



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V26 N26 June 30, 2024

TRUE NORTH

“Walking in Love”

2 John 4-6

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Love

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

1 John 4:10-12



What command has the Father given his children?

Jesus' words to his disciples in the upper room on the night of his betrayal left an indelible impression on John. After washing the disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-17) and predicting his betrayal (vv. 18-30), Jesus gave the eleven a new command—Satan had entered into Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, and he had gone out into the night. “A new command I give you,” Jesus told them. “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (vv. 34-35).

John, the apostle, mentions that command numerous times in his first epistle. In 3:11, he tells his readers, “For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should *love one another*,” and in verse 23 of the same chapter, he writes, “And this is the command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to *love one another* as he commanded us.” Then in 4:7, he tells his readers: “Dear friends, let us *love one another*, for love comes from God,” and in 4:11-12, “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to *love one another*. No one has ever seen God, but if we *love one another*, God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us.” He puts the command a bit differently in verse 21: “And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”

On brotherly love, just one aspect of Christian morality, one commentator writes: “What is unique to *Christian* morality is its demand for a brotherly love based on our mutual faith in Christ. Where one or both of these things are missing, there can be no actual manifestation of a truly Christian righteousness (cf. 1 John 3:23)” (Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 151).

“The elder,” the writer of 2 John, also makes much of the same command. In verses 5-6 of his short letter, he writes: “And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. 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.” This observation along with others suggests that the author of 1 John and the author of 2 John, that John, the apostle and John the elder are one and the same, contrary to what some have argued based on a citation of a statement of Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis (c. A.D. 60-c. 130), by Eusebius, a fourth-century Christian historian. Some have argued that the Gospel of John and 1 John were written by John, the apostle, while 2 John and 3 John were written by John, the elder—two different “Johns.” On this matter, one commentator writes: “The writer identified himself as ‘the elder’ (v. 1). The writings of the early church fathers attribute authorship of this epistle to the Apostle John. The early Christians commonly recognized him as the elder in view. We might have expected John to describe himself as an apostle, as Paul usually did, since this was an office of higher authority than elder. However John's apostleship was not open to challenge like Paul's was. There is no evidence that the early Christians questioned John's apostleship as they did Paul's. ‘Elder’ was a more affectionate title, and it undoubtedly represented John's role among the churches, at least unofficially if not officially. He was probably an older man at this time too” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 2 John,” 2024 ed., 1, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/2john.pdf).

The letter was probably written from Ephesus, perhaps around the same time as 1 John (c. A.D. 90-95). While his first epistle was likely a circular letter sent to various churches in the Roman province of Asia, 2 John may have been sent to a particular church, addressed as “the lady” (v. 1), in the same region. Apparently, John had a twofold purpose for writing: 1) to warn his readers about deceivers and the dire consequences of welcoming them and accepting their teaching (vv. 7-11), and 2) to remind them of the command that they had from the beginning, that they love one another (vv.4-6).

1

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 2 John 4-6

4 *It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.* 5 *And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another.* 6 *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.*

Read in other translations

4 *I rejoiced greatly because I have found some of your children living according to the truth, just as the Father commanded us.*

5 *But now I ask you, lady (not as if I were writing a new commandment to you, but the one we have had from the beginning), that we love one another.* 6 *(Now this is love: that we walk according to his commandments.) This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning; thus you should walk in it. (NET)*

4 *How happy I was to meet some of your children and find them living according to the truth, just as the Father commanded.*

5 *I am writing to remind you, dear friends, that we should love one another. This is not a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning.* 6 *Love means doing what God has commanded us, and he has commanded us to love one another, just as you heard from the beginning. (NLT)*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "some" in v. 4.
- Underline "your children" in v. 4.
- Circle "walking" in v. 4.
- Box "just as" indicating *comparison* in v. 4,
- Circle "the Father" in v. 4.
- Circle "dear lady" in v. 5.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 5.
- Circle "beginning" in vv. 5, 6.
- Bracket "love one another" in v. 5.
- Circle "walk" (2x) in v. 6.
- Circle "his" (2x) in v. 6.
- Circle "love" in v. 6.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. To whom does “the lady” and “her children” refer?
2. John has crossed paths with “some” of the lady’s children who are “walking in the truth.” Put what “walking in the truth” means in your own words.
3. Explain the use of *comparison* in v. 4.
4. Is John implying that *others* of the lady’s children are not?
5. Explain the use of *contrast* in verse 5.
6. The command John is giving his readers is one Christians have had “from the beginning” (v. 5). How so?
7. Paraphrase John’s definition of “love” (v. 6).
8. To whose commands is John referring in verse 6?
9. The last word in verse 6 is actually “it” (NET, ESV, NASB, et al.). To what does “it” refer? (See note.)
10. **Discussion:** Is “walking in love” *not* marked by a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)? Talk about what you think.

Commentary On The Text

2 John, unlike 1 John, has a typical letter *opening* (vv. 1-3) in which the *sender* identifies himself, in this case as “the elder,” and the *recipients* are identified, in this case as “the lady” and “her children.” Following the salutation comes the greeting, in this case an extended one, “Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father’s Son, will be with us in truth and love.”

The *body* of the letter follows (vv. 4-11), which can be divided into two parts: an *exhortation* and a *warning*. In the first part (vv. 4-6), John commends members of the church he has come across for “walking in the truth” and urges his readers to “love one another” — Jesus’ command to his disciples on the night of his betrayal. In the second part (vv. 7-11), the apostle warns the church against the threat posed by “deceivers,” namely, those “who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as come in the flesh” and directs its members to deny hospitality to any such false teachers.

The *closing* (vv. 12-13), like the opening, is typical, containing closing remarks and greetings.

Regarding the *exhortation* (vv. 4-6), John begins on a personal note. Apparently, he had crossed paths with some members of the church to which he was writing, whom he cryptically refers to as the lady’s children, and reports his great joy to discover that they were “walking in the truth.” Apparently, there were “deceivers” afoot, who had departed from an orthodox view of Jesus. Following the writing of the Fourth Gospel but before the writing of John’s letters, some faux members of the early Christian community refused to “acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh” (v. 7). One commentator writes: “Some of the members had taken on board certain beliefs about the person and work of Christ that were unacceptable to the author of the letters and those associated with him. These new beliefs involved a denial that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, come in the flesh (1 John 4:2-3), and that his death was necessary for the forgiveness of sins (1 John 5:6-7). A sharp disagreement arose which resulted in the secession of those who embraced these new views (1 John 2:19)” (Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PNTC, 2). Whether the term “some” implies that there were others in the church who were not “walking in the truth” is debated. But to say that there were goes too far, given the fact that there is no indication of this elsewhere in the letter (see note). Those whom John encountered were doing just as the Father had commanded, namely, “to believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us” (1Jn 3:23).

John goes on to build on his personal note by reiterating the command of the Father given by Jesus in

the upper room — “love one another” (v. 5; cf. Jn 13:34; 15:12, 17). This is no new command, but one Jesus’ disciples have had from the very beginning, that is, from the time it was given by Jesus and thereby linked to his gospel. John urges his readers to obey this command, namely, to “love one another.” On the command, one commentator writes: “The command **that we love one another** is once again, as in all three of John’s Epistles, a command for Christians. It is a command that only they can keep, or fail to keep. John is not concerned in any of the epistles with ‘love’ directed toward the unsaved world. But he *is* concerned with evangelizing the lost (cf. 3John 5-8) and he knows that when Christians **love one another** this is an effective witness to the world (cf. John 13:35)” (Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 257).

Verse 6 seems to mark a slight shift in the flow of John’s thought — from *exhortation* to *definition* — and while the gist of his thinking is clear enough, his use of “his commands” and “his command” is a bit confusing. One commentator explains: “Since the word ‘love’ can have a variety of senses and loving has a number of aspects, the elder draws attention to one particular feature which he felt needed emphasis. Love means living according to the Father’s commands. We can readily understand that love *for the Father* would involve keeping his commands: the person who loves somebody else will be anxious to please him by doing what he wants. But the elder says that love *for one another* involves keeping the Father’s commands. A further difficulty is that the elder oscillates between ‘the command’ and ‘the commands.’ These two difficulties are solved when we grasp that ‘the command’ is that we should love one another, while ‘the commands’ are the detailed requirements which unfold the structure of this central command The elder’s point is to show that love must issue in various detailed types of action in accordance with God’s commandments. It may be that the elder was thinking of people who did not realize the incompatibility of saying that they loved their fellow Christians and yet stealing from them or coveting their property” (I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, NICNT, 68, 69). Keeping in mind that the Father’s commands and Jesus commands are one and the same, and keeping in mind Jesus’ words, “If you love me, keep my commands” (Jn 14:15), is also helpful.

The meaning of the end of verse 6 is a bit confusing as well; it is more literally rendered, “This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning; thus you should *walk in it*.” The NIV identifies the antecedent of the pronoun “it” to be “love,” but there are other possibilities. I think it just as likely that “it” refers to “truth” (v. 4) as well as “love” (see note).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 4 *some* “The words **some of your children** have been thought to suggest an implicit rebuke of ‘others of your children’ who were not **walking in truth** (so Dodd, *Epistles*, p. 147; Smalley, 1, 2, 3, *John*, p. 323). But nothing necessitates this inference and we do not know enough about the relationship between John and this church to draw any such conclusion . . . ‘It is more likely that the elder [apostle, in our view] is thinking of the personal contact which he has had with some members of the church’” (Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 271). “On the surface, this might imply that some were not . . . But there is no indication elsewhere in the letter that this is the case, so it is best to regard the elder’s statement as expression joy over those he has heard are walking in the truth, without implying that others are not” (Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PNTC, 207).

v. 4 *your children* I.e., children of “the lady” (v. 1). “He addresses his readers as ‘the chosen lady and her children.’ This is a metaphorical way of saying ‘the church and its members’ . . . The personification of a community was not uncommon in ancient writings” (I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, NICNT, 60). “In this commentary we take ‘the chosen lady and her children’ to mean a church and its members. The ‘lady’ has a ‘chosen sister’ in the place from which the elder writes, whose ‘children’ send her their greetings (v. 13)” (Kruse, 38).

v. 4 *walking* Cf. “living according to the truth” (NET, NLT). “To walk in the truth is to be obedient to the truth God has made known. John wanted the whole church to do the same” (Zane C. Hodges, “2 John,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 906). “‘Living’ [NET, NLV] translates a verb which literally means ‘walking’ and was used to describe the whole of a person’s existence and behavior. To live ‘by the truth’ means to live in accordance with God’s revelation in the gospel and by the standards contained in it. It is the same as living ‘in the light’ (1 Jn. 1:7)” (Marshall, 66).

v. 4 *Father* “The commandment received from the Father is explained in v.5 as the commandment of love and in v.7 as belief in the Son (cf. 1 John 3:23: ‘And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us’)” (Glenn W. Barker, “2 John,” in *The Bible Expositor’s Commentary*, vol. 12, 363). “This is the only time in John’s Epistles that he explicitly ascribes that **commandment** to God **the Father**. But as we have seen, for John, the words of Jesus are the words and witness of the One who sent Him (cf. 1 John 5:9ff. and discussion); the command to exercise brotherly love is indeed a command that came from **the Father**. By putting it this way, the apostle implicitly affirms the authority of *the Son*, since his readers would know that the **commandment** was first spoken by Jesus Himself” (Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 256).

v. 5 *dear lady* Cf. v. 1 “to the lady [i.e., church] chosen by God and to her children [i.e., its members].”

v. 5 *the beginning* “The background may be located in the words of Jesus recorded at John 13:34; 15:12, 17. The Christian believer is to believe and to love” (Stephen S. Smalley, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 51, 1, 2, 3, *John*, 325). “It was a command that the writer had heard from the Lord Jesus Himself long ago when Christianity began, and which the readers have now had from the beginning of their Christian experience” (Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 257).

v. 6 *walk* “Or ‘that we live’” (The NET Bible, 18tn on 2Jn 6); or “should live in obedience to it” (The NET Bible, 20tn on 2Jn 6).

v. 6 *his* The *nearest* antecedent for the pronoun is “the Father” (v. 4). But the command to believers to “love one another” was given by Jesus to his disciples (Jn 13:34; 15:12, 17), making the *implied* antecedent “Jesus” (cf. Jn 14:15, 21). Believers are to walk in obedience to his commands, especially the one to *love one another*.

v. 6 *beginning* Here “beginning” refers to the time when John’s readers first heard the gospel.

v. 6 *love* Lit. “it” (cf. ESV, NET, NKJV, et al.). “The reference of ‘in it’ [*en autē*] is naturally to ‘love,’ thus completing the balance of the two parts of this v (see the comment on v 6a). It could also be to ‘command,’ which is similarly feminine; but this would result in an unnecessary tautology (against Brooke, 174). A further possible inclusive reference is to ‘truth’ in v 4 (‘living in truth’); for truth and love are closely associated in this part of 2 John, and the thought of correct belief (in Jesus) cannot be detached from the exhortation to right behavior (mutual love) in the present v.” (Smalley, 326-27). “The NIV translation interprets walking ‘in it’ to mean walking ‘in love’, a rendering which has much to commend it . . . An alternative approach would be to interpret ‘in it’ to mean ‘in the truth’. In favour of this interpretation one should note that (i) the feminine pronoun *autē* (‘it’) could also have as its antecedent the feminine noun *alētheia* (‘truth’); (ii) the expression ‘walking in the truth’ appears in v. 4, and to ‘walk in it’ in v. 6 could be a parallel statement concluding the section vv. 4-6 on the same note with which it began. Another approach to the interpretation of ‘in it’ is to regard *en autē* in v. 6 as an example of semantic density, that is, at this point the author deliberately intends to reader to understand that the antecedents of *autē* (‘it’) are *alētheia* (‘truth’), *entolē* (‘commandment’), and *agapē* (‘love’). To walk in ‘it’, then, would be to walk in truth and love” (Krause, 208-209)—cf. “truth and love” (v. 3).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Christians are to *walk in truth* and to *love one another* just as the Father commanded through Jesus.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

I'm always sad that there are not more words for "love" in the English language. Loving your child is certainly not the same as loving Cheez-Its, but we have no way of differentiating the two with our limited language. I think this is where the action of love comes in, and maybe that's not such a bad thing. Because we don't have several different words for love, we are forced to be demonstrative according to the different types and levels of love with our actions and affections. I wouldn't go to blows at Walmart over a box of crackers, but watch out if you hurt my child in any way. Things will get ugly. One certain way to evaluate myself when it comes to demonstrating love is to put my name in place of "love" or "it" in the 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 passage. Let's give it a try! "Love is patient." Now why do we have to start with patience? I can tell you right out of the gate that "Stephanie is patient," is almost laughable. Carry on "...love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." How'd you do? I've definitely got some work to do. This week let's read this passage every morning and ask God to work in our hearts and help us love our families well. Praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 2 John 4-6

1. What gave John joy?
2. What command did John give the readers?
3. How does John describe love?

What Do You Think?

How can obeying God's commands show love to others?

What Do You Do?

Make a list of seven actions that show love to others according to God's commands. Each day, make a point to practice one of these actions. (Example: Sunday - obey parents; Monday - give away my time . . .)

CORE COMPETENCY: Love

I love and forgive others no matter what.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 29:11

"The Lord gives strength to His people; the Lord blesses His people with peace."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week's verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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