FBS “One Hit Wonders: Truth, Love & Dealing with Cults” 6-25-17

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**Intro.** (walk up to “Happy Days” music). Several well-known “One Hit Wonders” come out from the 1970s, including what became the theme song by Pratt & McClain for the show “Happy Days.” Others include Frijid Pink’s “The House of the Rising Sun” (70), Janis Joplin’s “Me & Bobby McGee” (71), the Hillside Singers’ “I’d Like to Teach the World to Sing (in Perfect Harmony)” (72), Vicki Laurence’s “The Night the Lights Went Out in Georgia” (73), Carl Douglas’ “Kung Fu Fighting” (74) & the Buggles’ “Video Killed the Radio Star” (79). There are, what I call, 5 “One Hit Wonders” in the Bible—single chapter books which have an important message—Obadiah, Philemon, 2-3 John & Jude. Today we look at 2 John on “Truth, Love & Dealing with Cults.”

Theme: Living in truth & love

Background: Most scholars believe John the Apostle wrote 2nd John toward the end of the 1st century AD. The reference to “elect lady” & her “children” in v. 1 & the “elect sister” & her “children in v. 13 probably refer to local churches & the church members as the children. John may have use coded language with them to protect them from persecution in the Roman world.

* In this short letter, John reminds us that God the Father has given us 2 commands (“command” occurs 4x) to carry out:

**Command #1: Love one another (5-6)**

* While John reminds believers to love each other here, it is the subsidiary purpose of this letter, since most of it focuses on the truth. Elsewhere, John has much to say about “love” in His Gospel (agape—7x; agapao—37x; phileo—13x)

Illus: Hollywood thinks “love” is all about a feeling & romance, but it isn’t—that explains why so few marriages survive in Hollywood. Love is first & foremost about loyalty, allegiance, commitment. It includes emotions & romance, but those are secondary. John wants believers to be committed to each other in care, fellowship & belief, which leads to the next command

**Command #2: Live in the truth (1-4, 7-11)**

* “truth”—5x in vv. 1-4 (aletheia)

**A. To live in the truth, you must know the truth (1, 3)**

* “walk in the truth”—means to “live in the truth” (4, 6)—“walk in it” refers to walking in the truth, because John never talks about walking in love (though Paul does)

Illus: “What we live is what we believe. Everything else is just religious talk” (Vance Havner)

* When John talks about the “truth,” what does he mean? Let’s do a little word study in John’s writings:

1. **Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 5:33; 14:6)**
2. **The Holy Spirit (John 14:17; 15:26)**
3. **God’s Word (John 8:31-32; 17:17)—**believers abide in the truth & the truth abides in them (through the Spirit)—“abide” (dwell) occurs 41x in John’s Gospel

Illus: When Jesus stood before Pilate on trial, Jesus said He came “to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice,” to which Pilate asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:37-38)—readers of John’s Gospel would know by this point Jesus Christ is truth in the flesh, the Spirit of truth indwells God’s people & God’s Word is written truth—you must know God’s Word is truth & see the truth of Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God so that the Spirit of truth can dwell in you

**B. To live in the truth, you must grow in the truth (2, 4; cf. John 8:31-32; 1 John 1:6, 8; 2:4)**

* Not only do you need to know the truth, but you must grow in the truth—keep learning/abiding. Every day you should come to the Word of God & ask the Lord “what would you have me learn today?”

**Reason #1: Live in truth because many falsehoods masquerade as truth (7-9)**

* There are “deceivers” (imposters, wandering vagabonds) who deny the truth of Jesus Christ the Son of God—“watch out” for them! (you cannot be complacent—spiritual deception is real)
* John links God the Father & God the Son together—they are coequal, coeternal & consubstantial—if you have God the Father, you accept God the Son. If you deny or reject Jesus the Messiah, you reject God the Father (see 1 John 5:6-12)
* While the heretical group of Gnosticism wasn’t full blown until the middle of the 2nd century, early seeds of Docetism were cropping up—they claimed to be extra spiritual & saw matter as evil. Thus, Christ only “appeared” to come in the flesh, but He couldn’t have been spiritual or holy & good, if He was also matter, so He didn’t really come in the flesh—John made it clear such a view is heretical, for to deny Jesus Christ’s humanity is to deny His work on the cross in the place of humans

Illus: Just because someone comes along with new views or extra spiritual thinking doesn’t mean it’s of God—to go beyond the Christian faith is apostasy & foolishness. Groups today which reject the truth of Jesus Christ as God’s Son include the following:

* Judaism—until they recognize the Messiah has come, they don’t’ have God
* Islam—they reject Jesus Christ as the Son of God; thus, they don’t have God
* Jehovah’s Witnesses—they reject the full deity of Jesus Christ & neither have the Son nor the Father
* Mormons—they reject the unity of the Godhead & minimize the supremacy of God & Christ by claiming there will be many more gods reign throughout eternity

**Reason #2: Live in truth because if you don’t, you may wrongly take part in wickedness (10-11)**

* Inns in the 1st century Roman world were uncommon, but those which existed were normally of ill-fame, dishonorable, notoriously dirty & flea-infested. It was common for Christians to open their homes to traveling apostles & evangelists to offer lodging & food & money to help them on their missionary assignments (cf. Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:3-10; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:8-10)
* John is warning Christians not to open their homes for hospitality—lodging, food & money (& don’t bless them in their efforts) to false teachers or be guilty of taking part in their wickedness

Illus: None of the teachers of those world religions or cults should be housed by believers—we are wrong to give them food, lodging or money (I’m not talking about a family member who is a Mormon or a Muslim or a Jew who isn’t spreading their false views—you can have them in your home for family gatherings, but you should reject anyone who is one of their teachers or missionaries because they are full of wickedness)

* If people open themselves up to heresy & believe it, it isn’t so much that they fall from the faith but that they were never part of the faith to begin with—genuine believers will persevere in the faith
* The letter begins with a mention of the “elect” lady & ends with the “elect” sister, not to mention the characteristics of grace, mercy & peace. Election is a work of God’s grace. When we receive God’s grace, we experience His mercy, because He withholds judgment. Only then are we at peace with God because of the grace found in Jesus Christ. The reverse is also true. You cannot have peace with God until you receive His grace & mercy. The order is important.

**Conc.** Truth always comes down to doctrine. Taking a stand for truth may cost your job, like Jonathan Edwards lost his pastorate in the 1750s. But it may cost you your life. John Hus lost his life for preaching Jesus & grace & died in 1417, 100 years before the Protestant Reformation & several decades before the printing press. But the absence of truth & the twisting of truth has led many churches to slide down the slippery slope of heresy. Go with me on a tour through Europe & America & I can show you many a beautiful church building where the truth of God’s Word shone brightly & rang loudly in yesteryear, but today they are either empty or converted into museums & hotels or filled with social clubs who have little to do with spreading the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must always stand for the truth, because the devil will try to make us ineffective. But before you will ever be called to stand for the truth, you must know the truth. You must confess the truth about God, your sin & Jesus Christ, His Son. Will you trust Him today?