

## 3 John

### One-Page Letters—part 3

August 23, 2020

3 John is a “one-page letter that highlights both the best of Christian fellowship and some of the worst. There are some great lessons for any relationship.

#### DAY 1: “Beloved”

1. The apostle John is writing to Gaius, a dedicated Christian who is a blessing to many, but who finds himself in a very difficult situation with his pastor.

2. As you read this letter underline the phrase “**dear friend**” every time you see it. Also underline any words or phrases that are expressions of John’s love for Gaius.

*3 John 1:1 The elder, To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.*

*<sup>2</sup> Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. <sup>3</sup> It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. <sup>4</sup> I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*

*<sup>5</sup> Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. <sup>6</sup> They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. <sup>7</sup> It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. <sup>8</sup> We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth. <sup>9</sup> I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. <sup>10</sup> So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.*

*<sup>11</sup> Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. <sup>12</sup> Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone--and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true. <sup>13</sup> I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink.*

*<sup>14</sup> I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace to you. The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name.*

3. “**Dear friend**” appears four times in this short letter (vv. 1, 2, 5, 11).

4. The Greek phrase is “to agapeto” which literally means “**the beloved**.” The translators opted for “dear friend” likely because the usage of “the beloved” is not used much, and when it is it usually refers to a romantic relationship.

5. If you were in a difficult situation with your pastor or spiritual leader, what would it mean to you to have someone like the apostle John call you “the beloved” four times in a short letter?

6. How does the tenderness of John strike you? Are there others you would speak to similarly?

**DAY 2: 4 men in this letter: John, Gaius, Diotrephes, Demetrius**

1. **John**, the author of this letter:

- a. Is the last living eyewitness and original follower of Jesus Christ.
- b. In the gospel of John he used the term “the disciple Jesus loved” to refer to himself. Of all people, John was most grounded in the love of Christ for him.
- c. He is writing to Gaius to applaud him for his service to gospel teachers and missionaries
- d. He is helping Gaius navigate a very difficult situation with Diotrephes.

2. **Gaius**, the recipient of this letter.

- a. He is a good man
- b. Has a servant’s heart
- c. Has a heart for the spread of the gospel
- d. Partners with Christian teachers to enable them to travel in the teaching and spreading of the faith.

3. **Demetrius**

- a. Is a traveling teacher of the faith
- b. Is well-thought of by John

*<sup>12</sup> Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone--and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.*

4. **Diotrephes**

- a. Is a local church elder
- b. Is not acting under proper authority
- c. Is not responding to counsel
- d. Seems to be on some kind of power trip
- e. He is caught up in himself.

5. What strikes you about these men?

### DAY 3: Gaius: godly character and action

*3 John 1:1 The elder, To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.*

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*5 Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. 6 They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.*

1. What stands out to you about Gaius?

2. In the world people are recognized for their success or accomplishments. Gaius had been a blessing to traveling teachers and missionaries. But John is highlighting **who** Gaius is in addition to **what** Gaius did.

a. List the character qualities John mentions in Gaius. Look for at least three character qualities.

b. What things did Gaius do that John recognizes as good? Look for at least three actions.

3. Relationships, like plants, grow with water and sun. Encouragement about people 's character is like water, and recognition for people's good actions is like the sun.

4. Are there some people in your life that need some "water" and "sun?" Jot them down. Then write down a character trait you notice in them and/or something good you've seen them do.

Who:

Character trait:

Good action:

5. What might happen to some of your relationships if you were to relate to others in the way John related to Gaius?

## DAY 4: Diotrephes, the dangers of pride and independence

1. Conflict is inevitable. Consider these factors as to why:

a. **Our sinful human nature**: We will battle our own sinful nature until we leave earth. This is true for lost people and it's true with people who are saved.

b. **Working together**: When people have to work together differences of opinion, of approach, of perspective, timing, decisions, and a host of other factors make conflict inevitable.

c. **Human pride**. Conflict "goes on steroids" when pride is a factor! In the following verses underline words and phrases that indicate pride and its effects.

*Proverbs 13:10 (NIV) Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.*

*James 4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?*

<sup>2</sup> *You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.*

<sup>3</sup> *When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

2. What strikes you about conflict and pride?

3. In the following passage, underline the character traits in Diotrephes that are creating damage.

*3 John<sup>9</sup> I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us.<sup>10</sup> So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.*

a. What does John see in Diotrephes that drives his pride? (v. 9)

b. John may not have had any direct authority over Diotrephes, but John writes as if Diotrephes should have appreciated John's place of unofficial authority in this situation. Instead, Diotrephes functions independently as if he does not need to listen to someone like John. (v. 9)

c. What is wrong with Diotrephes' mouth? (v. 10)

d. He refuses to welcome fellow brothers in the faith (v. 10).

e. He ex-communicates church members for doing productive and fruitful service to traveling teachers.

4. Is there something in Diotrephes' character and/or actions that resonates with you? In some way, do you see something of yourself in him? What would you like to do to rectify this?

## **DAY 5: Demetrius, an example to follow**

*<sup>11</sup> Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. <sup>12</sup> Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone--and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.*

1. Over time people get to know the real you. You develop a reputation based on your character, actions, and how you treat people.

2. How does John describe Demetrius?

3. What is inferred in this letter is that Demetrius was a traveling bible teacher. He would be in need of resources, a place to stay when traveling through, and encouragement. Consider these factors:

- a. The mission mandate. John underscores the necessity of traveling bible teachers.
- b. There was no mission board that funded missionaries. They either had to do bi-vocational work, live off their savings, or get funding from churches and individual Christians.
- c. There were no “reimbursable travel expenses.”
- d. Inns were notorious for bad conditions and high payments
- e. These teachers served an important role! There was a glut of false teachers looking to steal young Christians. Bible teachers helped them get rooted in the truth.
- f. Gaius helped Christian teachers who were “strangers” to him, meaning they had not yet met.
- g. This was called “a good work”

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*<sup>14</sup> I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace to you. The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name.*

4. As John finishes this one-page letter, what sense do you have of his attitude toward:

a. Gaius?

b. Toward the people in the church?

5. Every church is made up of flawed people. Overcoming our pride and building growing relationships doesn't just happen. It takes people who humble themselves before God and one another, and give themselves to working together in an atmosphere of encouragement for the glory of God.