



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Community Group Material:

*Bible Reading: 2 John 1:1-6*

**Bible Reading:** 2 John 1:1-13

o 1 The elder: To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth—and not only I, but also all who know the truth — 2 because of the truth that remains in us and will be with us forever. 3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

o 4 I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, in keeping with a command we have received from the Father. 5 So now I ask you, dear lady—not as if I were writing you a new command, but one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. 6 This is love: that we walk according to his commands. This is the command as you have heard it from the beginning: that you walk in love. (2 John 1:1-6 CSB)

o 7 Many deceivers have gone out into the world; they do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves so that you don't lose what we have worked for, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who does not remain in Christ's teaching but goes beyond it does not have God. The one who remains in that teaching, this one has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your home, and do not greet him; 11 for the one who greets him shares in his evil works. 12 Though I have many things to write to you, I don't want to use paper & ink. Instead, I hope to come to you & talk face to face so that our joy may be complete. 13 The children of your elect sister send you greetings. (1:7-13)

•**SUMMARY:** 2nd John is a brief letter from “the elder” to “the chosen lady and her children,” offering insight into John’s distinct vision of church life. Unlike the ‘overseers’ in Acts & Paul’s letters, ‘John the elder’ is the patriarch, the elder statesman of the Johannine community, drawing on personal authority rather than holding an official hierarchical position. This contrasts sharply with Pauline churches, where Paul adopted the Jewish synagogue model of appointing elders & deacons,

establishing a hierarchical structure that laid the groundwork for apostolic succession, as seen in the Pastoral Epistles. In 1-3 John, “the elder” exhorts based on his eyewitness testimony within an egalitarian community, where all believers have the Spirit’s anointing, love one another, and know the truth. This structural divergence was evident in first-century Ephesus, where both churches coexisted. Historically, the Pauline churches evolved into the centralized structures of the Roman Catholic Church, while John’s community stood as a counter-model. Modern attempts to ‘recover’ the original Pauline church have followed the same path. John’s letters offer a compelling biblical alternative for us to follow today.

•**BACKGROUND:** ‘The Elder’ adds another aspect to the NT portrait of John & his ‘Johannine community.’ This message is not based on this item – John ‘the elder’— alone, but rather the overall NT portrait which includes:

1. John as the ‘Beloved Disciple’ in the 4th Gospel, including (a.) the ‘race to the tomb’ (Jn. 20:3-10), (b.) Jesus’ words regarding Peter & the ‘Beloved Disciple’ in Galilee (Jn. 21) – both validate John’s distinct ministry.
2. History suggests John outlived the Apostles James, Peter, & Paul. John moved to Ephesus’ area ~70 AD.
3. ‘Pauline church(es)’ & ‘Johannine church(es)’ coexisted in the Ephesus area 80-100 CE (see V. below)
4. Paul’s churches developed as described in Acts through to the Pastorals, John’s churches in 1-3 John.

•**Discussion:** Consider: “John’s church was ‘egalitarian’ (with ‘equals’ vs. hierarchical with ‘levels or ranks’)

1. Where in 2 John does the author place himself on ‘the same level’ as the readers by using “we,” “us,” & “our” (rather than “you,” “your,” etc.)? How do you see ‘equality’ here, rather than hierarchy? Discuss.
2. How would these statements (in Q1) be expressed in a more authoritative/hierarchical way? (Give examples)
3. John (‘the elder’) does have personal authority; where does John give directions (commands)? What circumstances might motivate John the Elder give such commands (directives)? Discuss.
4. Scholars claim that “there was no one uniform pattern [of church governance] even in the early church.”
  - a. Does this statement imply that all forms of church governance (structure) are equal? Or, are some structures better than others? Discuss.
  - b. The message & materials compared the organizational structures of Paul’s and John’s churches. What are the advantages (& disadvantages) of John’s “way of doing church” versus Paul’s? Discuss.
5. During your Christian experience perhaps you have gathered with different types of Church. Have you experienced a “Pauline-type church”? Or a “Johannine-type church”? Share your experience to help others.