

STUDY GUIDE 11

2 John

Study warm-up: What is something about which you will not compromise?

OBSERVATION – Lord, help me to discover it!

1. As you study 2 John, remember the three tests/criteria from 1 John that identify authentic Christianity. (See question 2, Study Guide 9.) List them here:

Read 2 John.

Read 2 John 1-3.

2. These first three verses are packed with important details that help us understand John's intent in this epistle. As you make your observations, begin to contemplate why John selected the words he used.
 - a. What adjective is associated with the *lady*?

b. The word, *truth*, is mentioned four times in these three verses. What do you observe about the *truth*?

c. What does John say about all believers?

d. What does John emphasize about God and Jesus?

Read 2 John 4-6.

3. How does John connect *truth*, *walk(ing)*, and *love*?

Read 2 John 7-11.

4. One party John mentions in these verses are the *deceivers*. What do you observe about the *deceivers*? Be sure to capture the falsehood they assert and whether they are a threat to the *lady* within her fellowship or from outside it? (In the next question we will look at how the deceiver is to be treated.)

5. How is the *lady* to treat the deceivers?

6. What does John say about the threat deceivers pose?

Read 2 John 12 and 13.

7. As John closes his letter, what does he hope to do?

8. What adjective is associated with the *lady's sister*?

INTERPRETATION – Lord, help me to understand it.

9. Read 2 John again, this time considering whether John is writing to an individual or to a church. To whom do you think he is writing? Explain. (Not all Bible scholars agree, so there isn't necessarily a wrong answer here.) However, it is clear that John was taking care to protect his and their identities.

10. Does walking in truth and love (verses 1-6) seem in line with John's instructions about treating the deceiver (verse 10)? Why or why not? (We'll look at this from another angle in the next question.)

11. Consider the following differently weighted priorities between love and truth. John instructs believers to have high regard for both – this is box b; fill in John's instructions for dealing with deceivers here. Now imagine/speculate about other responses to false teachers for the rest of the boxes:

- Box a is low regard for truth, but high for love.
- Box c is low regard for both truth and love.
- Box d is high regard for truth, low for love.

		TRUTH	
		Low	High
LOVE	High	a.	b.
	Low	c.	d.

12. Read verses 7-9 once more. What eternal outcomes await the different groups of people mentioned?
- a. the deceiver and the antichrist

 - b. those who **don't** watch themselves

 - c. those who go too far and do not abide (NASB95)

 - d. those who abide in the [true] teaching
13. What distinguishes the false teaching John addresses in this epistle from erroneous teaching? Compare the situation and the response to the visiting teacher in Acts 18:24-28 to what you have learned in 2 John.

APPLICATION – Lord, help me to live it!

14. In 2 John, the Apostle instructs the recipient (and believers in general) to walk in truth [as per the commandment to do so] and to walk in love [as per the commandment to do so.] Share any insights or nudging the Spirit has given you about walking in truth and love.
15. Consider this hypothetical range of teachers with whom you would disagree: false teachers → erroneous teachers → teachers with opinions differing from your own. From what you have studied this week, what criteria would you use to differentiate the categories? How would you walk in truth and love toward someone from each category?

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OR CONTEMPLATION:

- I) Is there significance behind the order of the words, *grace, mercy, and peace*, in verse 3? Paul's letters to Timothy are the only other epistles that include all three in the salutation. Other epistles use *grace and peace* (most common) or *mercy and peace* (Jude.)
- II) What is the danger if a church focuses on love over doctrine, or on doctrine over love?
- III) How does John's emphasis on obedience to God's commands differ from legalism?

 *Cole Women's Bible Study Writing Team, 2024*

Additional Scripture for Study Guide 11

□ Acts 18:24-28

²⁴ Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. ²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; ²⁶ and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.



STUDY GUIDE 12

3 John

Study warm-up: Remember a power-hungry individual you have known. Describe their character.

OBSERVATION – Lord, help me to discover it!

Read 3 John. Watch for John's favorite topics of *truth* and *love*.

Read 3 John 1-4.

1. What does John emphasize about Gaius in the first four verses? What can you deduce about the relationship between John and Gaius?

2. In case you did not capture it in question 1, how did John obtain the good report about Gaius?

Read 3 John 5-8.

3. Describe Gaius' service in these verses for which John extends additional commendation.

4. From the context, what can you deduce about *the brothers*?

Read 3 John 9 and 10.

5. What are John's issues with Diotrephes (pronounced dee-ot-ref-ace)?

6. You may have included it in your answers to questions 3 and 5, but compare Gaius' and Diotrephes' respective treatments of *the brothers*:

Gaius	Diotrephes

Read 3 John 11 and 12.

7. Describe what John is doing in these two verses. (Think about the content that immediately precedes these verses, and whom John now addresses and the instruction John gives. Consider what purpose is served by mentioning Demetrius.)

Read 3 John 13-15, John's closure of the letter.

INTERPRETATION – Lord, help me to understand it.

Read 3 John once more.

8. The Text is not explicit, but what role do you think Gaius might have had in the local congregation? (Consider what you know of John's character and the topics he covers in this letter.)

9. Assuming Gaius and Diotrephes were part of the same church, what kinds of concerns might John have had for Gaius?

APPLICATION – Lord, help me to live it!

10. If Gaius is considered an example to emulate (a prospering soul) and Diotrephes (a lacking soul) an instance to avoid, what behaviors do you want to pursue and which do you want to avoid?

11. What has 3 John clearly instructed us about caring for *the brothers*?

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OR CONTEMPLATION:

- I) Some commentators suggest that the authority struggle between John and Diotrephes was symptomatic of the approaching end of the apostolic church age [church authority held by the apostles] and the transition to the 'monarchical episcopacy,' in which regional bishops held authority over area churches. They suggest that Diotrephes, sensing the coming change, may have been vying for a place of influence in the changing order. (Stott)
- II) If the conflict was indeed connected to the transition to episcopacy, how might the situation have been handled better? (The changing of the guard can be quite difficult!) Is there a lesson for today's church?
- III) 3 John 2 is one of the verses on which proponents of the errant prosperity gospel base their teaching. How would the Apostle address this misuse of his words and authority?

REFERENCES

Stott, J. (2009). *The Letters of John*. IVP Academic.



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