

RESTRICTIONS TO FELLOWSHIP
2 JOHN 7-13

The first time I remember a Mormon coming by our house when I was a child was when we were living in Minnesota. I think it was January. My Dad answered the door, saw who they were, stepped outside, closed the door, and shared the gospel with them for what seemed to be about an hour. When he came in from the freezing temperatures I asked him why he didn't invite them into our home and talk inside where it was warm, he said because 2 John prohibits bringing people into our home who are known false teachers as a sign of hospitality.

A few years ago it was the middle of summer and the Mormons came by my house and I did the same thing; and when I came inside from an hour-long visit in the 100°+ sunshine, the girls asked me the same question and I gave the same answer.

Well, I suppose we can understand the lack of fellowship we might have with people who are identified with known cults; but are there similar situations in "Christian" churches? Where do we draw the lines for broken fellowship? Are there times when we should not take a meal with those who hold different beliefs about Christianity? If so, how is that loving and how will those who are outside the church come to be inside the church if we don't associate with those people?

Those are the kinds of questions that the 2nd shortest book in the NT was written to answer.

As we look at the last few verses in that book we will find that John unequivocally says:

THE BELIEVER SHOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN ANY WAY WITH ANY KNOWN FALSE TEACHING OR TEACHER.

1. Resist False TEACHING (vv. 7-9)

- ✓ Love ONE ANOTHER (not false teachers) (v. 7)
- ✓ Watch out for YOUR OWN doctrine (v. 8)
- ✓ Continue in CHRIST'S teaching (v. 9)

2. Don't Relate to False TEACHERS (vv. 10-11)

- ✓ Do not be GENEROUS to false teachers (v. 10a)
- ✓ Do not seek God's BLESSING for false teachers (v. 10b-11)

3. Be Joyful in Standing for TRUTH (vv. 12-13)

Remember that the theme of this brief letter is to know real, biblical fellowship:

THE BELIEVER SHOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN ANY WAY WITH ANY KNOWN FALSE TEACHING OR TEACHER.

Transition: Here are three instructions for relating to false teaching and false teachers:

1. Resist False TEACHING (vv. 7-9) — Here John provides his readers with three ways to resist...

- Love ONE ANOTHER (not false teachers) (v. 7)
 - ✓ John has a significant transition between verses 6 and 7 and verse 7 begins with the word **for**, providing a reason or justification for why believers should do what he commanded in v. 6.
 - ✓ The reason we should obey verse 6 is that **many deceivers have gone out into the world**.
 - The word **deceivers** means “to wander” or “to roam.” And the particular problem with these people is not just that they have wandered away from the truth, but they are attempting to get others to follow after them. We know that because John says **they have gone out...** that is, they have purposefully left the church (1 Jn. 2:18-19) and they have purposefully entered the world system to propagate their false teachings. They are on an active mission as Satan’s emissaries. They cannot rest until they ensnare others in their error.
 - A further danger of their error is not just that it confuses people mentally, but it leads to an ungodly kind of living: the **deceiver** is one who leads to wrong opinions and wrong living.
 - And there are **many** of these false teachers — the movement of false teaching is widespread and it is a real danger.
 - ✓ John also identifies the falsehood of this teaching even more specifically — **they do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh**. That is, they refuse to affirm the truthfulness of the humanity of Christ — they deny that He came **in the flesh** as a real man.
 - This is the old heresy that dominated the book of 1 John (e.g., 1 Jn. 4:2).
 - Notice that John doesn’t say, “they deny the humanity of Christ,” but they **do not acknowledge** His humanity. That is, they don’t agree with and confess Christ’s humanity.
 - ... There is a good warning here; false teachers can be false not only for what they say, but what they fail to say about God and Christ. Sometimes what is left out about Christ is even more significant than an error that is taught about Him.
 - ... The other thing to notice is that not every false teaching is a reason for dividing fellowship. A professor in seminary rightly said, “We all have heresy in our theology.” He was right. But just because we believe untrue things about God doesn’t mean none of us can have fellowship with anyone else. But there are some errors that are critical. And errors about Christ’s person and work will lead people to suffer eternally in Hell;

those teachings and teachers must be avoided.

... I recently picked up a book entitled, *Know the Heretics* and in the introduction he identifies some of the key heretics of church history:

Marcion: The God of the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament are two different gods.

Docetists: Jesus only appeared to be human.

Arius: The Son was a created being of a lower order than the Father.

Apollinarius: Jesus' divine nature/Logos replaced the human rational soul in the incarnation. In other words, Jesus' 'pure' divine nature replaced the filthy mind of a typical human.

Sabellius: Jesus and the Father are not distinct but just modes of a single being.

Eutyches: The divinity of Christ overwhelms his humanity.

Nestorius: Jesus was composed of two separate persons, one divine and one human.

... What you should notice about all those heresies is that there are still manifestations of those heresies with us today, and they all are perversions of the person of Christ. If one gets Christ wrong, he can have nothing right. Christ is the *crux* (cross) of our truth.

➤ So John says that the person that teaches that is **the deceiver and the antichrist**. That is, there may be many false teachers and false teachings, but the preeminent ones are the ones that distort the teaching about Christ. They not only are in error, but they represent the ultimate source of error, Satan (the deceiver and antichrist). They are not just anti-christs, but they represent the great antichrist, Satan.

✓ Now if you heard what I said earlier, I said that John provides us three ways to resist false teaching; but what he has appeared to do in this verse is only identify what false teaching is. So how does that provide “resistance” against false teaching? Remember the word ***for*** at the beginning of the verse? He is tying this verse to the previous ones. And in verses 5-6 he says, ***we (should) love one another because many deceivers...*** So the way to resist false teachers is to love one another — true teachers and true teaching.

✓ We resist false teachers by holding onto those things we know to be true and those teachers whom we know to be true.

✓ This is the central responsibility of the entire church — 1 Tim. 3:15. We guard and protect the truth and love and follow those who teach it truthfully and well (2 Tim. 3:14; Titus 1:9; 2:1ff). That leads to the next way to resist false teaching...

- Watch out for YOUR OWN doctrine (v. 8)

✓ Not only do we watch out for the false teaching of the false teachers, but we are also to be on guard against any entrance of heresy in our own teaching and beliefs.

- ✓ **Watch yourselves** = Not only are they to watch out for false teachers, but they are also to continually examine their own teaching so that they are sure themselves to remain pure in doctrine (cf. **1 Tim. 4:16**). Given the proliferation of false teachers, the woman and her children were to watch that no heresy crept into their own teaching.
- ✓ John gives two reasons why she is to watch out for her own teaching:
 - ***That you do not lose what we have accomplished.*** Notice how John changes the pronoun from “you” to “we.” Why does he do that? He is reminding them that there is more at stake than just their personal loss — if they abdicate their faith, then they lose and John and the others who invested in them lose as well. If this woman and others “slip back,” then they might undo not only their work, but also the work of the faithful men who invested in them. This is a reminder that what we guard is not ours, but Christ’s and is part of a long lineage that has been handed down to us (2 Tim. 1:13-14). We stand on the shoulders of others.
 - A second reason they are to watch out is so that they might ***receive a full reward***. John is referring to the heavenly eternal reward that is given to those who are faithful in service (Jn. 12:26; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 3:11). There are eternal incentives for making sure our lives remain “gospel compliant.” [Yarbrough]

“Believers must be discerning and decisively reject deceiving false teachers, no matter how loudly they clamor for love and tolerance. Loyalty to the truth, written and incarnate, demands it, and the consequences of not doing so — both now and eternity — are sufficient reason to be faithful.”

[MacArthur, 1-3 John, 235.]

- Continue in CHRIST’S teaching (v. 9)
 - ✓ Here John gives us a good test of false teaching — does it ***go too far and not abide in the teaching of Christ?*** Does it go further than Christ and run ahead of Christ? Or is it consistent with who Christ is and what Christ taught? The false teachers offered “advanced” teaching. John is suggesting that “advanced” teaching is actually “backward” teaching.
 - ✓ The sense of ***going to far*** is that it is “innovative.” Today it is called, “relevant.”
 - ✓ John’s not saying, “be irrelevant,” but he is saying, “your task in teaching is not to be creative and innovative. Your task is to teach what God has said (e.g., 2 Tim. 3:14-17).”
 - ✓ When people thank me for a sermon, I sometimes say, “I have a simple (but hard) task: I have been given an inerrant word to explain. My task is not to mess it up.”
 - ✓ The reason this is so important is because if anyone goes outside the boundaries of what Christ teaches, he doesn’t have ***Christ*** and he doesn’t have the ***Father*** — he’s unsaved and condemned. The only way to have the Father and Son is to stay in the teaching of Christ. To deny the Son is to forfeit the Father; it is impossible to separate the Son from the Father.
 - ✓ If you want to resist false teachers, just stay with the true teachings of Christ.

- We are to resist every form of false teaching. Sometimes it is wearying to continue to call out false teachings, but this is our task: we resist and fight against every form of falsehood and we do all we can to protect and uphold the truth.
- But we also have instruction here about how to relate to the false teachers themselves:

2. ***Don't Relate to False TEACHERS*** (vv. 10-11) — two practical steps to take

- Do not be GENEROUS to false teachers (v. 10a)
 - ✓ When John says, ***if anyone comes to you...(without) this teaching***, he is referring to those who went out as Satan's emissaries (v. 7); this one has gone out with intention and purpose to lead others astray. They were not in agreement with John about Christ's person. These were the false teachers who were going house to house to get people to leave the fellowship of believers. They'd left the church and Christ and were attempting to get others to do the same.
 - ✓ Some of these false teachers had traveled significant distances and were in towns that were not their own and with no Hampton Inn in Ephesus, had no place to stay. Evidently this woman had let them come into her home and provided them food and lodging — it was a way not only to provide hospitality, but it also indicated fellowship and kinship.
 - ✓ John says to do that is spiritual suicide, not love. Why is this not love? Because it exposes the rest of the church flock to the false and condemning teaching of these heretics. So in loving the heretic they actually also demonstrate hatred and ambivalence to the other believers who become susceptible to these false teachers.
 - ✓ So John says, ***do not receive him...*** That is, "Stop aiding and abetting their false teaching through your hospitality." They stand for something that is not true and they should not be treated hospitably and generously.
 - ✓ Notice that John's focus is not on those who have been confused by the false teachers, but on the false teachers themselves — don't encourage or help them in any way. Do nothing that indicates you are ***receiving them*** — that you are receptive to them or their teaching.
 - ✓ While we don't have the same obligations for hospitality in our culture, the principle remains. Do nothing to engage with a false teacher that indicates generosity or hospitality to them (that's why I stood sweating outside for an hour, calling two Mormons to repentance).
 - ✓ But it also means, don't listen to them or read them. A couple of times I've been flipping channels and come across one of these charlatans and watched for a couple of minutes to see what they say, and RJ has irritably said, "TURN THE CHANNEL..."
 - ✓ Beware of being hospitable to them on iTunes, the Internet, TV, in books, or anywhere else.
 - ✓ Do nothing to take them in and give them a hearing.

- Do not seek God's BLESSING for false teachers (v. 10b-11)
 - ✓ John says they are not only not to receive them, but also ***do not give him a greeting***. That is, don't talk to him as if he's a believer. You don't have to insult him, but you also don't speak with him as if he's on equal terms with you as a believer.
 - ✓ The word ***greeting*** has the idea of being glad to see someone, wishing them well, and as a word of departure, wishing them "God-speed" (KJV). It has the idea of desiring God's best for the person. Again, we don't have to be rude about this (something I didn't do well the last time this happened), but instead of saying, "see you later," "Have a good/blessed day..." we should say, "you need to repent and turn away from your sin of rejecting Christ..." (which is exactly what I did the last time JW's came to my door).
 - ✓ The best way to "love" these heretics is to call them to repentance. We can have no fellowship or friendship with them until they repent of their sin; so instead of benignly offering them a "see you later..." we should say, "unless you repent I will never see you in eternity; you must turn from your sin and embrace the true Jesus Christ..."
 - ✓ And there is a highly important reason not to give them a greeting — to do so is to ***participate in his evil deeds***. To speak as a friend to a heretic is to condone them and their teaching and to ***participate*** in their evil deception. In fact, ***participate*** means "have fellowship" — there is unity and companionship in their evil. If we receive and greet these false teachers, it puts us in close association with them and identifies us with them so that we become known in the same way they are known. We become one with them. *To not call them to repentance is to approve them.*
 - ✓ The church father, Polycarp, was met on one occasion by the heretic Marcion, "Do you know me?" To which Polycarp replied, "I do know you — the firstborn of Satan."
 - ✓ John himself apparently encountered Cerinthus in a public bathhouse (Cerinthus was the heretic behind many of the false teachers John wrote against in these letters). John turned and ran out of the bathhouse exclaiming, "Let us fly, lest even the bathhouse fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within." [MacArthur, 236]
 - ✓ Do not be affectionate or welcoming of any false teachers in any way.

3. Be Joyful in Standing for TRUTH (vv. 12-13)

- This brief letter was evidently written on a single sheet of parchment (not a scroll) and as he reached the bottom of the page, John said, he had many more things to write but wanted to do so in person (***face to face***) and not by ***pen and paper***. (Aside: some things must be said personally.)
- The reason that John wants to continue the conversation is that he hasn't said everything there is to say about defending the truth and if he can come to speak to her personally, he can tell her even more and that will result in further obedience and give her a ***joy (that is) full***.

- ✓ She had more room for spiritual growth and as she grew in that truth and defending the truth, there would be increasing joy for her.
 - ✓ It is possible that John is speaking of the joy that will be experienced in eternal reward (v. 8).
 - ✓ Or it could also be that she will know of the joy of seeing herself walk in obedience to the truth (v. 4). There is nothing better than living obediently to the Lord. That's what produces joy.
 - ✓ And to reinforce that, he also gives greeting to the woman from her nieces and nephews — her *sister*, who was *chosen* (a believer) also had children and they wanted John to express their love to their aunt. So even the final words of the letter exemplify the call of love that John gives in his letter and suggest the love that comes from remaining faithful to our calling as God's *chosen* people.
- [ASIDE] What is interesting to note about our relationship with these heretics, John doesn't say anything about refuting these false teachers. Given that he has more instruction for this woman (v. 12); she is probably not qualified to refute them. She just needs to disassociate herself from them. Run. It's okay to run away from heretics and flee from evil.

CONCLUSION: Here are a few summary principles for relating to false teachers and teaching:

- There are times when protecting the truth and the people in the church is more important than cultivating “friendly” relationships for evangelistic opportunities. We don't engage false teachers; we call them to repentance (e.g., don't let cults talk to you; you initiate and guide the conversation).
- It is not loving to invite someone into your home and treat him as a believer when he is a heretic. If he doesn't repent he will die in his sin and if I don't call him to repent, that means I don't care about his eternal destiny.
- There are lines to be drawn where fellowship cannot be enjoyed. But those lines are always on the central doctrines of the faith (particularly about Christ); don't divide fellowship over less central concerns (e.g., the extent of the atonement). So one comedian captures this idea when he tells of a conversation he had:

“Are you Protestant or Catholic?”

“Protestant.”

“Me too! What denomination?”

“Baptist.”

“Me too! Northern Baptist or Southern Baptist?”

“Northern Baptist.”

“Me too!...Northern conservative fundamentalist Baptist, Great Lakes Region, Council of 1879, or

Northern conservative fundamentalist Baptist, Great Lakes Region, Council of 1912.”

“Northern conservative fundamentalist Baptist, Great Lakes Region, Council of 1912.”

“Die, heretic.”

- There is a difference between those who have been taught error and those who teach error. Don't cultivate fellowship with the teachers (who have Satan's agenda, v. 7); do be willing to continue to pursue those who have been led astray by the false teachers.
- Know what you believe. Cultivate discernment by growing deeper in knowledge of Christ, the Scriptures, and biblical doctrine.
- It is important to love one another (vv. 5-6); but our love for one another must be based on the true teaching of the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. If one does not believe rightly about Christ, he is not right with God and we have no love or fellowship with that person. So we do love, but there are restrictions to our fellowship.

BENEDICTION: John 17:13-19