

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**12-6-17**

**3 John**

BY SPECIAL invitation or with a surprise knock, company arrives and with them comes the promise of soiled floors, extra laundry, dirty dishes, altered schedules, personal expense, and inconvenience. From sharing a meal to providing a bed, hospitality costs . . . in time, energy, and money. But how we treat others reflects our true values—what is really important to us. Do we see people as objects or inconveniences, or as unique creations of a loving God? And which is more important to God, a person or a carpet? Perhaps the most effective way to demonstrate God's values and Christ's love to others is to invite and welcome guests into our homes.

For Gaius, hospitality was a habit, and his reputation for friendship and generosity, especially to traveling teachers and missionaries (1:5), had spread. To affirm and thank Gaius for his Christian lifestyle, and to encourage him in his faith, John wrote this personal note.

John's format for this letter centers around three men: Gaius, the example of one who follows Christ and loves others (1:1-8); Diotrephes, the self-proclaimed church leader who does not reflect God's values (1:9-11); and Demetrius, who also follows the truth (1:12). John encourages Gaius to practice hospitality, continue to walk in the truth, and do what is right.

Although this is a personal letter, we can look over the shoulder of Gaius and apply its lessons to our life. As you read 3 John, with which man do you identify? Are you a Gaius, generously giving to others? a Demetrius, loving the truth? or a Diotrephes, looking out for yourself and your things? Determine to reflect Christ's values in your relationships, opening your home and touching others with his love.

**PURPOSE:** To commend Gaius for his hospitality and to encourage him in his Christian life

**AUTHOR:** The apostle John

**ORIGINAL AUDIENCE:** Gaius, a prominent Christian in one of the churches known to John

**DATE WRITTEN:** Approximately A.D. 90 from Ephesus

**SETTING:** Church leaders traveled from town to town helping to establish new congregations. They depended on the hospitality of fellow believers. Gaius was one who welcomed these leaders into his home.

**KEY VERSE:** "Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you" (1:5).

**KEY PEOPLE:** John, Gaius, Diotrephes, Demetrius

## THE BLUEPRINT

1. God's children live by the standards of the gospel (1:1-12)

2. John's final words (1:13-15) John wrote to commend Gaius, who was taking care of traveling teachers and missionaries, and to warn against people like Diotrephes, who was proud and refused to listen to spiritual leaders in authority. If we are to live in the truth of the gospel, we must look for ways to support pastors, Christian workers, and missionaries today. All Christians should work together to support God's work both at home and around the world.

## MEGATHEMES

### Hospitality

**EXPLANATION:** John wrote to encourage those who were kind to others. Genuine hospitality for traveling Christian workers was needed then and is still important today. **IMPORTANCE:** Faithful Christian teachers and missionaries need our support. Whenever you can extend hospitality to others, it will make you a partner in their ministry.

### Pride

**EXPLANATION:** Diotrephes not only refused to offer hospitality but also set himself up as a church boss. Pride disqualified him from being a real leader.

**IMPORTANCE:** Christian leaders must shun pride and its effects on them. Be careful not to misuse your position of leadership.

### Faithfulness

**EXPLANATION:** Gaius and Demetrius were commended for their faithful work in the church. They were held up as examples of faithful, selfless servants.

**IMPORTANCE:** Don't take for granted Christian workers who serve faithfully. Be sure to encourage them so they won't grow weary of serving.

### Love In Truth - Verses 1-7

<sup>1</sup> 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 when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. <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 and sisters, even though they are strangers to you. <sup>6</sup> They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God. <sup>7</sup> It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans.

1:1 This letter provides us an important glimpse into the life of the early church. Third John, addressed to Gaius, highlights the need for showing hospitality to traveling preachers and other believers. It also warns against a would-be church dictator.

**1:1** The "elder," John, was one of Jesus' 12 disciples and the writer of the *Gospel of John*, three letters, and the book of *Revelation*. For more information about John, see his profile. We have no further information about Gaius, but he is someone whom John loved dearly. Perhaps Gaius had shared his home and hospitality with John at some time during John's travels. If so, John would have appreciated his actions because traveling preachers depended on expressions of hospitality to survive (see *Matthew 10:11-16*).

**1:2** John was concerned for Gaius's physical and spiritual well-being. This was the opposite of the popular heresy that taught the separation of spirit and matter and despised the physical side of life. Today, many people still fall into this way of thinking. This non-Christian attitude logically leads to one of two responses: neglect of the body and physical health, or indulgence of the body's sinful desires. God is concerned for both your body and your soul. As a responsible Christian, you should neither neglect nor indulge yourself but care for your physical needs and discipline your body so that you are at your best for God's service.

**1:4** John writes about "my children" because, as a result of his preaching, he was the spiritual father of many, including Gaius.

**1:5-6** In the church's early days, traveling prophets, evangelists, and teachers ("the brothers and sisters") were helped on their way by people like Gaius, who housed and fed them. Hospitality is a lost art in many churches today. We would do well to invite more people for meals—fellow church members, young people, traveling missionaries, those in need, visitors. This is an active and much-appreciated way to show your love. In fact, it is probably more important today. Because of our individualistic, self-centered society, many lonely people wonder if anyone cares whether they live or die. If you find such a lonely person, show him or her that you care!

**1:7** The traveling missionaries neither asked for nor accepted anything from nonbelievers. This was not intended to be a criticism of unbelievers, but a statement of how things ought to be. Imagine the awkwardness of a Christian worker's requesting funds or lodging from the very people he or she was trying to reach! Instead, it is the responsibility of churches and Christian individuals to support those who are called by God to full-time vocational ministry. In that way, unbelievers will not be questioning the missionaries' motives for preaching. God's true preachers do not preach to make money but to fulfill their calling and express their love for God. It is the church's responsibility to care for Christian workers; this should never be left to nonbelievers. Don't just automatically discard the next missionary fund-raising letter you receive. That appeal may be God's invitation for you to become a partner in a new gospel venture.

#### **Love In Truth - Verses 8-14**

**<sup>8</sup> We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people 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 not welcome us. <sup>10</sup> So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. 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.

**1:8** When you help someone who is spreading the gospel, you are in a very real way a partner in the ministry. This is the other side of the principle in 2 John 1:10 (see the note there). Not everyone should go to the mission field; those who work for Christ at home are vital to the ministry of those who go and who need support. We can support missionaries by praying for them and by giving our money, hospitality, and time.

**1:9** This letter to which John refers was neither 1 nor 2 John but another letter that no longer exists.

**1:9-10** All we know about Diotrephes is that he wanted to control the church. John denounced (1) his refusal to have anything to do with other spiritual leaders, (2) his slander of the leaders, (3) his bad example in refusing to welcome any teachers of the truth, and (4) his attempt to excommunicate those who opposed his leadership. Sins such as pride, jealousy, and slander are still present in the church, and when a leader makes a habit of encouraging sin and discouraging right actions, he or she must be stopped. If no one speaks up, great harm can come to the church. We must confront sin in the church; if we ignore it, it will continue to grow. A true Christian leader is a servant, not an autocrat!

**1:12** We know nothing about Demetrius except that he may have carried this letter from John to Gaius. The book of Acts mentions an Ephesian silversmith named Demetrius, who opposed Paul (Acts 19:24-41), but this is probably another man. In contrast to the corrupt Diotrephes, Demetrius had a high regard for truth. John personified truth as a witness to Demetrius's character and teaching. In other words, if truth could speak, it would speak on Demetrius's behalf. When Demetrius arrived, Gaius certainly opened his home to him.

**1:14** Whereas 2 John emphasizes the need to refuse hospitality to false teachers, 3 John urges continued hospitality to those who teach the truth. Hospitality is a strong sign of support for people and their work. It means giving to them of your resources so their stay will be comfortable and their work and travel easier. Actively look for creative ways to show hospitality to God's workers. It may be in the form of a letter of encouragement, a gift, financial support, an open home, or prayer.