



THRU the BIBLE

with *J. Vernon McGee*

2 JOHN

BIBLE COMPANION



EPISTLES

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of 2 John heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/2John (or any book of the Bible). The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 1	FOR TRUTH'S SAKE1
LESSON 2	TRUTH AND LOVE WALK HAND IN HAND8
LESSON 3	LIFE IS AN EXPRESSION OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST 16

LESSON 1

FOR TRUTH'S SAKE



Begin with prayer



Read **2 John 1**



Listen at [TTB.org/2John](https://www.TTB.org/2John) to **2 John Intro—1:1** and **2 John 1**

Any Christian, if they are born again, is our brother or sister. Race doesn't matter—neither does nationality or station in life. That's what we learned in the book of 1 John and what continues to be taught from another angle in the second and third letters from John. In fact, these two short books are essential to get a proper perspective of 1 John.

John, the same John who walked with Christ in the Gospels, wrote this letter near the end of his life in the 90s A.D. We call him the apostle of love; the Lord Jesus called him a “son of thunder” (Mark 3:17). In this letter, we can add a little lightning to that thunder, for he makes it very clear you must exhibit love to the brethren or you're not a child of God.

This epistle is a personal letter John wrote to “the elect lady.” The question is often asked whether this title refers to a Christian lady in the early church or is John writing the family of God. Regardless, John is thinking of it in the context of the whole family of God. Apparently, a Christian lady or a local church was extending hospitality to those who claimed to be Christian, although some were heretics who denied the deity of Christ and the other great truths of the Christian faith. John is writing to warn against entertaining or supporting such folk.

The theme of this letter is: “For truth’s sake.” When truth and love come into conflict, truth has top priority.

The truth of God’s Word is worth contending for, and it is wrong to receive false teachers. “Truth” can apply to the basic facts of the Bible, but of essential importance is the deity of Christ and His work on the cross for us. If you agree on these essentials, you can disagree on nonessentials. If a brother stands true on the inspiration of the Scriptures, he stands true on the deity of Christ, and he stands true on the fact that Christ died for us. When a person can do that, they are your brother or sister in Christ.

The key word in John’s first epistle is “love”—a family of God kind of love. We are to love each other like we’re family—which we are! This is the mark of a child of God: They love Jesus Christ, and they love their brothers and sisters in Christ. How we do this is the sum and substance of this epistle.

It would be helpful to go back to the first epistle and pick up this thought again: “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:10). John purposely cast this truth in the negative so that there would be no way anyone could wiggle out of it who claims to be a Christian but doesn’t measure up. If you do not practice righteousness in your life, you are not of God. This is the outward badge of a child of God. You are to know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, and the proof to others is that you practice righteousness in your life. And if you do not love your Christian brother, then you are not a child of God. John said you can tell if someone is a genuine believer by his righteous life and his love for other Christians.

But what about the lost sinner who is not in the family of God? Are we to love him? Well, we are told in the Gospel of John: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Follow carefully now. We are to love people to the extent of taking the gospel to them. We see in the Old Testament book of Jonah that Jonah did not love the Ninevites, but God sent him there because God loved them and God said, “*Since I love them and they have turned to Me, Jonah, I want you to love them also.*” This is the relationship the child of God is to have to the lost world. You can’t love the sinners and their sin—we are not asked to do that. We are asked to love them enough to take the gospel to them. That’s what’s important. We are to love them in that sense because God loves them. And then, when they turn to Christ, we will love them also.

Now another question arises: What is to be our relationship to false teachers, to those who deny the deity of Christ? John is going to make his warning very clear in this second letter. Many deceivers have entered into the world, those who refuse to believe Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Be very careful with these people, John says.

What should be our relationship to false teachers? Don't fall into the trap of "love everyone" that's making the circuit today. That's not biblical at all. There are some whom the Scriptures tell us not to love but to be very careful of. John writes, "Do not love the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15). The things that are in the world are identified with the people who are in the world and who have made it as it is. Our love is to take the gospel to them, to give them the Word of God.

John's emphasis in his first epistle is on love, but the key word in this second epistle is "truth." Now when truth and love are in contrast and conflict, which one should prevail? If we get the answer to that, then that will determine our relationship to the false teacher, to the one who denies the deity of Christ. The so-called apostle of love is going to shock us out of our sentimental complacency and our sloppy notion of love.

Which one should prevail—truth or love? His startling reply is that *truth* comes first. Christ didn't say, "I am love," but He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). You have to come to the Father through Jesus Christ. There is no other way. Why? Because He's not only the Way, but He is the Truth. After the Lord Jesus was here and had said He was the Truth, then John said, "God is love" (1 John 4:16).

Love can be expressed only within the bounds and context of truth. Scripture sets the boundaries of how love should be expressed. Should we love false teachers? John makes it absolutely clear, "*Don't even entertain them in your home. Don't receive them or to have fellowship with them in any way*" (see 2 John 10). That is just about as strong as it can be.

Another important word we need to understand is "light." John will be talking about what it means to "walk in the light" in his second and third epistles. "Walk in the light as He is in the light ..." (1 John 1:7). Truth and light both represent the Word of God. And as we have already seen, love and truth are also inseparable. Jesus Christ is the epitome of both; He is the incarnation of both. He is the Truth, and He is love. God is love, and He is God.

So, what does it mean to walk? John says, “I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth.” And then, “This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.” “Walking in truth” refers to the manner of your life, meaning walking in obedience to the Father’s commands. Not only is truth essential, but the living out of the truth is essential, and the best place to do that is within the family of God. Too often the pendulum swings deep in truth, but it also needs to swing wide with love. Many churches have built a reputation for being of sound doctrine. Now they need a reputation for loving the brethren.

But this love shouldn’t be the sloppy kind. There are boundaries to love within the family of God that guard the family. Just like today, along comes one of these heretics, as they did in John’s day. He is apostate; he is actually an antichrist—that is, he denies the deity of Christ. John says, *“When one of these fellows comes along, you’re not to extend love to him. You are not even to entertain him.”*

Guard the family. While you walk in the truth, walk in God’s love.

NEXT: What is the difference between love, mercy, and grace?

4. How is the way we interact with the lost to be different from the way in which we interact with those who are false teachers?

5. What does it tell us about God that “God is love” and that Jesus Himself said, “I am the truth”?

6. What are some areas of your life which are easier for you to not walk in the light?

7. If you had been a first century Christian, what do you think would have been your reaction to reading this letter that is all about truth from the “apostle of love”?

LESSON 2

TRUTH AND LOVE WALK HAND IN HAND



Begin with prayer



Read **2 John 1–6**



Listen at [TTB.org/2John](https://www.TTB.org/2John) to **2 John 1–5** and **2 John 6–8**

Truth and love: Two sides of the Christian life. We learned last time that when truth and love come into conflict, truth needs to have top priority. Truth is the key word to understanding 2 John.

This second letter from John is a personal greeting that helps a generous woman—and also the local church—express love within the boundaries of truth. Too often, our churches today over emphasize love (sometimes sloppy love) at the expense of truth. So this little epistle will help us shape up and correct our perspective of what that love looks like.

John really loves the people he is writing to. He’s a model of what he’s calling them to—love the family of God. He’s also very sincere in expressing his love to them, not just uttering some pious platitudes.

John also stands for the truth. He defines and defends it—and it needs to be defended. The Spirit of God who dwells in us makes these things real to us. The truth will not change “and will be with us forever.” Someone has put it like this: “What is true is not new, and what is new is not true.” (Like many generalizations this has some exceptions, but it’s usually true.)

In his opening greeting, John adopts a little phrase that grabs our attention. “Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.”

If we understand three important words, we can grasp the beauty of our whole Christian life. The words, *love*, *mercy*, and *grace* seem similar, yet in their subtle differences we discover God's work on our behalf.

What is the difference between the love, mercy, and grace of God?

First, God is love. Before anything was created, God's nature was love. In the Trinity, love was expressed between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. God's love existed before He would even care to exercise mercy or grace. God is love, but His love never saved a sinner. It is His love that causes Him to move in the direction of mercy and grace; it causes Him to exercise mercy and grace. Like the great verse in Ephesians explains, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Ephesians 2:4-5). This wonderful Scripture combines all three: God is rich in *mercy*, and because of His great *love* for us, He saves us by *grace*.

What's the difference between mercy and grace? God is rich in mercy. Why is He rich in mercy? Because He is love. And because God is love, He, by mercy, provides for the need of sinful man. But mercy didn't save us, either. In mercy, all the demands of holiness have been satisfied in the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. Now God is free to act in grace. It's His grace that saves us. As sinners, we haven't anything to offer to God. But now because of God's grace, He comes to you, a lost sinner, and says, "*I am love, and I am rich in mercy. I love you, and I have provided by My mercy a Savior for you.*" Now if you will trust Him, "by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Salvation all stems from the love of God, but God does not save us by His love or His mercy. After all, our God is a holy God, and the Bible says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ..." (John 3:16). Read this carefully: God did not so love the world that He saved the world. God so loved the world that by His mercy He provided a Savior for the world, and now He can save us by grace.

Our salvation not only expresses God's love, it also expresses His justice and righteousness. We not only need John 3:16, we also need Romans 3:26: "To demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." In order to justify you when you trust Christ, God has to be righteous and holy and fair and just. He makes sinners right in His sight when they believe in Jesus. He can't simply open the back door of heaven and slip us in under cover of darkness. We

aren't fit for heaven. We're alienated from Him. We have no fellowship with Him. Communication broke down in the Garden of Eden, and He is the one who renewed it.

Because God is just and righteous, His mercy provides a Savior—all because He loves you.

Therefore, John can now write, “Grace be with you”—that is how God saves you. “Mercy”—mercy provided a Savior. “And peace”—when you have all this, God’s peace goes beyond what we can understand and will keep your heart secure.

John opens his letter by reminding us of the great truths of God that will never change. “Because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever.” God won’t change His mind tomorrow and say, *“Well, I think public opinion is going in another direction, so I’m going to change what’s expected for salvation.”* God doesn’t change.

This timeless truth is what John celebrates. He says he “rejoices greatly” that his children, members of the local church that he’s writing, are walking in this truth. As we learned last time, “walking in truth” refers to their way of life, their obedience to what the Father has described as what pleases Him. The Father says we are to walk in the light as He is in the light, that we order our lives by the Word of God.

The Lord Jesus Himself described this life when He said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). The way people will know you follow Me is if you keep My commandments and if you love each other, He said (see John 13:35). John says this is the commandment we’ve had from the beginning: Love each other.

Here we have it: Walking in truth and loving fellow believers. What may at times feel like objective opposites is the balance we need today in the church. Too great of an emphasis on either one and the body becomes lopsided. Too easily we can become overly sentimental in the church and demonstrate sloppy love. But are you walking in the truth, walking in the knowledge of God’s Word?

John emphasized loving the body of Christ in his first epistle, the body of Christ loving each other. We need to be aware that some water down the Christian faith and say we need to love everybody. Truth is, we can’t love everybody. Too many in this world are unlovely and, as a result, we are not

loved. But God loves the world. We aren't worth loving, but God loves us all. He tells believers to take the gospel to the world and *that* is the way we can show our concern and love. We take the gospel to the lost because God loves them, and then if we take it to them, a love will be born in our hearts even for our enemies.

The most important thing to remember from this little epistle is that God is love—it's who He is. In His love, He has provided a Savior for us.

And how do we express His love through our lives? We "walk according to His commandments." Does He mean His Ten Commandments? Well, that's a starting point. The Ten Commandments are basic to government and civilization, but the Christian is called to a higher plane where we are to produce in our lives, by the Spirit, His love, joy, peace, longsuffering, etc. If these things are in us and abide in us, we are walking after His commandments. Take a close look at your life. If these "fruit of His Spirit" are not in you, you're not walking after His commandments.

"This is love, that we walk according to His commandments." Think about it. Love is demonstrated in the kitchen. Love is not made in the bedroom—it's made out there in the laundry room. Think of the ways you express love in the family, and that is the way you express love in the church—in your concern and in your help for others. You can't say you're loving someone unless you have a concern for them, especially a concern for their spiritual welfare.

Loving people this way is sidewalk salvation. This kind of love walks down the street. And John knew what he was talking about. He was writing to people who lived in the Roman world where the emperor was bloody Nero who persecuted Christians. Beginning with Titus, the Roman general who destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the persecution was severe. The Roman world was a brutal, cruel world, pagan to the core. And yet here were men and women walking down Roman roads, living in pagan cities, and still they walked after God's commandments. They translated the gospel into life. We need this same kind of obedience from love in our day.

"This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it." In other words, this commandment isn't new. The Lord Jesus taught this. Now let's get busy and walk in it.

NEXT: A warning about antichrists.

7. Think about the people who first read this letter while living in the Roman empire. What challenges do you think they faced to follow John's instructions regarding truth and love?

A person is kneeling in prayer, their head bowed and hands clasped. The scene is bathed in a deep blue light, creating a serene and contemplative atmosphere. The person's face is partially visible in profile, and their hands are resting on the floor.

GOD IS RICH IN *mercy*,

AND BECAUSE OF

HIS GREAT *love* FOR US,

HE SAVES US BY *grace*.



THRUtheBIBLE

LESSON 3

LIFE IS AN EXPRESSION OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST



Begin with prayer



Read **2 John 7–13**



Listen at TTB.org/2John to **2 John 6–8** and **2 John 9–13**

Why would John not want us to love everyone?

We've been talking about the role of truth and love and John again warns us about deceivers in the world who teach Jesus Christ isn't God. They are false teachers and antagonistic of Christ. "Antichrist" is what he calls them.

How do we identify those who have the spirit of antichrist? John gives us the answer: "Who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh." The spirit of antichrist is to deny everything that is said about Him, everything He said, and everything He did for us in redemption by dying on the cross and by being raised bodily from the dead. That is the spirit of antichrist.

The spirit of antichrist eventually will be headed up by the Antichrist, described in Revelation 13, who may possibly be embodied by two people—one a political ruler who will stand against Christ and the other a religious ruler who will imitate Christ. This is coming in the future, and everything this side of the Rapture is preparing the way for the coming of this one. When the political ruler and the religious ruler finally appear, the world will be ready for them. The political ruler will promise peace in the world, and for three and a half years, he will do a pretty good job of it. But the

conflict will build up to a mighty catastrophe that is ushered in by the war of Armageddon, which will last for another three and a half years until Jesus Christ returns to the earth to establish His Kingdom.

At that time also, there will be one world religion where everyone will pool their thinking. Certainly we are moving in that direction even now. This religion won't really believe in anything and nothing will hold them together. That is the kind of church union that is coming about today. They are going nowhere, they believe nothing, and therefore, they can all get together. This is the deceiver, the Antichrist who is finally going to come—one to head up religion and one to head up the politics of this world.

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world.” Everywhere the gospel has gone, cults always follow (they never go before). In John's day, a cult called Gnosticism was running riot. Some Gnostics taught Jesus and Christ were two different entities and the divine came upon Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the Cross. Others denied that Jesus had a physical body, that people only thought they saw Jesus, but He wasn't actually there. This is the reason John said in his first epistle, *“We have seen Him. We have heard Him. We've gazed upon Him. We've handled Him. We know what we are talking about, and He was a real man.”*

Then there were certain Jewish sects in that day that picked up some Christian teachings and mingled them with their teaching. Among them were the Essenes at Qumran (where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found) and at Masada, which fell in A.D. 73, three years after the fall of Jerusalem, with the Zealots. Both groups had distorted conceptions about the person of Christ.

Then and now, the one thing that sets a deceiver apart is what they teach about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unless they think rightly of Him, everything else goes down the tube.

This doesn't mean a person can't hold a different view on other points of theology, like for example, on election. Election has been debated through the centuries, with great theologians holding differing views. However, you must agree on the essentials of the faith, like in the virgin birth, and the record that we have in the Word of God, and you must believe in the apostles' doctrine, taught in their epistles.

Since many deceivers have come into the world, the believer today walks a very dangerous pathway through the world. To the left side of the pathway is the jungle of liberalism and apostasy. It is a beautiful but dangerous jungle, because in it are beautiful but dangerous animals ready to devour us.

Then, on the opposite side of the pathway is a wilderness filled with rattlesnakes—a desert of extreme fundamentalism devoid of love. The only thing they think is important is to have the right doctrine. If you do not cross your T's or dot your I's as they do, they will attempt to destroy you by circulating a report to nullify your influence.

The way you're going to tell if someone is God's child is by their actions and if they love their believing brother, John tells us in his first letter (see 1 John 3:10). Love and righteousness are the two manifestations of a child of God. John is saying that if you deny the deity of Christ, you are not a Christian. You may be religious, but you are not a Christian. After all, *Christian* means one who is a follower of Christ, one who believes in Him. You cannot be a follower of Christ unless you believe in His virgin birth, His deity, His miraculous life, and His work of redemption upon the cross.

Did you know the Lord wants to reward those who follow Him, even beyond the gift of salvation?! Just imagine the joy at hearing Him say to you someday, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). Every believer ought to be working for a reward. At the end of his life, the apostle Paul said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day ..." (2 Timothy 4:7-8). It would be such a loss to be taken in by deceivers and lose our reward. We'll never lose our salvation, but when we fellowship with the wrong folk we put ourselves in a dangerous position of losing our rewards. A believer who identifies themselves with anything that denies the deity of Christ has lost their reward. Some people get so "progressive" in their thinking that they walk away from God. John praises those who stay the course, and don't change their doctrine after the world's pattern.

If anybody comes to you and preaches something other than God's Word, don't give him the time of day, John says in essence. Remember who John is writing to—an outstanding woman in the church, noted for her hospitality. Evidently, some of these Gnostics came by, and she entertained them. Then she felt convicted by it and wrote to John. She felt badly to turn them away. How should she engage with someone who pretends to be a follower of Christ? Should she entertain him in her home like she would other traveling evangelists and Bible teachers?

John lays it on the line: *“If they come to you teaching anything but sound doctrine, don’t even let them in the door. Don’t wish them ‘God speed,’ unless you want to share in the evil that they are doing.”* This is why you need to investigate everything you support financially or in prayer. If you’re giving to the wrong thing, God considers you a partner in it.

There’s many a fake ministry that’s trying to make a fast buck today. Just like the worldly person who is wise about how they invest money, so should you be wise by who you support financially. Jesus said sometimes the children of the world are wiser than we are. So we need to show some spiritual discernment and not be taken in by false ministries.

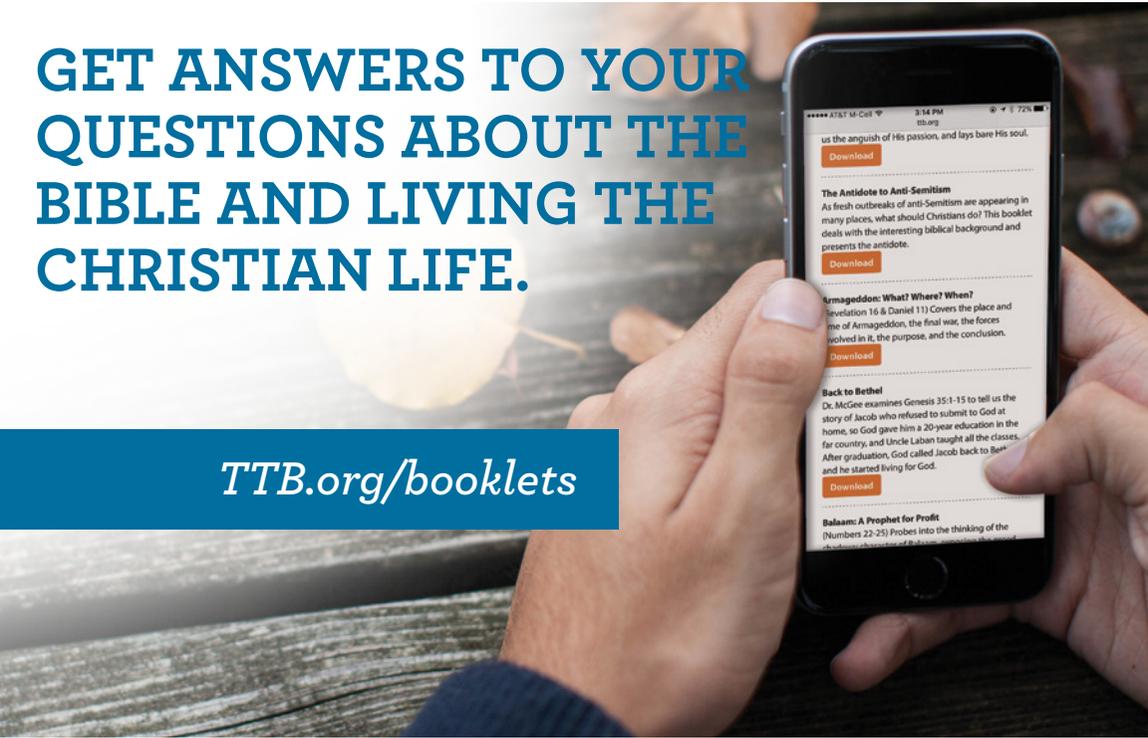
After some personal greeting, John closes this tremendous little letter with a message to alert every believer today.

7. All throughout this letter John has preached love and truth. What are some ways in your life you can practice love and truth more and better?

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

**LEARN HOW TO SHARE
THE MOST
IMPORTANT
MESSAGE OF
YOUR LIFE.**

TTB.org/HowCanIKnowGod

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a list of booklets from TTB.org. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden table.

**GET ANSWERS TO YOUR
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
BIBLE AND LIVING THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE.**

TTB.org/booklets

**KEEP YOUR BIBLE BUS JOURNEY
GOING ANYWHERE AND ANYTIME.**



[TTB.org/listen](https://www.ttb.org/listen)

**GET THE GOSPEL TO THE
ENDS OF THE WORLD
WITHOUT LEAVING
YOUR HOME.**



[TTB.org/give](https://www.ttb.org/give)



THRUthe**BIBLE**
with *J. Vernon McGee*

CONNECT WITH THRU THE BIBLE



Box 7100, Pasadena, California 91109-7100
P.O. Box 25325, London, Ontario, Canada N6C 6B1



1-800 65-BIBLE (24253)



TTB.org



BibleBus@ttb.org



/ThruTheBibleNet

YouTube

/TTBRadio