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# 3 John

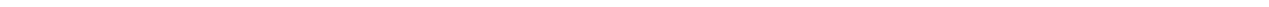
an expositional Bible study by

Dr. Grant C. Richison

# 3 John

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## Foreword

These lessons in **3 John** are compiled from the writings of Dr. Grant C. Richison, and were first published on the Internet beginning in 2001 in the Campus Crusades (Canada) daily online devotional Today's Word.

Dr. Richison is a highly experienced pastor, lecturer, and Christian servant who is dedicated to a lifetime of studying and teaching God's Word. Almost immediately after his salvation he began to desire to teach the Word, and he set about a lifelong program of preparation and ministry.

Dr. Richison has a diploma from Detroit Bible Institute, a bachelor's degree in religious education from William Tyndale College (Detroit), a Masters in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a doctorate in ministries from Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Florida.

Dr. Richison has been pastor and senior pastor of Baptist churches from 1965 to 1992. His most recent pastorate was at Grant Memorial Baptist Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, where, over a 20 year period, he had oversight of a ministry that expanded from about 350 to more than 2500 communicants. During the period of his pastorates, Dr. Richison was also a lecturer at Detroit Bible College and Winnipeg Theological Seminary.

From 1993 to 1995, Dr. Richison was Director of Leadership Ministries for Campus Crusade for Christ (Canada). He currently has a world-wide lecture ministry with Campus Crusade.

Dr. Richison is an experienced writer, and he provides materials for three areas on the Internet: Sermon on the Net; Today's Word, and Pastors' Power Points. He has considerable ability to communicate God's Word verse by verse in a relevant, clear, applicable and insightful manner and to communicate vision and establish a philosophy of ministry in the local assembly. .

Dr. Richison has served on the following boards and conferences:

- Lower Michigan Baptist General Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, board member)
  - Great Lakes Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
  - Central Canada Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
  - Child Evangelism Fellowship (Manitoba)
  - Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
  - International Ministries to Israel (Canada)
  - Chairman of Greater Manitoba Sunday School Convention
  - Chairman of Marney Patterson Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
  - Chairman of Terry Winter Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
-

- Chairman of the "Why Campaign" (city-wide evangelistic trust in Winnipeg)
- Chairman of the Board of Regents of Canadian Baptist Seminary (part of consortium of seminaries on Trinity Western University)
- Baptist General Conference of Canada (board member)
- Briarcrest Bible College and Seminary, Moose Jaw, Sask.
- Electronic Bible Society, Dallas Texas
- President's Cabinet, Campus Crusade for Christ, Canada

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## Introduction

### I. AUTHOR - John, one of the twelve.

A. John identifies himself as "the elder" (v.1) as in 2nd John.

B. 3rd John was spoken against as an authentic book of the canon [antilegomena]:

1. External evidence: weak

Origen, A.D. 185-253

Dionysius of Alexandria, A.D. 200-265

Eusebius, A.D. 260-340

Jerome, A.D. 340-420

2. Internal evidence: strong

Similarity of style and content to 2nd John affirms John as the author of 3rd John.

### II. DATE - between 90 and 95 A.D. from Ephesus

### III. OCCASION - warning against a tyrannical leader named Diotrephes.

Diotrephes refused hospitality to emissaries sent out from John and excommunicated anyone who did. •Gaius extended hospitality to emissaries from John.

### IV. COMPARISON TO 2 JOHN

- Both epistles address the concern over itinerant teachers and hospitality given to them.
- Both epistles are concerned with the relationship between "truth" and hospitality but for different reasons.
- 2nd John is a condemnation for giving hospitality to false teachers whereas 3rd John is a commendation for giving hospitality to teachers of the truth.
- 2nd John stresses the truth of doctrine whereas 3rd John stresses integrity of doctrine.
- 2nd John is more general but 3rd John is more personal in dealing with specific cases.

### V. DESTINATION - to Gaius and the Christian community in the Roman province of Asia.

A. 3rd John is a genuine letter written by "the elder" to a highly wealthy and influential believer named Gaius [common name].

Uncertain as to whether he is one of the Gaiuses of Acts 19:20; Ro 16:23; 1 Co 1:14

B. 3rd John designed to be shared with other believers in Asia Minor [in Turkey today].

C. 3rd John has universal value to the church of all ages.

VI. BACKGROUND: Diotrephes refused to recognize itinerant preachers sent by John and opposed them. He did this for personal reasons - he wanted to have preeminence in the church. The issue was personal, not doctrinal.

VII. PURPOSE - to warn against self-exaltation and self-assumption in leading the local church.

A. To commend Gaius' commendable conduct of putting the needs of teachers of truth above his own (vv. 5-8).

Providing for teachers is worthy of God (v. 6)

Providing for teachers is necessary to advance the gospel (v. 7)

Providing for teachers puts the supporter as a partner with the teacher (v. 8)

B. To warn against Diotrephes' contemptible conduct by putting his own needs before the cause of Christ (v. 9)

1. Diotrephes' problem was pride

2. Result of pride (v. 10):

Lies and false accusations to lift self above others

Selfishness and insecurity

Oppressiveness, intimidation and exclusion of others from fellowship

C. To commend Demetrius as a traveling teacher and bearer of the letter of 3rd John (v. 12).

D. To inform his readers that John is coming for a visit soon (v. 14)

VIII. KEY VERSES: verses 3,4,8,12

IX. KEY WORD - "truth" (vv. 3,4,8,12)

X. THEME - examples of leadership who walk and who do not walk in integrity (v. 4)

XI. CHARACTERISTICS

Highly personal epistle but also clearly official.

3rd John is the most personal letter in the New Testament.

Shows the relationship between truth and love.

3rd John deals with more of a personal issue than a doctrinal issue.

## XII. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

A. Second shortest book in the New Testament [2nd John is shortest in terms of verses; 3rd John is the shortest book in terms of size – one line shorter]

B. 3rd John revolves around 3 people

C. 3rd John is important for the nature of church leadership

## XIII. OUTLINE

Introduction, vv. 1-4

Salutation, vv. 1-2

Joy in standing for truth, vv. 3-4

Three Portraits:

1st Portrait: Confirmation of Gaius as a leader with God's viewpoint, vv. 5-8

2nd Portrait: Complaints of domineering Diotrephes as a leader with selfish viewpoint, vv. 9-10

3rd Portrait: Commendation of Demetrius as a leader with God's viewpoint, vv. 11-12

Conclusion, vv. 13-14

Reason for short letter, vv. 13, 14a

Benediction and greeting, v. 14b

## 3 John 1:1

**"THE ELDER, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth..."**

THE ELDER,

John asserts his authority as an "elder" because of a conflict with Diotrephes discussed later in the chapter. He has special prerogative as an apostle.

**To the beloved Gaius,**

John expresses warm affection for Gaius. Gaius was "beloved" because he was well loved. John calls Gaius "beloved" four times in this short epistle (1,2,5,11).

Gaius' identity is difficult to determine. His name was common in his time (Ac 19:29; 20:4; Ro 16:23). It is not known whether he was an official in the church in Asia Minor or not.

## whom I love in truth

John again demonstrates his concern for the relationship between love and truth. The word "I" is emphatic. John always operates within the sphere of truth as a principle of life.

**Tim. 3:15 "All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen."**

**Principle:** Christians should love each other within the sphere of the integrity of truth.

**Application:** It is wonderful to be loved by someone. To feel cherished and wanted is a sense of being valued. Some children go bad because they do not feel wanted by anyone.

God loves us and expresses His love toward us. He knows how to express love as well. Some of us do not know how to show it or express it. If God loves us and knows how to express it, the household of faith should love each other and express it clearly. This is more than loving others in appearance but loving them in faith.

**2 Thess. 2:13, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth..."**

**1 John 3:1,2 "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.**

**Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."**

We live in a sophisticated time when no one will admit to loving anyone. Each goes his own way. He is independent; he needs no one. He does not have time for anyone else other than his own family. Everyone else can drop dead for all he cares. All he cares about are inanimate objects. He could care less for people. He does not care if they live or die. All this will come home to roost in its own coin. If we show no interest in others, they will not show interest in us.

Read Rom 16:5-12

**1 Cor. 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in**

**the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."**

**Phil 4:1 "Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved."**

### 3 John 1:2

**"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."**

**Beloved,**

John calls Gaius "beloved" for the second time in two short verses.

**I pray that you may prosper in all things**

Prosperity here is mental health and general well being. Diotrephes gave Gaius a hard time so he needed encouragement.

**and be in health,**

John was concerned about the physical health of Gaius.

**just as your soul prospers**

Gaius was in good spiritual health. He walked with a clear conscience before the Lord. John's hope for him is that his general well being would be as good as his spiritual well being, "I wish you a general prosperity that equates with your spiritual prosperity."

**Principle:** A prosperous soul is a soul in right relation to the Lord.

**Application:** The church needs more people with spiritual health. Many give little concern to the soul. If our physical health corresponds to our spiritual health, many of us would be in bad shape physically. If our financial state were as bad as our spiritual state, we would be bankrupt.

There is some profit in giving concern to our physical well being (1 Ti 4:8) but there is much more benefit in spiritual prosperity. If some of us were as strong physically as we are spiritually, we would be bedridden.

**Ps 106:15 "And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul."**

**Ps 138:3 "In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul."**

What makes for a prosperous soul? A soul in right fellowship with the Lord. Incorporation of the principles of God's soul food into our spiritual system strengthens our spirit. The soul that has a good dose of the Word is a prosperous soul.

**Joshua 1:8 "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."**

### 3 John 1:3

**"For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth."**

**For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified**

Christians from Asia Minor came to testify to John of the truth that is in Gaius. Traveling missionaries and evangelists flowed from Christian community to Christian community.

There were no missionary boards in the first century. These were entities of the remote future. Ramada Inns and MacDonald restaurants were not in vogue yet. There was little support for missionaries and traveling teachers. People compensated for this by providing hospitality and limited financial support for these people.

**of the truth that is in you,**

John commended Gaius as a man of the truth. He was not like Diotrephes who did not walk according to the truth.

**just as you walk in the truth**

Gaius' life was consistent with truth. His walk matched his talk. He walked according to the reality of the Word of God. He was a man of integrity.

**Principle:** Testimony of living a consistent Christian life blesses many.

**Application:** It is wonderful to hear testimonies of integrity in ministry. It seems that all we hear are stories of failure in ministry. The few horror stories overshadow multiplied untold stories of sacrifice and blessing.

Some people do not want to hear the good news because bad news makes them look good. Some Christians develop a rival attitude toward those successful in ministry. They have malicious feelings of ill will when they hear about something good in someone else. They hear of a success in another ministry and they turn green with envy. "Hey, tell me more. This makes me feel good. When it comes to gossip, I am all ears." The sin capacity feeds on this garbage.

Mature Christians rejoice when they hear that someone walks "in the truth."

### 3 John 1:4

**"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."**

"Walk" is a metaphor for live. "Walk" has to do with how we conduct our lives. Those who are mature live in the sphere of the truth (v. 3). The normal Christian life does not rest blithely in static doctrine. It lives out the principles of the Word. Christianity is more than a speculative theory; it is a supernatural life. Belief always impacts life and applies principles to experience.

**Principle:** There is no greater joy that a mature believer can hear than that his disciple is maturing in Christ as well.

**Application:** Mature believers have spiritual children. They are always in the process of developing and helping others to grow to be more like the Lord Jesus. It always rejoices the heart of a mature believer to see one of his disciples go on with the Lord.

Walk in the truth depends on how well our soul prospers. Our walk will be right if our heart is right.

### 3 John 1:5

**"Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers..."**

Now we begin the body of the epistle to 3rd John. The book of 3rd John revolves around the portraits of three men: Gaius, Diotrephes (v. 9) and Demetrius (v. 12) -- two good men and one not so good.

**Beloved,**

For the third time in 5 verses John expresses his love to Gaius. John loved Gaius for supporting his

traveling missionaries so he punctuated this epistle with "beloved."

**you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers**

John commends Gaius for his financial service for others. Probably this refers especially to support of food, housing and money for traveling teachers and missionaries. Gaius even went further and supported "strangers" as well; he did not need to know them personally. Anyone who came into town to minister found a place to stay at Gaius' house. Gaius invited the displeasure from a key leader in his church for doing this.

**Rom. 15:23,24 "But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you,**

**whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while."**

**1 Cor.16:15-18, "I urge you, brethren -- you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints --**

**that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us.**

**I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied.**

**For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men."**

**2 Cor. 1:15,16 "And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit --**

**to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea."**

**Tit. 3:13 "Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing."**

Gaius supported Christian workers "faithfully." People could count on him because he was trustworthy and dependable. When traveling missionaries came to town, John could count on him to provide for them even in the face of incurring the wrath of Diotrephes.



**1 Tim 5:9,10** "Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work."

**Principle:** Financial support of those who serve Jesus Christ is essential to the advancement of the work of Christ.

**Application:** A genuine sign that God has touched a person is when he starts giving to others. This is true in his pocketbook as well as in his time. He becomes a generous person. He gives with a sense of delight.

Ministry cannot advance without the help of generous believers.

**Rom. 12:13** "...distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality."

The church cannot operate without generous Christians. That generosity must go first to the household of faith. Believers must always discriminate in favor of Christians.

**Gal 6:10** "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

**He 6:10** "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

### 3 John 1:6

"...who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well..."

John dispatched ministers to the church at Ephesus but Diotrefes refused to host them. However, Gaius did graciously host them. These itinerant travelers went back to John after visiting Gaius with a report that he exercised the love of hospitality to them at Ephesus. His love was one of action and not mere sentiment. John spent his later years in Ephesus.

### If you send them forward on their journey

The concept of send forward conveys the idea of providing supplies. John did not want to blunt Gaius' hosting of legitimate teachers of the truth so he urges Gaius to continue his hospitality (Ac 15:3; 20:38; 2:15; Ro. 15:24; 1 Co. 16:6, 11; 2 Co 1:16; Ti 3:13).

### in a manner worthy of God,

The phrase "worthy of God" is literally worthily of God. The emphasis is on manner. Gaius' hospitality to servants of Christ gave praise to God by a manner consistent with his God (Co 1:10; 1 Th 2:12). The way he showed hospitality brought praise to God. Gaius had a high degree of comparable worth that is fitting or proper for what is expected from a spiritual leader. John deemed that his life corresponded to God's standard for living.

**Eph. 4:1** "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called..."

### you will do well

John now requests Gaius to give further service to itinerant teachers for the second time. Demetrius may have been one of these itinerant teachers. This both pleased God and is lovely in the eyes of those who benefited by Gaius' action.

**Principle:** We give praise to God by sharing our resources.

**Application:** Motivation for ministry should be outgoing love that is self-giving and spontaneous. People who truly love God do not begrudge giving to the cause of Christ. They willingly invite speakers and missionaries into their homes, serve them a good meal, and get to know their specific needs. They also willingly help in practical ways such as driving a visiting speaker to the airport and making sure he has something to eat.

### 3 John 1:7

"...because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles."

The traveling preachers from John went out in Jesus' name. "Went forth" is a missionary idea. It is an honor to go out in His name [This is the only New Testament book that does not mention the name of Jesus Christ].

### taking nothing from the Gentiles

John's traveling preachers did not solicit funds from non-Christians. They stayed with Christians such as Gaius. "Gentiles" is a name for non-Christians. It does not give honor to the name of Christ to receive funds from non-Christians. These itinerant preachers were free from greed (2 Co. 2:17; 1 Ti. 5:17,18).

**Principle:** God's people should support God's work.

**Application:** To represent Jesus Christ is a supreme honor. We minister for the glory of His name, not our own.

**Acts 5:41,42** "So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

**And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."**

**Rom. 1:5** "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name..."

**Phi. 2:9-11,** "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

**that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,**

**and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."**

We should not press this point to mean that we can never receive anything from non-Christians who voluntarily offer gifts to Christians. Jesus accepted water from the sinful Samaritan woman. The point here is that itinerant evangelists should not as policy seek support from non-Christians. God's work done in God's way will never suffer God's blessing.

**2 Cor 2:17** "For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ."

Generous support for those who teach the Word is a biblical standard.

**1 Tim. 5:17,18** "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor [reference in

context is to salary], especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

**For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages.'"**

### 3 John 1:8

**"We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth."**

Verse 8 sets in contrast to verse 7. Because non-Christians do not support Christian workers but it is incumbent upon Christians to support them.

**We therefore ought to receive such,**

The "therefore" indicates an implication of not receiving financial support from non-Christians. The "we" is emphatic in the Greek, that is, "we Christians as over against non-Christians -- "Since evangelists do not depend on non-Christians for support, we Christians must provide that support. We Christians are the only ones who will supply the means possible for evangelism."

The word "ought" implies moral obligation. It is a moral obligation to provide financial means to advance the gospel.

"Receive such" relates to giving financial support to Christian workers. The word "receive" conveys the idea to welcome, to receive as guests. "Such" points to John's evangelists hosted by Gaius who did not receive support from unbelievers -- "Underwrite the expenses for this evangelistic team who totally depends on Christians for their support."

**that we may become fellow workers for the truth**

"That" indicates a result of support for itinerant evangelists. Those who provide financial support for them become co-workers for the truth with them.

The word "we" is emphatic in the Greek. Since Christian workers do not rely on non-Christians for support, Christians must support them. Christians must do what we do not expect non-Christians to do.

By receiving these itinerant evangelists, Gaius became a part of the movement called "fellow workers for the truth". The word "become" means to become something that you were not previously. Gaius was not a fellow worker for the

truth until he started financially supporting itinerant evangelists.

Christians work for the truth. If it were not for Gaius, the interest of the truth would not advance. If Gaius did not provide financially for John's itinerant evangelists, the truth would not go forward as it does now that Gaius provides for them. Gaius, by his financial support, is a partner with John's evangelistic team.

The word "for" in "for the truth" conveys the idea to promote the truth. Financial support for evangelists makes evangelism more operative in its dynamic.

**Principle:** Those who financially support people in ministry share personally in their ministry.

**Application:** Giving financial support to Christian workers makes the giver a partner with the receiver.

**1 Cor. 3:9** "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building."

**1 Cor. 9:23** "Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you."

**Co. 4:11** "...and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me."

### 3 John 1:9

**"I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us."**

John now transitions to the 2nd main character of 3 John - denouncing Diotrephes. This is the climax of 3 John. The conflict is not between Christians and non-Christians but between different orientations to ministry. One is interested in self-promotion and the other is interested in advancing the cause of Christ.

**I wrote to the church,**

John wrote to the church, which Gaius attended.

**but Diotrephes,**

Diotrephes means nourished by Zeus. Zeus was the chief god of the pantheon. Diotrephes may have had a pagan past. John introduced Diotrephes' power lust to contrast it to Gaius' love for ministry and God's ministers.

**who loves to have the preeminence among them,**

Diotrephes was motivated by a love of preeminence in the church. The words "loves to have the preeminence" come from one Greek word and means loves to be first in rank or position, wish to be first, to strive to be first. Diotrephes wanted the attention of being number one in the local church.

**does not receive us**

Diotrephes did not want to kowtow to the apostle John or his ambassadors so he refused to financially support these itinerant evangelists. John's group of leaders endangered his power base. He was on a power trip and he did not want any competition. His clandestine self-love exploded in the disruptive conduct of the next verse. Diotrephes eventually excommunicated those who disagreed with him (v. 10). He was an influential person whose power went to his head.

**James 3:16** "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there."

**Principle:** Self-seeking always diminishes the work of Christ on earth.

**Application:** Love of preeminence is the plague of many churches today. If churches neglect to deal with this issue, they are going to have difficulty advancing the gospel of Christ.

Self-interests get in the way of Christ's interests. Love of place and power is unadulterated carnality. Carnality always blunts the cause of Christ. Carnality always pushes self to the fore and is more interested in self-advancement than advancing the gospel. Not everyone owns the objective of world evangelism.

**Mk 10:42-45** But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

**"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.**

**"And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.**

**"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."**

**1 Pet. 5:2-4, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;**

**nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;**

**and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."**

Some people do not want to kowtow to anyone. They reject authority from anyone, anywhere. The root problem behind this is self and self-interest.

**John 13:20 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."**

Ambition is an archenemy to churches and to their advancing the cause of Christ. People who put themselves first love preeminence. They are in church work for themselves, not for the Lord. This is a dead giveaway for carnality. This robs Jesus Christ of His glory and detracts from the work of Christ on earth.

**Col. 1:18 "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."**

### 3 John 1:10

**"Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church."**

**Therefore,**

"Therefore" refers to immediately preceding statements indicating John's reasons for giving Diotrephes a dressing down when he comes to Ephesus.

**if I come,**

The "elder" (v.1) John will deal with Diotrephes personally when he comes to Ephesus (v. 14). Diotrephes will answer to the authority of an apostle at that time.

**I will call to mind his deeds which he does,**

John will manifest the deeds of Diotrephes publicly to the congregation at Ephesus. He will lay the following charges against him:

**Prating against us with malicious words**

Diotrephes threatened the spread of the gospel by his actions and personal intrigue. He spread unjustified charges in a malicious way about John and his team.

The word "prating" means to bring false charges of tattle, to babble with gossip. This is the only occurrence of this Greek word in the New Testament. Diotrephes' talk was nonsense and senseless. He deemed John as a rival to his authority and sought to undermine him by false accusations. Diotrephes was a man of little content for he was filled with empty talk.

Diotrephes hurled "malicious" words that tore down the reputation of the gospel team. He spread vicious innuendos about them.

**Principle:** Religious tyrants do great damage to the cause of Christ.

**Application:** Power lust is a problem in church leadership today. It will cause havoc to the work of Christ. People with power lust care little about what they say or how they say it as long as they remain king of the mountain. They will pull anyone down on the way up to the top of the mountain.

People with power lust will verbally run down any rival to their power. They will cut the ground out from under any Christian leader by attacking their person. They will assassinate anyone's character or reputation as long as they deem that it reflects well on them.

**1 Tim. 5:13 "And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not."**

**2 Tim. 2:16,17 "But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.**

**And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort..."**

Read Romans 14:4-13

Abuse of leadership, however, does not negate balanced biblical leadership.

He 13:7,17 "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.... 17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."

**And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren,**

Not satisfied with undermining the authority of John and his team, he refused them hospitality on their journey making it difficult to advance the gospel.

**and forbids those who wish to,**

The audacity of Diotrophes was amazing. His pontifical impudence and effrontery was blatant. His palpable nerve was something else. He prevented others in the congregation from fellowshiping with a gospel team!

**putting them out of the church**

The third area of his malice was to develop an intimidation policy of excommunication against the gospel team. Against those who did not join him in not welcoming the gospel team, he personally vetoed their fellowship with the church.

The problem of 2nd John was doctrinal. The problem in 3rd John is a practical problem. John condemned Diotrophes publicly not because of his system of belief but because of his conduct of life. He ran things with an iron hand. He was a religious tyrant.

**Principle:** Conduct within the local church is important to the vibrancy of the church.

**Application:** Trouble from within the local assembly is a real problem. What cannot destroy the church from without can destroy it from within. What we say and do is important in the local church. It is not only who we are but also the way we operate that is important to the function of the body of Christ.

Acts 20:29,30 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

"Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."

### 3 John 1:11

"Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God."

**Beloved,**

John now addresses Gaius as "beloved". The following is a command on how to deal with Diotrophes.

**do not imitate what is evil,**

"Do not" in the Greek means to stop something already in process - "Stop copying Diotrophes' conduct. Don't cave into pressure from him."

**but what is good.**

"Imitate what is intrinsically good, Gaius."  
"Good" means good of intrinsic value.

**Principle:** Christians should be careful about their role models.

**Application:** Godly men should never be intimidated by Diotrophes types of today. If they see leaders jockeying for the top spot because they want to build a name for themselves, recognize this for what it is - a power grab. If they acquiesce and yield to the Diotrophes of today because he has money or influence, then they put their church and the work of God in jeopardy.

Do you follow "good" or "bad" leadership? Paul deemed himself adequate for others to follow, "I am following the Lord closely enough for you to follow me". We imitate others only to the extent that they imitate Christ.

**1 Cor. 11:1 "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."**

The Thessalonians saw God in three men: Paul, Silas and Timothy. They could see what God was like through these three men. God can reveal Himself through regenerate men.

**1 Thess. 1:6,7 "And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe."**

**Gal. 1:15,16** "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace,

**to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood..."**

God exhibits His Son through our conduct. People who watch our lives should see Jesus in us like a daughter sees what she wants to be in her mother. A consistent testimony is a wonderful sight to behold.

Sometimes sheep follow so far behind the Shepherd that they cannot see Him so we follow other sheep that see Him. We must follow godly sheep if we are new sheep or out of touch sheep. That is the next best thing to following the Shepherd. Our ultimate aim is to follow the Shepherd.

The Shepherd will change the entire trend our lives. Sin all of a sudden becomes a big issue to us. Our orientation to please the Shepherd becomes all-important. We have a new trust, a new tone and thrust to our lives. We do not receive a rebuilt motor but a brand new motor for living.

Some sheep follow wayward sheep. Other sheep even follow goats. When sheep follow wayward sheep or unsaved goats their lives will go far astray.

**He who does good is of God,**

The idea here is not whether this person is a Christian but that he is a godly Christian. Doing "good" is doing something that profits other people, to be of help, to benefit. Diotrephes was not very helpful.

**1 Pet. 2:14** "...or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good."

The words "of God" indicate source. The source of actions can be found in God (1 Jn 3:6, 3:10, 4:7, and 4:20).

**but he who does evil has not seen God**

Evil does not find its source in God (1 Jn 3:6). Good and evil are always products of something. Diotrephes' conduct did not come from his God. To imitate pernicious evil puts one out of phase with God.

**Principle:** Christians should be careful about the source for what they do.

**Application:** There is a "good" and "evil" in the issue of power lust within the church. All too often people within the church today mimic power lust in carnal people. Others go along with these tinhorn dictators in order to keep the peace. These are people with jelly for a backbone.

The issue is this - is Christ increasing and am I decreasing. Any other attitude than that in the local church causes havoc and chaos within the body of Christ.

### 3 John 1:12

**"Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true."**

John now turns to the last of the three personalities that he deals with in 3rd John - Demetrius. John says in effect, "Extend hospitality to Demetrius as a member of my team because he is a man of integrity."

John gives a threefold tribute to Demetrius:

- A good testimony among all
- Truth spoke on his behalf
- The elder John speaks well of him

**Demetrius has a good testimony from all,**

John now commends Demetrius. "Demetrius". a common name in the first century, means belonging to Demeter [the goddess of agriculture]. Demetrius probably had a pagan background. He is not the Demetrius of Acts 19:24. He may have been the leader of the itinerant evangelists sent from John.

In any case, Demetrius held a good testimony to "all". His testimony was so extensive that it was commonly reported among all those who knew him. His integrity made his reputation. His character stood the test of many people.

**Principle:** Our character is our commendation.

**Application:** There is a danger if all men speak well of us because that may indicate that we are without conviction. Yet it is another thing if people speak well of our integrity and disagree with our viewpoints. It is our stand on integrity that makes a good testimony. "His viewpoint is wrong but he is a good man."

When conduct matches our profession we are deemed a person of integrity. We are more than our reputation. Our reputation is what others deem us to be. Our character is what we are. Our character commends us to others.

**and from the truth itself.**

The second witness to Demetrius is the truth itself. Truth witnessed that his belief, conduct and character conformed to reality itself.

The definite article in the Greek points to the corpus of truth in the Word. Demetrius practiced the body of God's truth in his life.

**Principle:** If we apply God's Word to our lives consistently, we will have credibility before God and others.

**Application:** Is your life in harmony with God's truth? If it is, you will enjoy the trust of many people. What a wonder your life will be to many who come into contact with you! A rare bird indeed! You will be a person with a testimony.

**John 21:24** "This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true."

The Word of God shapes our character. The truth of the Word of God will mold our lives and shape our character into the image of Christ. After God forms His character in us, people will not say, "That person believes the Bible but undermines others. That Christian believes the Bible but is full of anger, resentment, hostility and bitterness." They will say, "God uses the Bible powerfully to change lives."

**John 17:17** "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

**Tit. 2:5** "...to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.... 10 not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things."

**And we also bear witness,**

John's evangelistic team attests to the credibility of Demetrius, "As over against Diotrophes, Demetrius is a man you can trust. He lives consistently with the Word. We approve of him. We vouch for him."

**and you know that our testimony is true**

John and his team as well have strong credibility so they had a basis for endorsing Demetrius' credibility.

**Principle:** Reputation gives us credibility with others.

**Application:** If God gave a report card on your life at the end of each year and published it to the Christian community, what would be your grade? An "A" or "F"? He does not give an "E" for effort. Your character is what it is. Reputation is good but character is better. Nevertheless, a good reputation is important.

**Acts 6:3,4** "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

'but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.'"

**Acts 10:22** "And they said, 'Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.'"

**Acts 16:1,2** "Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek.

He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium."

**Acts 22:12** "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there..."

**1 Tim. 3:7** "Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

People know what kind of person we are. They know if we are serious about applying the Word to our lives. They know whether we are interested in introducing others to Christ. The crucial issue is not what others think of us but what God thinks of us.

Parliaments in Great Britain and Canada have votes of confidence in government. Sometimes they have a vote of “no confidence” in the Prime Minister. If your church had a vote of confidence in you, would they give you a vote of “no confidence”? You may not have anything overly wrong in your life but you do not have anything outstanding either. There is not much there. They sized you up.

Some of us are all show and no dough. We are just window dressing. We are more concerned about our reputation than we are about our character but our reputation ultimately takes a beating if our character is not there.

A powerful testimony takes years to develop. People need to observe us under pressure. They need to watch us when we are crossed. They need to see us when everything goes wrong. Would people recommend us without hesitation to an important role? Would they give us a sterling credit reference?

### 3 John 1:13-14

**“I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.”**

Now we come to the conclusion of 3rd John – verses 13,14.

**I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink;**

John wanted to write more but he will wait until he comes to Gaius’ church to talk to him personally.

**but I hope to see you shortly,**

This is the reason for the shortness of the epistle.

**and we shall speak face to face.**

Some things should be communicated in person rather than a letter because written communication cannot convey context and tone as person-to-person communication.

### Peace to you.

John’s desire is that the church in Ephesus would experience “peace” even in the face of the problem with Diotrephes.

**Gal. 6:16 “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”**

**2 Thess. 3:16 “Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.”**

**1 Pet. 5:14 “Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.”**

### Our friends greet you.

John’s church greeted Gaius’ church at Ephesus. Jesus employed the term “friends” to refer to those for whom He gave His life (Jn 15:13). Christians network on the basis of their common family relationship – they are members of the family of God. There is a family bond even if they never met.

### Greet the friends by name

John wanted Gaius to greet “the friends by name.” Greeting by name was a more personal greeting making it warmer. Every last individual in the church at Ephesus was important.

**Principle:** True friends care enough about each other to take the effort to communicate properly.

**Application:** Friends support one another. They show hospitality to those in need.

**Heb. 10:24,25 “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”**

Personal conference and communication may save significant misunderstanding. We need to be careful about flat statements of a letter. People cannot read our tone and cannot understand the full context of our issue without personal contact.