**2 John**

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| **Limits to Love** | | | | |
| **Aid True Teachers** | | | **Avoid False Teachers** | |
| **Verses 1-6** | | | **Verses 7-13** | |
| **Walk in Commandments** | | | **Watch for Counterfeits** | |
| **Positive** | | | **Negative** | |
| **Demonstrate Truth** | | | **Defend Truth** | |
| **Greeting in Truth and Love**  **(1-3)** | **Children’s Obedience Commended**  **(4)** | **Exhortation to Love**  **(5-6)** | **Prohibition to Help False Teachers**  **(7-11)** | **Expected Visit & Greetings**  **(12-13)** |
| **Ephesus** | | | | | |
| **AD 85-95** | | | | | |

**Key Word: Limits**

**Key Verses: “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your home or welcome him” (2 John 9-10).**

**Summary Statement: The way to live out the gospel is to show hospitality to true missionaries but limit that love by *not* *aiding false teachers.***

**Application: Don’t contribute to or encourage in any way Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, or any other false religion.**

**2 John**

**Introduction**

**I. Title**: The Greek title (Ἰωὰννου Β´ *Second of John*) follows the standard practice of naming the General Epistles after their authors and distinguishes this epistle from John's two others.

**II. Authorship**

A. External Evidence: The Church has long viewed this epistle as penned by the Apostle John, leader of the church of Ephesus in Asia Minor and author of the Gospel, 1 John, 3 John, and Revelation.

B. Internal Evidence: The designation “the elder” (v. 1) has always been considered another designation for John until the rise of liberal scholarship. Themes such as love (vv. 1, 3, 5, 6), joy (vv. 4, 12; cf. 1 John 1:4), truth (v. 4), and antichrist (v. 7) bear remarkable resemblance to emphases in 1 John and the Gospel of John.

**III. Circumstances**

A. Date: Most scholars believe that John recorded this epistle about AD 90, although nothing in it excludes an earlier date (see 1 John notes). Thus it was written in about AD 85-95.

B. Origin/Recipients: John invested the final years of his ministry in Ephesus, which makes this capital of Asia the likely origin. The letter is addressed to the “chosen lady and her children” (v. 1), which has caused some debate as to who is being addressed.

1. Some see the title as a personified form for a local church and cite the following arguments:

a. No personal names are found in the epistle—either for the woman herself, her children, or her nephews (in contrast to 3 John).

b. The literary form which addresses nations, cities, and churches as female personages is common in the Bible (“the daughter of Zion” for Israel; “the bride of Christ” for the church in Eph. 5:29f.; 2 Cor. 6:2f.; “she who is in Babylon” for a church in 1 Peter 5:13).

c. “The greeting in verse 13 is more natural if sent from one church to another than from a group of people to their aunt by means of a third party” (Guthrie, 892).

d. John often referred to the people in the church as “children” (1 John 2:12, etc.).

e. Nothing is known in the New Testament of a woman named *Eklecta* or *Kyria*—the Greek titles for “chosen” and “lady,” which some see as the woman’s name.

f. The lady was known not only by John but by “all who know the truth” (v. 1), which is more probable if it refers to a community than to a woman.

g. The subject matter on false teachers matches that of a church more than that of an individual, “although this might have been equally necessary for a prominent private person in the habit of entertaining visitors freely” (Guthrie, 892).

h. The predominant use of the second person plural (vv. 8, 10, 12) suggests a composite community more than a family.

i. The “new commandment” (v. 5) “has more point if applied to a community rather than to the narrower limits of a family circle” (Guthrie, 892).

2. The Virgin Mary who resided in Galilee (Knauer's view cited by Barnes, 1501).

3. An anonymous woman and her children are addressed (v. 1), who probably opened their home for church services and housed traveling preachers. This more literal view depicts a woman in a local church and is probably right for many reasons:

a. Her children are mentioned (vv. 1, 4), and “the reference to the lady's children is quite intelligible if these were by now grown up” (Guthrie, 891).

b. She may have been named *Eklecta* (“chosen”) or, more likely, *Kyria* (“lady,” a popular proper name for Christian women [although only in later times]; cf. Barnes, 1501) as the Syriac and Arabic versions translate it as a proper name

c. Possible grammatical constructions include “the Elect Lady,” “an Elect Lady,” “Eklecta the Lady,” “The elect Kyria,” and “Eklecta Kyria.”

d. This better distinguishes between the woman herself and her children (physically or spiritually). If the “lady” is the church, then who are the “children”?

e. If the “lady” refers to the leader of the church, then it would be odd to refer to the leader of a church by a feminine title.

f. The NT pattern for addressing churches refers to them by name.

g. The woman's name may have been kept secret to protect her from persecution.

h. It’s best to follow the literal sense unless it doesn’t make sense (it does here).

i. The woman's nephews and nieces (v. 13) make good sense, taken literally.

j. Adopting the literal meaning better accounts for some early Christians' reluctance to use this epistle. “A private letter written to a lady would not seem of sufficient importance to receive canonical status” (Guthrie, 893).

C. Occasion: Before the New Testament writings were completed and circulated among the early believers, the churches had to rely upon traveling preachers and teachers for truth. Since inns were unsafe and few, these teachers stayed with Christians. Many struggled with this question: “How could believers know *which* teachers to allow into their homes?” John answers this question in this epistle, where he pointedly commands a hospitable woman to “put limits on her love” by refusing to house false teachers or to encourage them in any way.

**IV. Characteristics**

A. This letter is the second shortest book in the Bible (3 John is slightly shorter; cf. p. 306).

B. This is the only NT letter addressed to a woman.

C. Verse 10 is the most controversial part of this letter. The issue is whether false teachers should be allowed to (1) stay in believers' homes, (2) enter their homes, or (3) neither. The third view is the usual interpretation, so believers are not involved in promoting false teaching even in the slightest sense. See the study on pages 302-4 for different views.

**Argument**

John’s second epistle warns a woman zealous in hospitality against providing lodging to false teachers so she wouldn't help spread their destructive doctrines. His greeting balances truth and love to illustrate this point (vv. 1-3), followed by a commendation of the woman for her love (v. 4) balanced with the importance of truth (vv. 5-6). Next follows the central teaching of the letter that warns her to show her love with discerning limits by refusing hospitality to false teachers (vv. 7-11). A conclusion follows (vv. 12-13). The basic format is to support the truth (vv. 1-6), implying continued aid to true teachers, followed by warning against supporting false teachers (vv. 7-13).

**Synthesis**

**Limits to love**

**1-6 Aid True Teachers**

1-3 Greetings in truth and love

1a Author

1b-2 Recipients

3 Blessing

4 Commendation for children's obedience

5-6 Exhortation to love

**7-13 Avoid False Teachers**

7-11 Prohibition to help false teachers

7 Heresy defined

8-9 Rewards lost for aiding heresy

10-11 Never aid heresy

12-13 Expected visit/greetings

**Outline**

**Summary Statement for the Book**

**The way to live out the gospel is to show hospitality to true missionaries but limit that love by *not* *aiding false teachers.***

1. **I. The way a woman should live out the gospel is to balance love with truth (1-6).**
   1. John greets a woman and her children, emphasizing truth and love, to prepare them for his warning on misguided love by helping heretics (1-3).
      1. John identifies himself so the recipients might know that the contents have the stamp of apostolic authority (1a).
      2. A woman and her children are greeted anonymously in love and truth, probably to protect them from persecution (1b-2).
         1. The recipients—a woman and her children—are unnamed, likely to protect them from persecution if the letter fell into the wrong hands (1b).
         2. The recipients are affectionately greeted in love and truth to show that these traits must be balanced to guard the faith (1c-2).
            1. John loves this woman based on truth, as do all who know God, for true love is based on truth (1c).
            2. Love is based on God’s eternal, indwelling truth, so the woman might see that her response to his limits on love should protect the truth (2).
            3. God's blessings always balance truth and love, so John’s upcoming teaching on love must be limited by truth (3).
   2. John commends the woman for the obedience of her children to soften his later correction with sincere appreciation (4).
      1. The woman's children living the truth brought John joy, thus affirming his high esteem for her before his later correction (4a).
      2. That the woman's children also please God the Father by their obedience is noted to encourage her with divine approval (4b).
   3. John exhorts the woman to practice truth in a life of obedient love so that she won't think by his later comments that he is discouraging love altogether (5-6).
      1. God always expects those who fear him to love one another, so the woman should understand John’s later rebuke as not discouraging love altogether (5).
      2. A life of love is shown as it always has been—obedience to God's commands (6).
2. **II. The way John encouraged the hospitable woman to proclaim the gospel was to warn her not to help false teachers (7-13).**
   1. The hospitable woman must protect the truth with a discerning love that has limits by not assisting heretics who deny that Christ is God become man (7-11).
      1. False teachers who deny Christ’s incarnation as God are numerous, deceptive, and against Christ, so the woman should consider if she supports them (7).
      2. The woman could lose her rewards by aiding or believing false teachers’ heresies to encourage her to please God by remaining steadfast in doctrine (8-9).
         1. Believers can lose previously earned rewards, so the woman should consider whether her aid to false teachers receives God's blessing (8).
         2. Rewards can be lost when believers support heresy against God, so she should please God by remaining steadfast in doctrine (9).
      3. Believers must never spread heresy by inviting heretics inside their homes or even greeting them to stress discerning limits based on the gospel's truth (10-11).
         1. A Christian must never invite a heretic inside his home or even greet them, so this woman's love must be discerning and have limits (10).
         2. Anyone who even greets a proselytizing false teacher encourages him in his heresies and promotes Satan’s work (11).
   2. A visit to clarify heresies is better than a letter, so John hoped to see the woman and sent her sister's children greetings to end this serious letter affectionately (12-13).
      1. John wants to clarify his teaching about discerning love through a personal visit that is better than a letter and would be a joyful rather than stern time (12).
         1. More teaching is needed on the delicate subject of responding to false teachers, but not through a letter (12a).
         2. A personal, face-to-face visit would better clarify John’s teaching and result in a joyful time rather than a list of stern regulations (12b).
      2. John sends greetings from her nephews and nieces to end affectionately (13).

**The Meaning of 2 John 10**

**A Study of How to Respond to False Teachers**

**Translations**

1. “ … do not take him into your house or welcome him” (NIV).

2. “ … do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting” (NASB).

3. “ … receive him not into *your* house, and do not bid him God speed” (KJV).

4. “ … do not receive him—do not accept him, do not welcome him *or* do not admit him—into

[your] house or bid him Godspeed *or* give him any encouragement” (Amplified).

5. “ … don't have him inside your house; don't even greet him” (J. B. Phillips).

6. “ … don't even invite him into your home. Don't encourage him in any way” (Living Bible).

7. “ … don't take him into your home or greet him “ (Beck).

8. “ …you must stop welcoming him to your house and stop bidding him good morning” (Williams).

9. “ … stop receiving him into your house. And stop giving him greeting” (Wuest)

10. “ … do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting” (Revised Standard Version)

11. “… don’t invite that person into your home or give any kind of encouragement” (NLT)

12. “… do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting” (ESV)

13. “… stop receiving him into [your] house and stop saying a greeting to him” (my translation)

14. … μὴ λαμβάνετε αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λὲγετε (Greek).

**Interpretive Issues**

1. Definition: The lexical (dictionary) meaning of χαίρειν (χαίρω) is twofold (BAGD 873-74):

a. “rejoice, be glad” (e.g., Romans 12:15a: “Rejoice with those who rejoice…”).

b. used as a formula of greeting—

1) as a form of address, often when meeting people… “welcome, good day, hail (to you), I am glad to see you,” sometimes (e.g., Hermas), “How do you do?” or even the colloquial “hello”… “good morning”; … “greet someone, bid someone the time of day” 2 John 10f.

2) elliptically at the beginning of a letter… “greetings” (James 1:1).

2. Parallel Passages: The word is a greeting (“b.” above) in…

a. “Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, '**Greetings**, Rabbi!’ and kissed him” (Matt. 26:49).

b. “… They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of Him and mocked Him. ‘**Hail**, King of the Jews!’ they said” (Matt. 27:29b).

c. “Suddenly Jesus met [the women after His resurrection]. '**Greetings**,' He said. They came to Him, clasped His feet and worshiped Him” (Matt. 28:9; cf. Mark 15:18; John 19:3).

d. “The angel went to her [Mary] and said, '**Greetings**, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you’” (Luke 1:28).

3. Tense Usage: The use of the present imperative tense here has either of two possibilities:

a. Iterative: repeat an action at successive intervals or whenever the occasion arises; i.e., “whenever a false teacher comes, don't receive him into your house” (cf. J. A. Moulton, *Grammar of the New Testament Greek* [Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1908], 1:125).

b. Prohibitive: a command to discontinue an action already going on, i.e., “stop receiving him into the house” (Eugene Van Ness Goetchius, *The Language of the New Testament* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965], 263).

c. Therefore, John wrote this hospitable woman to stop demonstrating hospitality to false teachers immediately. This obviously could only occur the next time she had the opportunity to encourage them in the propagation of their false gospel.

**Some Commentators Allow Entrance Into Homes**

1. John Stott makes three key observations on 2 John 10 (*The Epistles of John*, 213-14). I agree with “a.” and “c.” but show my disagreement with “b.” in brackets [ ]:

a. “John is referring to teachers of false doctrine, not merely to believers in it… Christians may certainly welcome and entertain someone who holds false views and will seek to bring him to a better mind. It is those who are engaged in the systematic dissemination of lies, dedicated missionaries of error, to whom we may give no encouragement.”

b. “John's instruction may well relate not only to an 'official' visit of false teachers but to the extending to them of an 'official' welcome, rather than to private hospitality [because]:

(1) “This letter was addressed to a church, not to an individual [But verse 1 says it was written to a woman and her children!], and

(2) “The phrase *if there come any unto you* (plural, *humas*) describes the anticipated visit of a false teacher (or group of them, verse 7) to the church in question… They had left the church where John was . . . but had evidently not yet arrived where the recipients of the Second Epistle were” [but if this were true, why didn't John specifically say, “There are some false teachers en route to you from our area . . .”? Also, the plural “you” refers to the woman and her children in verse 1 since a church is not mentioned in the letter].

(3) “John's order [is] not to *receive him . . . into your house*, which is literally 'into the house' (RSV). Which house? Of course, he may mean that every Christian house was to be closed to the false prophets. But may it not be that John was referring to 'the house' . . . in which the church met for worship?” [Of course, the woman's house probably was also the same place believers met for worship—besides this, should false prophets be banned from church services but welcomed into private homes?]

NOTE: Stott contradicts this whole second argument (b) when he writes concerning (3) above, “How then can we make him welcome in our home or church or wish him well on his journey?” (p. 214).

c. “John is referring to teachers of false doctrine about the incarnation, and not to every false teacher.” [Here, Stott brings up a good point: those in view are, first of all, *teachers*, and second, they are *not* divergent in a minor issue (e.g., a different perspective on baptism, church structure, divorce, etc.) but a *big* problem—whether Jesus is indeed God in the flesh].

2. F. F. Bruce writes, “The injunction not to receive anyone who does not bring 'the teaching of Christ' means that no such person must be accepted as a Christian teacher or as one entitled to the fellowship of the church. It does not mean that (say) one of the Jehovah's Witnesses should not be invited into the house for a cup of tea in order to be shown the way of God more perfectly in the sitting room than would be convenient at the doorstep” (*The Epistles of John*, 142).”

Therefore, the above authors believe that the verse prohibits false teachers from teaching ministry in the church. In this view, it does not prohibit believers from showing hospitality to false teachers within their own homes.

**Some Commentators Prohibit Entrance Into Homes**

1. “For their hospitality and keep [traveling Christian preachers] depended upon the generosity *of the members* of the church. Such hospitality was not to be offered to preachers with a false message; it can be taken for granted that they were not to be allowed to minister in the church” (I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 74, emphasis mine).

2. “Do not receive such a teacher as one who can justly claim the privilege of Christian hospitality as a brother” (B. F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*, 231).

3. “Neither the local church *nor the individual* believer are to have any fellowship whatsoever with those teaching erroneous views which deny the person and work of Christ” (Robert Weldon Wilson, “An Exposition of Second and Third John,” ThM thesis [Dallas Theological Seminary, 1955], 36, emphasis mine).

**Summary of the Differing Views:**

**Can False Teachers**. . .

**View *Stay* in Believers Homes? *Enter* Believers' Homes? Adherents**

1 Yes Yes John R. Stott

F. F. Bruce

2 No Yes Stanley Toussaint (DTS)

3 No ? I. Howard Marshall

B. F. Westcott

Robert Weldon Wilson

4 No No Rick Griffith

**Views Explained**

1. False teachers can stay overnight with believers and can be invited to enter the private homes of believers because the command prohibits them only from church services (Stott, Bruce)

2. False teachers should never stay overnight with believers *but* can be invited to enter the private homes of believers for a chat (Toussaint)

3. False teachers should never stay overnight with believers, but the question of staying inside for a few minutes is not addressed (Marshall, Wilson, Westcott)

4. False teachers should never stay overnight with believers *and* should never be invited to enter the private homes of believers (Griffith). I think this is the natural sense of the expression, “Do not take him into your house or welcome him.” Anyone inviting a heretical teacher into his house, even for a few minutes, has welcomed false teaching into the home.

**Modern Heresies**

(1 of 2)



**Modern Heresies** (2 of 2)



