

2 JOHN + + +

| SETH FLICK

Hey, good morning again. We're going to keep going on in our sermon series called Bible Shorts. The first question I have to you is, how do you respond when someone texts you or emails you, or even just in passing says, hey, we need to talk? How does that feel? Do you feel it here first? Or do you just start to cycle up in here first? What do we need to talk about? What did I do? And it could be something really good, but instead we usually go to the negative. Why? Because we've experienced those conversations before. And generally speaking, they don't feel very good.

Now this happened in the story that I'm about to tell you. But sometimes when someone says we need to talk, it's incredibly important and we need to listen and we need to hear and we need to change as a result of it. But that doesn't make it any easier for the person that needs to speak with us.

So in this story, I'm going to start with something that maybe again, you know, raise your hands if you've ever heard of Louie Zamperini. Yeah, see, some of us know. If you haven't heard about him, go read the book about his life. It's called Unbroken by Laura Hildebrand, I think is the author. It's a phenomenal book. Now we're talking New York Times bestseller book, but it also talks about life and faith in Jesus and what that looks like when you're living authentically after him.

I want to start earlier than that. I want to start in the beginning of his life. Louie was known as a very fast kid. And I would love to say that Louie was known for being incredibly fast because like he was on the track team or he was good in PE. No, instead he was really fast because he ran away often from local police and shopkeepers because he would steal and then get out as soon as he could. And that's where his life was kind of orienting towards. Like he would call himself a juvenile delinquent.

Now Louie had a brother. His brother's name was Pete. Pete saw all of Louie's potential. Pete loved Louie. So he sits him down one time and he's like, brother, look, we know where we come from. We know the other people that are in our circles. So you and I can see that if you keep doing what you're doing, that's going to be the result. You're going to end up hurting somebody. Somebody's going to end up hurting you. You're going to end up incarcerated or even worse. You're going to end up dead. If you keep going the way that you're going.

Now was this easy for Pete? Absolutely not. Pete loved his brother and he was willing to sit in something incredibly uncomfortable to be able to speak love and truth into his life. So as he's sitting him down, he says this sentence. And this sentence is going to be something we're going to utilize throughout Second John as we study it. And you're going to get a chance to do the back and forth with this as well, because I really hope that you take Second John to heart, take it home and start applying it in your own households.

So this is what Pete told Louie to change his life. This is what Pete told Louie what he was enduring to help Louie have a better life afterward. He said, look, buddy, you've spent your lifetime running away from the pain of what's happened in our household. And this is why you're doing all of these things.

Instead of running away from the pain, you're going to need to embrace the pain. Instead of me running away from the pain of this hard conversation, I need to embrace this pain for you. Because a lifetime of glory is worth a moment of pain.

And for those of you who know Louie Zamperini's life, he utilizes this statement from his brother through some incredibly, significantly challenging times. Louie ends up in the military in World War II. He gets shot down out of his aircraft and floats for something like 40-some days. And what gets him through is a lifetime of glory is worth a moment of pain. He's saying to himself, I can endure this season because I know something better could come after this. And I have hope now because I've experienced pain in the past and when I sit in the pain, I can endure that and get to the next phase.

Now I would love to tell you that this story ends up with an American military like naval craft picking him up out of the sea. But that is not what happens in Louie's life. Instead, do you know who picks him up? Japanese soldiers who put him into a prisoner of war camp for years. And what is it that Louie continues to remind himself of to be able to endure the torment and the horror and the torture in that POW camp? A lifetime of glory is worth a moment of pain. And he reminds himself that time and time and time again so that he can endure the moment's difficulty to enjoy what happens after it.

You're going to find out that John is doing the same thing as he's writing to a church, to specific people that need a moment of pain, a moment of confrontation in a specific kind of way to see their lives change after that.

So before we dive into 2 John, we're going to get into our Bible snapshot like we've done through the whole series. So we snapshot at Obadiah. We snapshot at Jude last week. We've got 2 John today, 3 John tomorrow. And you're like, what happened to 1 John? Well, 1 John has multiple chapters. I can't preach that all in one service. So we're skipping 1 John for now. I'm sure we'll get back there at some point.

All right. Here's the deal. 2 John, written around the same times as 1 John and 3 John. There are some other things going on in those specific circumstances. So he tailors those letters to the specific recipients. Written around 85 to 95, which means most scholars believe, not all, but most, that the gospel of John was written first, first, second, third John are written next. And then the final work is when he's exiled on the island of Patmos and he receives what we know as the book Revelation.

Now there is some debate over that, but most scholars say gospel, epistles, revelation. And hopefully that helps us understand a little bit about this. In the letter of John, he identifies himself as the elder. So that's the person who's writing it. This is the apostle John, the one that traveled with Jesus. His note of calling himself the elder is also attributed outside of the scriptures. He has a student, his student's name is Polycarp. Polycarp affirmed that John was called John the elder. So even whether it's within the scripture or in history outside of the scripture, it's attested to that John is this author here.

Now this book is like the shortest according to verses. It's about 13 verses long. Many of the other epistles are written on scrolls because they are very voluminous. And guys like Paul would write one sentence, I kid you not, in two to three paragraphs. They don't stop. He just keeps going. You got to have a big old scroll to write all of that inspired word of God.

John has a high command of the Greek language. So he can say what he needs to say in 13 verses on one piece of papyrus, which is where we get the word for paper. This is written to a specific group. It's written to the chosen lady and her children.

Now scholars debate on who the recipient is because there were many women leaders in the early Christian church. So it very well could be to one specific woman and her household. But most scholars believe that this is just a coded way because of the word chosen here to actually write a letter to the entirety of the church, the church, and then her children, that is those who are within the church.

All right. So again, written around the same time as first John, and we'll find again about the same time as third John. One of the circumstances of his writing though, is that back in this day, how much of the internet did they have access? Yeah. How many Instagram reels could they have? How many followers? Yeah, exactly. You didn't have any of that. So the way that religions would grow is that their teachers would go from home to home, city to city, and they would teach.

They were called itinerant or mendicant teachers. And the way that they would have housing is that people would let them in and stay with them. These itinerant teachers, you wouldn't often know if they were correct teachers, good undershepherds teaching the scriptures as they were communicated, or if they were false teachers coming in to deceive and to lie. And so John is telling this chosen lady and her children that you need to be very careful of who you've let into your home, because I know the character of some of the people that you've let in there.

And they denied that Jesus actually came in the flesh. He just seemed to be in the flesh. And we're going to talk a little bit later about why that is a terrible teaching and that will move people outside of the kingdom of God.

And they had this like pull where they wanted to be hospitable. But what we don't understand, because we're not in this culture, is that if you were hospitable and you brought a teacher into your home, all of your neighbors would then say, oh, what that guy teaches, the whole rest of the household that welcomed him also believes. So your reputation, your connection to Jesus was connected to these teachers you let into your home.

So if you let in a good teacher, how would you be seen in the community? It's good. You let in a faithful teacher, how would you be seen in the community? Faithful. You let in a false teacher that's trying to drive people away from the church and away from Jesus, how would you and your household be seen? Or how would you and your church be seen? Same manner. Which is why John is saying you cannot do this.

He writes to warn them of love. That perhaps they're overlooking some big difficulties because of love. But even in his warnings of speaking the truth, he still communicates that truth to them in love. Why? Because in his letter, he wants to make sure that everyone knows that you can't just speak the truth. Because if you just speak the truth, you're just going to be a jerk. And you can't only speak the love, because if you only speak loving words, and those are never hard or difficult, you really don't love that person. And let's be, let's call a thing what it is, it's just cowardice.

John is saying that these have to come together, truth and love. So let's dive into the text. If you have your Bible, that's why the house lights are up, so you and I can study it. Please open up your Bible to 2

John verses 1 through 3. You're going to hear him talking about truth and love, and you're going to get to participate as well.

John opens this way: The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the... And not only I, but also all who know the... Because of the... That abides in us and will be with us forever, grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father, Son, in... And... Exactly. Truth and love.

So a little bit of a Bible study note, when you're studying the scriptures, slow down. And if you see the author repeat a word several times, stop, highlight the word, and study that word. Study all the words around that word, because it's important to the point that the Spirit is trying to make to the church then, which means it's important to the point that the church is making... Or the Spirit is making to the church now.

I'll talk for a minute about truth. John needs to speak a word of truth to the chosen lady. This truth could be said in a way that lets John off the hook as an overseer. Like a, you deal with this kind of truth. Like a, how does it feel? I don't really care how this feels. I don't care how it affects you. I'm speaking the truth to you now. My job is done. That's not the truth that John is talking about.

John is talking about if you want the truth to be effective, if you want the truth to change your church, if you want the truth to change your home, it has to be part and parcel. It has to be hand-gripped tightly of the truth and love. He loves too deeply to be distracted from the truth and holds the truth too highly of Jesus Christ to sacrifice it just for the sake of a very surface level love. And John is willing to endure difficulty and the pain of that moment to have a much better relationship in a much longer manner, which is why we're going to repeat the hook again, because you'll see that this is happening with John and the church.

A lifetime of is worth a moment of exactly a lifetime of glory is worth a moment of pain. It would have been a lot easier for John just to walk away. It would have been easier for him to send an email or a smoke signal that would say they're doing it all wrong, but instead he's speaking the truth in love for the benefit of the lady or the church and the children in that household. This only happens in one way, speaking the truth in love, and you're going to see it in relationship in the next verses of 2 John 4-6.

You get another opportunity because there's more repetitive words here, and this is going to kind of unlock our understanding for this section of what a relationship looks like that allows truth to be spoken in love.

John says this. I rejoice greatly to find some of your children in the truth. Like that's another big one, right? Truth. Just as we were commanded by the Father.

And now I ask you, dear lady, not as though I was writing you a new commandment, but the one we had from the beginning that we love. So we've had truth and love now, right? And this is love that we, according to his commandments. And this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.

All right. To be able to talk about this relationship, we need to figure out what that word walk means.

The word walk means peripeteo. I'm not going to ask you to say that because poor Joe just got spat on because of so many Ps in that word. And I'm sure the backs of the necks in front of you don't want the spittle on the back of their necks either. But walking in this word, isn't just like being near.

So I'm going to call out somebody to help illustrate what peripeteo looks like. I'm going to ask Chase from production to come on out here. Chase is going to peripeteo with me.

All right. You ready for this? No. Okay.

Peripeteo walking means that this person is going to walk so closely with me that I'm not going to say anything that he's going to miss. In fact, there are some extra biblical accounts that talk about the rabbi's relationship with those walking with him and thereby the conversations Jesus would have.

He was often peripeteo with the disciples walking and teaching in a relationship at the same time that it was said that the disciples would say, let the dust of your sandals be upon me. That's how closely I need to follow you. And so Jesus would go around saying the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed and he would peripeteo and he couldn't shake the disciples because it was so close in relationship.

Hey, your name is Chase. This is working out great.

No matter where Jesus would go, he'd be followed closely. And so then anything that Jesus would say would never be missed and their relationship was so intensely close, days and nights would be shared together.

The disciples would trust that no matter where Jesus dukes to, I'm not Jesus, but I'm just playing the role right now. The disciples would be right there and wherever the disciples would go, that Jesus would be right there, which is why when the disciples do things against the expectation of the Lord, where do we find Jesus?

Do we find Jesus walking away from them in disgust and despair?

No, we find Jesus speaking the truth in love time after time and they heard it, they incorporated into their life and they changed as a result of walking with Jesus.

All right. Can we give God thanks for Chase's stamina?

If you desire to speak the truth and love to someone like John, and you actually want it to have an effect, you have to share life with them. You can't walk out of their life, come in, drop a truth bomb and expect that they're going to actually listen. If they're doing something that you don't like, if you want to be able to speak into that life, you have to walk with them.

It doesn't mean you have to agree with them. It doesn't mean you endorse what they're doing or saying, but if you want them to listen to you, if you want them to receive truth in love, you got to walk with them. And I think you'll find that if you want to experience someone else speaking the truth in love for you, wouldn't you want the exact same thing?

And it's typically in a relationship like that, where you can actually engage in those hard conversations because they know you care about them and you know that you care about them. And so it's easy to see that a lifetime of glory is worth that moment of pain, right?

Now we're going to jump into the pain point for John and this church in 2 John 7-11.

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus the Christ in the flesh, such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. So this is a big deal. This isn't just some like kind of side teaching.

John is saying, look, chosen lady, you've decided to be in a close walking relationship with someone who's going to harm you and draw you away from the actual Jesus. He goes so far, not just to say this is the deceiver, but says that kind of person is the antichrist, the opposite of Christ trying to draw you away.

Teach yourselves so you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and doesn't abide in the teaching of Christ doesn't have God. This is how important this is. Whoever abides in the teaching though has both the father and the son.

If anyone comes to you and doesn't bring this teaching, don't receive him into your house. Don't give him a greeting. Whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

He's saying, look, you have relationships that you get to steward. Some of them are amazing walking together and draws you close to the father and draws you close to the son. And sometimes it's hard words that are going to do that. There's some other people that want to tickle your ears and just want to be able to get their own gain and actually will draw you away from Jesus.

So chosen lady, which one are you going to be engaging in church? Which one would you rather engage in?

One of those relationships that walks so closely with Jesus that you're not afraid to walk with someone whose life looks different than yours, but one that has such a trusting relationship that they'll listen to truth and love or a shallow relationship.

One that's going to draw you away from Jesus, but it feels a lot easier on the front end. One of these is a life in the flesh with a Jesus who deeply cares about you.

One of these is a relationship built on facade and surface level connections. And that's what it's like not being connected to a Jesus in the flesh.

Can you imagine how much would Jesus love you if he didn't have nerve endings and nerve bundles that went exposed to the air after being flogged for you and for me?

How much would it say he loved you if he didn't have the ability to feel the pain and endure that for our sake?

How much would it show that he loves us if he didn't have the fleshly made vocal cords that from the cross can say, Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.

How much is the relationship of the Jesus who loves you, if when he is stricken, smitten and afflicted as the prophet Isaiah says, for you and for me, because of our sins and the skin of his back being torn apart, how much does he love you if you know that he's a fleshed God and could feel every moment of the wrath of God on his own body that was intended for us, but instead absorbed by his actual fleshly body?

And so this is what John's trying to say. Look, you're associating with a Jesus that doesn't have flesh. It's not a real relationship because that's not a real Jesus. And so he's willing to endure that because he actually loves those people. He's walked with them in life. He knows it's worth sitting down in a moment of pain.

So we're going to hook it again. Everyone knows that a fleshly Jesus and his proclamation is a lifetime of glory worth the moment of pain.

The scriptures talk all about a Jesus who's come into the flesh. When Adam and Eve received the first curse in the middle of the curse, Jesus says, or the Lord says, I'm going to send a seed that will crush the head of the serpent. That was just a part of this deception and actual offspring physical.

And then he talks in Genesis 12 to Abram and says, all of the families of the earth will be blessed by your descendant, singular, a person.

And then he talks to David further along the storyline, he says, I'm going to place a descendant of yours on a throne, and he is going to be a king eternal, fleshly sitting on a throne to rule and to reign. It was always intended that Jesus would be in the flesh.

Why? Because a Jesus in the flesh can actually spend time walking around with his church, with you and me. Which is why the same writer of this second John letter also wrote in the beginning of the gospel of John and John 1 14, the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And this is the same Jesus who, when his disciples hearts were troubled, the ones that he walked with and spoke the truth in love, he said, I am the way and the truth and the love. Nobody gets to the father except through me. That's a hard word, but it's a word they needed to hear.

Truth wasn't some abstract idea, just kind of floating around in the ether. Truth was a person in Jesus in the flesh. And if he wasn't, the cross is a lie. And you and I shouldn't be here this morning.

If he wasn't, then we don't need to be in any kind of relationships. We don't have to endure hard things. We don't want to actually see somebody else grow. We can get ours and then be fine.

But instead, Jesus is in the flesh. He has spoken a word of truth in love that we were sinners and yet he died for us. He's in a relationship with us. It was worth him being in that pain to speak the truth in love for an eternity of glory that he's able to give to us.

And that relationship happens because he's present here right now for you, for me. This is the best kind of relationship. The one where he's actually with us right now, guiding when we have to have hard conversations. He's with you right now. He was with the church too.

This is why in 2 John 12, 13, the letter ends this way, the most ideal way to have a good relationship. John says this, I have a lot to write to you, but rather not use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to come talk to you and to talk so that our joy may be complete. The children of your elect sister greet you.

The best relationships are the ones where we're present with one another, walking around where you can't shake the other because you know they love you so much.

I'm going to give you three ways from John's letter that you can diagnose if you're talking the truth to somebody else rather than just being a jerk.

Number one, if the truth is in love, then the truth is actually better for them and harder for you. So if you find that in this conversation, you're benefiting from it, you're probably not to the point of speaking truth and love to them yet. You got to keep praying and wrestling until you get to a point where it's actually better for them than it is for you.

Number two, if love truly is the only reason why you're speaking to them, you will know because it is going to hurt you. You're going to wrestle with that significantly. I mean like Jacob wrestled with God all night long.

If you really want to speak the truth and love to someone, you need to wrestle with God and by the time you come out of that wrestling match, he's going to touch your hip and you're going to walk with a little bit of a limp because you speaking to that person you really care about in truth and love, it's going to hurt.

So number one, the truth is better for them. Number two, love is the only reason this truth is being spoken.

But number three, you're walking together in a long term connection.

I want to say this one time, social media, if you actually love that person, if you want to see them change their lives through the Spirit, don't use social media.

It'll make you feel better, but it's going to make your connection, your relationship, your walk worse. It's probably going to affect the way that people see Jesus in the church.

Look, if you see somebody saying something on social media, either one, maybe you don't need to be the person to respond to that. But number two, if you do, give them a call, invite them to coffee, walk with them in life. See them face to face if you actually want to see a difference being made in their lives.

Let's draw back to the Louis Zamperini story to wrap up our time together today.

So you heard that Pete sat him down and said, a lifetime of glory is worth a moment of pain.

And that helped Louis get through not only his tumultuous childhood, I mean, this guy broke the mile record in the state of California at the time, he went to the London Olympics to run in the 1930s.

And you heard how it helped him as he moved into World War II. And as he got shot down, as he was adrift, as he was a POW.

But what you might not know is that he had to engage this one more time.

And the hard word that was spoken to Louis later in his life was actually from Billy Graham.

And Billy said, Louis, look, you've done a great job of talking about Jesus. But I think you have one more conversation that you have to do. I think you need to go back to Japan. I think you need to go find those captors who tormented you. I think you need to look them face to face, and I think you need to tell them that you forgive them.

Because if not, they'll never hear about Jesus. And if you don't endure that moment of pain, they'll be separated from a lifetime of glory in Christ.

So what does Louis do? He takes a flight to Japan, looks each one of the jailers in the eye, tells each one I forgive you, and shares the gospel of Jesus face to face.

Why? Because he was willing to experience a little bit of pain for their sake.

And maybe just maybe you can be like Louis, or you can be like John, enduring that difficult moment.

Because we're going to stay the hook together one more time, as we close 2 John.

It's worth it, because a lifetime of glory is worth a moment of, let's pray.

Jesus. It's a hard thing to see people that we love hurting themselves. It's hard to give them over in patience to you. But it's easy to walk away. It's easy to be a keyboard warrior. It's easy to send a text message and be able to leave it on unread.

You don't call us the easy things, Jesus. You call us to walk face to face with the people that we love.

And so Lord, we would ask that we would be open to hear the truth in love, and that you would move us, just like you did through John and the church, to speak that truth in love.

Because a lifetime of glory is worth that moment of pain. In your name we pray. And all God's people said, amen.