3 John | Sunday May 31, 2026

I am always amazed at how prone we are to take a simple truth and miss the heart of it by carrying it too far. In 2 John, John warned the church not to accept false teachers and not to show them hospitality. He did not want the church participating in their false teaching in any way. Now, in 3 John He needs to correct the lack of hospitality some are showing to true teachers. We are so prone to go from one extreme to the other. This letter gives us a glimpse at the early church and the very common problems they dealt with that are still present in churches today.

3 John 1:1-2 ESV

> (1) The elder to the beloved **Gaius**, whom I love in truth.
> (2) **Beloved**, I pray that **all may go well with you** and **that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.**

Three different men will be singled out in 3 John. The first is Gaius, whom the letter is written to. John has an affection and closeness with Giaus. In the short letter John calls Giaus beloved, 4 times. There are multiple Gaius' in scripture (1 Cor 1:14, Rom 16:23, and Acts 19:29) which is fitting as it was one of the most popular names in the Roman Empire. So it is doubtful that this Gaius is connected to any of the others mentioned. Out of His love for Gaius John prays that he would prosper and have good health. This serves as a great example of praying for one another's overall wellbeing and health needs. **John wants earthly good for Gaius, but notice his main focus, Gaius' eternal good**. John had a confidence that Gaius' soul was healthy, meaning he was growing in his walk with Jesus. Good health and things going well are valuable but they do not compare to our soul doing well.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 ESV

> (16) So we do not lose heart. **Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.**
> (17) For this light momentary affliction **is preparing for us** an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,
> (18) as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. **For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.**

John feels a freedom to pray for Gaius' health and for things to go well for Him, as He is confident that Giaus is growing and His soul is doing well. He sees the eternal as the important and the physical as the secondary. The earthly, the things that are seen are transient. Here one minute gone the next. Our bodies, are wasting away, **this word is used to describe rust eating into iron**. Even as the outer self wastes away, the inner self, our soul, can be renewed in God. We are promised that this life and its suffering will not be wasted, but is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory. Gaius was doing well were it mattered most, in the eternal.

3 John 1:3-4 ESV

> (3) **For I rejoiced greatly** when the brothers came and testified to your truth, **as indeed you are walking in the truth.**
> (4) **I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.**

Gaius is walking in the truth. I cannot think of a better compliment**. His lifestyle, and His actions are consistent with the truth.** There is no separation or divide between His beliefs and His life.

John was given a report about how well Gaius was doing spiritually and it thrilled him. We are about to find out that Gaius is going through a trying situation and even in the midst of this hard time He is responding to it based on the truth of the Word of God. Gaius' spiritual growth is what encourages John and gives Him such great joy. Paul felt the same way about the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 3:8 ESV

> (8) For now **we live**, **if you are standing fast in the Lord**.

Paul was not content that the Thessalonians had accepted Jesus, He desperately wanted them to grow and stand firm in Christ. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were given life when those they ministered to were growing in their faith. Our ongoing walks with Jesus are so important. Gaius was walking in the truth and his actions reflected this.

3 John 1:5-6 ESV

> (5) Beloved, **it is a faithful thing** you do **in all your efforts for these brothers**, **strangers as they are,**
> (6) who testified to your love before the church. **You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.**

The report John received about Gaius came from fellow believers that had received hospitality from Gaius. They were brothers in Christ yet strangers. Gaius had shown them godly hospitality and John encourages Him to continue to do so. John wants Gaius to treat these brothers and sisters in Christ **the same way He would if God was staying with Him**. We are commanded to show this kind of warm hospitality to fellow believers multiple times.

Romans 12:13 ESV

> (13) Contribute to the needs of the saints and **seek to show hospitality**.

1 Peter 4:9 ESV

> (9) **Show hospitality** to one another without grumbling.

Titus 1:8 ESV (Qualifications for Elders)

> (8) **but hospitable**, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.

Hospitality is so important it is even listed as a qualification for being an elder. The more we grow in Jesus the more hospitable we are to be. We are called to seek out opportunities to show Godly hospitality. This word seek means **to run after, pursue, move rapidly and decisively toward something**. We are to be intentional and deliberate in showing hospitality. **In reality hospitality is tangibly showing the love of God.**

Gaius was faithfully showing this kind of hospitality even though he was actively being discouraged to. **His circumstances were not directing his actions but faithfulness to the truth was.** We are called to walk faithfully regardless of our circumstances. Too often we think our circumstances, **that are out of our control,** need to change so we can start walking with God. Gaius is a great example of how we are called daily to walk in faithfulness regardless of what is happening around us. So Gaius was faithfully supporting the truthful missionaries that He was called to.

3 John 1:7-8 ESV

> (7) **For they have gone out** for the sake of the name, **accepting nothing from the Gentiles.** (8) **Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.**

As we compare 2 and 3 John it becomes evident that there were traveling missionaries that were teaching the truth and there were another group that was denying Jesus. **Both groups were in need of support. Believers needed to be very careful who they supported**. This group was sent out in the name of Jesus and were teaching the truth about Him. Their actions verified this. They refused to accept any support from non-believers. They did not beg for nor pursue money. Instead, they trusted that if God called them to go He would provide through His body. It is not right to ask the world to financially support God's work.

As believers we can become associated with false teaching by supporting the wrong ministries. The great news is we can also become associated with the truth and be a fellow worker of it by supporting those who share truth. **Supporting Gods work in whatever way we are called to, monetarily, financially, with our time, or in prayer connects us to the eternal work that God is doing.**

1 Corinthians 3:5-7 ESV

> (5) What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.
> (6) **I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.**
> (7) So neither he who plants nor he who waters **is anything, but only God who gives the growth.**

One role is not to be elevated above another. Gaius was not called to go out, but he was a fellow worker for the truth, by being hospitable and sending out. We are to support in whatever way God has called us to the work He is doing. It is not about Paul or Apollos or even Gaius, but about God who is at work. The amazing thing is He has given us the opportunity to be a part of what He is doing. We do not want miss out on what God has for us. Unfortunately, John is about to address someone who has let sin get in the way of being apart of God's work.

3 John 1:9-10 ESV

> (9) I have written something to the church, but **Diotrephes**, **who likes to put himself first**, does not acknowledge our authority.
> (10) So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, **talking wicked nonsense against us**. And not content with that, **he refuses to welcome the brothers**, **and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.**

Diotrephes is proud and likes to put himself first and make everything about himself. **His name is associated with roman nobility and means Zeus reared**. At some point He accepted the truth of Jesus and became a part of the church. Yet, He continued to think earthly and has let personal feelings and ambition get in the way. Diotrephes has refused to listen to John. He will not accept these teachers who are sharing the truth and is so power hungry that he is forcing anyone who does out of the church. This shows the oppressive circumstances that Gaius is walking faithfully in. We do not know for sure what role Diotrephes officially had but in reality He thought of himself as in charge and wanted to control everything. If you have been around church long enough you have met a Diotrephes.

Matthew 20:25-28 ESV

> (25) But Jesus called them to Him and said, "You know that **the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them,** and their great ones exercise authority over them.
> (26) It shall not be so among you. **But whoever would be great among you must be**

> **your servant,**
> (27) and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,
> (28) even as **the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."**

Diotrephes was acting like one of the gentile rulers that Jesus was mentioning. True leadership is humble service. Too many leaders in churches today assert their own will and authority instead of serving. **Unfortunately, the Diotrephes of the world tend to crowd out the faithful servants like Gaius.** Diotrephes was cunning and strategic in how he consolidated and wielded power. He spread false rumors and gossiped about John to try and gain followers. His own actions showed how far He was from walking in the truth. Gaius was not to sink to Diotrephes level.

3 John 1:11 ESV

> (11) **Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good**. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

Even in this difficult and trying situation Giaus was not to imitate the evil that Diotrephes was doing. **The Greek word imitate is where we get the word mimic or mime.** It is so easy to mimic someone else's actions, or attitude without even realizing it. When someone is negative and critical we tend to follow and be negative and critical. When someone is gossiping and spreading false stories it is easy to follow along. Instead, we are called to imitate or follow good. The correct response to Diotrephes is not to imitate His evil but to continue to walk in the truth and in faithfulness. We are to walk in the freedom of the light. Diotrephes' lies will catch up to him, especially when John confronts him.

3 John 1:12 ESV

> (12) **Demetrius** has received a good testimony from everyone, and **from the truth itself.** We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

John then gives a specific name of one of the teachers that Gaius should support. Demetrius has a great reputation, with others and with John. Demetrius even has a good report from the truth itself. This means that you can take Demetrius' life and His teaching and compare them to the truth and it matches up. This is the kind of teacher that we are to support.

Three men are called by name in this letter each with a unique legacy. Gaius is faithfully walking in the truth. Demetrius is well spoken of by the truth. Then there is Diotrephes who is so focused on Himself that He is lying, gossiping, and hurting others by putting them out of the church. It is important to consider what type of legacy we hope to be leaving. **Are we known for the truth and walking faithfully in it or are we known for pursuing earthy things, even ourselves?** I am so encouraged by Gaius and Demetrius these quiet faithful servants that walked in what God had for them. They did not have the power or authority that Diotrephes had but they lived for eternal things.

3 John 1:13-15 ESV

> (13) I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink.
> (14) I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.
> (15) Peace be to you. The friends greet you. **Greet the friends, each by name.**

John has more to address and yet wants to save the paper and ink. Which is funny considering His gospel is 21 chapters long and Revelation is 22 Chapters long.

Right at the end of this letter John encourages Giaus to greet the friends each by name. In the face of controversy and conflict Gaius is to remain close to the friends and interact personally with them. This can seem like such a small command and yet practically it can be extremely difficult. When there are only 10 friends to greet by name it is possible, when there is 500 it can seem impossible. This is why we are called to stay connected within the body. **So many of the one "another commands" in scripture are undone if we do not know each other.**

Galatians 6:2 ESV

> (2) **Bear one another's burdens**, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV

> (11) Therefore **encourage one another and build one another up**, just as you are doing.

We cannot bear each other's burdens if we don't know about them. We cannot encourage each other and build each other up in our walks with Christ if we do not talk to one another. This body of believers has grown pass the point that one person can know everyone but the hope is that we each stay connected to a pocket of this body. This might be a small group, an area you serve in, even the people you sit by. We are called to one another in the body and this means knowing each other, yes even by name.

This fits John's heart of 1, 2, and 3 John so well. He desires for believers to walk in "fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3). **Believers have access to fellowship with Jesus and in turn access to a unity and love with each other**. John has been teaching us how to abide in Jesus and in the eternal life He has given to us. John was a Son of Thunder (Mark 3:17) and wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume Samaritans (Luke 9:54). Yet, through His new life in Jesus, and abiding in Him John mentioned love over 50 times. He knew how much fellowship with Jesus had changed His heart and He desired for us to experience the same thing.

Fellowship is found when we **walk in the light** (1 John 1:7) by **confessing our sins** (1 John 1:9) and constantly walking fresh with Jesus. When we walk in the light **we will love our brothers and sisters in Christ** (1 John 2:10). When we walk in the light we **will not shrink in shame** when Jesus returns (1 John 2:28). We can **know love because of Jesus** (1 John 4:9). Then **in His love we are able to love** one another (5:1-3). This **love is to be balanced by truth** (2 John 3). This means we are not to accept falsehood and false teachers because they will break our fellowship (2 John 8, 10). Instead we are to be fellow workers for the truth (3 John 8).

We have been given such an amazing opportunity in Jesus to abide in Him and have fellowship with Him. As we do so we will have a true love and fellowship with one another. Let's walk in His light.
