

**Second John:
The Elect Lady and Her Children**

Second John is addressed to ‘the elect lady and her children...’ Most commentators agree “the elect lady” is a metaphor for a congregation John is writing to, or a metaphor for the church in general. Thus, the children are the members of the congregation. While very brief, the message of Second John echoes that of his first letter. He refers again to the “old and new commandment,” emphasizes again the importance of Christians loving one another, and once more he states emphatically the importance of proper belief and confession concerning the person and nature of Jesus. Something important in John’s letters is the care he himself shows for his audience. John makes some very bold and dogmatic claims, but he does so because he loves people. He views his readers as his beloved, those whom he loves, and his little children. John was concerned for the spiritual welfare of the brethren. That type of concern isn’t displayed in ambiguous platitudes, but in bold and straightforward proclamations of God’s Word and its truth.

**Third John:
Three Character Studies**

John’s third epistle is the most personal of all, and is addressed to an individual named Gaius. In this letter, we have three examples of people that illustrate things John has written about.

Gaius: This man is a shining example of faithfulness. In fact, his faith is great enough that John wishes the man’s physical health would mimic his spiritual health! How healthy would you be if you were as physically healthy as you were spiritually?

Diotrephes: This man is an example to avoid. Instead of loving brethren, he was a lover of self. This motivated him to evil actions against John and the faithful. We should always be on guard against the “Diotrephes” in the church.

Demetrius: This man returns to a good example. In fact, John speaks of this man in the context of imitating what is good. While we don’t compare ourselves to others, it’s always good to recognize faithfulness in others that is worthy of imitating. It’s also good to ask, “Is my life worth imitating?”

“That You May Grow Thereby...”

A weekly Bible reading plan



**1 John, 2 John, 3 John, & Jude
Contending for the Faith**

Overview

The final four books that make up the “general epistles” are First, Second, and Third John and the book of Jude. Except for First John, these are all short letters. In fact, along with Philemon, they are the shortest books of the New Testament. Despite their brevity, all of these epistles have strong and important messages. John’s three letters seem to have varied yet general audiences. First John lists no specific recipient. Second John is written to “the elect lady” which is most likely a congregation, and Third John is written to an individual named Gaius. All three have similar themes, however, and highlight the importance of holding fast to the true doctrine of Christ. Jude’s letter has a much different tenor than John’s letters, but the essential message is the same; the truth has been delivered and must be held to. These letters emphasize the important truth that we can’t divorce practical living from doctrine. If we deny true doctrine, our lives will tell the tale.

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: 1 John 1-3
Tuesday: 1 John 4-5
Wednesday: 2 John
Thursday: 3 John
Friday: Jude



False doctrine is not just a differing philosophical opinion: false doctrine is something against which Christians must do battle! Even in the first century, false teachers and false doctrine threatened the church. Thus, Jude penned his brief but powerful letter exhorting Christians to not only reject false doctrine, but to fight against it. Obviously this fight is not a physical fight, but a spiritual one. Jude calls Christians to “contend” for the faith. That word means to struggle, fight, and conquer. Jesus brought redemption and life, and the gospel message shows men how to access forgiveness and life. That great message is something to be defended.

Jude introduces himself as a servant of Jesus and brother of James. Assuming that is Jesus’ half-brother James, then Jude is Jesus’ half brother also. It’s worth noting that he sees his role as a servant to Jesus as superior to his biological tie to Jesus. As a servant of Jesus, he exhorts his fellow servants to faithfulness to the King. There were those who had begun to depart from the faith. Their false doctrine had led to immoral living and other heresies, and faithful Christians could not just stand by idly. Jude masterfully uses Old Testament examples as well as other historical sources to show the danger and damnation of false teaching and living. The conclusion is a strong one: we must stay faithful to God and His word or else we will face destruction. The final verses of the letter call Christians to persevere, to remember the words of the apostles, and to rely on the power of prayer. He ends with a powerful ascription of praise to God through Jesus, which reminds us of the joy we will share in if we remain faithful to Jesus always.

Light, Love, and Life



Throughout his letters, especially First John, the apostle depicts God as light, love, and life. These themes pick up the message conveyed in his gospel record. Thus, First John is both highly practical and intensely theological. John addresses truths about the nature of God, Christ, and the Spirit, and because of these truths lays out how Christian lives should be impacted. Instead of going through his points sequentially, John weaves his themes together throughout the book, so that topics are repeated in various contexts throughout. Because of this, it’s difficult to necessarily outline John’s first epistle, but the effect is a powerful one. As one reads through

and studies the book, the repetition of key themes stands out and helps us learn them better. Everything goes back to the basics. If we stick to the core message of the gospel, we can evaluate teaching and see when it is false. We can evaluate our lives and ensure we are living as we ought to. And we can evaluate our circumstances and trust in the future promised by God through Christ. Two major themes of First John are:

Love: God is love. If we do not love, we are not of God. Our love is not mere emotion, but is seen in our actions of caring service.

Obedience: When we do not obey God, we prove we are not of God. God has called us to holiness, and we are to live obediently to His call.

First John: A Letter of Contrasts

Throughout First John, the apostle frequently uses the method of contrast to teach important lessons. Here are some of the contrasting topics addressed in this letter:

Light & Darkness	1:5
New & Old Commandment.....	2:7-8
Loving the Father/Loving the World...	2:15-16
Christ and Antichrist.....	2:18
Truth and Lies.....	2:20-21
Children of God/Children of Satan.....	3:1-10
Eternal Life or Eternal Death.....	3:14
Love and Hatred.....	3:15-16
True Prophecy vs. False Prophecy	4:1-3
Love and Fear	4:18-19
Having Life/Not Having Life.....	5:11-12

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