

Sermon Notes

Series on Second John
Second John 1-6
“Practicing the Truth”

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Lesson #1, 07/13/08
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Introduction: If email had been available to the Apostle John, I don't believe he would have used that method to write his second letter, although perhaps he would have used it on 1st John! Emails are usually not very personal but are often general and rather business-like in content. Unlike 1st John, 2nd John is a very private and personal letter and at approximately 245 Greek words, is shorter than all other New Testament books; 12 verses and 303 words in the KJV except Third John with 219 Greek words; 13 verses. One writer calls it “a pastor's postcard to his people,” capturing well John's pastoral heart and empathy for these Christians. John is a good *shepherd* of the *flock*, a man with a true pastor/shepherd's heart that is willing to care, tend, and lay down his life for his *sheep* (read John 10:1-27; Acts 20:28-29 & 1 Peter 5:1-4). However hand written letters are a very rare method of communicating in the 21st century! 2nd John is written in the standard letter form of the 1st century, beginning with an introduction (verses 1-3), stating the sender and identifying the intended recipient and including a greeting. Letters of this period usually include a statement of thanksgiving, which 1st John doesn't; however, we could consider verse 4 as just such an expression when he writes, *I was very glad....* In keeping with correspondence of John's day, the body of the letter follows in verses 5-12. Letters then would conclude by expressing some wish or greeting, which the Apostle John does in verse 13. The situation in the church that John addresses in this letter is very similar to his first epistle. Note that the overview chart of John's three epistles that I've prepared, indicate that his three letters were written sometime around 90-95 AD, and probably written from Ephesus. Recall that the Apostle John is at this juncture the oldest surviving apostle who knew personally the Lord Jesus Christ as Peter and Paul have already died.

Chart of John's epistles

	First John	Second John	Third John
Theme	<i>Fellowship with God</i>	<i>Fellowship with enemies</i>	<i>Fellowship with believers</i>
Recipients & Topics	<i>My little children 2:1</i>	<i>The chosen lady v.1</i>	<i>Gaius 1:1</i>
Key Word	<i>Love</i>	<i>Truth</i>	<i>Truth</i>
Key Instruction	<i>Walk in the light 1:7</i>	<i>Walk in the truth v. 4</i>	<i>Be fellow workers of the truth v.8</i>
Key Verse	<i>5:13</i>	<i>v. 10</i>	<i>v.8</i>

Key Idea	<i>Promote Christian living</i>	<i>Combat false teachers</i>	<i>Promote Christian hospitality</i>
Place	<i>Written in Ephesus</i>		
Date	<i>About 90-95 AD</i>		

John's **theme** for this epistle is quite simple; he instructs believers not to entertain false teachers! Hospitality is on his mind as he writes. Read here verses 10 and 11 which we'll examine in the next lesson, Lord willing: *10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.* (Verse 10 is the key verse in this letter.) So, John is warning this fellowship of believers about not giving hospitality to traveling evangelists and teachers who might be disseminating false doctrine as opposed to *the truth*. False teachers were introducing heresy to the churches in Asia Minor (which is modern day Turkey) false teachers known as Gnostics. Dr. Wayne Barber, graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, in commenting on 1 John 1 provides us with the following information on Gnosticism: Gnostic heresy was something that was very prevalent in the days of the writing of 1 John. **Gnosticism** is still around, by the way. It is just under a different cover. Many religious programs on television are preaching 21st century Gnosticism. It is not one single thing new. It has been around for a long time. It erodes the faith, the trusting of people in the Lord Jesus Christ. **Gnosticism** came from a man by the name of **Cerenthus**. Cerenthus denied the truth that Jesus Christ ever came in the flesh. He started the heresy that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary, not of the Virgin Mary, and that the Spirit of God, the true Christ, never entered Him until He was baptized at the River Jordan by John the Baptist. The Spirit of Christ lived in Him until just before the crucifixion and then departed Him. Now what does this do? It denies the precious atonement for our sins. It denies His death, burial and resurrection. It denies the major tenets of the Gospel. It denies the virgin birth. A little later it migrated into a different form called **Docetism**. That simply said that Jesus was a ghost, that He never had a body to start with. He was a spirit, an apparition. It comes from the Greek word which means to seem or to suppose. They said, "He really didn't have a body." So then, I ask you the question, how can our Gospel be true if He didn't have a body? Because it says in [Hebrews 10:5](#) (note), "A body thou hast given me to do thy will, O God." He came to die for you and for me. It wasn't just human blood that was shed and it wasn't just divine blood that was shed. It was divinely human blood that was shed upon the cross. **Gnosticism** completely obliterated the truth of the Gospel of what we have just spoken. It denied everything that these young Christians knew. They were being beleaguered by the ones who were bringing this heresy in their midst. This is a very dangerous doctrine. **Gnosticism** says to the Christian, "Because all of this is true, your flesh is evil." I would agree with that – the lust of my flesh is my problem every day of my life. **Gnosticism** said, "Your body is evil. But you are not accountable for sin because a body is going to do what it only can do. It is going to sin.

You are spiritual. With mystical knowledge you live inside this body and the more it sins the more you kind of learn about the two different lifestyles." Have you heard the doctrine that is going around when people stand up and confess all these things? They say we are living in a carton. They even use the word "carton." They say, "My body is evil. Therefore, any sin that comes in my life is really not me, it is something outside of me that is causing me to do it and most of it is demonic." There is no personal accountability for sin. There is no personal dealing with sin. "Oh no, we live in a carton. And inside that carton we are like God. The body itself, the carton, is evil. God, you see, doesn't have anything to do with those things that are flesh." Have you heard about this doctrine? It has been in a subtle way in recent years. You know what I am talking about. John goes right to the heart of Docetism, not just the Gnostic heresy, when it says that Jesus is an apparition and He didn't have a body to start with. In verses 1-5 look at what he says. "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life." Notice that, "we have heard, we have seen with our eyes, we have beheld and our hands have handled." If He didn't have a body, how could we do that? He is trying to let them know, "I am an eyewitness and an eyewitness account is important. I am the apostle and I am telling you something. You had better hang on to what is the authority of the ones God has given it to." [From www.preceptaustin.org website.] Speaking of hospitality and entertaining traveling Christians, the Roman Empire contributed greatly to the spreading of the gospel in many ways, obviously due to solely to God's sovereign hand, not only by a commonly understood language, but also by the Pax Romana (Roman peace) coupled with their excellent road system that spanned the entire Roman Empire. The consolidation of that empire made travel throughout the world easier and safer than ever; as a result, many Christians 'took to the roads' to evangelize. I understand that portions of two very famous roads are still visible today: (1) the Appian Way, near Rome; (2) the Egnatian Way near Kavalla—the New Testament name is Neapolis (cf. Acts 16:11), and near Philippi and Thessalonica. A favorite commentator of mine, John R. W. Stott adds, "But where should travelling Christians stay when they came to some city on a business journey or, more important still, on a missionary journey?" He then quotes from an article titled, 'Roads and Travel' (New Testament) in Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, "The comforts of the modern hotel, or even of the village inn were then unknown (Findlay). Besides, according to W. M. Ramsay 'the ancient inns...were little removed from houses of ill-fame...The profession of inn-keeper was dishonourable, and their infamous character is often noted in Roman laws. Inns were notoriously dirty and flea-infested, while innkeepers were notoriously rapacious (Barclay). As a result, it was natural that Christian people on their travels should be given hospitality by members of local churches. There are many traces in the New Testament of this custom. For example, Paul was entertained by Lydia in Philippi, Jason in Thessalonica, Gaius in Corinth, Philip the evangelist in Caesarea and the Cypriot Mnason in Jerusalem (Acts xvi.15, xvii. 7; Rom. xvi 23; Acts xxi.8, 16)." [Stott, John R. W., The Epistles of John, Tyndale Bible Commentaries, Eerdmans, Pp. 198-199].

#1 COMMITMENT TO THE TRUTH, vv. 1-3

Verse 1: In verses 1 and 2, the formal introduction to the book, the Apostle John introduces himself, identifies his readers, greets them and gives his reason for writing. We'll begin by identifying the author of 1st John, here simply called *the elder*, the same title as in 3rd John 1. You might think since this book is called 'the second epistle of John' that it's John's letter, right? But, John doesn't sign this letter, 'the Apostle John' but rather the author signs it, *the elder*. *The elder* is the word in the Greek [πρεσβυτερος], 'presbuteros, which is used in the New Testament for the word *elder* or overseer, sometimes translated 'bishop' and can be used to refer to an older person. πρεσβυτερος is translated, *old men*—Acts 2:17 & Hebrews 11:2; *older women*—1 Timothy 5:2; a church leader, *overseers*—Acts 20:17, 18, 28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-7 & Titus 1:7; a church leader, *elder*—Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5 & 1 Peter 5:1 & 2. Concerning authorship, allow me to cite a statement by B. H. Streeter: "The three Epistles and the Gospel of John are so closely allied in diction, style, and general outlook that the burden of proof lies with the person who would deny their common authorship." [Streeter, B. H., The Four Gospels, Macmillan, p. 460.] I believe that the Apostle John calls himself, *the elder* rather than by his own name, because by this distinctive title he desires to emphasize that he is a pastor to these people and to show his pastoral heart. I'm also reminded that in his gospel, John refers to himself as *the disciple whom Jesus loved*, rather than his own personal name, perhaps out of humility not desiring to be exalted but rather exalt Jesus Christ. *The disciple whom Jesus loved*—read John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7 & 20. Therefore, the Apostle John chose to use the title *the elder* because the churches to whom he ministered and wrote would naturally know who he was and his position. Recall that John never affixed his name to any of his epistles with the exception of Revelation. John was then, both an apostle as well as an *elder*. By the way, Peter does the same thing in 1 Peter 5:1 where he refers to himself as an *elder*. Peter was both an *elder* and an apostle. How fascinating is that next phrase, *to the chosen lady*? Makes you curious, right? There are at least four interpretations as to what is meant by *the chosen lady*: (1) Metaphorically understood: The 1st interpretation is that this refers figuratively to the church who are the recipients of this letter; therefore, John is writing to the church and its members. The words, *her children*, refer to the church members. Often in the Bible Israel or the New Testament church is designated as a woman or the bride of Christ (Isaiah 54:1, 13; Jeremiah 6:21; 31:21; John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Galatians 4:25-26; Ephesians 5:22 & Revelation 18 & 19. Notice that in verse 13, the Apostle John greets *the children of your chosen sister*, which could imply a reference to the church. Some believe that this interpretation is best as it was written during a time of persecution and by using a cryptographic phrase (that is, a message hidden in code words). John would not have implicated any specific person if by chance this epistle had been intercepted by Roman authorities who might have killed the intended recipient. While this could possibly be written to a church and church members, as I read this epistle that's not what naturally comes to my mind. (2) A specifically named Christian woman: A 2nd interpretation is that this is actually a woman and perhaps her name is 'Elect/Electa,' *chosen* [Greek is εκλεκτη] or her name is Kuria. Greek word for *lady* is κυρια, Kuria, and in the Aramaic

corresponds to the name Martha, which in Aramaic means ‘lady.’ Stott writes, “J. Rendel Harris in *The Expositor* (March 1901) argued from papyri parallels that *kuria* was a term of endearment, and that 2 John was virtually a love-letter, written to a certain Electa who was far from being what he called ‘a prehistoric Countess of Huntingdon’!” He continues by discounting the view that her name is Electa by adding “but, if the lady’s name was Electa, we should have to believe, according to verse 13, that she had a sister called Electa also!” [Stott, John R. W., The Epistles of John, Tyndale Bible Commentaries, Eerdmans, p.200]. Some have even suggested that such a woman might be (a) Mary, Jesus’ mother, whom Jesus entrusted to John’s care in John 19:26-27 or (b) Martha in John 11:1-46, especially since Martha is the Aramaic equivalent of Kuria. Understanding this as a real woman in the church makes sense to me [and some believe that she was probably a widow with children. (3) An unnamed Christian woman: This 3rd view sees her as a real person with real family members who are not only members of her family but also members of the church family; a church meeting in her home. The absence of the Greek definite article with her name suggests that this refers to an unnamed *lady*. (4) A very specific Christian woman and a congregation: This fourth interpretation is a takeoff on the 2nd interpretation which understands this to be a very specific lady, whatever her name might be, but adds that he’s writing to a congregation through her. To reinforce that thinking, note that the Apostle John goes back and forth between the singular and the plural uses of words/verbs. Here are the uses of the singular: (v.1—*chosen lady*; v.5—*lady*; v.13—*chosen sister*) and here are the uses of the plural: (v.6—*you have heard*; v.8—*watch yourselves*; v.10—*anyone comes to you* & v.12—*write to you...come to you*.) Therefore, perhaps we should understand that the Apostle John is writing these words first of all to a very specific *chosen lady* so that she in turn will share these truths with *her children* in her immediate family as well as the members of the church which might have been meeting in her own home! Conjecture yet possible! Similar examples of such duality can be found in 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; & Philemon 1:2. Taking this “both/and” view seems to serve to take away the concern of such difficulty as found in verse 4; *4 I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father* which would apply more to a church than only to one individual. So, John is warning this fellowship of believers about not giving hospitality to traveling evangelists and teachers who might be disseminating false doctrine as opposed to *the truth*. Listen carefully; welcoming such false teachers in one’s home opens the door to infiltrating the church with doctrinal perversion. (Compare Titus 1:10-11.) That warning introduces the very next phrase in verse 1; *whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth* with the emphasis on the word *truth*, in contrast to the lies of false teachers. In fact, look at your Bibles and notice that the word *truth* is used four times just in verses 1-4, the salutation, and is one of the key words of this book along with the other key word *love* (also used 4 times in the book). *Truth* and *love* go hand in hand relationally; *truth* is the motivation and the context for experiencing Christian *love* as *true love* is bound by *truth*. In much of so-called Christianity today, *truth* takes a back seat to *loving* others; but **the teachings of the Word of God never surrender *truth* for *love*—never!** (Read what Paul

writes in 2 Corinthians 13:7-8 & Galatians 2:11-14). *Truth* is always on at stake in the church, then and now. *Loving* others in the church (cf. v.5) is natural to the one *knowing the truth*—isn't that his point at the end of verse 1? *Love* among the brothers and sisters ought to be stronger when God's people *know the truth* of the Word of God and hold fast to the cardinal doctrine of Christianity such as the deity of Christ; substitutionary atonement; personal sin; etc. *Truth* demands a response and *truth* makes *love for one another* possible as the Word of God binds believers together in a mutual bond of *love*. Making this a little more personal; if we understand John's words as addressed to a specific *lady* in the church then the Apostle John is stating that the rest of the church has as much *love* for her and *her children* and others as John does for the entire church. John is commending the church for its *love* for others. Bruce makes this most practical remark about *truth* and *love*; "Where 'truth and love' coexist harmoniously, we have a well-balanced Christian character (cf. Eph. 4.15)." [Bruce, F. F., The Epistles of John, Eerdmans, p.139].

Verse 2: The Apostle John continues writing about *truth* affirming that true Christian *love* revolves around *truth*. To John, *truth* is not just the facts of the Bible nor simply an objective set of rules or tenets of belief but to him, *truth* is that which is alive and living in a dynamic way within each of us. Because *truth* comes from the living God, He enables us to live in *truth forever*. We believers don't *love one another* because we are compatible or we put up with each other, but because of God's *truth* living/*abiding* within. Often in the Old Testament and the New Testament we read about the Word of God *abiding* or dwelling or living *in* the believer; read Deuteronomy 6:6; 11:18; John 15:7 & 2 John 2:14]. One scholar finds the closest parallel in John 14:16-17 where Jesus promised the Holy Spirit whom believers *know because He abides with you....* 'In other words, the truth the author is speaking of in 2 John 1 is a manifestation of the Spirit of truth himself, and is permanently with the believer, just as the Spirit is.' *The truth* about the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word is the ground for all fellowship. In our day, not many churches and/or pastors hold to a Christocentric doctrine. They might be sincere and loving but not hold strong to *the Word of truth*—doctrine (read Philippians 2:16 & John 8:44 concerning Satan). Illustration: The great American statesman, Daniel Webster was dining in Boston with a group of distinguished men. Some of these had Unitarian leanings. To refresh our minds a Unitarian is a person who denies the trinity and the deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. When the subject of religion came up at the table, Webster boldly affirmed his belief in the deity of Jesus Christ and His atonement at the cross. "But Mr. Webster," said one of the men, "Can you comprehend how Christ could be both God and man?" "No sir, I cannot comprehend it! If I could comprehend Him, He would be no greater than myself. I feel that I need a super human Savior!" Amen! Hallelujah!

Verse 3 continues John's salutation to the church. We discover similar greetings in other New Testament epistles (cf. Romans 1:7; Galatians 6:16; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2 & Jude 2.) Those three main words, *grace, mercy and peace* stand in perfect relationship to each other. Do you think that there's a progression in these words? *Grace* is what God does in our hearts and never what man is able to do—*grace* is not based on human merit;

(a popular acronym that describes *grace* is, ‘God’s riches at Christ’s expense). (Read John 1:14; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Ephesians 2:8-9 & 1 Peter 5:10). *Grace* is followed by the manifestation of that *grace* in His *mercy* with the resulting issuing of *peace* within the lives of believers. Dr. Westcott writes about this sequence; “The succession ‘grace, mercy, peace’ marks the order from the first notion of God to the final satisfaction of man.” [Westcott, Brooke Foss, The Epistles of St. John, 1883, Reprint ed. England: Marcham Manor Press, p. 225]. *Mercy*, the Greek word is ελεος, eleos, emphasizing compassion/s; love poured out by God on the undeserving and needy, like us. (Read Lamentations 3:22; Psalm 23:6; 103:8; Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 1:3 & Ephesians 2:4.) *Peace*, a favorite word of John's is the assurance that believer's have in knowing that we are kept secure by God the *Father*. God is a God of *peace*—Romans 15:33 & 16:20. Also, every believer has God's *peace*—Romans 5:1 but not every one enjoys it—Philippians 4:6-7. Also read Isaiah 26:3; John 14:27 & 16:33. Isn't John's trinity of words, *grace, mercy and peace* actually **a promise**? John doesn't just wish them on his readers; he bestows them with the words *will be with us!* Praise God for that promise. This is the only use of the word *mercy* in any of John's writings. John affirms the source for these three as *from the trinity, God the Father....* I almost overlooked the unique phrase that's found only here in the New Testament, *the Son of the Father*; perhaps to stress the incarnate Christ. Notice that the verse ends with the words, *in truth and love* as the Apostle John is attempting to declare the necessity of both and not to emphasize *love* at the expense of *truth*. Dr. Ray Steadman shares a rather humorous story told by the renowned Dr. Harry A. Ironside. He relates that on the way out of the church service a man shook his hand and said, ‘Oh pastor, I want to tell you what a blessing you've been to me since you've been pastor of this church. Why, when I first started here, I didn't have any regard for God, man or the devil. But since you came, I've learned to love all three.’ Dr. Stott writes these words about *truth and love* and places them contextually in the book; “Our love is not to be so blind as to ignore the views and conduct of others. Truth should make our love discriminating. John sees nothing inconsistent in adding to his command to love one another (5) a clear instruction about the refusal of fellowship to false teachers who are deceivers and antichrists (7-11). Our love for others is not to undermine our loyalty to the truth. On the other hand, we must never champion the truth in a harsh or bitter spirit. Those who are ‘walking in truth’ (4) need to be exhorted to ‘love one another’ (5).” [Stott, John R. W., The Epistles of John, Tyndale Bible Commentaries, Eerdmans, pp. 204-205].

#2 COMMENDATION FOR LIVING IN THE TRUTH, v. 4

Verse 4: Commenting on the literary structure of 2nd John, Smalley writes, “In the central section of 2 John [vv.4-11]...we have a brief summary of the great contrasts between truth and error, love and hatred, the church and the world, which are dealt with at greater length in 1 John.” [Smalley, Stephen S., 1, 2, 3 John, Word Biblical Commentary, p. 322]. Most 1st century letters include some expression of thanksgiving after the greeting and so here we find that John is ecstatic having found that the members of this church are living for God and obeying His Word, in spite of the false teachers that had made serious inroads into the church. Verse 4 are words of commendation. John begins by declaring his

excitement! He is *very glad*; (the New Revised Standard Version reads, *overjoyed*) to find those who are *walking in truth*. *Walking* is a figure of speech for living. John is not implying that there were *some* in the church who were not *walking in truth* of the Word of God, but simply that he doesn't have personal knowledge of all the members of the *lady's* family and/or the church. We might also be curious as to how the Apostle John learned this information; perhaps some of the *lady's children* and/or members of the church had traveled to Ephesus for business and John had met them there or he had visited this church or perhaps reports had reached him about their continuing strong faith in Christ. (Cf. the parallels in 1 John 1:7—*walking in the light* & 3rd John 3—*walking in the truth*.) *Walking in the truth* involves believing the entire Word of God, obeying it, and living it out in our daily activities. The Greek participle is περιπατούτας, peripatountas, from the verb περιπατεω, peripateo, meaning “to walk about,” and refers to conduct, behavior or lifestyle (read the use of this Greek word in Romans 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 2 Corinthians 5:7; 10:3; Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 4:5; 1 John 1:6 & 3 John 3-4.) These words, *walking in the truth*, capture the reason why John wrote this 2nd epistle. That was music to his ears rather than to have heard that they had fallen prey to false teaching or just fallen away! A few weeks ago I received a really great phone call from a man whom I disciplined back in Ohio and had not heard from him since we left there 32 years ago. Since that initial call, we've talked on the phone often and have been emailing back and forth. He thanked me for mentoring him and impressing doctrine on him. But what made the call so great was when he told me how much he loved the Word of God and how faithful he is to the Lord and his church, I literally cried with joy just as the Apostle John did as he writes: *I was very glad to find some of your children walking in the truth* after all those years. June was pastor appreciation month here at Grace Community Church and there were so many tangible ways that you demonstrated appreciation to me for which I'm eternally grateful. However, to know that the people I pastor are *walking in the truth* brings the greatest of *gladness* and joy to any pastor—that's the heart of a genuine pastor, elder and/or deacon. And if it brings mankind *gladness*, can you imagine how God feels when we *walk in the truth*? Christianity is more than something intellectual; it should affect our attitudes and behavior as the latter part of verse 4 states, *just as we have received commandment to do from the Father*. This *lady's children* and the members of this church had made a close correspondence between how they lived and the Word of God. I believe that the word *commandment* refers to the instruction in the Bible. God has revealed Himself and His *truth* in concrete fashion; we're not left adrift, rudderless to determine for ourselves how we should live and what is right and wrong. He has *commanded us to do* in the Bible. The absolutes of the Bible state how to live—thus saith the Lord! [John R. W. Stott adds, “Revelation carries with it responsibility, and the clearer the revelation, the greater the responsibility to believe and obey it (cf. Am 3.2)"] [Stott, John R. W., *The Epistles of John*, Tyndale Bible Commentaries, Eerdmans, p.206]. Perhaps the Apostle John is presenting this foundational principle; **that faithfulness to the Word of God is the foundation of Christian living!** In this election year, everybody's taking polls these days so let me get your opinion; is it easier to study the *truth* or live it? I read this illustration that I believe

fits in here. A Doctor of Divinity was living in the same house as his son who was a Doctor of Medicine. One day the phone rang and the maid answered as the voice on the other end said: ‘Is the doctor in?’ The maid replied: ‘which one do you want? Do you want pills or prayer? On another occasion when she answered the phone, she was heard to ask: ‘do you want the one who preaches or the one who practices? That’s exactly what the Apostle John wants us to grasp—believe God’s Word and live it!

#3 CHARGE TO LIVE IN LOVE, vv. 5-6

Verse 5: Now, the Apostle John connects all that he’s been writing about with the commandment to *love one another*. *Loving one another* is not something that we’ve never heard nor had John’s readers. John repeats this principle throughout 1st John (cf. 3:1, 11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12, 20-21) as well as in his Gospel (cf. 13:34-35; 15:12, 17). Also read Paul’s comments in Colossians 1:4 & 2 Thessalonians 1:3. Does John give any exceptions to when we don’t have to *love one another*? No! Reciprocating *love* is a *commandment* from God! John’s words *one another* indicate reciprocity—true believers reciprocate *love* to others. John uses a Greek reciprocal pronoun—*one another*. You know that the Greek word for *love* is αγαπωμεν, agapomen, from the Greek verb αγαπαω, agapao, or agape *love*; that unique kind of *love* that *loves* the unlovely (see discussion below on Greek words for *love*). Agape *love* isn’t emotional but rather it’s *commanded* from God! No choice—even if you don’t like that other Christian; God’s placed under *command*! We must! Didn’t Jesus teach to ‘turn the other cheek?’ And if we ‘hate our brothers we’re liars.’ I’m still convinced that one of the most difficult things we are to do as Christians is to *love one another*. That includes husbands and wives, parents and children, etc. Maybe someone here needs to express more *love* and show more *love* in tangible ways—anyone? Genuine godly obedient *love* is hard to counterfeit! Quick review of the Greek words for love: There are four Greek words for *love*. (1) God allowed a unique word to be coined in the language of the common man, Koine Greek, in preparation for the New Testament and the Christian era. It’s the Greek word αγαπε, agape (noun form), and translated *love*. Yet agape *love* is different than any other kind of *love* for agape *love* seeks the best for another person and causes believers to *love* the unlovely and unappealing. Agape *love* makes believers “will” to *love* those they really don’t want to *love* simply because of Jesus Christ. Agape *love* has its source in the will although it involves the emotions as it is choosing by an act of the will to *love* even when the object of *love* may be unworthy of *love*. Agape *love* gives and *loves* because it wants to; it does not demand or expect repayment from the *love* given. Agape *love* is seen in Matthew 5:44 where the verbal form [φιλεω, fileo] is used in the command to *love your enemies*. Also read John 3:16; 15:13; Romans 5:5, 8; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; & 1 John 4:11 for uses of agape. Other Greek words that focus on different aspects of *love* are (2) ερος, eros, (our word erotic is derived from this) basically all sexual and/or physical *love* and became associated with passion. The source of this *love* is emotions which can lead to lust. Although the Bible refers to lust, eros is not used anywhere in the New Testament; (3) στοργε, storge, meaning family *love* between a parent and a child or between family members in general. The source of this *love* is also emotions from which grow affection for family members. This Greek word is used in the

New Testament only in the negative (with the prefix “a”) in Romans 1:31 & 2 Timothy 3:3 and in the last verse reveals that there will be a breakdown of family affection in the last days; (4) φιλία, *philia*, emphasizes affection which grows out of mutual response (its much easier to like those who like us). It speaks of brotherly *love* (Philadelphia) and the *love* of deep friendship and partnership. Again, the source of *philia love* is emotions and a form of the word is what Martha and Mary used when they told Jesus that Lazarus *whom You love is sick* (John 11:3).

Verse 6: If anyone has a question about what *loving one another* means, explains that it is essentially obeying God (read 1 John 5:2-3). Consider John’s argument: (1) applying God’s principle of *truth* to experience produces *love* (v.5); *love* in turn produces the application of *truth* to experience (v.6a); the application of the Word of God to experience produces *love*. Believers will obey God *commandments* because we know that to obey is not only best for us but it’s basically applying the Word of God to our experience (cf. 1 John 5:1-2). John is saying that real *love* is *waking* according to God’s *commandments*—according to the Word of God. Think on this for a second: an incomplete response to the Word of God comes from an incomplete *love* for God! Ouch! There is some question as to what *it* refers to—the last word in the verse. *It* could refer to *love* or to *commandment* although *commandment* seems to fit best with John’s argument. In verses 4-6, John uses *commandment/s* four times. John desires that his readers obey the teachings that they *heard from the beginning*, such as in John’s gospel and such teaching as found in such places as John 1:1-2: *1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.* Believers are to reject false teaching, then and today. And recall what Jesus said in John 14:15: *If you love me, you will keep My commandments*; and also John 14:21a: *He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.*

Conclusion: Therefore, John is saying that *love* is more than emotions or mush as it must involve content—the Word of God. We who love the Word of God, let’s go live and practice that *truth!* **We obey Him because we love Him.**

Note: It is my prayer that these printed notes will encourage Bible students to do further study on this passage. If you find any typos, errors or have any questions, please contact me. Since these notes are also available on our website, www.gcc-am.org, your assistance in drawing my attention to necessary corrections will be greatly appreciated. I’ve made every effort to give credit to quotations from other authors. Thank you. Pastor John A. Eastman