

# THE ELDER AND THE LADY

## 2 JOHN 1:1-13

Today, I have with me a list entitled, “The Top Ten Shortest Books.” It consists of some pretend titles...

- 10) America’s Most Popular Lawyers
- 9) Different Ways To Spell Bob
- 8) French Hospitality
- 7) The 2018 Atlanta Hawks Basketball Highlights
- 6) The Loganville Travel Guide
- 5) Everything Men Know About Women
- 4) Everything Women Know About Men
- 3) The Engineer’s Guide To Fashion
- 2) The Amish Phone Directory
- 1) Pastor Sandy’s Jokes That Are Actually Funny

These would all be very, very short books... *and speaking of short books* - we have two to study next...

2 & 3 John are the shortest books in the Bible. Both books combine for a mere 27 verses - just 500 words.

I call them “The Lilliputian Letters” after the little people in Gulliver’s Travels... You could also call them “The Fruit of the Loom Letters” - since both are **brief**.

Once a family was eating dinner at a restaurant.

During the meal dad left for the restroom. He was gone a long time. Finally, his wife sent her son to make sure dad was okay. The boy walked into the restroom, and saw three stalls - *but he couldn’t see his dad*. So he called out, “*Dad, are you alright, where are you?*”

That's when a voice sounded from the middle stall, "Son, I'm okay, I'm in the second John." *And so are we!*

Let's read the letter; then we'll go through it, "The Elder, to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

John begins by introducing himself, “The Elder...”

These letters were perhaps the last NT books written. By the time he penned them John was 100 years-old - the last living of the original twelve apostles.

John’s stature was unsurpassed within the Christian community. He was known not just as *an* elder, but as “**THE Elder.**” John was an elder with a capital “E.”

He writes, “to the elect lady and her children...”

Some Bible teachers believe the “*elect lady*” was actually a “*sister church.*” In the NT the Church is referred to as *the Bride of Christ*. Here it’s possible that “*the lady and her children*” are titles for a local body of believers... **Or** it could also refer to a specific person...

**Or** some Bible teachers suggest that it’s both...

Perhaps John is writing to a devout Christian lady who’s vibrant witness birthed a church-full of spiritual children. It could be a church met in the lady’s home.

John writes to her and the church she planted.

Notice, John uses no personal names in his letter. He was writing at a time of persecution. He didn’t want to give the enemies of Christianity ammunition to target anyone specifically. John is being a gentleman here. He’s being protective of a female leader in the church.

Did you hear about the McDonalds in Lynwood California, that on March 8th of this year, flipped their golden arches logo upside down? They displayed a “W” to celebrate International Women’s Day.

The Lynwood McDonalds is owned by Patricia Williams. Patricia, and her two daughters, now own 18 McDonalds franchises. Apparently, McDonalds has a long history of promoting women entrepreneurs.

It seems other McDonalds franchises across the country followed suit, and gave a *shout out* to women.

Well, I think John’s second letter gives a similar *shout out!* Think about the strategic role that women played in the ministry of Jesus! God’s Son came into the world through the virgin womb of a woman.

Among Jesus’ disciples Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany were among his most devoted... At the cross when the men tucked tail and fled, it was the women and John who followed Jesus to the cross...

The first person to see the risen Lord Jesus was a woman, Mary Magdalene... And it’s no surprise there were women among the 120 in the upper room when the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost Sunday...

It’s true, that the NT teaches a symbolic significance in the roles played by men and women in the church and in the home. *Gender roles matter to God!*

Men are to lead and women should let them. This portrays Christ’s relationship with His Church.

But just because the office of a pastor or elder is reserved for a man, it doesn't mean female leadership isn't appreciated. *The NT teaches the very opposite...*

In addition to the women mentioned in the Gospels there was also the businesswoman, Lydia, a seller of purple-dye, who founded the church in Philippi.

In Acts, Philip's daughters served as prophetesses, and Priscilla, Paul's friend, helped to tutor Apollos.

Paul trusted his letter to the Romans - *some of the most important theology in the Bible* - to a woman named Phoebe. It traveled to Rome under her robe.

In 1 Timothy 5 an order of widows was established to serve the Lord and His Church in meaningful ways.

In fact, I don't think a NT fellowship is complete without women serving in the vital office of deaconess.

I appreciate McDonalds for turning the golden arches upside down to honor women. But realize, the Bible has always honored women's roles in the Church - and Bible-believing churches today do the same... And this is what The Elder John did by writing *"to the elect lady."*

*"To the elect lady and her children whom I love in truth..."*  
Here's the theme of this letter - **love in truth.**

1 John told us if we love God we'll love our brother, but here we're told real love never ignores the truth!

*God's love* is always in harmony with *God's truth.*

If ever our love causes us to ignore the truth - or if in the name of love we tolerate, or gloss over, or accept a falsehood

- realize we're not exhibiting the true love of God. Real love affirms and supports God's truth!

And this is so important in today's "Politically Correct, Can't Offend, Tolerant-Of-Everything, Watered Down World." Many churches today have adopted a "*Love is Supreme, Unity at all Costs*" type of mentality. To them *nothing is as important as love, and peace, and unity.*

**Well, they've forgotten the words of Jesus!**

In Luke 12:51-53 Jesus said, "Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

Jesus said He would draw a line in the sand.

He confronts us with the truth about God, and life, and us, and we're forced to make decisions that put us at odds with people who make the opposite choice.

At times friction even erupts in the same family.

Not everyone humbles themselves and receives the truth. It's been said, "*You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you mad.*" Sometimes the truth does just that - it upsets people. To insist on unity at all costs glosses over the reality of objective truth - God's truth.

Once a pastor called the kids to the front of the church for a children's sermon. He taught on unity. He said, "Boys and girls, God wants us all to be one."

A little 4 year-old shouted, "Yea, but I wanna be five."

To suggest that Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Atheists, and Mormons should just forget their doctrinal differences - and the incompatibility of their beliefs - and just treat one another as "*brothers*" is ridiculous.

As Christians we should love everybody and seek to lead them to Jesus, but for us to embrace them as family is to deny the truth that saves us and defines us!

**Real love will never deny God's truth!**

And to suggest *it really doesn't matter what you believe - that doctrine is irrelevant - that all that matters is love* - is total naïvety about what the Bible teaches!

I believe the idea that **all truth is relative** (*which serves as the backdrop of today's culture*) is straight from the pit of Hell. **Your doctrine does determine your destiny.** Having love, even faith, is not enough - *the real question is can the object of your faith save you?*

Just because a baby sucks a bottle is no guarantee he or she will grow up healthy. It depends on the contents of that bottle! Likewise, faith alone will never save us. **Faith and love has to be grounded in truth!**

In fact, I want to take this one step further. The goal today in most megachurch models is to focus on the basics of Christianity - keep *faith in Jesus* and *love for others* at the

center of what's said and done. Ignore the parts of the Bible that tend to divide us into subgroups.

This is how churches grow so large - by sticking to a brand of Christianity everyone can agree on. It's a unity of common denominators - but it's not a unity of truth.

In fact, at times the truth even gets sidestepped.

This is not our objective at Calvary Chapel.

We believe the Bible is **the truth the whole truth and nothing but God's truth.** *And He wants us to teach it all.*

The last thing God wants us to do is duck the parts of the Bible that might be offensive. Thus, *we talk about what the Bible talks about* - even controversial subjects like *end times prophecy, gender, gifts of the Spirit, speaking in tongues, sexual purity, etc., etc...*

The Bible conveys the truth about all of life's issues, and God wants us to know it, in its totality - *whether it's comfortable or not.* Paul told the Ephesian elders that he had been responsible for feeding them **"the whole counsel of God,"** not just what was easily digestible - or not just *the red meat* over which everyone could rally.

One day, you'll be responsible for what's in this book.

The whole Bible is truth, and though we may not grasp every nuance perfectly - *and can leave room for disagreement over nonessentials* - we **can** get at the heart of what God is saying, and conform our lives to it.

*It is true,* what the Bible teaches about the peripheral issues isn't going to send a person to heaven or to hell, but that



doesn't mean these issues aren't important, and won't effect a believer's spiritual health...

If God put it in the Bible, it's meant to be considered by us. *“Walking in truth”* is always the Christian's goal.

This is why in verse 4 John *“rejoiced greatly”* when he learned the lady's children were *“walking in truth.”* In 3 John 4 he makes a similar statement, *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”*

And here John is writing to those *“whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth...”* Notice, the unity that is found *in the truth.*

*John writes to those who love the truth, on behalf of all truth lovers.* Trust me, lies and falsehood don't bring people permanently together as does God's truth.

In Ephesians 6 Paul talks about the armor of God. It's our spiritual defense against the wiles of the devil...

And Paul mentions *“the shield of faith.”* But the Roman legion carried a type of shield that interlocked.

Have you ever heard of the *“Testudo Formation?”* *“Testudo”* is Latin for *“tortoise.”* This was literally *“the tortoise formation.”* Each man's shield connected to the shield next to him. Together they formed a impenetrable shell over the troops - *a tortoise shell.*

And this is what the truth does for the Church. When we unify behind the truth, we're sheltered under its shell - so when the fiery arrows of the enemy rain down on our heads, God's truth becomes our protection.

John continues, “because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever...” Real truth is eternal.

God’s truth doesn’t shift from age to age, or from generation to generation. It’s unaffected by popular opinion. It’s never trending. It’s *absolute* and *timeless*.

Charles Spurgeon once said, “Many say that we ought to keep “*abreast of the times,*” whatever that may mean; and that there is a certain “*spirit of the age,*” to which we should be subject.

This to me is treason against sovereign truth. I know of only one spirit to whom I desire to be subject, and that is the Spirit of all the ages, who never changes...

Let the times and the spirits go where they like, we shall keep to the Holy Spirit and to His eternal teachings... Cling to God's word; cling to infallible and immutable revelation! Whatever novelty comes up, keep to the word of Jesus! Whatever discovery may be made by the wise men of the age, let Christ be wisdom to you... Here is your anchorage. The Book is our ultimatum.” Indeed, it’s God’s truth that abides forever!

And in verse 3 John extends his greetings to “*the elect lady and her children,*” “Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

It’s “*truth and love*” that make a beautiful couple. It’s “*grace, mercy, and peace*” that are their wedding gifts.

Verse 4, “I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.” Apparently, John had been in contact with some of the Christians who’d been discipled by this *elect lady*, and he rejoices that they’re doing well. This is a credit to her, and her ministry.

And this is often the case, a person who *walks in truth* is more than likely the one who was *weaned on truth*. This affirms the importance of a good foundation.

A person on a good trajectory, probably was headed *straight* from the start. They were grounded in truth!

We all need to lay a solid spiritual foundation.

“And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another.” This is John’s anthem in all of his writings...

If we know God we’ll be filled with His love - and if we know God’s love; then we’ll love one another.

And “This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.” Notice, *how we love* is measured by *what we do*. Love is an action word. It’s a lifestyle.

If I really love my wife I’ll not just do what’s convenient, or easy for me to do - but I’ll love her in the way she wants and needs to be love. *I’ll aim to please*.

And this should be our attitude toward God. Anybody can say they love God - but real love for God is willing to walk according to what’s pleasing to Him. As John puts it, “*we walk according to His commandments.*”

Verse 6, “This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.”

Remember, John is now 100 years old. He’s seen a lot in his lifetime. He’s no longer the youngest of the disciples, he’s now “*the Elder.*” *Can you imagine the wonders and miracles the Apostle John had seen?*

John saw the life, and death, and resurrection of Jesus. He saw the birth of the Church. The martyrdom of His peers. The transformation of a Jewish sect into a global movement. Now he’s seen the expansion of Christianity takeover all around the Mediterranean rim.

And he’s asserting that **nothing has changed.**

From the outset of His ministry, Jesus taught the importance of love for one another. John had reiterated love! This was the message “*from the beginning.*” And John encourages his readers to hold to that message.

Theologian Richard Niebuhr once said, “**The great Christian revolutions have come not by the discovery of something that was not known before. They happen when somebody takes radically something that was always there.**” We tend to look for new tactics, but it’s the rediscovery of simple truths that light revival fires.

Even today, it’s not a new commandment we need.

We need to love like Jesus’ loves. We need to put our love into action. ***Love is what will change the world!***

Verse 7, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

It was Mark Twain who wrote, “A lie runs around the world while truth is putting on her shoes.” Bad news travels faster than good. *And this is true in the church.*

Paul warned the Ephesian believers about being “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive...”

False doctrine blows through the Church like a reoccurring wind. The same lie resurfaces again and again in new packaging. Whether like in John’s day, when people denied Jesus’ humanity - or like today, when they deny His deity - we have to be on-guard against deceivers. They are clever and deliberate!

Hey, if you have any spiritual discernment at all you’re aware that there is a real *anti-Christ spirit* in the world today. The animosity is palpable and pervasive.

And believers in Jesus need to beware.

Author Warren Wiersbe once quoted a pastor of a successful church who said, “If I took my eyes off this work for twenty-four hours and stopped praying, it would be invaded before we knew it.”

He knew the importance of vigilance in the church’s cultivation of sound doctrine.

It reminds me of the little boy who was asked by his Sunday School teacher if he knew how to define the term “false

doctrine.” He thought the teacher had said, “*false doctoring.*” He replied, “False doctoring is when a doctor gives the wrong stuff to sick people.”

And this is also the definition of the term “false doctrine” – it’s the wrong stuff to the spiritually sick.

And here again, John tells us how to spot the person who is *false doctoring* - they may be right on 95% of what they say and teach, but invariably they’ll stray when it comes to what they believe about Jesus.

John notes the deceivers of his day as those “*who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.*”

Recall, John battled a heresy called “Gnosticism.” It was a system of belief that denied Jesus’ humanness. In contrast, most false teachers today deny His deity.

Both are wrong. Jesus revealed Himself as both *fully man* and *fully God*. He’s *the God-man*. He became a man so He could *bear our guilt*. But He was always God so He could *clear that guilt and expunge our sin*.

John writes in verse 8, “*Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.*” Notice, in Christian ministry we can lose what we work to obtain. Spiritual success is never guaranteed. Look around and you’ll see tiny crowds occupying huge church buildings that were built in a day when they were needed to accommodate the swell of hungry believers. *Something has been lost.*

John was laboring in his day to lay a solid foundation of right teaching in the church, but that foundation can crumble

unless every believer takes responsibility to do what he or she can to insure its preservation.

I look at what God has done at Calvary CSM over the years, but if we don't continue to serve, and support, and give - the breakthroughs and progress God has given us will fade away. Entropy will set in.

If we just kick back and say, "I've done my part. I did my time in the nursery when my kids were younger... I gave money to the last project... I've done the usher thing. It's someone else's turn..." If we all just pass the buck we can lose what we've worked so hard to build.

It's been said, "No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible." I'm not asking anyone to do it all. I'm just asking us all to take personal responsibility for the part God that has called us to play in His church...

Verse 9, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." This is why it's so crucial that you be right in your belief about Jesus. Jesus is the means by which God has chosen to redeem the world to Himself!

If you're not right about Jesus, you can't be right with God! Jesus is the one bridge between God and man.

Speaking of bridges, there is a bridge in China, the Danyang-Kunshan Grand Bridge. It's now the world's longest bridge. It's part of the Beijing to Shanghai freeway. Its length is a tad more than 102 miles long.

This enormous bridge took 4 years to build at a cost of \$8.5 billion. Yet it's not the longest bridge ever built.

For in just six hours, and at a cost of far more than \$8.5 billion - with His own body and blood Jesus built a bridge from heaven to earth - from God to man. His cross spans an enormous gulf caused by our sin

Today, even though you've *violated God's law and broken His heart* we can still *know Him* through Jesus.

And verse 10 works all this out practically, **"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him..."** Deal with the deceiver **at the door**. Don't let him *get on the inside* of your own mind, or your family, or the church.

In the first century Church traveling pastors were numerous. Many of the infant churches lacked adequate leadership so men traveled from place to place to fill the gaps. Churches would put these fellows up, provide their needs, and support their ministries.

But apparently, this was such a frequent occurrence, the churches needed help in discerning who was a legitimate apostle, and who was just a con artist, and was taking advantage of a church's generosity...

So in the second century a document began to circulate in the churches known as **The Didache** or **"The Teaching of the Twelve."** It provided instructions for the churches concerning these traveling apostles...

Here's a few examples of what's in the Didache...



“Every apostle who comes to you should be received as the Lord. But he should not remain more than one day, and if there is some necessity a second as well; but if he should remain for three, he is a false prophet.”

In other words, if the guy stays more than a weekend without offering to mow the grass or do some repairs, and pay for his upkeep, he's not an apostle - he's a freeloader, a deadbeat! You shouldn't allow him to stay.

Here's another excerpt, “And when the apostle departs, he should receive nothing but bread until he finds his next lodging. But if he requests money, he is a false prophet...” Wow, that would eliminate a lot today!

“And not everyone who speaks forth in the spirit (or who says, “*Thus saith the Lord*”) is a prophet, but only if he has the kind of behavior which the Lord approves. From his behavior, then, will the false prophet and the true prophet be known...” The proof is in his conduct.

“And every prophet, who in the spirit, (who speaks as if it's by the Holy Spirit) orders a table to be spread shall not eat therefrom; but if he does, he is a false prophet.” In other words, if supposedly the Holy Spirit speaks through one of these traveling pastors and he orders some food - make sure it's for the hungry and needy folks in the fellowship - not the fat-cat prophet.

The Didache has even more relevant warnings, “And whoever says in the spirit, ‘Give me money’... do not listen to him. But if he says that it should be given for others who are in need, let no one judge him.”

In other words, a greedy or lazy or irresponsible pastor shouldn't receive a church's support. John says don't give in to an apostle's appeals for money - *no matter how spiritual he sounds. We need to discern.*

It reminds me of the old adage, "Treat your guest as a guest for two days. On the third day give him a hoe." That's a lot like the instructions in this ancient manual!

This book, [The Didache](#), was written in the second century to correct the church's lack of discernment in the first century. Apparently, the first church abounded in love, but lacked discernment. Churches had a habit of taking in everyone - *true teacher or false teacher...*

The Church was so enamored with the need to love they failed to support the truth. John is teaching here that a love not wedded to the truth, is not real love.

In fact, it seems this problem in the early church was so prevalent that Christian charity was helping the false teachers and perpetuating the spread of heresy.

This is why John warns in verse 11, "**he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.**" Offer a false teacher a helping hand - or some practical support toward the deceitful work he's doing - *and you're an accomplice to his crime.* You're aiding and abetting a deceiver.

This was *and is* a serious issue!

If two Mormon missionaries pull up to your house on their bicycles... They're hot and sweaty - so in a spirit of niceness

you invite them into your air-conditioned house to take a nap and drink lemonade, *that's wrong!*

Don't enable a false prophet to keep spreading his deception. Instead, ask him to mow your lawn. Get him sidetracked or pooped out. Don't encourage him.

If you see him with a flat tire. You probably need to help him get out of the road, but don't fix his flat. He'll jump back on his bike and keep pedaling his heresy.

There may be times when it's appropriate to invite a Mormon missionary or a Jehovah Witness into your house. And in such cases, proper hospitality can be shown. *We need to be led by the Spirit in these cases.*

But make sure your ultimate goal is to plant seeds of truth in his mind - *not just a hot meal in his belly.*

I'm not saying don't befriend the cultist. Jesus taught us to be a friend of sinners, and lead them to Him. But when a man is actively propagating lies, don't assist him - don't even greet him in an encouraging way.

As one commentator writes, "John warns us not to intentionally or unintentionally collaborate with the enemy. Don't be mean, but when he comes to your door don't moisten lips that lie with your lemonade."

John concludes his second letter, "Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full." Here is why *the Elder's* letter is so short and to the point. He's planning a visit where he can fill them in on all the details he's left out.

And *“face to face”* is usually better than an email, or a text, or even a letter. *Ever send an email that was misunderstood? Everyone has!* Voice inflection, tone, body language all get left out of an email. You can **see** what the person is saying only if you’re *“face to face.”*

And this is why even though the live stream is a good option when you can’t come to church, it should never be viewed as a replacement for *“the assembling of ourselves together.”* There’s a dynamic that occurs when we are *“face to face”* that you lack otherwise.

John closes, *“The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.”* The *“elect sister”* may’ve been another church. Her children were members of a sister church.

Or this was the lady’s actual sister and John sends greetings from her cousins... Friday night at the dinner Stacy held for our Children’s Ministry volunteers, I was talking to a couple who mentioned they had five grandchildren. Then the wife said, *“Well, one of the five is actually a cousin, but we just consider her our own.”*

I thought that was beautiful. I’m sure that’s also what these sisters thought. They treated their cousins as if they were their own... *And in Christ they were!*

Let’s also love each as brothers and sisters - *for we are*. But in our loving, let’s never ignore the truth.