

---

# *The Epistles of John*

“Love Can Mean Saying ‘No’”

## 2 John 1-6

---

*Janette and I are not exactly what you might consider social butterflies. Also I wouldn't put the gift of hospitality at the top of the list of gifts the Lord has provided for us. And because of the nature of my ministry I have to limit my social involvement.*

*It was the late seventies. Life was fairly routine in those days. One night Janette came home and announced that she had been talking to this person, who really wasn't known to either of us. Anyway, this young lady needed a place to stay. And much to my surprise Janette suggested we put her up. Now, recognizing that this must have been a request from the Lord, since Janette suggesting this was on a parallel with the parting of the Red Sea, I agreed. This was never to be our norm.*

*But a lack of social involvement and exercise of hospitality isn't just our issue, it is endemic to today's church. The sense of community found in the Church through the ages is seriously missing in the Western Church. Of course there are many reasons. The very nature of our life style, business, isolation, even the design of our housing mitigates against involvement. To be involved is “too much work.”*

*But, the pattern of hospitality once was a standard practice within the Christian world. Many homes had an “Elijah Room.” This was a guest room for the traveling pastor, missionary or other needy brother or sister. But the practice of caring for these people could be abused. And one way was housing someone who in reality was not a believer, but instead was an enemy of the Gospel. And it is to this situation that John speaks in his second epistle.*

---

### **I Introduction**

### **II Opening Greetings**

### **III Commendation**

### **IV Conclusion**

---

**Verses 1-3**

**Verses 4-6**

**Introduction:** We made some general comments regarding the three epistles at the beginning of the series. As with the first epistle, the accepted author is the Apostle John. Here too the background deals with the issue of false prophets who were attacking the faith of believers.

This and the third epistle are the shortest books in the Bible, and unlike the first epistle these are much more of the nature of letters. I plan to spend two weeks on each of them.

The perspective of this letter deals with a specific concern of the day. John's focus is on the practice of providing hospitality to traveling missionaries and how this practice should be carried out in relation to the activities of false prophets.

While there is still some of this activity today, that is providing housing for those who come to our area to speak for the Lord, the practice is not a wide spread. I remember Dr. McGee, always stated he preferred staying at a local motel, where he could have more privacy and time alone with the Lord prior to teaching at a conference.

But there is a more general principle here, and it relates to the concern of how we are to interact with those who are false prophets. Remember, we have noted how some Christians think that to be critical or non-supportive of evangelists, regardless of what they teach, is being judgmental, unloving and non-Christian.

We can extrapolate from John's comments on hospitality to a general principle on dealing with those who, while representing themselves as Christians, clearly are teaching heresy. Speaking of this type of people John states:

***“They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us” (1 John 2:19).***

**II Opening Greetings:** John introduces himself, not by his name, but by his position. He calls himself the Elder. He writes from a position of authority. It is also obvious that his readers know from whom the letter comes. Stott notes:

*“He had no doubt that they (his readers) would immediately identify him by this title, which bears witness to his recognized authority.”*<sup>1</sup>

But there's problem with reading somebody's personal letters. When we write to friends, or acquaintances, because of the relationship a lot of things are left unsaid. Reading an individual letter is like overhearing part of one side of a telephone conversation. And as we saw last time, we sometimes come up against something in scripture that is specifically cultural and familiar to the recipient but we have no way of understanding the intent. Baker says:

*“While a strict interpretation of the text supports an individual person as the addressee, the context supports an enigmatic reference to a community. Such a veiled allusion may have been, as Dodd suggests, a device for shielding the identity of the community from adverse action by public officials who opposed the Christian community. If the letter fell into unfriendly hands, it would seem to be nothing more than a private message to a friend. The reference to the elder's children would be a veiled way of referring to the members of the community; and the greetings extended to her from the children of her “chosen sister” (v.13) would be understood as being from the members of the community of the elder. The statement “whom I love in the truth—and not I only, but also all who know the truth” seems more appropriate as a reference to a church than to an individual. No dogmatic conclusion about the addressee is possible, however, because of the ambiguity of the text.”*<sup>2</sup>

John states that he loves this local body. And apparently this group was known to other believers who also loved it. The foundation of this love was truth. John loved in truth. Others loved in truth. The truth was present in all, John, others and those in the body. What is this

---

<sup>1</sup> Stott, John R. W., The Epistles of John, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1983, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Baker, Glenn W., Expositor's Bible Commentary, “2 John,” Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1990.

truth? The truth of God, salvation, what it means to be a believer, the incarnation. These are all included. The truth is all that is consistent with theological orthodoxy.

But, there is another element of biblical truth. This is relational truth. By this I mean truth between believers in relationship. We can only love one another, that is, care for each other, in the midst of truth. If we try to hide ourselves from our brothers and sisters, then we are not living truth in relationship. And, if we are not living truth then we don't have real relationship, therefore we aren't demonstrating God's love. The church has to be a place of transparency. We must give up the wearing of masks, ones put on to make us look like we have our acts together. The church isn't to be a Greek theatre. Truth and love go hand-in-hand.

As with the previous letter, the underlying issue here is the importance of truth and the abuse of truth by heretics. Love cannot be carried out in an environment of compromise with truth. This is why the ecumenical movement that desires "Christian" unity because of Christ's call to love is on the wrong track. Christ doesn't desire a love that sells out to the lowest common denominator of doctrine. This is why He has John warn believers about false prophets.

Moving on to the completion of John's greeting, we find the familiar grace and peace. But, here John includes a third element, mercy. It is God's grace that is the basis of our salvation. He saved us while we were undeserving.

*“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).*

He showed us His mercy, by caring for us who are needy and helpless. We needed forgiveness and we were helpless to do anything to earn it. But God loved us and provided the way of salvation as His gift.

Finally, we are at peace with God. Too frequently when we talk about God's peace we focus on the emotional sense of peace that we depend on to get through life. But in this context the concern is an end of the warfare between God and man. We are no longer in rebellion but are at peace with God, because of the work of Christ on the cross. How can we experience grace and peace?

**III Commendation:** What should be of great joy to us as believers? John's joy comes from the faithful walk of other believers. What is encouraging is that he finds joy even though there are some of those that are part of the local community who are not being faithful. Note he says that he finds some of the walking in truth.

This means that we are not to become discouraged because all who represent themselves as believers don't demonstrate the validity of that claim in their lives.

*“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them (weeds) up?’ ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’” (Matthew 13:28-30).*

While we are called to judge the message, and fruit of those who claim to be believers, but a conclusive judgment related to salvation can only be made by the Lord. In the final analysis we can receive joy from the obedient and not allow others to steal that joy.

John here, as in his previous epistle, offers the most important command, the command to love one another. This is the final proof of our obedience, our love. And this isn't a new command. Go back to Moses.

***“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:18).***

What we will see next time is that apparently this church was demonstrating this love with the practice of hospitality. And while they thought they were demonstrating love, they were not demonstrating discrimination as to where they were exercising that love. The call to love is also a call to commitment to truth.

Christ's command, which had been taught to them from day one, was to love, to love God, and to love others. But the call to live still requires what Dr. McGee always referred to as “sanctified common sense.”

**Conclusion:** The message we need to continually reemphasize is that everything we do as believers is to be done in God's love. Each decision we make as individuals must require asking, “Is what I want to do, a demonstration of God's love?” Dr. McGee gives some real practical illustrations of love in the life of the individual.

*“Love is not made in the bedroom—it is made out there in the laundry room. Does she wash his clothes? Does he bring home his paycheck? Does he support his family: That is the way you express love in the family, and that is the way you express love in the church—in your concern and in your help for others. You cannot say that you are loving someone unless you have a concern for him, especially a concern with his spiritual welfare.”<sup>3</sup>*

Each decision we make as a body means asking the same question. “Is what I want to do, actually do, a demonstration of God's love?” We must make sure our love is grounded in truth. *What are some of the ways we can show love right here, within our local church?*

It is only as we show God's selfless love that we truly become adequate representatives of His presence in a fallen world. The inner condition of the local church is the first issue we must deal with as believers. Just as my ministry will not be effective if I don't strive to walk on a consistent basis with the Lord, neither will the ministry of the local body. And this expectation isn't we always succeed, the call is to consistency of a Holy Spirit driven effort. The Christian walk, be it individual or corporate is one of process.

***“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Romans 8:29).***

And we can't minister effectively within the community, if our perspective isn't properly balanced. We are to love, and to love in truth.

---

<sup>3</sup> McGee, J. Vernon, Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1983, p. 829.

John isn't the only one concerned with this issue. Jesus expressed a similar thrust in His letter when He said ...

*“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:1-7).*

Let us restore the purpose of the church. We are called to make disciples. We are called to hold firm to truth. And we are to do all this, in dependency on the Holy Spirit, in obedience to God's commands to love Him and love one another.

Next time we will see that doing this doesn't mean being a doormat to the demand of others who have no concept about real biblical love.

### ***Love's Foundations.***

*“Love is the foundation of all obedience. Without it morality degenerates into mere casuistry. Love is the foundation of all knowledge. Without it religion degenerates into a chattering about Moses and doctrines and theories; a thing that will neither kill nor make alive, that never gave life to a single soul or blessing to a single heart, and never put strength into any hand in the conflict and strife of daily life.*

*~ Alexander Maclaren.”*

---

# *The Epistles of John*

“Love Can Mean Saying ‘No’”

## **2 John 1-6**

---

**I Introduction**

**II Opening Greetings**

**III Commendation**

**IV Conclusion**

**Verses 1-3**

**Verses 4-6**

---

**I Introduction:**

*(1 John 2:19)*

**II Opening Greetings:**

*(Romans 5:8)*

### **III Commendation:**

*(Matthew 13:28-30; Leviticus 19:18)*

### **Conclusion:**

*(Romans 8:29; Revelation 2:1-7)*

---

Personal Application: What are some ways you can exercise love here in the local body of believers?

**Prayer for the Week: Lord, help me to be fully aware of Your love so I might desire to share it with others. Amen.**