spiritual evil or a literal devil . . . And for them the devil is simply a symbol of 'defiance, independence, wisdom, and self-empowerment.'" In describing their aim and defining their purpose, Greaves and this organization betray their hypocrisy. If their sole intent were to offer these skills in logic, science, and reasoning while refraining from addressing what they call mythology, why not call it a "Club for Scientific Enlightenment?"

### ***In Reference***



Lauren Green, "[After-School 'Satan Club' Takes New Aim at Archenemy: Christian Clubs for Kids](https://www.foxnews.com/after-school-satan-club-takes-new-aim-at-archenemy-christian-clubs-for-kids)," (February 14, 2022), available from [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com).

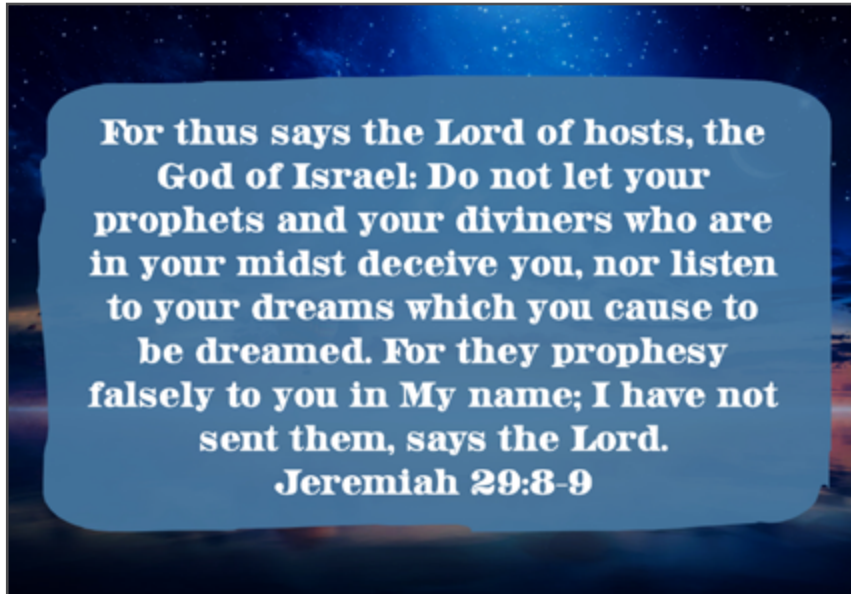
Even though they accuse Christian clubs, like The Good News Club, of indoctrination, they are attempting to do the very same thing using deceptive means. Whether they use Satan merely as a symbol or ideology, "religious" ideology is still interjected into the conversation. They could have chosen a whole host of other titles and developed a number of other logos and mascots, but they didn't. These ideas and images have a specific intent behind them! They have the purpose of indoctrinating children and



## Instruct

swaying them from hearing the truth about Christ! Ultimately, they have a “religious” purpose to dissuade children from following Christ and urging them to follow the pattern of the world.

Deception, such as this perpetrated by the after-school Satan Club, is often so subtle.



It may sound harmless or less intrusive and influential than it really is; it may even sound almost like the truth, but it is nowhere close. The article referenced above describes the very thing which John battles with his readers in the first century. They rejected that Jesus came **in the flesh**—that is He physically came to earth.

Although the article uses different, perhaps more modern terminology, it describes the very same thing happening today! It identifies Scripture as “myth.” It puts it on par with the tales of other ancient gods and goddesses whether from Egypt, Greece, or Rome.

In what ways does the world try to deceive us from the truth? How are some in the church blinded to the truth by following culture today?

Question  
# 3

Today, people may not deny that Jesus physically came to earth, but they do deny that He is the Son of God who came to remove sin through His sacrifice. They deny He was born of a virgin and claim He was just an ordinary man who had extraordinary charisma to influence and persuade. They assert that His earliest followers became deceived and misunderstood His purpose, so they erroneously identified Him as the Son of God—when Jesus Himself never did. But Jesus did clearly attest to His divinity. He identified Himself as being equal to the Father ([John 10:30](#)); He described Himself as eternal when He announced, “Before Abraham was, I am” ([John 8:48-59](#)). Although the Roman leaders found no legal fault in Jesus, the Jewish leaders insisted upon His crucifixion because He made Himself equal with God ([John 19:7](#))—this wasn’t some concoction of the early church. It was recorded in history and came from the very lips of Jesus

Himself.

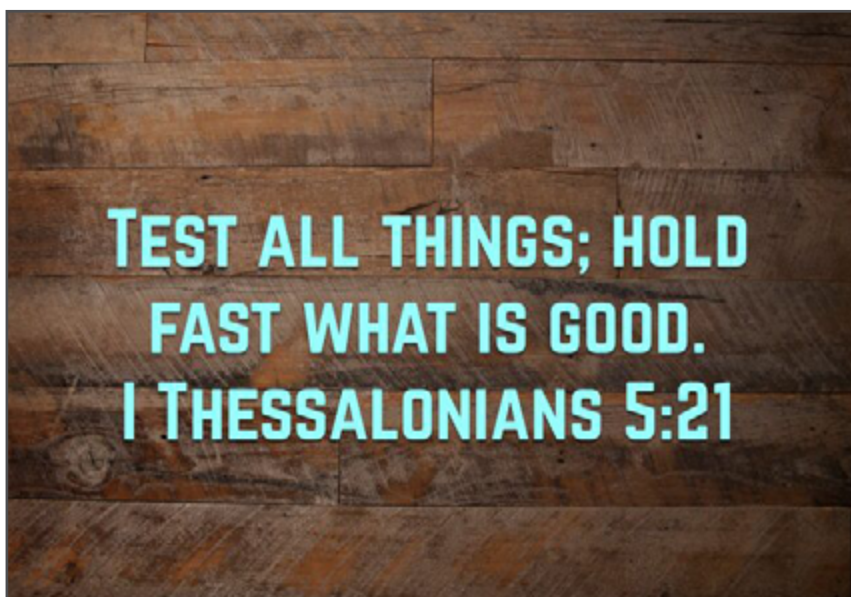
Secular governments, like Canada, follow the same course of misguided logic in associating Christ with myth. Recently, the wording of a resolution in Canada lumped Christian beliefs together with mythology in their attempt to combat the practice of “conversion therapy” for the sexual and gender deviation we see in our world today.\* The resolution was aimed at defining the promotion and practice of “conversion therapy” as hate speech in their aim to be more inclusive in the world. Such governments and people clamor for us to follow the science and look at the course of human history while they themselves don’t. They are deceived! If we follow the science, it tells us that their practices are nothing more than sin in which people choose to participate!

### ***In Reference***



*Jon Brown, “[Thousands of Churches Raise Alarm about Scope of New Canadian ‘Conversion Therapy’ Ban,](#)” (January 16, 2022), available from [www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com).*

Whether it’s The Satanic Temple in Moline, Illinois or the Canadian government, which the United States as a whole is not far behind, they have caved to deception because it sounds palatable to their ears. In denying Christ, they have chosen to ignore the same scientific facts that they purport to uphold and believe. They charge us with old-fashioned thinking and believing in mythology, but they themselves are actually doing the very things of which they accuse us. We base our beliefs upon historical and reasoned information. When examined in light of the evidence, it’s most reasonable to believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died for our sin, was raised from the dead on the third day, and will come again. We can defend these things as true because we have evidence—an empty tomb and eyewitnesses to the events in the first-century! Because of the prevalence of deception in the world, John bids the believers to whom he has written to “**look to yourselves.**” This phrase is better translated as “watch yourselves.”



## Instruct

John wants them to assess what they believe or examine their own lives to make sure that their beliefs align with Scripture and they don't follow the pattern of the world and elevate their personal preferences. We must constantly check to see if we're on the right course; we can't just put our lives on cruise or autopilot. We must always be aware of our surroundings. We must continually evaluate what we believe based upon the truth in God's Word!

When we encounter a problem with our cars, we take them to an auto store or a mechanic who will run a diagnostic test. He'll hook a machine into the car's computer system, turn it on, press a few buttons, and wait as it runs some tests. It will eventually compile a list of things—both the things working well and the things that need repair. For our lives, we don't plug into a machine, but we plug into Scripture which produces a readout for us. We must use it to examine our lives. When running a diagnostic check on our lives, we must ask three questions that will apply to every situation: Does what I believe / practice coincide with Scripture? Does what I believe / practice reflect God's character? Does what I believe / practice help me to conform to Christ and draw me closer to Him?

If you were to run a diagnostic check on your life, what would the readout be?

Question  
# 4

We must pay special attention not to misunderstand what John says in the latter half of this verse. There, he interjects, "**Do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.**" John isn't saying that we worked for our salvation, but in how we have built upon it—just as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 3. When we live inconsistently with God's Word and don't properly build upon His foundation, our work will not last; it has no eternal value and significance apart from Christ. John will explain this theme further beginning in verse nine.

## 2 John 1:9-13

### **THE DOCTRINE REJECTED:**

To conclude his instruction to the believers in this church, John defines the doctrine that must be rejected. We may not deny Jesus came **in the flesh** as did those whom John calls **antichrist**. We may not deny the basic tenets about the faith; we may believe in the virgin birth, the sinless perfection of Jesus, and the resurrection. We may

say that we believe Scripture is the inerrant, infallible, and inspired Word of God. Yet, we don't put its principles into practice. To John, not practicing what Scripture says is tantamount to rejecting it. It is a serious offense and odious to the Lord.

The phrase **whoever transgresses** is a difficult one to translate into English (v. 9). Literally, it means to go ahead or could mean go beyond. Taken together with the word

translated doctrine or teaching, it means to live inconsistently with Christ's teaching—that is we don't put it into practice. Therefore, it's not just a set of theological beliefs, but ethical ones too. It's so serious that John writes, "**Whoever goes ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God.**" The converse is true if we remain in them: "**He who abides in**

"I am the vine,  
you are the branches.  
He who abides in Me,  
and I in him,  
bears much fruit;  
for without Me you  
can do nothing.

John 15:5



**the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son."**

Moreover, John warns us not to have close fellowship with those who do not practice the truth (vv. 10-11). He tells them not to **receive** them **into their house** or even **greet them**. This isn't a call to treat them with contempt and hostility or treat them uncivilly or rudely. Rather, John depicts how easy it is to become influenced by these individuals when we entertain them or have close fellowship with them. We still need to speak the truth in love ([Eph 4:15](#)); we still need to present the gospel to these individuals, for how else would they hear the message unless those of us who have a relationship with Christ tell them?

To accept into one's **home** as a show of hospitality and **greet** someone in this instance would mean to support their affirmations! Our world preaches tolerance, acceptance, and affirmation. Christians, sometimes even knowingly, affirm and encourage people who are acting contrary to God's Word. We should never affirm or encourage someone who is not following God's Word, but we are to correct them lovingly. Therefore, many churches have become tolerant and accepting of unbiblical practices; they reflect the world rather than mirror Christ. This ought never to be the case. The world has deceived us unto thinking that we cannot correct someone lovingly. If we love someone, the world posits that we will let them do or believe whatever they want. But such an attitude does not constitute biblical love! For this reason, John reminds us that



## Instruct

when we **greet** or affirm someone's evil deeds, we share in them too! What a serious charge. Let us, therefore, stand firmly rooted in the truth of God's Word, practicing consistently the principles He has espoused therein by which we should live.

How can we be lights in the world without having close fellowship with them?

Question  
# 5

## Inspire

Kcarb Uckles learned a valuable lesson. Sometimes things appear in order outwardly and everything looks good, but looks can be deceiving. Fortunately, he had someone who helped reveal the truth to him about the car before he invested in it. In the same way, we ought to exercise extreme caution in evaluating our beliefs. God has given us everything we need to know the truth and evaluate our lives through Scripture. If we know Scripture and practice its principles, we will not succumb to the deception of this world which destroys. Because we have a relationship with Christ and we know the truth from His Word, we should be ambassadors of the truth. We should not have close fellowship with the world, but at the same time we should point them to the truth by both what we say and what we do in accordance with Scripture. Therefore, may we always follow the truth therein and live by the principles which God has clearly espoused.



## ***Incorporate***

How do you defend the truth of God's Word in your life? Is there any area in which you have elevated personal preference over what God has said in His Word?

Have you ever found yourself deceived by the world? How did God help you to overcome that deception?

How have you personally seen the world opposed to the truth when you have lived it out in your life? How do you find encouragement to remain strong and not waiver in a world that ruthlessly opposes the truth of God?

*July 24, 2022*



# *Follow with Integrity*

## *Part 1*

### *3 John 1:1-4*

Focal Verse:

*"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."*

3 John 1:4

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## Introduce

When we rise in the morning as we prepare to go out and face the world, most of us will likely spend significant time peering into a mirror, so that we can see the truth of how we really look in order to make ourselves presentable for the day's activities. Before we leave the house, we want to make sure everything in our appearance is in order. We glance into a mirror to see whether we have any dirt or residue on our faces and to determine whether we have combed our hair properly and it's in its place. For men, we will inspect the job that we did in shaving or trimming our facial hair to ensure we didn't miss a spot and it's evenly groomed. For women, you assess the job you did in applying any makeup that you might have chosen to wear that day.



We look into a mirror because it tells us the truth. It doesn't hide anything from our view, but exposes everything as it truly is. It gives us an exact picture of reality, reflecting the way the world really is by showing all our blemishes and flaws as well as the good things about our appearance. In life, however, many people today desire to live in an alternate reality. They don't want to see themselves as they truly are. Rather, they want to see themselves as the way they want to be. They want to see the world through these same lenses—not as it really is, but as they want it to be. Consequently, they lie and deceive themselves! They have a distorted philosophy of reality which leads to discontentment and destruction in the end. We see evidence of this disillusionment all around us today.

In photographs, we want to look our best and present a perfect world to capture and commemorate an important event in our lives. But inevitably something unflattering or unseemly often surfaces in the picture—whether shadows from lighting, glare on glasses, red eyes from flashes, unwanted items in the background, or blemishes exposed by high-definition resolution. Whether professional or amateur, many attempt to touch-up their photos to make them “perfect” in their eyes by removing all the imperfections and faults. In doing so, they no longer present a true picture of reality as

## Introduce

life really was at the time, but an altered view of how they wanted it to be!

In my office hangs a picture from 2004 where I stood along the banks of the Thames River with British Parliament and Big Ben in the background. I had the opportunity to visit London that year while returning from a mission trip to East Africa. The picture looks like any other travel photo until one starts to examine the water of the river closely. Although almost imperceptible, the water had been altered to cover over a bystander who appeared in the picture making a hideous face. With rudimentary software at the time, I cut pieces from the river and carefully placed them over the unsavory sight until it looked as if I were the only one standing on the banks in an idyllic setting.

People alter pictures in such a way like this all the time even to a much greater degree where they create a completely alternate reality! These alterations are so good one cannot tell the truth from a fake without careful consideration and attention. For example, sometimes people appear in “travel” photos in places to which they have never actually been! The world is crafty; it deceives. At times, the philosophies the world espouses sound good and even valid. But they are designed to deceive and destined for destruction. Scripture, on the other hand, provides a mirror by which we can examine everything in life truthfully because it reflects and communicates the holy character of God. As followers of Christ, we must walk in the truth which He has plainly revealed to us. We must rely on the Holy Spirit to help us discern the truth and evaluate the principles we hear so that we might not become ensnared by the deception of the world but remain entrenched in the truth of the Lord!

Key  
Question

In what ways does the world deceive? How does it often present an alternative reality that stands opposed to the Lord?

### 3 John 1:1-4

#### **WALK TRUTHFULLY:**

John addresses this letter to a man by the name of Gaius about whom we technically know very little. Most likely, Gaius was converted under John's ministry because the Apostle expresses joy that his "**children walk in truth**" (v. 4). Identifying someone spiritually as their child in Scripture often carries with it the idea that their ministry played a significant role in bringing them to faith in Christ or that their ministry helped to mentor them so that they might mature and grow in their service in the local church. Perhaps, then, Gaius served as a leader in the local church who partnered closely with John in ministry—just like Timothy and Titus did with Paul and to whom he also refers as sons ([1 Tim 1:2](#)). Although both 1 Corinthians and Romans mention a man by the name of Gaius, it's highly unlikely this is the same person to whom John writes here given the approximate thirty-year span between Paul's letters and John's. Nonetheless, Gaius is someone with whom John works closely in ministry and whom he has disciplined. John has deep admiration and respect for his partner in ministry, loving him just as Christ does.

Like many modern letters or e-mails, the ancient sender often began with well wishes for the recipient. The divinely inspired biblical writers were no different. Depending upon the recipient and occasion for writing, many of my e-mails include a wish that it finds the person well. I may say something like, "I hope this letter finds you well" or I may conclude with, "May you be blessed in the Lord as you continue faithfully serving Him." Essentially,



John does the same with Gaius when he wishes him well: "**I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health as your soul prospers**" (v. 2).

Unfortunately, some have robbed this verse of its contextual meaning and invested it with an idea foreign to both John and Jesus. Peering into the scriptural "mirror" colored



## Instruct

by their own misguided lenses, such individuals have read into this verse what they want it to say rather than hearing what it actually says. Namely, they use this verse to argue that God wants every believer to prosper in health and wealth. If one doesn't **prosper** in an expected way, those who misinterpret this verse wrongly surmise, that he lacks faith and isn't in the center of God's will. Job's friends applied this very same errant philosophy to his suffering.

Such wishful thinking grossly mischaracterizes what John has written. The word "**prosper**" in this context means to achieve something according to a particular purpose. Certainly, God has the wherewithal to bless us with health and finances should He so choose to do so according to His divine plan and purpose. But prosperity is much more than this narrow view to which the world limits success. John specifically defines what it means to be prosperous in this very text; he doesn't leave us guessing! To **prosper** means that we **walk in the truth**—we practice **the truth** as God has defined and designated it.

Contrary to what the world thinks and portrays, we can have little earthly wealth and be prosperous. We can have chronic health problems that plague us and still **prosper**. Prosperity depends not upon what we have, but upon whom we follow. Whether we have little or much, prosperity comes from our willingness to surrender to the Lord and follow His plan. Truly, we can only achieve success when we obey the Lord. The pursuit of wealth and health can take our eyes off our true focus: the example of Christ.

How has God prospered you—especially in times of turmoil and distress?

Question  
# 1

God has explicitly given us a plan for success if only we would apply it. This plan never fails; it works 100% of the time. Success boils down to three key areas. And we can use three questions to help us evaluate whether we are successful in life. First, do I know and practice Scripture? Second, do I imitate Christ so that the world can see Him working through me? Finally, does what I do, say, think, or believe cultivate my relationship with Christ and draw me closer to Him? Success, or prosperity, by any other definition doesn't reveal **the truth**! It causes us to deceive ourselves, seeing the world from our own flawed perspective rather than the way it truly is.

When we tie our idea of success to our financial and physical circumstances, it can distract us severely when we perceive things don't go our way. It can lead to

discouragement and depression where we seek pity and empathy for ourselves rather than offer comfort and point to hope in Christ. It can lead to bitterness and anger where we question God because He hasn't met our expectations. It can also lead to arrogance and pride because success may make us seem favored by God based upon what we have done rather than the grace and compassion He has given us undeservedly. To **prosper** we must remain grounded in Christ, realizing what we have achieved and what we have received as an act of grace in which He works in our lives whatever the circumstances.

How do you define success in life? How does that definition fit with the truth found in Scripture?

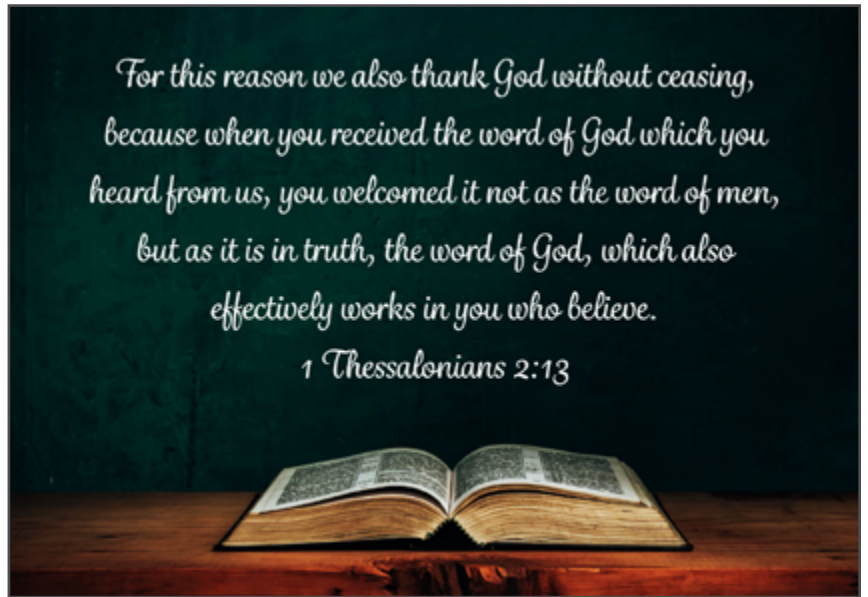
Question  
# 2

Having wished Gaius well in his endeavor to serve the Lord and to have success in every area of his life as he follows Him, John now rejoices **greatly** that others have **testified** that he walks **in the truth** (v. 3).

What does it mean to **walk in the truth**? When we think of the word **truth**, we most often think of abstract concepts or principles—facts and figures that dictate what we believe about the world or a particular subject. In terms of the Bible, we would specifically call this **truth** doctrine. We must indeed have the right set of beliefs

*For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.*

*1 Thessalonians 2:13*



about God, mankind, and the world. We must believe that the Bible is **truth** and not mythology or man-made philosophy ([1 Thess 2:13](#); [2 Tim 3:15-16](#)).

The **truth**, consequently, necessitates that we believe God is holy, righteous, and just. He created the world perfectly, but we destroyed that perfect union and separated ourselves from Him through our sin and disobedience. Still, God loved us and wanted to redeem us, so He sent His only Son born of a virgin to live a sinless life and die on the cross in our place. After He was buried, three days later He was raised victoriously from the tomb in declaration of His power and signifying His promise to give us life in this same way. Although a very basic summary of Scripture, anything other than this set of beliefs constitutes deception—a lie—and it leads to death.

## Instruct

What we believe about doctrine and what we believe cognitively about the principles by which we live matters. It matters because what we believe about God, mankind, and the world affects what we do. John is certainly concerned with what men like Gaius, Diotrefes, and Demetrius believe because it influences how they **walk** or how they conduct themselves. If we don't evaluate ourselves according to the **truth** found in Scripture, we won't be able to see how things in our lives truly are. If we can't see how they truly are, then we can't **walk** by it and we won't practice it.

To illustrate, we'll use the picture from 2004 to which I referred in the introduction. To be clear, I did alter the background, but I did not in any way alter my actual appearance. In looking back at the picture, I, and many of you, can see I have lost substantial weight in those intervening years. At that time, as I look back and reflect upon the picture, I knew that I was obese and out of shape. I knew this to be true. No one had to tell me. I could see it reflected in the photograph and I knew it to be indisputable fact based upon the unhealthy lifestyle choices that I had made.

Yet, what I believed about my physique and its effect on my health would ultimately lead me to act in a particular way. For a moment, however, let's say that I deceived



myself into thinking I am a specimen of health. When I looked at the picture, I didn't see an overweight, and at the time, much younger individual. I perceived a well-built, muscular man who was in shape—someone like Lou Ferrigno in his heyday as the Incredible Hulk. From the picture, you and I can both see that this is definitely not true! I could

never have classified myself as a bodybuilder no matter how much I "believed" it to be true. If I deceived myself into believing this to be true, it would have impacted what I did. It would have influenced the choices I made which would have continued to be detrimental to my health and well-being. I would have continued doing what I was doing without any change because I didn't live in reality—that is I didn't **walk in the truth**.

However, both you and I can see **the truth** whether we want to believe it or not. **The truth** is that obesity and poor dietary choices lead to a whole host of health problems—sometimes immediately—but many times later down the road in life. Because I understood reality and was aware of the consequences of my own choices, I began eating more healthy and balanced meals and losing weight over the years—which was expedited in recent months by COVID after which I have managed to keep the weight off. In the same way we recognize **the truth** about nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices which affect our physical bodies, we must follow **the truth** as God reveals it to us through His Word—not the way that we want to see the world or we want it to be. But the way that God has revealed to us that it really is! If we don't see and practice God's **truth**, not only does it lead to a whole host of problems both immediately and down the road, but it also deceives us in the way we live our lives now which brings a whole host of problems.

If we don't examine our lives according to God's **truth**, we won't see our true condition. We may look like Fabio and Lou Ferrigno when we're actually fat. As a result of not heeding **the truth**, we will continue the same misguided, misappropriated, and misunderstood path in life and never realize the need for change. On the other hand, **the truth** also tells us when we're doing something right. It doesn't just tell us when we're doing something wrong! It lets us know that we need to continue the course that we're on. Consequently, it helps us to remain consistent in our faith to practice the principles by which God has established for us to live. Therefore, may we use Scripture as a mirror which helps us to recognize **the truth** and follow God's plan for our lives!

How has Scripture helped you to have a truthful picture of reality? What has it revealed about you in relation to the Lord?

Question  
# 3

Practicing **the truth** in our lives is not only beneficial for our self-assessment, but also the assessment and encouragement of others to practice the same. In other words, practicing the **truth**—or walking in it—is not just for our benefit, but also the benefit of others. Notice what John writes in verse 3: "**For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you.**" Walking in **the truth** serves as a testimony to others about the One to whom we belong; it signifies the One whom we follow. From whomever John has received word about Gaius, the way Gaius has conducted himself has made an impression upon them so much that they bring a good report about his conduct. Certainly, we ought to know and apply **the truth** in our own



## Instruct

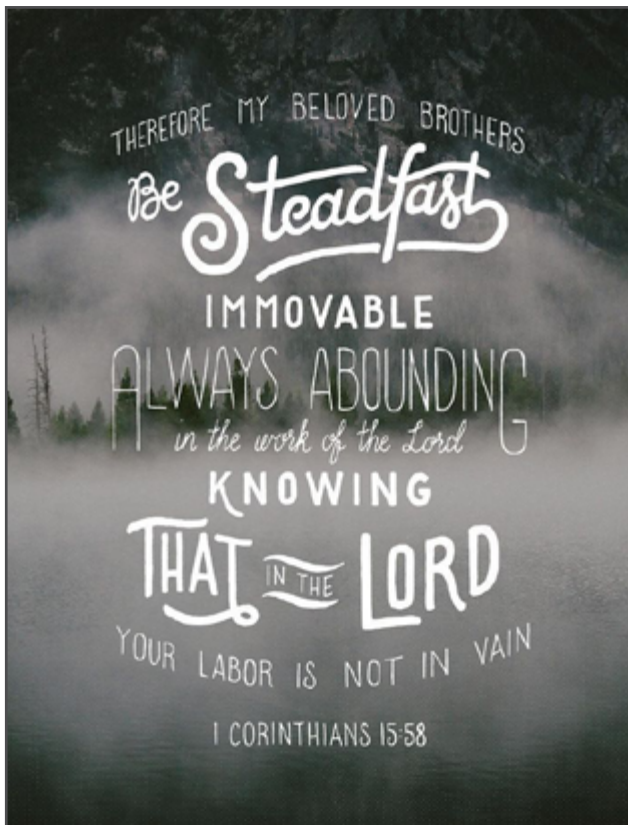
lives for our own benefit—that we might **prosper** and have success in becoming more Christ-like, but we must also **walk** by **the truth** so that others may see and know that transformation comes from Him.

**The truth** ought to be visible in our lives; there should be no question about who we follow. Others must see a difference in us that stands in sharp contrast with the world. Borrowing again from the illustration of becoming healthier over the years from 2004 until now will help to underscore this point. I can tell everyone that I'm skinny and completely physically fit, but you can look at me and see **the truth**. You can see that I still have work to do. I could even dismiss it by saying the camera adds ten pounds to photographs. But reality would not be consistent with my portrayal. You may testify that I am indeed skinnier, but you must also testify that I still have more work to do to get in shape.

How is the truth manifested in your life causing others to testify positively about it?

Question  
# 4

If I misrepresent the condition of my physique and health, everyone can see it! They can see the distortion. Things don't add up. The same happens in our lives in Christ. If we live inconsistently with the principles Christ espouses in His Word, then others will see it. They will see that our lives don't match His character, but that they align with the world to which we should stand in contrast. Instead of testifying that we **walk in the truth** of Scripture, the world will say, "They walk just like we do. There is no difference." They will criticize us as hypocrites, fakes, and phonies because they cannot observe the transformation we say Christ has produced in our lives. On the other hand, if we live consistently with the truth, Christ will reveal that through us too just like He did Gaius. The people who brought this report to John could see a difference in him. They could see that He walked the walk and talked the talk—and was not some slick conman. Gaius believed





what he professed because he practiced it!

How consistent are you in your daily walk?

Question  
# 5

Not only does our walking **in the truth** provide a testimony and set an example for others to follow in Christ, but it also encourages those who have walked with us on our journey. John interjects that nothing gives him more **joy than to hear** that his **children**—those whom he disciplined and taught—to **walk in the truth** (v. 4). One of the greatest joys that one can have as a parent, pastor, or teacher is when one's **children**, fellow believers, or students get it—they put into practice what they have learned. It's not merely some information that they memorize so they can discard it and forget it after a test, but something which they internalize and utilize throughout the rest of their lives.

Years ago in college, I had to observe an elementary class for one of my education courses. In the church that I attended, the wife of the coach who taught the college Sunday School class was an elementary school teacher, so I asked if I could come to observe her classroom. Although I did my fair share of observing, she also put me to work, knowing my skills and ability to teach. She assigned me to work with a girl who was having trouble counting different denominations of money. I began noticing a pattern. She had the money heaped into a pile and couldn't distinguish the different amounts. Helping her to separate the money into their respective denominations, I then asked how much each was and then helped her to add them together. Eventually, after working with her for a while, she began to add the money correctly. Not only did it give her **joy**, but it gave me **joy** in seeing her succeed.

In the same way, we should grow together with one another, using our gifts and talents to serve the Lord and grow in our faith. Scripture tells us that we are to teach the younger in the faith. We are to teach them doctrine as well as application—that is how to live. When we see them learn, succeed by following Christ, and apply what Scripture teaches, it should give us such **joy** that we could **walk** with them together in life. This is why generational connections and connections at church are so important. God has given us each other to **walk** through life together.

What times has God allowed you to have joy when you have walked closely together with someone in the church?

Question  
# 6

## *Inspire*

We live in a world that has been deceived. Many are disconnected from reality, believing a lie which leads to destruction. These people follow the culture—a culture which calls good evil and evil good. They see the world as the way they want it to be rather than the way that it really is. As followers of Christ, however, we must recognize the truth and walk in it. We cannot allow the deception of the culture to influence what we practice. Instead, we must base our beliefs on Scripture which reveals the truth by which God has given us to live. Our beliefs, therefore, must influence the way we live and we must live according to God's standard as only this gives life and ensures success.

## *Incorporate*

Using Scripture as a mirror, how would you evaluate your life? What things do you do well? What things need improvement? Are there any areas in which you have deceived yourself into thinking all is well when it really isn't?

Of whom in the church can you bring a good testimony that they walk in the truth? What characteristics do they exhibit?

*July 31, 2022*



# *Follow with Integrity*

## *Part 2*

*3 John 1:5-12*

Focal Verse:

“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.”

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3 John 1:5-12

## Introduce

The way people walk or carry themselves can tell us much about them and what they have experienced on a particular day. Shoulders drooping with a slumped posture along with other physical signs, such as labored breathing or long, drawn-out sighs, can indicate one of two things pursuant to the circumstances in which we find a person: it either connotes physical tiredness or a defeated attitude—a disheartened reaction to a devastating loss or tragedy. In a locker room after a hard-fought game, those who lost and have



experienced the agony of defeat will carry themselves with such a forlorn posture while those in the opposing locker room, though equally as tired, will celebrate jubilantly with shouts and celebratory gestures vibrantly bounding around the room. Likewise, a person who works hard all day in a physically-demanding job may return home shuffling his or her feet, barely able to lift them off the floor with the same drooping shoulders and slumped posture as those lamenting defeat.

Still, the way we walk tells us much more than merely physical attributes. A casual stroll at a leisurely pace embodies being relaxed and content. Carrying ourselves upright with our chests protruding can suggest one of two things depending upon the circumstance: it expresses either confidence or pride and arrogance. Someone running whilst frequently glancing over his shoulder can convey that he is trying to flee or escape something. A person who backs up slowly as someone approaches either signals that his personal space has been violated or that he is uncomfortable being around that particular person and wishes not to engage in much conversation. Certainly, we must exercise caution so that we don't assume something and misread the situation when using physical signs to interpret the reasons why people walk the way they do. We must also carefully examine the contextual clues in that specific setting. Yet, we often use body language cues without ever noticing how much we use them because they have become so engrained within us. At the same time, however, we cannot become so oblivious to the situation that we misunderstand and



## Introduce

misinterpret it. How we walk is a conditioned response to the specific situation in which we find ourselves. It demonstrates how we react innately or naturally to a given set of stimuli. In other words, the way we walk may become automatic based upon our conditioned response to what we have endured.

In life, the way we walk should reveal to others whom we follow or, more aptly, after whom we pattern our lives. We ought to condition ourselves to respond to our environment, or our world, in the way Christ exemplified and taught. It should be so engrained within us that we walk innately or naturally in concert with Him—it should become second nature. Although we will still respond differently depending upon the circumstances, our response must always reflect Christ and the principles in His Word rather than the methods of the culture. We can't slap a label on an action or attitude, branding it "Christian" if it doesn't conform to Christ and measure up to His standards. On the contrary, the way we walk ought to be so crystal-clear that others can undoubtedly see Christ at work in us. May we walk with righteousness and integrity, following the pattern Christ Himself has established for us.

Key  
Question

What does the way you walk say about you?

### 3 John 1:5-8

#### **WORK TOGETHER:**

When we walk truthfully, it should also lead us to work together with unified purpose and direction in Christ to ensure the spread of the gospel. Continuing to address Gaius directly, John urges him to continue ministering to all believers **faithfully** (v. 5). The way that John writes this sentence in the Greek stresses Gaius' faithfulness. Perhaps, a good way to translate the phrase is: he (you / Gaius) is faithful in doing what he does. In other words, he is devoted to his ministry and calling because he loves the people with whom he serves. His **love**, consequently, is evident in the **manner** of his conduct and support of their ministry which is **worthy of the Lord** (v. 6; see also [Eph 4:1-6](#)). Thus, he represents God and acts **faithfully** on His behalf to **send** these individuals on a journey of service to the Lord. With this phrase, John cheers him on to keep up the good work in Christ! He wants Gaius to continue what he's already doing.

Who in the church has God used you to encourage to keep ministering faithfully? Who has God used to encourage you?

Question  
# 1

In a way, Gaius seems to be partnering with people who minister and serve the Lord full-time, like we would partner with missionaries or even church planters today. The subsequent verses seemingly make this clear, for the individuals whom Gaius supports didn't take anything **from the Gentiles**—literally, the nations (v. 7). This means that they didn't have a salary or seek support of any kind from them, but they had a network of supporters within the church who enabled them to focus on ministry by meeting their needs.



For even in  
Thessalonica  
you sent aid  
once and  
again for my  
necessities.  
Philippians  
4:16

Both the Old and New Testaments establish this principle ([Num 18:21-32](#))—Paul even compares the support of those who minister vocationally full-time to an ox being

## Instruct

worthy of its wages; in other words, those who labor full-time in service should receive support to meet the basic necessities of life ([1 Cor 9:6-14](#); [1 Tim 5:17-18](#)).

In verse 8, John again emphasizes that **we ought to receive** (literally support) those who work to spread the gospel so that we might **become fellow workers for the truth**. In other words, he not only encourages Gaius, but every one of us to aid in equipping with the necessary resources those who minister. As such, we become partners, **fellow** laborers in the Lord. As a church, we partner with other churches to send laborers to the mission field whether Lake Charles, Louisiana, Brazil, or East Africa among many other places. Not only do we set aside monies for missions in our budget, but we have a number of people who give specifically toward these projects so that others in our church may go.

In addition to commissioning and sending missionaries from our very own congregation, we also partner with our denomination to support missions around the world through the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention. Through individuals and our church corporately, we also support over twelve independent missionaries sent to spread the gospel in Tanzania, Nigeria, Mexico, Hong Kong, Moldova, and Vanuatu as well as the United States and right here in Tarrant County. We must continue to fulfill the Great Commission by both going ourselves and sending others when and where we cannot go. We must make every effort to disseminate the gospel whether by physically going ourselves or sending others in our stead. Let us, therefore, use all the resources with which God has blessed us to make an impact on the world by declaring the life-changing promises of the Lord found in His Word.

With whom has God called you to partner to ensure the spread of the gospel? Who has partnered with you—even if right here in Fort Worth?

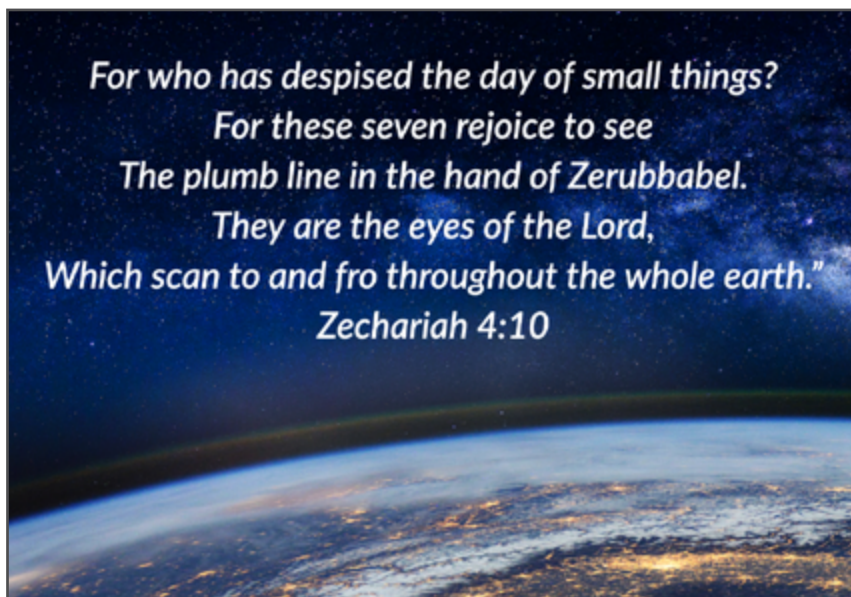
Question  
# 2

Although funding or supporting missionaries from a biblical perspective is of fundamental importance to accomplish our God-given mandate as His body, today we will focus on one word, faithful, which should describe the spirit in which we must conduct our service—whether going, giving, or sending. Gaius, as John notes, was faithful in whatever he did; and he did it as unto the Lord. He did not do it to receive accolades and recognition, but to make the name of the Lord greatly to be praised throughout the world by spreading the gospel. Everything that we do we ought to do

**faithfully**; it doesn't matter how big or how small we may perceive the task. We must exercise as much faithfulness in accomplishing the ordinary, routine things in life as we do the projects we may consider big and worthy of more attention.

When correcting the attitude of the people in building the second temple as they became discouraged over the lack of progress and the seeming smallness of the tasks they had been assigned, God asks,

"For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the Lord, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth" ([Zech 4:10](#)). God wants us to focus on our attitude in serving Him and not in the size of the task.



We live in a world that believes in

and practices the motto "go big or go home." People despise things in which they think are not entertaining enough; they despise things which they believe are not worthy of their time and effort. They may regard them as beneath their dignity or too menial to do, so they refuse to do them or do them reluctantly with a begrudging spirit.

God doesn't work that way, however. He doesn't look at things in terms of big or small; rather, He looks at our faithfulness. The world was not impressed with the amount that the widow gave in the temple treasury, but Jesus was ([Luke 21:1-4](#)). It seemed small and insignificant to the world, but it was all she had. Although I have used an illustration from the Bible involving money, I am not solely talking about finances here. We ought to be faithful in every area—whether we deem it big or small—trivial or important—useful or useless. We ought to serve with the same zeal and the same faithfulness when doing things others can see or doing things behind the scenes that most take for granted and never even notice!

What small task has God given you to do? How did you view these small tasks? With what attitude did you approach them?

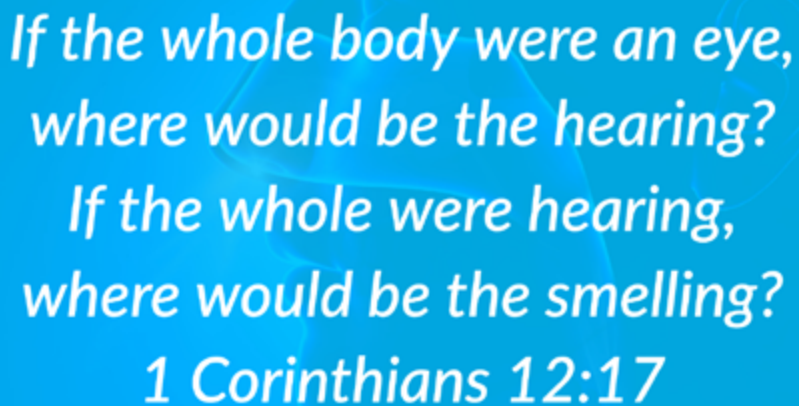
Question  
# 3

Unfortunately, too many times we fall into the trap of thinking our service doesn't matter if no one notices; or our service doesn't matter if it's something that we deem

## Instruct

insignificant. In [1 Corinthians 12](#), Paul discusses the importance of serving faithfully in every area of the church. Although God has gifted us uniquely and called us to serve in specific areas, He has called us for one purpose—moving forward together, serving together in His body to glorify Him, disciple others, and proclaim the gospel. Some ministries may be more visible and seem more important than others, but they are all equally important to God for building His church.

Cleaning and caring for the grounds and facilities, for example, assist us to teach and preach effectively. If one cannot overcome the condition or cleanliness of the building,



*If the whole body were an eye,  
where would be the hearing?  
If the whole were hearing,  
where would be the smelling?  
1 Corinthians 12:17*

they will become distracted from hearing the gospel! Similarly, greeting is as important as serving as secretaries who help track attendance and keep people connected. It doesn't matter the perceived visibility or significance of the position; we all work together for one purpose. Whatever we do in service to the Lord, we must be faithful. We

must serve with our full devotion to the best of our ability, ministering by encouraging, supporting, and strengthening fellow believers to the glory of the Lord for the growth of the body and the spreading of the Word.

How do you view the areas of service to which God has called you?

Question  
# 4

Even though John uses the word "**strangers**" in verse 5, he is still referring to working together with other believers with whom we are not familiar intimately. The word translated "**strangers**" comes from a Greek word we've probably heard before. From it, we get our modern word xenophobia which connotes a fear of foreigners. In John's day, however, it didn't connote this irrational fear, but in this context it referred to fellow believers who held the same set of beliefs and practices, but ones whom Gaius did not know personally. In our day, we would call this networking—getting to know and partnering with various people who share similar goals and passions.



God did not design us to live an isolated existence. He has called us to be part of a community. We live in an increasingly isolated, independent world, thinking that we can do things on our own, but we need each other. What we do, say, and how we live have a profound impact on each other—even if we clamor to be left alone or to stay out of one another’s business. We need to spur one another to live as Christ. We need to encourage one another to act with integrity. We need to remind each other of the principles Christ has espoused in His Word. Although we are responsible for our own choices and our own spiritual progress, we need to work together with others who are faithful so that we might maintain focus in our service to glorify God together as His people whom He has called.

: How has God called you to encourage others and used you to disciple others to live consistently with integrity?

Question  
# 5

### 3 John 1:9-12

#### **WITNESS THROUGH GOOD DEEDS:**

In contrast to Gaius’ faithful and humble acts of service, Diotrophes serves to make a name for himself. Not only does he draw attention to himself, but he puts down those who spread the gospel in truth through **malicious words** (v. 10). We see this attitude

all the time in the world. Years ago, we would call this “mudslinging.” People insult and put down others, whether they hold a valid argument or not, to elevate themselves and gain popularity. The focus, therefore, resides on the individual rather than Christ; it distracts and detracts from the message. Rather than listen to the logicalness of the message, all



others hear are the put downs and insults. Diotrophes apparently engaged in this type of argument with John where he wanted to make himself more prominent, so he spoke against them with **malicious words**.

Some in the church today have adopted this same technique as Diotrophes. They

preach Christ, but they do so to draw attention to themselves ([Phil 1:15-17](#)). They do so by emulating the rhetoric of the world. They draw attention to themselves by playing the victim; this leads to fiery rhetoric and insults. They attack the person's character viciously rather than focus on the content and criticism of their speech. Christ, however, spoke the truth with love, but He didn't go around insulting people and egging on fights! The message of Christ can easily get lost in such speech because the spotlight shines brightly upon the attitude of the presenter not the actions of the Savior.

In what ways do we see some in the church today engaging in such a practice where they are offensive in their words which demean others and distract from the gospel?

Question  
# 6

Therefore, John exposes such tactics for what they are, arguing they do not belong in the church, because it creates dissension and disunity. Instead, he says, we ought to imitate Christ. Literally, John urges us not to **imitate evil**, but to imitate **good** (v. 11). Others should see Christ in us; they should see His character and traits boldly through our words and actions performed in love. Diotrophes' character betrays him. People can clearly see the inconsistency with which he conducts himself. He rejects those who practice the truth (v. 10) while he himself practices **evil**, leading John to assert that those who **do evil** have **not seen God** (v. 11). In other words, Diotrophes likely doesn't have a relationship with Christ, but has patterned himself wickedly after the world. But this stands in stark contrast to Demetrius who has a **good testimony from all** which bears the **truth** (v. 12). Others can see the difference. Demetrius imitates Christ and lives consistently with His character! He practices or walks in the truth!

As followers of Christ, we ought to have a **good testimony** before **all**. Others ought to see consistency in our lives whereby we represent Christ in the way that we live. Several months ago, while walking through the hall here at church after a leadership meeting having just concluded from one of the break-out sessions with Legacy Adults, I greeted some of our children playing in a nearby classroom. After responding with a hello, one of the girls declared, "No one is here." So, I stopped and said, "If you're here, then someone's here. You can't say no one's here." It fascinates me how children reason. She corrected herself and rightly said, "There's no adult here—just us kids." After we get a certain age, we typically stop talking about how old we are, but this

young girl proudly informed me that she was six. Then, she began pointing to the other children in the room and telling me their ages as well. After a brief discussion of their grade-levels and ages, I told her my age, but she didn't even seem phased by such an astronomically high number. Instead, she said, "That's not old for a pastor." Although I am certain she had seen me at church several times, knowing that I was one of the pastors would have been more difficult to discern for children because I rarely have the opportunity to interact with them on a regular basis. Then the six-year-old girl asked, "Wanna know how I know you're a pastor?" "How," I replied. She pointed and said, "That thing around your neck. What is it?" I told her a tie.

To which she retorted, "Pastors always wear ties." I tried to explain briefly that not all people who wear ties are pastors, but that she happened to be right this time. We cannot just assume that because someone has a tie that they are a pastor. This could lead to all kinds of problems when we draw such assumptions! So, she began thinking and said, "You're right, not all pastors wear ties all the time," and she began naming a few.



In a simple, yet complex way, she illustrates beautifully how others ought to see us when we confess Christ as our Savior. Others ought to be able to point and ask, "Wanna know how I know you follow Christ?" We ought to have identifying marks in our lives that distinguish us from the world; they are so clearly visible in our lives in the way that we reflect Christ that one instantly knows to whom we belong! These identifying marks are the attitude we wear; it's the character we put on ([Eph 4:20-24](#)). We should **imitate what is good** rather than **what is evil**. It ought to be that evident in life! We must ask ourselves, "Can others point to our deeds and say that they mark us as a follower of Christ?" Or do they look at us and see no difference; nothing that separates us from the rest of the world; nothing that distinguishes us as a believer? May we walk in the truth, representing Christ, so that we might work together to spread the gospel effectively to the whole world by both our words and deeds.

When others look at you, what shines brightly as the greatest "clue" that you belong to Christ and follow Him?

Question  
# 7

In the introduction, we asked the question, “What does the way you walk say about you?” If we say that we follow Christ, we must carry ourselves uprightly. We must walk according to the truth in His Word no matter how much the world pressures us to conform to its pattern and walk according to its misguided standards. Our walk ought to identify us as a follower of Christ because we imitate good and shun evil. This should be borne out in our character as well as our cooperation with others to disseminate the gospel throughout the world. Whether our character or our cooperation, everything we do should be done out of faithfulness so that we establish a good testimony among men that points all to Christ.

## ***Incorporate***

How do partnerships / working together help us more effectively spread the gospel? Why must we be careful with whom we partner? What dictates whether we can partner with them or not?

If people were to examine your life, would they regard you more like Demetrius or Diotrephes? Why?

Depending upon the answer you gave above, what must you continue doing to remain faithful in all things or what must you change to align your character in Christ so that you can be faithful in every area?



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