



## 2 John

2 John is a short letter, from John the Elder to someone called 'the elect lady' and her children. The letter encourages them to continue walking in truth, in the love of God and love of one another. He urges the letter's recipients not to be deceived by false witnesses and expresses a hope that he will be able to visit them in person soon.



### How long will it take?

**Reading time:** 2 mins  
**Short of time?** Just read – it's only 13 verses.



### Anything tricky?

The trickiest part of 2 John is working out how it relates to John's Gospel and 1 John.



### Genre

Epistle



### Inspiring quotes

...because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever.  
*(2 John 1.2)*

I ask you, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning, let us love one another.  
*(2 John 1.5)*



### About the times

Given the uncertainty about dating it is hard to know when 2 John might have been written. Most scholars would argue that it dates from the late first century ad, probably in the ad 90s.

#### *What were people feeling?*

Like many of the letters, 2 John addresses the concerns of how to live life as a Christian. This suggests that this was a crucial issue for many Christians of the first century.



### What kind of Book is it?

A epistle 2 John is a very short letter written to encourage the community to remain faithful to God, to love one another and to resist false teaching.



## About the Author

2 John states that it is a letter from John the Elder. The question is who John the Elder was. In the first century, as now, the name John was very common.

Debates about the authorship of the Johannine material (i.e. John's Gospel, 1, 2 and 3 John and Revelation) are extensive and marked by a lack of agreement.

- Some, though not many, think the same author wrote all five books.
- Others think that one author wrote the Gospel and Epistles but another wrote Revelation.
- Others again think that one author wrote the Gospel and 1 John; another wrote 2 and 3 John and another again wrote Revelation.

It is interesting to read all five books together and see what you think!

### *What do we know about him?*

Possibilities for who this John was include:

**John the apostle.** If this is the John, then he was the brother of James, called by Jesus to follow him early in his ministry. He is often thought to be the 'beloved disciple' of John's Gospel, and if he was, then when he was on the cross, Jesus handed over care for his mother to him. Christian tradition states that he took her to live in Ephesus, where he lived to a ripe old age (around 100).

**John the Elder.** In other words, a different John, who was an elder and prophet in the early church, but not John the apostle; if it is this John, we know very little about him other than this.

**The elect lady.** Not the author but the recipient of the letter. There has been much discussion about her identity. She might either be a real person, the leader of a Christian community, who for various reasons is anonymous or a symbol of the church more generally.



## How is it structured?

1-3	Greeting and blessing
4-11	Instruction to remain strong in the truth and to resist false teaching
12-13	Closing



## Look out for...

One of the main questions about 2 John is what the false teachers were teaching. Reflect on this as you read and see if you can work out what they might have been teaching people that so worried John the Elder.

John talks a lot about truth – what do you think he means by this?



## What could this mean for me?

Another key issue for this letter is love – what does John say he thinks love is and how should this affect how we live?



## Discussion group questions

- Were there any parts of the book that you particularly liked or which inspired you?
- Were there any parts of the book that you disliked or which troubled you?
- What did *you* think the book was about?
- What do you think 'walking in the truth' means? How would we recognise when someone was not walking in the truth?
- In verse 5, John talks about the importance of loving one another. It is a message that is stated time and time again throughout in the New Testament and yet Christians struggle with it and always have. Why do you think we find it so hard? What might we do differently if we were better at it?
- 'Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, but goes beyond it, does not have God; whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. <sup>10</sup>Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching; (2 John 1:9-10).  
  
Who do you think John means by this? Do you think we exclude people from teaching today? If yes how would you decide who to exclude?
- Did you read anything in the book that touched you, expanded your faith or made you think more deeply about your life and how you live it?



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