

## **“MAKING TRUTH AND LOVE A PRIORITY.”**

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### **Scripture Texts: II John 1:1-6**

#### **Introduction.**

I am going to attempt to do something I have never done before. I am going to preach through an entire book of the Bible in just two sermons.

In our culture today which would you say is more important, truth or love? I think the answer is pretty obvious. Love trumps everything. Truth is relative, diversity and tolerance are all the rage. People who stand for truth are labeled haters speaking hate speech. Unyielding commitment to the truth is called unloving. Truth has been sacrificed on the altar of love.

We are told truth divides and separates us from love, because it makes distinctions and calls error error. We are told doctrine divides and love unites.

Today love is defined as tolerance without the truth.

Love is never challenging someone's views.

Love is refusing to label anything as wrong.

One example is the view of marriage. It is no longer culturally acceptable to say marriage is only between one man and one woman. That is too exclusive, elitist, narrow, unfair. It marginalizes people who feel and think differently, and want all the rights and benefits even if they don't believe God's will and purpose for marriage.

Predictably it won't stop at same-sex unions. Recently the American Psychological Association announced it is opening the door to polygamous relationships or what are now called polyamorous relationships. If we throw out God's definition of marriage, then anything and everything goes. Why not a marriage with three or four or more people? Who can stand up against that? If gender doesn't matter then why should number matter?

There is no end to the folly of godlessness. If there is no God then everything is permitted.

The brilliant Christian philosopher and mathematician, Blaise Pascal once said: “Truth is so obscure in our times, and falsehood so established, that unless we love the truth, we cannot know it” (Pensées, 14:863).

But when Christians who love God and love His truth stand up to defend His truth they are called arrogant, unloving and even unchristian.

So John is being clearly counter-cultural when he makes the bold declaration:

“This is love, that we walk according to God’s commandments. This commandment is from the beginning.”

John is writing in a time when the truth of Christianity was being compromised. Gnostics and Docetist were denying the full incarnation of Christ. Gnostics said all matter and all flesh are evil and so God could not dwell in flesh since He is holy. Therefore, Jesus is not God but a created being, higher than the angels but still created.

They sowed seeds of hatred as we saw in I John, they disobeyed God’s word, they departed from the truth and are far from God.

John confronted false teachers and false shepherds who were subtly changing the truth and deceiving the flock.

## **Truth and Love.**

*John had to learn the importance of truth and love.* He started out as a disciple rather unbalanced. Remember Jesus called him and his brother, James, son’s of thunder. One time when the Samaritans rejected Jesus John was quick to say:

**Luke 9:54** “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”

What changed? Being with Jesus.

The events of the evening of the last supper with Jesus were clearly etched deep into the memories of all the apostles. All four Gospels give lots of details about those final hours with Jesus.

John devotes seven full chapters to the details of his last hours with Jesus, from the Upper Room to the crucifixion.

Listen to just a couple verses that stood out and were remembered by John.

**John 13:34-35** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**John 14:6** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

**John 14:15** If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Jesus’ words about truth and love made a deep impression on John. Truth and love are the twin rails Christianity runs on.

We are told to love the truth. We are told to speak the truth in love. In I Corinthians 13 we are told love “rejoices with the truth” (1 Cor 13:6).

Some ask which is more important, truth or love. It’s a bad question that leads to a false dichotomy. Truth and love are twins, they are inseparable, interdependent. He who loves, loves in truth. All who know the truth, love.

To know God is to love God. Doctrine is essential, but doctrine that doesn’t stir up love for God and each other is fruitless.

But love turns back to the truth. Love loves the truth. Love supports the truth, upholds the truth, rejoices at the truth.

Remember all through I John the apostle had two test for their Christianity, the social test, do they love each other, and the doctrinal test, do they believe the truth about Jesus.

In this letter John is encouraging them and reinforcing these two priorities. So he commands them over and over to follow the truth and to love one another. Make these the priorities of our fellowship and life together.

John doesn’t specifically define truth, but it is clearly implied to be the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ who at the incarnation became the self-revelation of God (John 1:14).

Jesus is the truth. Truth to John refers to those who have embraced Jesus and are filled with the Spirit of Truth.

John tells us two things about the truth.

***We must love the truth, I John 1:1-3.***

Truth is the foundation of love (vv. 1–3).

We live in a Pontius Pilate age. He would be comfortable in our world. What is truth? Who can know the truth? Truth is relative, you have your truth, I have mine. Whatever is true for you is your truth. It is OK to search for the truth, but if you find it and tells other, they will resist.

Christians have a different view. We know the truth, the truth is a person and it is personal. The truth is absolute, unchanging, eternal and universal. There is one truth about God, humanity, sin, salvation and eternal life.

If we say we love Jesus then we must love and embrace the truth. Jesus is the truth, He is the true God and eternal life. We must seek it, pursue it, know it, love it, defend and protect it.

Those who do this will have grace, mercy and peace (vs. 2).

Is it hard to love God's truths? Do we think God's commands are burdensome?

Let me put it by way of analogy.

Would you ever give one of your children a command that was bad for them? Rather don't parents give commands to their children that they believe are best for their children? If we who are sinful give good commands and good gifts to our children, how much more, as Jesus says, does our perfect father in heaven only give good gifts and good commands to us (Matthew 7:9-11)?

If God is a father to us and if God is perfect and wise and good, then how can we not love all His commands which are all His best gifts to us?

***We must live the truth, I John 1:4-6.***

Love is the fulfillment of truth (vv. 4–5).

Truth in the head only is vain, worthless. Truth must get into our hearts, wills, hands and feet.

What you believe must impact how you behave or you believe in vain.

Notice what pleases John most, that they are walking in the truth, living it out, doing it.

How do you feel when you hear a child or grandchild is walking in the truth, is following the Lord, is growing in faith in love toward God? Does it not bring you great joy? Is it not cause for genuine and heartfelt gratitude to God?

To “walk” simply means to be intentional, deliberate, disciplined in following the right path. Walk in the truth and walk in love.

John is never interested in truth as an intellectual exercise or philosophical concept. He is interested in the truth as the Gospel, as something that transforms and changes lives, that delivers us from our sinful old ways, truth that is expressed in grace, mercy, peace and forgiveness.

Wrong thinking leads to wrong living. Right thinking leads to right living. Loving the truth leads to loving God and loving others.

Walk in the command to love. Love the command in which you walk.

### **Implications and application.**

*What is one way you can walk in the truth this week?* When you hear a lie you can counter it with truth. When yourself tells you something false you can preach the truth of the Gospel to yourself.

*What is one way you can walk in love this week?* You can show love to someone, a gift, a kind word, a prayer, an encouragement, a verbal blessing. You can do something for someone. How about to someone who doesn't deserve it or can pay it back?

Make truth and love a priority this week.

Speak the truth in love. Ask a close trusted friend to give you an honest and candid answer, are you true and loving.

Paul gives an example of how he spoke the truth in love. Paul wrote two very hard hitting letters to the Corinthians.

**II Corinthians 2:4** For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

His love for them compelled him to tell them the truth. Speaking the truth in love is Christ-like.

When we obey God and His commandments it will come out as love toward others. If it isn't loving, it isn't truth-filled.

If we don't love, we aren't obeying the truth. If we don't obey, we aren't loving. Truth-filled love and love-filled truth.

Let us love the truth in a way that knows no compromise.  
Let us love each other in a way that knows no boundaries.

Use the love chapter in I Corinthians 13 as a test of your truth and your love.

**First**, do you put truth above love? You cannot honor truth without also being loving. In 1 Corinthians 13:2 Paul writes, "If I... understand all mysteries and all knowledge [that's truth]... but have not love, I am nothing." If you are satisfied to be full of truth while lacking in love, know this—the truth of God's Word that you think you are so full of and that you honor, says you are nothing.

**Second**, In the same way, it is impossible to truly love without honoring truth. Why? Because genuine love "rejoices in truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6).

Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, when we walk in the truth and abide in love for God and one another.