

2 JOHN

As with the gospel of John, this epistle is also anonymous. Although the author and recipient go unnamed, this text was treated as a letter/sermon from John to Ephesus before circulating to other believers as it was opposed to the Gnostic teaching of spirit and flesh dualism (falsely stating that Jesus came only in spirit because the flesh is free to pursue pleasures). This gospel emphasizes the importance of truth. (1 Corinthians 13:6)

John was in the “inner circle” of the ministry of Jesus along with James and Peter (witnessing many of the miracles that the other disciples of Jesus did not see). John wrote five books in the New Testament (John, 1, 2, 3 John & Revelation) which accounted for 20% of the New Testament.

John was the son of Zebedee whose brother, James, was the first disciple of Jesus to be martyred (Acts 12). John refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” (John 21:20-24) John was the cousin of Jesus as his mother (Salome) was the sister of Jesus’ mother, Mary. (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40). John and his brother were called the “sons of thunder,” so they may have had fierce tempers. (Mark 3:17; Luke 9:51-56) John is the only disciple to have remained at the foot of the cross during Christ’s crucifixion (John 19:26), and he is the only one of the twelve who was not martyred for his beliefs. During His ministry, Jesus seemed to indicate that John would live a long time. (John 21:19-23)

In this epistle (as well as the third), the writer refers to himself as “the elder.” Similar to Paul’s epistles (and unlike Peter’s two epistles), the books written by John all bear similar characteristics between them.

This letter is written to a lady believer who had been approached by false teachers.

Outline of 2 John	
2 John 1:1-3	Greetings to the Christian Lady & Church
2 John 1:4-6	Love by Being Obedient to God’s Truth
2 John 1:7-11	Oppose False Teachers
2 John 1:12-13	Closing

The Five Shortest Books in the Bible		
1.	3 John	219 Words
2.	2 John	245 Words
3.	Philemon	335 Words
4.	Obadiah	440 Words
5.	Jude	461 Words

Read 2 John 1:1-3 ... Introduction to the Lady and Her Children

1:1 This “lady” is possibly a church or one of the many women (like Lydia in Acts 16:14-15) who opened their homes to travelers.

- The Greek term “elder” (presbyteros πρεσβύτερος) is the root word for “presbyterian” and described the writer of 2 & 3 John (1:1).
 - The “elder” could describe an older man or a church official like the pastor or bishop (Titus 1:5-7).
- The Greek term “lady” probably represents a woman who manages the home church as well as the church itself (1 Peter 5:1). The church is represented as the bride of Christ. (Ephesians 5:25-32; Revelation 19:7-8; 21:2)
 - Beyond the individual lady’s children, the church also had members who were called children. (2 John 1:1, 13)
 - John uses the term “children” to represent believers in his writings. (John 12:36; 13:33; 1 John 2:1, 12, 13, 18; 2:28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21)

1:2 John’s focus is God’s truth contrasted to the false teachers. Truth is repeatedly emphasized in this brief letter. (2 John 1:1, 2, 3, 4)

John’s Essence of Truth	
John 14:17	Holy Spirit
John 8:32; 14:6	Jesus
1 John 3:23	The Gospel Message

1:3 God’s good gift of grace is the beginning of all things; grace is an unmerited gift initiated by God to an undeserving individual. (1 & 2 Timothy 1:2)

- The individual does deserve judgment for wrongdoing and sin; however, mercy means that the individual will not receive the punishment that they deserve.
- The ultimate result of grace and mercy is peace with God through His Son.
- The preposition “from” (para παρὰ) is repeated for God the Father and the Son which equates the two. John continues to emphasize that it is only through the Son that anyone can know God the Father.
- The underlying message to the believer is to temper truth with love. If no truth, one endorses and enables false living; if not love, one is judgmental and condemning.
 - The Greek term “love” (agape ἀγάπη) is God’s unconditional, covenantal love for His people; this is similar to the Hebrew term ‘hesed’ (חֶסֶד) of the Old Testament.

Read 2 John 1:4-6 ... Believers Are to Walk In Loving Obedience to God

1:4 John had met believers from the lady’s home church who were faithfully walking according to the Word of the Lord.

- The term “walking” (peripatountas περιπατοῦντας) is synonymous with “lifestyle.” Christianity is an initial decision (similar to a marriage vow) that initiates a relationship that is followed by a lifestyle of submissive obedience.

1:5 The sacrificial love of God established salvation through Christ His Son.

- The greatest commandments are to love God and then to love others (Matthew 22:36-38; Mark 12:28-34)

John’s Three Tests of Genuine Salvation	
Selfless Love	(2 John 1:5; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-12, 16-21; 5:1-2)

Obedient Lifestyle	(2 John 1:6; 1 John 2:3-6; 3:1-10; 5:2-3)
Doctrinal Truth/Spiritual Authority	(2 John 1:7; 1 John 1:1; 2:18-25; 4:1-6, 14-16; 5:1, 5, 10)

1:6 *“This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.”*

- Love equates to obedience; love is not an emotion, but instead, love is an action. (1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22; 1 John 4:7-21)

Read 2 John 1:7-11 ... Believers Should Not Befriend False Teachers

1:7 As fundamental Christianity was established; believers were warned that false teachers would arise. (Matthew 7:15; 24:11,24; Mark 13:22; 1 John 2:26; 3:7; 4:1)

- The Greek term for “deceivers” (planoi πλάνοι) is etymologically associated with the word “planet.” Ancient travelers would use stars to take their bearings and understand location/direction; however, certain heavenly objects (planets) moved irregularly which ancient astrologists called “wanderers.”
- The false teachers had left the Christian roots and adopted worldly desires and rationale (1 John 2:19)
- The Gnostic false teachers believed there was a dualism between the "spiritual" (good) and "matter/flesh" (evil); therefore, Gnostics could not believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man.

Two Primary Types of Gnostic False Teachers	
Docetic	This was a denial of Jesus' humanity; they taught that Jesus appeared to be human, but was really a spirit
Cerinthian	This was a denial that Christ's spirit died on the cross; they taught that the "Christ spirit" came on the man Jesus at his baptism and left Him before He died on the cross

- The Lord Jesus Christ was and continues to be fully God and fully man.
- John is the only Biblical writer that uses the term “antichrist” (antichristos ἀντίχριστος). (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7)
 - The singular term of “antichrist” refers to a specific individual while the plural term of “antichrists” refers to a wicked spirit throughout the ages that opposed God’s will in a number of men. (Antiochus IV Epiphanes; Romans Emperors like Nero & Domitian; Adolph Hitler, etc.)
 - The Greek term “anti-“ (ἀντί) means “against” as well as “instead of.”
 - Some wicked men are against God while others claim to be divine. The false teachers that John is addressing did not claim to be Christ (the Messiah), but they were opposed to the message of Jesus Christ.

1:8 The early apostles so much prayer and work had established Christ as the foundation, but the false teachers were undermining the doctrine that had been established.

- Believers should build upon Christ as the foundation with spiritual growth (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

1:9 Christianity is based on simple principles of love and obedience. As believers grow in the Lord, it is important that personal imaginations and theories do not creep into sound theological doctrines.

- *“Anyone who goes too far and does not remain in the teaching of Christ, does not have God.”*
- The false teachers did not have the Holy Spirit nor salvation.

1:10-11 Do not welcome those who are witnessing and testifying other religions (attempting to separate you from Christ) into your homes because it encourages him to continue sharing deceit.

- Traveling teachers were frequently housed in believer's homes, and Scripture promotes hospitality towards these ministers. (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2)
- In an effort towards Christlike living and showing love, believers should be hospitable to those who are truly needy. (Matthew 25:35; Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9; 3 John 5-6)
- The greeting may symbolize a broader engagement of discussion instead of being focused on God's calling without distraction. (Luke 10:4)
- An ancient church document called the "Didache" gave guidance on how to deal with itinerant teachers/pastors.

Read 2 John 1:12-13 ... Greetings & Plans

1:12 Whereas a letter from a loved one is always nice, the visit by a loved one is even better.

- The ending of 2 John is similar to the conclusion of 3 John 1:13-14.
- The term "paper and ink" is actually "papyrus and soot." Papyrus is a reed that was slit and opened. A stone would be used to smooth out the reed as it overlapped with other reeds and glued together. As the writer used soot to write, the soot would bleed into the papyrus and could not be erased.
 - Sheets of ancient papyrus were discovered by archeologists in an ancient Egyptian "trash dump." Most sheets were typically 8"x10," so it would take multiple sheets for a single book of the Bible.
 - 2 & 3 John are the shortest books in the Bible, and are the only two books that could fit on a single sheet of papyrus.

1:13 This verse may reference believers in another house church that John was overseeing.