

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

2 John — Walk in Truth and Love

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

2 John is one of the shortest books in the New Testament, but its message is extremely important.

John brings together two truths that Christians must never separate:

Truth.

Love.

Some people emphasize truth while becoming harsh and unloving.

Others emphasize love while becoming careless about truth.

John teaches us that biblical Christianity requires both.

We must:

Walk in truth.

Walk in love.

Walk in obedience.

Guard ourselves against deception.

Refuse to support false teaching.

John writes as “**the elder**” to “**the chosen lady and her children.**”

Whether John is referring to a particular Christian woman and her family or using the language figuratively for a local congregation, his message is clear: God's people must remain faithful to the truth they have received.

John rejoices because some are walking in truth.

He reminds them of the command to love one another.

Then he gives a serious warning.

False teachers were denying that Jesus Christ had truly come in the flesh.

John calls such teaching deceptive and antichrist.

He therefore warns believers not merely to recognize false teaching, but also not to participate in spreading it.

2 John teaches an important principle:

Christian love does not require Christians to support spiritual error.

Love and truth must walk together.

I. THE ELDER WRITES IN TRUTH AND LOVE

2 John 1 — “Whom I Truly Love”

“From the elder, to the chosen lady and her children, whom I truly love—and not only I, but also all who know the truth—”

John introduces himself simply as:

The elder.

He writes to the chosen lady and her children.

What immediately stands out is John's repeated connection between:

Love

and

Truth.

John says he truly loves them.

But he is not alone.

All who know the truth share this spiritual bond.

Cross References

3 John 1:1

“From the elder, to my dear friend Gaius, whom I truly love.”

1 Peter 5:1

“I appeal to the elders among you as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings, and one who will share in the glory that is going to be revealed.”

1 Corinthians 13:6

“Love does not rejoice when wrong is done, but it rejoices together with the truth.”

John's love is not separated from truth.

That is significant.

Biblical love never requires us to pretend that truth does not matter.

Love rejoices with truth.

Spiritual Principle

Christian love is strongest when it is rooted in God's truth.

II. THE TRUTH LIVES IN US

2 John 2 — Truth That Remains Forever

“because the truth lives in us and will be with us forever.”

John does not describe truth as a temporary idea.

He says:

The truth lives in us.

And:

The truth will be with us forever.

The Christian faith is not built upon changing cultural opinion.

God's truth does not expire.

Cross References

John 14:17

“He is the Spirit of truth. The world cannot receive Him because it does not see Him or know Him. But you know Him because He remains with you and will live in you.”

1 John 2:27

“The anointing you received from Christ remains in you, and you do not need false teachers to lead you away. His anointing teaches you concerning the truth and is not a lie. Remain in Him as you have been taught.”

John 8:32

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Truth is not merely information that Christians memorize.

God's truth shapes:

What we believe.

How we live.

How we love.

How we worship.

How we recognize error.

Key Truth

Culture changes, opinions change, and generations change, but God's truth remains.

III. GRACE, MERCY, PEACE, TRUTH, AND LOVE

2 John 3 — Blessings From the Father and Son

“Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father’s Son, in truth and love.”

John brings together several great Christian blessings:

Grace.

Mercy.

Peace.

And these are experienced:

In truth and love.

Cross References

1 Timothy 1:2

“To Timothy, my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Galatians 1:3

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jude 1:2

“May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.”

Grace is God's favor toward those who do not deserve it.

Mercy is God's compassion toward those in need.

Peace is the spiritual wholeness that comes through relationship with God.

John connects all of these blessings with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Truth and love are not enemies; they belong together in the Christian life.

IV. WALKING IN THE TRUTH

2 John 4 — “I Was Overjoyed”

“I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.”

John experienced great joy when he discovered believers walking in truth.

Notice that he does not simply say they:

Knew the truth.

He says they were:

Walking in the truth.

Truth had moved from their minds into their lives.

Cross References

3 John 1:4

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”

Psalms 119:105

“Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.”

1 John 1:6

“If we say that we have fellowship with God while continuing to walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”

To walk in truth means allowing God's truth to guide everyday life.

It affects:

Our decisions.

Our relationships.

Our morality.

Our priorities.

Our speech.

Our worship.

Our conduct.

Application

Ask yourself:

Do I merely know biblical truth, or am I walking in it?

Knowledge alone is not the goal.

God calls us to obedience.

V. THE COMMAND TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

2 John 5 — The Command From the Beginning

“And now I ask you, dear lady—not as if I were writing a new command, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another.”

John now reminds his readers of a familiar command.

It was not new.

Christians had heard it from the beginning:

Love one another.

Cross References

1 John 2:7

“Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command, but an old command that you have had from the beginning. This old command is the message you have already heard.”

1 John 3:11

“This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.”

John 13:34

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another.”

Christian love is not optional.

It is commanded.

Jesus did not say:

Love people when it is convenient.

Love people when they agree with you.

Love people only when they treat you well.

He said:

Love one another.

VI. LOVE MEANS WALKING IN OBEDIENCE

2 John 6 — What Love Looks Like

“And this is love: that we walk in obedience to His commands. As you have heard from the beginning, His command is that you walk in love.”

John gives us a biblical definition of love.

Love is not merely emotion.

Love involves:

Obedience.

Cross References

1 John 5:3

“This is what it means to love God: we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome.”

John 14:15

“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

1 John 2:5

“Whoever keeps God's Word demonstrates that God's love is being brought to maturity in that person.”

Modern culture often defines love as unconditional approval.

John does not.

Biblical love walks according to God's commands.

Therefore:

Love does not require compromise.

Love does not require approval of sin.

Love does not require abandoning truth.

Key Truth

Biblical love is measured by obedience to God, not merely by emotion.

VII. MANY DECEIVERS HAVE GONE OUT

2 John 7 — Denying That Christ Came in the Flesh

“Many deceivers have gone out into the world. They do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Such a person is the deceiver and the antichrist.”

John now turns sharply from love to spiritual danger.

Many deceivers had entered the world.

Their error concerned:

Jesus Christ.

They denied that Jesus Christ had truly come in the flesh.

Cross References

1 John 4:1

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit. Test the spirits to determine whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

1 John 4:3

“Every spirit that refuses to confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of antichrist, which you heard was coming and is already active in the world.”

1 John 2:22

“Who is the liar? It is the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is antichrist because he rejects the Father and the Son.”

Again John makes Christology central.

What a teacher believes about Jesus matters.

A person can use religious vocabulary and still teach spiritual deception.

Spiritual Principle

False teaching is often exposed by asking what it teaches about Jesus Christ.

VIII. WATCH YOURSELVES

2 John 8 — Do Not Lose Your Reward

“Watch yourselves, so that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may receive a full reward.”

John does not merely say:

Watch false teachers.

He says:

Watch yourselves.

That is important.

Spiritual danger is not only outside us.

Believers must guard:

Their minds.

Their doctrine.

Their conduct.

Their perseverance.

Cross References

2 John 1:4

“I was greatly encouraged to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.”

Hebrews 10:35

“Do not throw away your confidence, because it carries a great reward.”

Revelation 3:11

“I am coming soon. Hold firmly to what you have so that no one takes your crown.”

John warns believers against spiritual carelessness.

Past faithfulness does not justify present compromise.

Application

Ask yourself:

What am I allowing into my spiritual life?

Am I becoming careless about doctrine?

Am I slowly accepting ideas I once knew were false?

Am I remaining faithful?

Important Truth

Spiritual vigilance is necessary because deception often happens gradually.

IX. REMAIN IN THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

2 John 9 — Do Not Run Ahead

“Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God. Whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.”

John warns against people who claim to move beyond apostolic Christianity.

They may call it:

Progress.

New revelation.

Advanced knowledge.

Spiritual enlightenment.

But if someone abandons the teaching of Christ, John says that person does not have God.

Cross References

1 John 2:23

“Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father. Whoever openly acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”

2 John 1:4

“I rejoiced greatly when I found some of your children walking in truth according to the Father's command.”

1 John 2:24

“Let what you heard from the beginning remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you will remain in the Son and in the Father.”

Christianity does not need to be reinvented.

The church does not need a new Christ.

It does not need a new gospel.

It needs to remain faithful to the truth already revealed.

Key Truth

Spiritual maturity does not mean moving beyond Christ; it means going deeper into Christ.

X. DO NOT SUPPORT FALSE TEACHING

2 John 10 — Do Not Welcome False Doctrine

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not welcome him into your house or even greet him.”

This verse must be understood in its context.

John is not teaching Christians to become rude to every unbeliever.

He is addressing traveling teachers who were spreading false doctrine.

In the ancient world, hospitality could provide:

Housing.

Food.

Financial support.

A meeting place.

Public endorsement.

John warns Christians not to help false teachers spread doctrines that deny Christ.

Cross References

Romans 16:17

“I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create divisions and place obstacles in the way of the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.”

2 Timothy 3:5

“They may maintain an outward appearance of godliness while denying its true power. Turn away from such people.”

Titus 3:10

“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, refuse to continue supporting his divisive behavior.”

Christian love does not require cooperation with false teaching.

There is a difference between:

Loving a person

and

Supporting that person's false ministry.

Spiritual Principle

Compassion for people must never become cooperation with deception.

2 John 11 — Sharing in Evil Deeds

“For whoever greets him shares in his evil deeds.”

John explains why the previous warning matters.

Supporting a false teacher can make someone a participant in that teacher's work.

Cross References

Ephesians 5:11

“Do not participate in the fruitless works of darkness. Instead, expose them.”

1 Timothy 5:22

“Do not be hasty in approving someone for spiritual leadership, and do not participate in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.”

2 John 1:10

“If someone comes to you without the teaching of Christ, do not receive him in a way that supports his ministry.”

There are forms of support that communicate endorsement.

Christians must think carefully about:

Who they promote.

Who they financially support.

Who they provide a platform for.

Whose teaching they distribute.

Important Truth

We become responsible when our support helps spread what God calls false.

XI. THE VALUE OF FACE-TO-FACE FELLOWSHIP

2 John 12 — “So That Our Joy May Be Complete”

“I have much more to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and speak face to face, so that our joy may be complete.”

John valued written communication.

After all, he was writing a letter.

But he understood that written words could not completely replace personal fellowship.

He wanted to speak:

Face to face.

Cross References

3 John 1:13

“I have many things I could write to you, but I do not want to continue communicating only with pen and ink.”

3 John 1:14

“I hope to see you soon, and then we will speak face to face.”

1 John 1:4

“We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.”

Christian fellowship involves more than transferring information.

It includes:

Presence.

Conversation.

Encouragement.

Prayer.

Worship.

Love.

Shared joy.

Application

Technology can help Christians communicate.

But it should not make us forget the importance of personal fellowship.

XII. FINAL GREETINGS

2 John 13 — Greetings From the Chosen Sister

“The children of your chosen sister send their greetings. Amen.”

John closes simply.

The greeting demonstrates the bond that existed among believers.

Cross References

1 Peter 5:13

“The church chosen together with you in Babylon sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son in the faith.”

2 John 1:1

“From the elder, to the chosen lady and her children, whom I truly love.”

Romans 16:16

“Greet one another with sincere Christian affection. The churches of Christ send you their greetings.”

The church of Jesus Christ is a family.

Believers may live in different places, but they belong to one spiritual household through Christ.

XIII. FIVE GREAT LESSONS FROM 2 JOHN

1. Truth and Love Must Stay Together

John repeatedly joins:

Truth

and

Love.

Christianity requires both.

Truth without love can become harsh.

Love without truth can become deception.

Ask Yourself:

Am I equally committed to truth and biblical love?

2. Love Includes Obedience

John says:

“This is love: that we walk in obedience to His commands.”

Love is more than feeling.

Love obeys God.

Principle:

Never redefine love in a way that requires disobedience to God.

3. Christians Must Recognize Deceivers

John warns that many deceivers have gone into the world.

False teaching is not imaginary.

Believers need discernment.

Remember:

The most important test concerns Jesus Christ.

4. Do Not Help Spread Spiritual Error

John warns Christians not to support teachers who reject the doctrine of Christ.

That principle remains important.

Christians should not provide resources, endorsement, or influence that enables false teaching to spread.

Principle:

Love people, but do not finance, promote, or participate in deception.

5. Fellowship Produces Joy

John wanted to move beyond written communication to face-to-face fellowship.

Christian relationships matter.

Ask Yourself:

Am I building meaningful fellowship with other believers?

XIV. THE SPIRITUAL PROGRESSION OF 2 JOHN

2 John gives us a clear pattern for faithful Christian living.

1. Know the Truth

Truth is foundational.

2. Let the Truth Remain

God's truth should live within us.

3. Walk in the Truth

Truth must become practice.

4. Love One Another

Truth should produce love.

5. Obey God's Commands

Biblical love walks in obedience.

6. Recognize Deception

Not every teacher represents God.

7. Guard Yourself

Watch your own spiritual condition.

8. Remain in Christ's Teaching

Do not run beyond biblical truth.

9. Refuse Partnership With Error

Do not help falsehood spread.

10. Pursue Fellowship

Enjoy the spiritual joy of God's people.

This is the movement from:

Truth → Love → Obedience → Discernment → Faithfulness → Fellowship.

XV. WHAT 2 JOHN TEACHES US ABOUT TRUTH AND LOVE

2 John gives us an important biblical balance.

Truth

John says the truth:

Lives in us.

Will remain forever.

Must be walked in.

Must be defended.

Love

John says believers must:

Love one another.

Walk in love.

Demonstrate love through obedience.

Discernment

John warns:

Many deceivers have entered the world.

False teaching must be recognized.

Believers must watch themselves.

Separation From Error

John teaches that Christians should not support people who spread doctrines that reject Christ.

Fellowship

John values personal fellowship among believers.

The message of 2 John can therefore be summarized:

Love never requires the abandonment of truth, and truth never gives us permission to abandon love.

XVI. Answers for Personal Study

Question 1

Why does John connect truth and love so closely?

John understands that genuine Christian love must be rooted in God's truth.

Truth tells us:

Who God is.

Who Jesus Christ is.

What salvation means.

How believers should live.

Love then becomes the practical expression of that truth.

If love is separated from truth, people can begin calling sinful or deceptive things loving.

If truth is separated from love, people may defend correct doctrine with an ungodly attitude.

John refuses both errors.

Biblical Christianity requires truth expressed through love.

Question 2

What does it mean to walk in truth?

Walking in truth means allowing what God has revealed to shape everyday life.

It is possible to know biblical facts while refusing to live according to them.

John rejoiced because believers were not merely talking about truth.

They were:

Walking in it.

Walking in truth affects our:

Conduct.

Relationships.

Speech.

Decisions.

Values.

Priorities.

Spiritual commitments.

Truth becomes visible through obedience.

Question 3

Why does John say that love means obedience to God's commands?

John does not define love merely as an emotion.

He says:

“This is love: that we walk in obedience to His commands.”

This protects Christians from false definitions of love.

A person may say:

“If you really loved me, you would approve of everything I do.”

But biblical love cannot require disobedience to God.

Jesus connected love and obedience when He said:

“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

Real love seeks another person's good according to God's truth.

Question 4

What kind of false teaching was John warning about?

John specifically warns about teachers who refused to confess that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh.

This was a denial of an essential truth concerning Jesus.

John identifies such teaching as deception and antichrist.

This shows us that what people believe about Jesus Christ is foundational.

A teacher who rejects the biblical Christ cannot be treated as though he is simply offering another harmless Christian opinion.

Question 5

What does John mean when he says, “Watch yourselves”?

John is calling believers to spiritual vigilance.

Christians should guard:

Their doctrine.

Their spiritual influences.

Their conduct.

Their perseverance.

Their relationship with Christ.

It is easy to focus only on false teachers and forget that we must also examine ourselves.

A believer should regularly ask:

Am I remaining faithful?

Am I drifting?

Am I compromising?

Am I allowing deceptive ideas to influence me?

Spiritual protection requires continued watchfulness.

Question 6

What does it mean to “continue in the teaching of Christ”?

It means remaining faithful to the truth revealed about Jesus Christ.

John warns against people who “run ahead” as though biblical Christianity has become outdated and needs to be replaced.

Christian maturity does not consist of abandoning foundational truth.

It means growing more deeply in that truth.

The gospel does not need to be reinvented.

Believers need to remain in what God has revealed concerning His Son.

Question 7

Why does John tell believers not to welcome false teachers into their homes?

In John's historical setting, traveling teachers depended heavily upon hospitality.

Receiving someone into the home could provide:

Food.

Lodging.

Financial assistance.

A meeting place.

Public credibility.

John therefore warns Christians not to provide support that would enable false teachers to spread doctrine that denied Christ.

His concern is not ordinary kindness toward unbelievers.

His concern is partnership in false ministry.

Question 8

How can Christians apply this warning today?

Christians should consider carefully what teachers and ministries they:

Promote.

Support financially.

Invite to speak.

Recommend to others.

Distribute online.

Provide platforms for.

We should not knowingly help spread teaching that rejects essential biblical truth concerning Christ.

The principle is simple:

Do not use your resources to advance spiritual deception.

Question 9

Why is face-to-face fellowship important?

John had more to communicate, but he wanted to speak personally.

He believed this would make their joy complete.

Personal fellowship allows Christians to:

Encourage one another.

Pray together.

Share burdens.

Worship together.

Correct misunderstandings.

Build deeper relationships.

Written and electronic communication can be helpful, but it cannot completely replace embodied Christian fellowship.

Question 10

How can a believer hold firmly to truth without becoming harsh?

The answer is found throughout 2 John:

Truth and love.

The believer does not need to choose one.

We can:

Reject false doctrine without hatred.

Speak truth without cruelty.

Correct error without arrogance.

Stand firmly without becoming bitter.

Love people without approving falsehood.

Jesus perfectly embodied grace and truth.

Christians should seek the same balance.

Personal Application

2 John gives us a powerful progression:

Truth must be known.

Truth must live within us.

Truth must be walked out.

Walking in truth leads to obedience.

Obedience expresses love.

Love does not ignore deception.

Discernment protects the believer.

Faithfulness requires remaining in Christ's teaching.

Faithfulness also requires refusing partnership with error.

Truthful and loving believers enjoy genuine fellowship.

2 John teaches us that the Christian life cannot be reduced to only one virtue.

God calls us to:

Truth.

Love.

Obedience.

Discernment.

Faithfulness.

We should never become so concerned about truth that we stop loving people.

And we should never become so concerned about appearing loving that we stop defending truth.

The mature Christian does both.

XVII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Never Sacrifice Truth in the Name of Love”

Our culture often tells us that love means approval.

Scripture does not.

John says:

Walk in love.

But John also says:

Watch out for deceivers.

He says:

Love one another.

But he also says:

Do not support those who spread false teaching.

There is no contradiction.

True love wants what is spiritually good for another person.

Therefore true love cannot celebrate what destroys people spiritually.

This principle applies in:

Families.

Churches.

Friendships.

Ministries.

Teaching.

Counseling.

Leadership.

Christian love should be warm.

But it should also be truthful.

Christian conviction should be firm.

But it should also be loving.

We do not honor God by becoming cruel in the name of truth.

And we do not honor God by abandoning truth in the name of kindness.

John teaches us:

Walk in truth and love.

XVIII. FINAL APPLICATION

2 John asks us several searching questions.

First:

Am I walking in truth?

Not merely:

Do I know truth?

But:

Does truth shape my life?

Then ask:

Am I walking in love?

Do I demonstrate:

Patience?

Kindness?

Compassion?

Forgiveness?

Faithfulness?

Then ask:

Does my definition of love agree with God's commands?

Biblical love never requires rebellion against God.

Then ask:

Can I recognize deception?

John warns:

Many deceivers have gone out into the world.

Christians need discernment.

Know Scripture.

Know Jesus Christ.

Know the gospel.

Then ask:

Am I spiritually watchful?

Do not become careless.

Do not assume yesterday's faithfulness guarantees tomorrow's faithfulness.

Guard your heart.

Guard your doctrine.

Remain in Christ.

Then ask:

Am I helping spread things that contradict God's truth?

Be careful what you:

Share.

Promote.

Recommend.

Finance.

Endorse.

Not every spiritual voice deserves a platform.

Finally:

Am I investing in Christian fellowship?

John desired face-to-face fellowship.

We need one another.

Therefore:

Know the truth.

Walk in the truth.

Love one another.

Obey God's commands.

Recognize deceivers.

Watch yourself.

Remain in Christ's teaching.

Refuse partnership with falsehood.

And pursue joyful fellowship with God's people.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for giving us Your truth.

Help us not merely to know it intellectually, but to walk in it faithfully.

Teach us to love as You command us to love.

Give us hearts filled with compassion, patience, kindness, and grace.

But also give us discernment.

Protect us from spiritual deception.

Help us recognize teachings that distort the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Give us courage to stand for truth without becoming harsh.

Give us love for people without compromising what You have revealed.

Teach us to obey Your commandments.

Guard us from the temptation to redefine love according to the standards of the world.

Help us remain faithful to the teaching of Christ.

Give us wisdom concerning the teachers, ministries, and messages we support.

Keep us from participating in the spread of error.

Help us use our influence, resources, words, and relationships for the advancement of truth.

Strengthen our fellowship with other believers.

Give us relationships in which truth is spoken, love is demonstrated, faith is strengthened, and Christ is honored.

May truth live deeply within us.

May love flow freely through us.

May obedience mark our lives.

And may Jesus Christ remain at the center of everything we believe and everything we do.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Key Verse

“And this is love: that we walk in obedience to His commands. As you have heard from the beginning, His command is that you walk in love.” — 2 John 6

Central Truth

God calls believers to walk in both truth and love, remaining faithful to the teaching of Jesus Christ while refusing to support spiritual deception.

2 John in One Sentence

Walk faithfully in God's truth, demonstrate His love through obedience, guard yourself against deceivers, and never support teaching that leads people away from Jesus Christ.