

3 John

“Walking with fellow workers in the truth”

- I. Chp. 1:1-4 Introduction
- II. Chp. 1:5-8 Statement of purpose: Commendation of Gaius “Walking with fellow workers in the truth”
- III. Chp. 1:9-12 Main body of teaching: Two Examples
 - a. 1:9-11 Condemnation of Diotrephes: The danger of pride and selfishness
 - b. 1:12 Commendation of Demetrius: The duty of hospitality and servanthood
- IV. Chp. 1:13-14 Closing

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I. Introduction

Second week of the new year and we again find ourselves examining another new book , this time we are in 3rd John. Examining the Apostles John’s letters reveals the consistent theme of “Fellowship”:

- 1st John writes about “Fellowship with God”
- 2nd John writes about “Forbidding fellowship with false teachers”
- 3rd John writes about “Encouraging fellowship with fellow believers”

Third John is written in the common and familiar letter writing style as John had written in his 2nd letter so we will again note the four normal divisions in the letter: Introduction, Statement of purpose, main body of the letter and closing. Another similarity of this letter is that it again deals with the general guidelines of “hospitality”. Today when we generally think of “hospitality” we think more of the actions and locations in which they are used then the reason for them in the first place. Hospitality today is what we do when we go out to restaurants or hotels as they are said to be in the “Hospitality Industry”. We also have enjoyed the “Hospitality” of other when they invited us over for a meal. But both 2nd and 3rd John the focus is more upon the necessity and dependence upon those that were given the responsibility of the ministry of hospitality. The reason for this in the early church is that there were NOT hotels set up or restaurants on every corner of a city. *That, combined with the lack of qualified Bible teachers and the local church meeting from house to house meant that getting these itinerant Bible teachers to local fellowship that were spread out across the known world was essential both for the spread of the gospel as well as the equipping the believer in ministry.* As such it is easy to see that the “*ministry of hospitality*” was essential and served as the “mission bible school” for the early church. It is no wonder that Paul mentioned the need for the leadership of the church to be “given to hospitality”. The guidelines in “hospitality” needed to be addressed from all positions and 2nd and 3rd John do so.

- A. **In 2nd John warned “the elect lady” NOT to be engaged in hospitality to false teachers:** John the wrote to *encourage discernment* from the “elect lady” as to not open and promote the false teachers by granting them hospitality to continue to spread their lies with regards to the person and work of Christ.
- B. **In 3rd letter John exhorts “Gaius” to continue to be “hospitable” towards those that John was sending to teach them:** In 3rd John the Apostle takes this time to Commend

his beloved brother Gaius for his hospitality and sharing in the ministry of missionaries who spread the truth.

This brief letter revolves around three men Gaius, Diotrephes (pronounced dee-ot-ref-ace) and Demetrius who was most likely the person who brought this letter to Gaius.

II. Chp. 1:1-4 Introduction

As we have noticed this is the typical introduction of a letter where we are introduced to the writer and to whom the letter was written too. The similarity of this letter and the previous two is again found in the word John chose as identification “Elder”. By the time of this letter John fit every description of that word, he was an apostle and leader in the church, he was a mature believer and at this time over 90 years of age he was “elderly”. There are three parts to our introduction to the first of these three men Gaius as we see that he was **the designation of the letter**, then we see John’s **desire for Gaius** and finally we see John’s **delight in Gaius**.

Designation of the letter

Next we are introduced to Gaius and his name is a Greek word that means “rejoice”. It was a common Greek name in fact there are at least four or more of them mentioned in the New Testament by Paul and there is no reason to believe that this Gaius is one of the ones mentioned by Paul. What makes this Gaius stand out is his Christ like character which John alludes to by the fourfold use of calling him “beloved” in this brief letter. The adjective describes a man well-beloved by his fellow believers who was noted for being a blessing to all he came into contact with. Gaius was the kind of servant of Christ that caused the Roman Tertullian to recognize the difference of followers of Christ from the world when he wrote, “*See how these Christians love one another*”. John says he loves him in the truth which points both his esteem and its limit.

Desire for Gaius

Vs. 2 John mentions the spiritual health of Gaius as his inner heart-life had been traveling of the right road in life. Life for Gaius had been spiritually prosperous throughout the time John had known him. There are some whose physical health and illness can be traced to the sickness of their soul and the Lord allows this so that they will learn to be dependent upon the Lord. John prays the common salutation but makes it a believer’s prayer by adding “**just as your soul prospers**”. The word “Soul” is one that mediates between our body and our spirit and is often used in reference to our heart. The word “**prosperous**” is a compound word that means a “**good road or a pleasant journey**” John prays that Gaius may have as much bodily strength and health as he has demonstrated the Holy Spirit’s power and direction in his life. Physical health doesn’t always accompany spiritual health and spiritual sickness is far more debilitating. Paraphrasing... “**May you enjoy a pleasant journey in this life in all things and be healthy so long as it is healthy for your soul!**”

Delight in Gaius

Vs. 3-4 Christian teachers had come back to John having visited the church where Gaius was such a blessing and mentioned him by name. The word “came” in the Greek is a continuous action and Gaius was walking his talk constantly faithful in the ministry of hospitality. It did John’s heart good by seeing and hearing of how much truth of God that Gaius was employing. In a world when all folks in church want to talk about is how many attend the church notice that all the Apostle John wanted to talk about was how much of Jesus was visible in Gaius! The goal of life as a believer is to see that every moment of the day we are living consistently and sincerely for Jesus’ glory.

III. Chp. 1:5-8 Statement of purpose: “Walking with fellow workers in the truth”

Vs. 5-7 John commends Gaius for his labor of hospitality especially for traveling Bible teachers most of whom he had never met. It is interesting to me to notice the early church practice of missions and overlap it to what we here at BVCC employs and see the similarities. We don't establish planting church's as much as we do equipping existing churches. As such we receive the blessing of taking the material God has given us and spreading it both on the internet as well as in person. We have just received another request from a pastor in India who has been taking our teachings and distributing them to other pastors in their community. This is what he wrote me: *“all our ministry pastors and all our churches people every day praying for you... we are all thankful to God for your family and ...ministry there, ...God is using you in a mighty way.... All our ministry pastors and all our street villages churches ...are encouraged by the sermons on your website. It is a great blessing to many people's lives through the preaching. The preaching videos touched many people's hearts. In my ministry 32 street pastors work, every time I am sharing all your videos with our pastors and many people.* This ministry that is reach people all over is due to your gift of hospitality as you are supporting this work and have added to God's kingdom by your ministry. John writes to Gaius, “If you send them forward” as Gaius was sending these Bible teachers on to another location to teach and be a blessing and he was a part of the work as much as was the Bible Teacher. And he was doing so “for HIS NAMES sake” taking nothing from the unbelievers this was a ministry to be a blessing! John uses the word in the Greek “receive” in verse 8 and it is a word that means “underwrite” and that is what BVCC does as we all are being used to “underwrite” the work of teaching the word of God, equipping the saints in their home countries. As such you all are **fellow companions for the truth!**

IV. Chp. 1:9-12 Main body of teaching: Two Examples

a. 1:9-11 Condemnation of Diotrephes: The danger of pride and selfishness

Vs. 9 Diotrephes (pronounced dee-ot-ref-ace) means “Zeus-nursed”. As Zeus was the chief god of the Greeks it was customary for the Greeks when they became Christians to drop their Greek names at their baptism and adopt ones that were more fitting their new life in Christ. This was simply done by dropping off the “Dee-ot” which means the god Zeus while still keeping the nursed or nourished and adding an aspect of God's nature or character. But it is noticeable that Diotrephes (pronounced dee-ot-ref-ace) hadn't done so. Although a professing Christian, a member and leader in the local church in which Gaius was a member he still chose to identify with his former life and behaved as much as well. John says of Diotrephes that he had a love of being first! This was apparently visible two ways:

- A. **His arrogance:** This is found in the phrase in verse 10a “*prating against us with malicious words*”.
- B. **His ambition:** This is seen in the words of verse 10b, “*and not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church*”. Diotrephes had a habit of excommunicating those that opposed him with regards to hospitality of those missionaries that taught the truth.

Here is a man that longed to be recognized as someone of authority, the C.E.O. of the fellowship, large and in charge. **He wanted people to remember his name, he wanted it to go down in**

history and little did he realize that it would but not the way he thought it would as he becomes the example of what a leader isn't. We can see this in **four actions** that John records that he was involved with in this local church:

1. Vs. 9 “**Does not receive us**”: **Exclusive**: He was so self-centered that he wouldn't receive the Apostle as he wanted to be seen over John. He was into being “seen by man” loved the titles and wanted to direct the church and was in love with himself and power and caused those under him to suffer. His concern was about position and how to maintain it.
2. Vs. 10a “**Prating against us with malicious words**”: **Divisive**: The Greek word for “prating” describes the bubbles that happen when water boils which describes **conversation that is as active as is empty**. His words were “malicious” and intended to “undercut” the authority of John. Most pastors have experienced this kind of “malicious hot empty” attack from folks who “regularly share their opinions”. John publicly names this fellow and rebukes him for his sinful unbiblical actions. This guy was hindering the work of the Lord by his actions all because of his own pride and ambition.
3. Vs. 10b “**Does not receive the brethren**”: **Oppressive**: The church where he was in leadership and this church needed good bible teaching and John was sending good Bible teachers to them and this so-called leader who wasn't teaching himself forbid those whom John sent to teach thus keep the solid food of the word of God from the church.
4. Vs. 10c “**Forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church**”: **Abusive**: the final step this guy did was kick out those that choose to be a blessing a be involved in this mission work. I've had a few of these types over the years who try to go around and cause problems, rally people to leave the church or try to get the people to cause me to retire or quit and all so they can come back and be C.E.O's again. It's all about power and possession for them.

b. 1:12 Commendation of Demetrius: The duty of hospitality and servanthood

Vs. 12 Demetrius (*whose name means devoted*) was most likely the person who brought this letter to Gaius but based upon these words was himself a stranger to the members of this church and therefore gets a word of commendation from John as he says that this brother has a habit of being a blessing to those of his local church Ephesus, those that knew him and more importantly to the truth itself. Here we note his fidelity and practice of servanthood has he is commended to Gaius. Above this section John said that the way to overcome the evil of dee-ot-ref-ace is not by doing evil back but instead by maintaining your course following Christ by doing good. Mimic Jesus, John says! Don't let these guys be a distraction instead follow the one that is following Christ and not the one following pride and ambition. Christian character is best seen with consistency and John says that was the case with Demetrius.

V. Chp. 1:13-14 Closing

Vs. 13-14 As in his 2nd letter John closes this letter saying that he would rather fellowship with Gaius in person then by letter and that he will be enjoying that hospitality that Gaius was famous for personally.