

# ***“Locking Horns With Liars”***

3 John 1:1-15

August 28, 2016

## **INTRO:**

When was the last time you realized you were in the midst of a murderous, spiritual street-fight?

\*\*\* I find the Devil & his minions mount major attacks about every 18 – 24 months \*\*\*

Last week we walked through 2<sup>nd</sup> John & I used the metaphor of the Trojan Horse... We heard God’s Word on how to thwart an attack... In short, when the Trojan Horse is found out, it is put out!

This week we’re going to look at 3<sup>rd</sup> John... and what you are to do if the Trojan Horse has successfully made it in unsuspected, and deployed its soldiers!

**Today’s message covers all of 3<sup>rd</sup> John**

and is entitled:

***“Locking Horns With Liars”***

### **Ephesians 6:10-20 (ESV)**

- <sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.
- <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.
- <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
- <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.
- <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,
- <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.
- <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;
- <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,
- <sup>18</sup> praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,
- <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,
- <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

### **CONTEXT:**

- **1<sup>st</sup> John is 3<sup>rd</sup> John's biblical umbrella...**

➤ **2<sup>nd</sup> John is 3<sup>rd</sup> John's paternal twin...**

- Many similarities
  - *“the elder”*
  - *recipients... he “loves in the truth”*
  - occasion of *“great rejoicing”*
  - The recipients *“walk in the truth”*
  - *elder has received good reports*
  - *both contain & pivot on a warning*
  - *desires to see both face to face*
- Lovers/Liars *both defined by relation to truth!*
- **Who to let in... and who to get out...**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> John = heads/tails on truth & love
- Both letters are applications of loving warnings

➤ **3<sup>rd</sup> John's key contexts:**

- Same time & trouble as **Revelation 2&3**
- Shortest book (219 words) in the Bible...
- **5 “people”** to focus on...
  - **John** (the “elder”)
  - **Gaius**
  - **“the Church”** (directly & indirectly)
  - **Diotrephes**
  - **Demetrius**

▪ **Key Words & phrases:**

- **True/Truth** = 7X
- **“witness”** = 5X
- **Beloved/love** = 5X
- **Church** = 3X
- **Walking/obey** = 2X

**Key CONTEXT:** *Chiastic Structure*  
(literary parallelism)

- **Good** = vv.1-4      **Celebration**
- **Good** = vv.5-8      **Commendation**
- **Evil** = vv.9-10      **Condemnation**
- **Good** = vv.11-12      **Clarification**
- **Good** = vv.13-15      **Continuation**

## **CELEBRATION**

<sup>1</sup> *The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.*

“elder” = *one in spiritual authority*

“beloved” = **loving, warm rapport!**

“love in truth”

- **Truth defines love**
- **Love is the treasure of truth**
- **Truth and Love complete each other!**

<sup>2</sup> *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.*

What if such a prayer was made to God for us?

**\*\*\* Doug prays for me every Saturday...**

<sup>3</sup> *For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.*

**To walk in the truth is to conduct one's life in the truth.**

(1 John 3:18) Gaius was the real deal!

<sup>4</sup> I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

v. 3 = “great joy”      v. 4 = “no greater joy”

*The ultimate goal of every true minister... is not just to teach the truth, or even to know that his people understand it, but to know that his people believe, love, and obey the truth (cf. [1 Cor. 4:14-16](#); [1 Thess. 2:11, 19-20](#); [3:1-10](#)).*

**To walk in the truth means to know it, believe it, and live it.**

There is a sense in which Christians are to love all people...

**But the love John spoke of here is the unique love that believers have for those who are in Christ and faithful to the truth** (John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Peter 1:22; 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5).

## COMMENDATION

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

## Gaius' walk... IS his talk!

“Love” (agapē) describes the acts of hospitality extended by Gaius to the stranger. (cf. 1 John 3:16–18).

If Christians do not support them, no one will.

*Nothing less than their best is expected (cf. 1 Cor 10:31).*

<sup>7</sup> For they went forth for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup> Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

We work together, as one, for the truth. Some give support and some are sent.

*Both are essential.*

*Missionaries who “set out for the sake of the Name” are allowing the truth that is within them to find a voice and are the instruments of the Spirit of Truth. By helping them as an act of love, Christians like Gaius are coworkers of the truth. – BROWN*

**T/S:** The letter now takes a striking and unexpected turn.

If it were not for this problem there'd be no 3 John...

# CONDEMNATION

<sup>9</sup> *I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, **does not acknowledge** our authority.*

**For starters:** *"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).*

*“Loves to be first” = selfish, self-centered & self-seeking.*

**Rejecting John = extreme arrogance.**

## Ephesians 5:6-11 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not become partners with them; <sup>8</sup> for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup> and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.*

One of the “*sons of thunder*” now responds in a way that is in keeping with his old nickname.

Remember... **JESUS**, the One who intentionally “*made a whip*” to take to church... **chose & commissioned John...** for such a time as this! – JDP

Diotrephes wished to drive a wedge between “*his church*” and John’s rightful influence.

**NOTE:** the issue was not doctrinal, it was devilish!

Given his under-shepherding responsibilities for the churches, John would need to respond, and respond he did!

### **QUOTE:**

*As was the case with the Devil, pride drives people to seek to exalt themselves. There have always been proud, egotistical, self-promoting people, who try to usurp authority, seize a place of preeminence, and elevate themselves over others, even God. They tend to gravitate to and even manipulate themselves into positions of power, influence, and prominence. Scripture records many such people; they form a sort of "Hall of Shame," in contrast to the heroes of the faith listed in [Hebrews 11](#).*

**EXAMPLES:** Absalom & Haman!

## 2 Corinthians 11:12-15 (NIV)

*<sup>12</sup> And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. <sup>13</sup> For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.*

*<sup>10</sup> 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.*

**QUOTE:** When John comes, he will bring up and address the actions of Diotrefes (probably intended to be a public rebuke; cf. **1 Tim 5:20**)...

Diotrephes was making evil accusations, unjustified charges... There was an emptiness to what he said as well as a vicious and wicked intent.

Character assassination is an all too common ploy of those who seek to elevate themselves. They gain people's trust not positively by manifesting a godly character but negatively by destroying people's trust in other leaders.

Diotrephes' malicious accusations were evil, false, and slanderous. He saw John as a threat to his power and prestige in the church and savagely attacked him.

He hinders the progress of the Word of God. In brief, Diotrephes is thwarting God's plans and purposes and consequently he faces divine wrath.

**T/S:** “Sadly, there have always been people like Diotrephes in churches.... The apostle John, however, had **no hesitation in confronting** such a sinner for the good of the church and the honor of Christ.” - **Dr. Dan Akin**

**CLARIFICATION**

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

- This is the “truth and love lesson” to be learned!
- Herein are the only 2 commands of the letter...

### QUOTE:

*Ultimately the child of God imitates the Savior, the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 11:1). He is our supreme example. Yet it is the case we all need earthly flesh and blood examples to imitate (mimic) as well. We should ever be mindful on whom we set our eyes. We must also be mindful of those who have set their eyes on us!*

- New American Standard Commentary

### See 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:3-6 & 5:2-3

<sup>2:3</sup> *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. <sup>4</sup> Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, <sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: <sup>6</sup> whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

*5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. <sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

**T/S:** John now provides another good example...

*<sup>12</sup> 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**.*

A threefold witness (martus occurs 3X in this v.12)

**His life was consistent with the truth...**

## CONTINUATION

*<sup>13</sup> I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. <sup>14</sup> I hope to see you **soon**, and we will talk face to face.*

...almost identical to those at the end of [2 John 12](#).

**John's heart is both full and burdened!**

**QUOTE:** *John plans to come and come quickly to Gaius. He will not allow the problem with Diotrephes to fester and perhaps grow worse... There is wonderful pastoral wisdom in John's approach.*

<sup>15</sup> ***Peace be to you.** The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name.*

*Peace be to you* is appropriate one for that **war-torn church!**

John's pastoral care is not remote and bureaucratic but personal, as Jesus commended and modeled (John 10:3, 14).

**John ends as he began it: on a positive note.**

**The gospel will prevail.**

**Right & righteousness will win!**

*Such confidence should characterize all who live their lives under "the Name." He will honor our faithfulness. We should not grow weary in doing good on his behalf.*

**Amen! Let's Pray**

## Introduction

**Third John is the shortest book in both the New Testament and the Bible. It is only 219 words in the Greek text. Third John and 2 John are rightly described as “twin epistles,” though they should be viewed as fraternal and not identical.**

**There are both similarities and differences between the two as the following charts indicate:**

### Similarities in 2 and 3 John

1. The author describes himself as *“the elder”* ([2 John 1](#); [3 John 1](#)).
2. The *recipients* are those whom he *“loves in the truth”* ([2 John 1](#); [3 John 1](#)).
3. The recipients are the occasion of *“great rejoicing”* ([2 John 4](#); [3 John 3](#)).
4. The recipients *“walk in the truth”* ([2 John 4](#); [3 John 3](#)).
5. The *elder has received good reports* about both ([2 John 4](#); [3 John 3, 5](#)).
6. Both *letters contain a warning* ([2 John 8](#); [3 John 9](#)).
7. The elder *desires to see both face to face* ([2 John 12](#); [3 John 14](#)).

8. *Others sent their greetings* ([2 John 13](#); [3 John 14](#)).

The structure of the two letters overall is also quite similar. The brevity of each would have allowed them to fit on a single piece of papyrus paper.

**The Structure of the Two Letters**

**2 John**

**3 John**

Greeting/Salutation

Greeting/Salutation

vv. [1–3](#)

vv. [1–4](#)

An exhortation to love

An exhortation to love

vv. [4–6](#)

vv. [5–8](#)

Warning concerning false teachers

Warning concerning Diotrephes

vv. [7–9](#)

vv. [9–10](#)

Charge to reject the false teachers

Commendation to receive Demetrius

vv. [10–11](#)

vv. [11–12](#)

Conclusion with greetings

vv. [12–13](#)

Conclusion with greetings

vv. [13–14](#)

**There are also some significant differences between the two letters.** Again, a comparative chart is helpful in clearly identifying these differences.

## **2 John**

Written to a lady and her children (feminine; a church) [2 John 1](#)

Some children walk in truth [2 John 4](#)

A request follows the “great joy” affirmation [2 John 5](#)

The problem is with many deceivers (from without) [2 John 7](#)

## **3 John**

Written to an individual (male) [3 John 1](#)

Gaius and the elder’s children walk in truth [3 John 3–4](#)

The “great joy” declaration has witnesses [3 John 3](#)

The problem is with one (Diotrephes from within) [3 John 9](#)

**Written to one considering entertaining the wrong visitors** [2 John 10–11](#)

Do not receive false teachers [2 John 10–11](#)

**Truth is the major emphasis**

**Anyone not abiding in the teachings of Christ does not have God** [2 John 9](#)

Anyone who continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son [2 John 9](#)

**No personal names (like 1 John)**

**Written about one refusing to entertain the right visitors** [3 John 10](#)

Welcome strangers [3 John 5](#)

**Love is the major emphasis**

**Anyone who does evil has not seen God** [3 John 11](#)

Anyone who does what is good is from God [3 John 11](#)

**3 personal names: Gaius, Diotrephes, Demetrius)**

**Third John is a personal letter that revolves around three individuals: Gaius (the recipient), Diotrephes (the troubler), and Demetrius (probably the bearer of the letter).**

Like its twin 2 John, it follows the ancient epistolary form more closely than any of the other New Testament letters. **It contains a word of exhortation to Gaius, encouraging him not to imitate the bad example of Diotrephes but to continue the good work he is doing receiving and supporting the traveling teachers/missionaries.**

The letter follows the basic epistolary pattern with an introduction (vv. [1–4](#)), body (vv. [5–11](#)), and a conclusion (vv. [13–14](#)).

**A prominent structural feature is the repetition of the address “BELOVED/Dear Friend” (*agapēte*) in vv. [2](#), [5](#), [11](#) (cf. [2 John 5](#)). This is followed in each case by a direct personal comment.**

In v. [2](#) there is a prayer or wish for the welfare of Gaius; in v. [5](#) there is a commendation of his work; and in v. [11](#) there is personal counsel expressing desired behavior. **The negative motivational basis (vv. [9–10](#)) has neither “Beloved/Dear Friends” nor a positive personal comment and is thus very different in content from the rest. Therefore, it is set off from the *appeal* paragraphs of the *body*.**

Though vv. 1–4 clearly function as the salutation, it is possible to **outline the letter for teaching purposes around the four (counting the elder) personalities of the book. Verses 1–8 contain a multifold commendation of Gaius. Verses 9–10 condemn the high-handed and malicious autocracy of Diotrephes. Verses 11–12, taken as a unit, praise the godly Demetrius. Verses 13–14 close with a glimpse into the heart of the elder. Four men and their reputations (growing out of their behavior) constitute the sum and substance of 3 John.**

**John again constructs this letter with the building blocks of key word repetition: “beloved” (four times; vv. 1, 2, 5, 11); “truth” or “true” (seven times; vv. 1, 3 [twice], 4, 8, 12 [twice]); “witness” (five times; vv. 3, 6, 12 [three times]). **The elder is understandably concerned that his authority is being challenged. He fears the powerplay of****

**Diotrephes may succeed and that others might be influenced by him. He will come if necessary for a face-to-face meeting where he will personally deal with the situation.**

In the meantime, John seeks to enlist the support of Gaius. He praises him for his past labors and encourages him to continue. Demetrius comes to Gaius both as the bearer of the letter and a reinforcement in the crisis.

**Third John provides insight into a personality conflict that arose at the end of the first century and the strategy adopted by the elder to resolve it.** Clearly then there is much that is valuable for our consideration in this letter. **The church has neglected it for too long—at its own expense.**

## **The Greeting ([vv. 1-4](#))**

Third John follows the typical pattern of the ancient epistle (as does 2 John; see comments at v. [1](#)). **The author wishes to establish positive and friendly affection with his reader.** Adopting the letter writing style of the day, **the greeting consists of three basic parts:** (1) identification of the author and his recipient (v. [1](#)), (2) a blessing or expression of good wishes (v. [2](#)), and ([3](#)) a greeting or word of praise (vv. [3-4](#)).

## (1) The Sender (v. [1a](#))

**1a This letter begins in the same way as 2 John with the author simply identifying himself as the elder** (see the comments on [2 John 1](#)). **He writes on his own authority and with a sense of authority.** **The elder**, whom I believe to be John the apostle, **rightly held a position of theological, moral, and pastoral leadership over the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.** The apostle Peter used a similar title when addressing a group of elders in his first epistle ([1 Pet 5:1](#)).

**QUOTE:** Men of respect and authenticity with a solid “track record” could rightly identify themselves by this term (*ho presbuteros*).

## (2) The Recipient (v. [1b](#))

**1b The letter is addressed to a man named Gaius.** This is the only epistle of John addressed to an individual by name. In this regard it is similar to Paul’s letter to Philemon. **“Gaius” was a common name in the Roman Empire of the first century, and three men by that name appear in the New Testament: Gaius of Corinth (Rom 16:23). Gaius of Macedonia (Acts 19:29), and Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20:4). Because the name was common, it is unlikely the Gaius of 3 John should be identified with any of these.**

To my “Beloved/dear friend” (*tō agapētō*) appears four times in the letter and at significant locations (vv. 1, 2, 5, 11). The term appears on six occasions in 1 John.

“Dear friend” is probably too weak to convey the affection the term bears. The elder desires to express deep and genuine love for this man. Gaius is near and dear to his heart. He is loved by John.

To reinforce his affection and go beyond typical convention the elder adds (lit.) “whom I myself love in truth.” The “I” is emphatic. John has in mind a love which is a companion to the truth of the Christian faith.

Truth is an important theme, for it is mentioned seven 7 times in this brief letter (vv. 1, 3, [twice], 4, 8, 12[twice]).

Love does not function as some disconnected emotion with no substance or content. Without truth it will devolve into mere sentimentalism. Love and truth are necessary companions. They go together. They work together. They must stay together.

John expresses sincere love flowing from both heart and head, a love rooted in him who is the “truth” and “true God” (John 14:6; 1 John 5:20).

### (3) The Blessing (Prayer-Wish) (v. 2)

**2** After an initial greeting, **John moves to express his good wishes for Gaius in the form of a brief prayer. He begins by again expressing his love and affection through the second use of *agapēte* (“Beloved / dear friend”).** In Greek concerning “all things” is put first in the sentence for emphasis: “Concerning all things [John] prays that [Gaius] may prosper and be in health just as his soul prospers” (my translation). The word “prosper” (translated “all may go well with you” in the NIV) can mean “to have a good journey.” Here it is used metaphorically. **John asks God for the best in every way for Gaius. Further, he specifically prays for “good health.”** It is clear that Gaius was a man with a clean bill of health spiritually. That he was also in good health physically is not so certain given John’s request. It should be noted that **to pray or wish for someone “good health” was a common feature of the letters of this day.** Brown points out we need some type of contextual clue to see a definite and specific request for the good health of someone who is ill. **What we can be certain of is that Gaius was thriving spiritually. He was in the best sense of the phrase a man of God.**

**John’s prayer-wish should give us pause. What if such a prayer was made to God for me and it was answered? What condition would I find myself in physically and spiritually?** Compare your bodily health to your spiritual health.

**Dare we hope or pray for ourselves or others in this manner? The order is not insignificant. The spiritual is indeed “the standard of measurement for the physical.”**

#### **(4) Word of Praise (vv. 3–4)**

**3** There is ample evidence that Gaius was “soul healthy.” **The elder had received a report from itinerate teachers concerning Gaius. It was a source of “great joy”** (*echarēn lian*) to the elder. **The report was that Gaius was in the truth and walking in the truth.**

**The emphasis is twofold.** First, he was faithful in what he believed. **Second, he was faithful in how he lived. In doctrine and deed** Gaius was commendable, praiseworthy, and consistent. **To walk in the truth is to conduct one’s life in the truth.** It is to flesh out in conduct one’s confession.

**Loyalty to Christ and the gospel marked his life. Gaius continued to do the truth he had been taught.**

**4** Verse **4** reinforces v. **3**. It also carries the word of praise (*exordium*) a step further.

*In v. 3 the elder has “great joy.” In v. 4 he now has “no greater joy.”*

The elder is enthusiastic and emphatic in his joy over what he hears concerning Gaius. **The life of Gaius and his service for the Savior are of the greatest joy to John.**

“Children” of course is plural and is regularly used by Paul in referring to his own converts (1 Cor 4:14; Gal 4:19; Phil 2:22). That the elder views Gaius as one of his children could indicate he was responsible for leading Gaius to faith in Christ.

It is also possible John simply has in mind all believers who are under his pastoral care. Regardless of the view taken, John’s point is clear.

*He experiences supreme joy when it is reported to him that those under his watch-care are walking in the truth.*

**To walk in the truth means to know it, believe it, and live it.**

**As Stott writes:** “Whoever walks in the truth is an integrated believer in whom there is no dichotomy between profession and practice. On the contrary, there is in him an exact correspondence between creed and conduct.”

## **2. Commendation of Gaius’ Hospitality ([vv. 5–8](#))**

**The body of the epistle can be divided into three fairly even sections, each revolving around the main characters of the letter.**

**The elder continues his praise of Gaius, specifying his faithfulness in showing hospitality to traveling teachers/missionaries ([vv. 5–8](#)).**

**He then addresses the arrogant and abusive behavior of Diotrephes ([vv. 9–10](#)).**

**He concludes with a word of praise for Demetrius ([vv. 11–12](#)).** **Within this last section is the main exhortation**

**of the book:** *“Do not imitate what is evil but what is good.”*

We will basically follow our more “biographical analysis,” which still takes into account rhetorical and discourse insights.

**5 For the third time John calls Gaius his “Beloved / dear friend”** (*agapēte*). **He praises him for his faithfulness in showing hospitality to Christian brothers who are traveling about preaching the gospel, even though he did not know them personally.**

*“You are faithful” (piston poieis) means literally “a faithful thing you do.”*

**Hiebert notes:** “The present tense is a compliment to Gaius, indicating that the expected hospitality is in keeping with his established practice, which John highly appreciated. He characterizes it as ‘a faithful thing, an act becoming a faithful man.’”

**That Gaius would treat strangers in this faithful manner is a further testimony of the fact that he was walking in the truth. He did not know them, but did know they were from John and that they proclaimed the same gospel of Jesus as he did. That was enough for Gaius.**

*To provide food, lodging, money, encouragement, and stand for them before the community was his pleasure.*

**6** It was natural, perhaps obligatory, for the itinerate teachers to report back to the home base their reception and treatment by Gaius. **They provided a glowing report worthy of the elders' earlier accolades. John informs Gaius that before the church they gave witness of his love.**

A form of the word translated **“told”** (*martureō*) **occurs five times in the letter** (vv. [3](#), [6](#), [12](#)[**three times**]).

**“Church”** (*ekklēsia*) **occurs three times in this letter** (vv. [6](#), [9](#), [10](#)) and only in 3 John in the Johannine material, excluding Revelation.

**Here it refers to a local body of believers**, most likely the church in which the elder himself was a member.

*“Love” (agapē) describes the acts of hospitality extended by Gaius to the stranger.*

No doubt **at personal sacrifice**, he had cared for and assisted these traveling evangelists. **In word and deed he had ministered graciously to their needs** (cf. [1 John 3:16–18](#)).

*Thus he displayed true Christian love.  
His actions stood in stark contrast to  
those of Diotrophes.*

The last phrase of v. 6 is somewhat complex grammatically though the meaning is clear. Literally the verse reads “whom well you will do sending them forward worthily of God.” The phrase “whom well you will do” is an idiom meaning *“please.”* **It is a polite request. In it John expresses his confidence that Gaius will continue the good work he is already doing.** “Sending them forward” became something of a technical term in the context of the missionary work in the early church.

**These brothers were on assignment for the gospel. As faithful missionaries and ministers of the Word, it was right to help them as they moved on to their next assignment.**

*“In a manner worthy of God”* **probably modifies both the work of Gaius and the traveling missionaries.**

*All partners are to do their share in a way that is worthy of the God they serve.*

***Nothing less than their best is expected***  
(cf. [1 Cor 10:31](#)).

**7** This verse (and v. 8) provides the rationale for Gaius's help in v. 6: “For on behalf of the Name they went forth” (my translation). **“The Name” of course is the name of Jesus Christ. These missionaries have gone out representing and proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.**

Though it may be subtle and inferential, **the exclusivity of the gospel is certainly in view.**

**There is one Name and only one Name that they proclaim.** Interestingly, this is the only time the Lord Jesus is mentioned in 3 John (and indirectly at that).

***“They went forth” affirms they were sent out.***

**In context it is from John that they have come.**

But it is for Jesus, the Name, that they go. As they went, they received nothing from the pagans. The word for “pagans” (*ethnikōn*) is usually a reference to the Gentiles.

**Here it is used of unbelievers as a whole in contrast to Christians.**

**The traveling emissaries of Jesus Christ did not seek to finance the work by appeals to the lost for their money. They depended, and rightly so, on the generosity and gifts of fellow believers.**

(NOTE the contrast to today's "Charismania Pulpit-Pimps who travel the globe fleecing unsuspecting spiritual sheep and goats. – JDP).

**Polhill points out:** *Peripatetics were not exclusive to Christianity. Hellenistic street preachers often took advantage of hospitality and even expressed pride in their success at fleecing the countryside. This is probably why 'they received nothing from the heathen' (v. 7), so as not to be identified with that sort of abuse.*

**The same sort of refusal to claim provisions in order to avoid all possible stumbling blocks was practiced by Paul as Corinth (1 Cor 9:15–18)."**

**8 John offers his third and final reason for Gaius and others to help traveling evangelists who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

*"We" is grammatically emphatic. "Ought" (opheilomen) speaks of an obligation. It is our dutiful responsibility. The verb is*

*present tense and speaks of a continual obligation.*

Unlike the false teachers of [2 John 11](#), who deny “the Name” and therefore should be refused hospitality, these men are faithful to “the Name” and deserve assistance. As we support such persons, “we become coworkers in the truth” (a more accurate translation than the NIV).

**We may not physically go where they go, but when we support them, we go with them anyway. We work together, as one, for the truth. Some give support and some are sent.**

*Both are essential.*

Brown provides a fine summary of what it means to be coworkers for the truth:

*Jesus is the truth; those who believe have dwelling within them the truth revealed in Jesus; it is not an inert principle; and there is a Spirit of Truth within the believer interpreting the Truth: This Spirit bears witness on behalf of Jesus; and the Spirit does this in and through Christians ([John 15:26–27](#)).*

*Missionaries who “set out for the sake of the Name” are allowing the truth that is within them to find a voice and are the instruments of the Spirit of Truth. By helping them as an act of love, Christians like Gaius are coworkers of the truth.*

*Would that our God would multiply both “the sent” and “the supporters.”*

**Gaius is a wonderful model for the latter.**

### **3. Condemnation of Diotrephes’ Behavior ([vv. 9–10](#))**

*The letter now takes a striking and unexpected turn.*

Everything has been positive and glowing through v. [8](#). A situation, however, came to the elder’s attention that demands a response. **Indeed if it were not for this problem, it is unlikely 3 John would have been written.**

**Diotrephes has refused the missionaries sent from John. This would have been**

embarrassing to John and culturally shameful.

To do nothing would be to accept the dishonor leveled at him by Diotrephes and to allow a spiritual crisis to go unchecked.

*John was of no mind to allow either.*

QUOTE:

One of the “sons of thunder” now responds in a way that is in keeping with his old nickname. (Remember... JESUS, the One who intentionally “made a whip” to take to church... chose & commissioned John... for such a time as this! -JDP)

9 John begins this section of the letter by informing Gaius that he had written a previous letter to a church, but he had encountered trouble from a man named Diotrephes. **This is the only mention of Diotrephes in the New Testament, and so our knowledge of him is limited.**

We can, however, construct a basic outline. His name was probably not all that common, and it would indicate he had come out of the pagan world.

➤ **He had a position of leadership in a local church in the city or area where Gaius lived.** Whether they were members of the same church is not stated, but given the information we have in 3 John it would seem unlikely.

➤ **The elder had written an earlier letter to “the church” (not Diotrephes).** That letter is probably lost. Its contents can only be vaguely surmised. It would seem to have contained recommendations for traveling teachers sent from John that would encourage the church of Diotrephes to extend to them hospitality. Apparently Diotrephes either intercepted the letter or, once it was read, led a movement to reject the elder’s appeal.

➤ **Why did Diotrephes reject John’s letter and the teachers he sent? John provides his judgment in the text with unreserved boldness: “*The one loving to be first among them, Diotrephes, does not receive us*”** (literal translation). The verb translated **“loves to be first”** (*philoprōteuon*) is unique and found only here in the New Testament. The word has an interesting etymology. The NKJV translates it **“who loves to have the**

*preeminence.*” [Colossians 1:18](#) states that only Christ rightly deserves the preeminence (*prōteuōn*). **Diotrephes usurped for himself the position only our Lord should hold.** He loved being the leader and exercising authority. **Amazingly, even the apostle John had nothing he wanted. “He will have nothing to do with us” (*ouk epidechetai hēmas*) is literally “he will not receive us.”** His refusal to provide hospitality for the traveling missionaries was not just a rejection of them. It was also a rejection of the elder himself. **Kruse notes, “This way of thinking is common in the Fourth Gospel, where to receive the ones sent is the same as receiving the one who sent them (cf. [John 5:23](#); [12:44–45](#); [13:20](#); [14:24](#)).** **Diotrephes wished to put space between himself and John, between “his church” and John’s influence. Plummer adds:**  
**“Perhaps the meaning is that Diotrephes meant to make his church independent [for whatever reason]: hitherto it had been governed by S. John**

*from Ephesus, but Diotrephes wished to make it autonomous to his own glorification. Just as the antichristian teachers claimed to be first in the intellectual sphere (2 John 9), so the unchristian Diotrephes claimed to be first in influence and authority.”*

**John addresses the spiritual aspect of the problem from his perspective: Diotrephes is prideful and self-interested.**

This still leaves unanswered **the precise nature of the conflict**. Historically what was the particular issue that caused the conflict? **Numerous interpretations** have been offered, which I will briefly summarize.

**1. Conflict over ecclesiastical authority**.—Diotrephes was perhaps the first monarchical bishop (so Harnack, who did not believe the elder was the apostle John) who acted dictatorially and abused his powers. J.-W. Taeger takes the opposite position

and argues that it was the elder who was guilty of pushing his authority on another church. Brown believes Diotrephes was caught in the middle of the secessionist schism reflected in 1 and 2 John. Without sufficient information to decide, he simply shut the doors to all.

***2. Conflict over doctrinal orthodoxy.***—Diotrephes was guilty of the heresy condemned in 1 and 2 John. E. Käsemann turns the argument around and says it was the elder who was guilty of heresy and that Diotrephes was the defender of the orthodox tradition. Strecker also defends this position.

***3. Conflict due to misunderstanding.***—R. Price provides a complex reconstruction (as well as an overview of competing theories) that sees two groups of missionaries coming from the elder. One had adopted a heretical (docetic) Christology without the elder's knowledge. They came to Diotrephes' church, who rightly refused them but wrongly assumed they represented the elder's teaching. A second orthodox group came from the elder to Diotrephes who again rejected them assuming they also held to a defective Christology. In reverse order the elder penned a lost letter (see [3 John 9](#)), 3 John, 2 John and 1 John. The elder and Diotrephes were reconciled between 3 John and 2 John.

**J. Lieu believes it is impossible to attempt any “confident reconstruction.” This is wise counsel. It does seem we may conclude that the issue was not doctrinal. There is not a hint of doctrinal controversy in the letter, and it is scarcely imaginable that if this were the problem the elder would not have mentioned it.**

## **It would seem the problem was personal and spiritual.**

Diotrephes arrogantly refused the elder's request to provide hospitality to the brothers (v. [10](#)). We do not know the reason. His refusal did, however, raise the issue to an ecclesiastical level as well as one of personal respect and honor for the elder.

**Given his responsibilities for the churches under his watchcare, John would need to respond, and respond he did.**

**10 John lodges four specific charges against Diotrephes in this verse:**

**(1) he is gossiping maliciously about us;**

**(2) he refuses hospitality to the traveling teachers;**

**(3) he prevents others in the church who want to from doing so; and**

**(4) he attempts to put out of the church those who extend hospitality.**

**QUOTE:** *“If” is not intended to cast doubt. It means “whenever.” When he comes, he will bring up and address the actions (“works,” erga) of Diotrophes (probably intended to be a public rebuke; cf. 1 Tim 5:20). These actions include “gossiping maliciously” (logois ponērois phluarōn). The verb “gossiping” occurs only here in the New Testament and is in the present tense. Diotrophes was making evil accusations, unjustified charges. He was talking nonsense and “spouting silliness.” There was an emptiness to what he said as well as a vicious and wicked intent. John no doubt deemed his opponent’s words to be slanderous and without foundation.*

### **KEY APPLICATION:**

**There is a digression in Diotrophes’ behavior. What began as ambition (“he loved to be first”) moved to arrogance (“he refused the elder”), then to accusations (of no substance), and finally to action.**

**First**, “he did not receive the brothers.” He acted exactly the opposite of Gaius (vv. [5–8](#)).

**Second**, he went further and attempted to stop others who would, even to the point of putting them out of the church. “Stops” (*kōluei*) means to “forbid” (NASB), “prevent,” “hinder.” It is a present tense verb that may indicate repeated action (iterative present). “Puts them out” (*ekballei*) is also in the present tense. It is a strong word and is used in [John 9:34–35](#) of the Pharisees throwing out from the synagogue the blind man Jesus had healed. The autocracy and dictatorial behavior of Diotrophes was extreme. No doubt the church suffered under his heavy-handedness as would be the case anytime a Diotrophes type rises to power.

#### **4. Consistency of Demetrius’ Testimony ([vv. 11–12](#))**

**These verses comprise the didactical climax of the epistle. Here the first imperative in the letter appears, “imitate” (*mimou*).**

**Two commands are contained in v. [11](#). Verse [12](#) provides supporting evidence in the person of**

Demetrius, who probably carried the letter to Gaius. If someone is to be mimicked or followed (and we all mimic someone), let it be Demetrius (or Gaius) and not Diotrephes.

**11 The verse begins with the familiar “Dear friend” (*agapēte*). This is the last of its four uses in the epistle (vv. 1, 2, 5, 11).** Here it serves both as a term of endearment and transition as John returns to personally address Gaius.

**The verse is also chiastic in the use of evil (*kakos*) and good (*agathos*).**

“Do not imitate” (*mimou*) is a present imperative. We derive our English word “mimic” from it. Paul is also fond of the word (e.g., 1 Cor 11:1; 1 Thess 1:6). With the negative “not” (*me*) it could imply the stopping of an action already in progress. Given the previous description of Gaius in vv. 5–6, however, this is unlikely. Rather it is a general admonition to do the good as you are already doing and especially to continue the good work of providing hospitality to the traveling missionaries.

**Westcott says, “He who does good proves by his action that his life springs from God as its source: *he who does evil has not made the first step towards participation in the Divine Nature.*”**

**QUOTE:**

*Ultimately the child of God imitates the Savior, the Lord Jesus ([1 Cor 11:1](#)). He is our supreme example. Yet it is the case we all need earthly flesh and blood examples to imitate (mimic) as well. We should ever be mindful on whom we set our eyes. We must also be mindful of those who have set their eyes on us!*

**12 John now provides an example (in addition to Gaius) of one who does good and is from God.**

It is most probable Demetrius was the bearer of 3 John and that this verse served as his recommendation.

**A threefold witness (a form of the word *martus* occurs three times in this verse)** is brought forward on Demetrius's behalf (cf. [Deut 17:6](#); [19:15](#)).

**First, he is well spoken of by everyone**, “an expression found in several places in the New Testament ([Acts 6:3](#); [10:22](#); [16:2](#); [22:12](#); [1 Tim 5:10](#); [Heb 11:2](#), [4](#), [3](#), [39](#)).” The verb “well spoken” (*memarturētai*) is in the perfect tense and “implies that the testimony to Demetrius had been given over a period of time, and it was still effective.”

*Everyone (pantōn) is an amazing declaration.* It is doubtful everyone (e.g., pagan unbelievers) agreed with Demetrius's views or appreciated the stands he

took. It was the case, however, that **all who knew him knew him to be a man of character and integrity.**

**Second, he had the witness of “the truth itself.”**

**Demetrius’s devotion to the truth of the gospel was self-evident. His life was consistent with the truth of the Christian faith.** There was a marvelous match between the two.

**Third, he had the testimony of the elder and his church on his side.**

**The “we” is emphatic and should be understood to include the entire community who had sent Demetrius out.**

**Given this sterling recommendation, Gaius would have more than adequate motivation to receive Demetrius and extend to him the gracious hospitality for which he was so well known.**

## **5. The Benediction ([vv. 13–14](#))**

**John's concluding remarks (vv. [13–14a](#)) are almost identical to those at the end of [2 John 12](#).**

Wishing to maintain rapport with Gaius to the end, “he closes the letter in an appropriate manner. This is in keeping with how letters are usually ended, affecting the audience’s emotions in such a way as to produce a good feeling about what was said.”

[13](#)

**John's heart is both full (for Gaius) and burdened (because of Diotrephes).**

What he needed to say could not be put on a single sheet of papyrus or in a longer letter for that matter. **An overflowing heart must give way to a bolder course of action. Yes, he would come and confront Diotrephes** ([v. 10](#)).

**He would also come and enjoy the company of Gaius as well.**

**[14](#) This verse is quite similar to the conclusion of 2 John (see [2 John 12](#) and the comments there). The word “soon” (*eutheōs*) is the only significant difference. **It is probably added because of the urgency of dealing with Diotrephes.****

**QUOTE:**

***John plans to come and come quickly to Gaius. He will not allow the problem with***

*Diotrephes to fester and perhaps grow worse.*

*There is wonderful pastoral wisdom in John's approach. "Face to face" is again a translation of the idiom "mouth to mouth" (stoma prōs stoma; see also 2 John 12). The elder is the only New Testament writer to use this phrase. John wants a personal conversation with Gaius. No letter can substitute for his presence. John loves him and loves him dearly. If God will allow it, he will soon be on his way to see his precious friend.*

**The conclusion of the letter is typical, yet there is still substance in what the elder says.**

Unlike 1 or 2 John, there is an expression of peace (but note 2 John 3). **For Gaius this was especially appropriate considering the situation with Diotrephes.**

**Peace (eirēnē) is a wonderful Christian grace that has several facets.**

**Objectively we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus ([Rom 5:1](#)).**

**Subjectively we can enjoy that peace that transcends understanding through the Lord Jesus ([Phil 4:9](#)).**

**John** adapts the well-known and common Jewish greeting and benediction and **communicates to Gaius his personal prayer for wholeness and blessing in his life.**

“Greet” is placed toward the front of the sentence for emphasis (lit., **“Greet you the friends”**). Those who are members of the elder’s church send them “hellos” as well. This would **indicate they are aware of the Diotrephes matter and that they stand with John.**

If their opinions matter, **it should be known they favor John in the dispute.**

This is the only place in the New Testament that believers are called “friends.” This may reflect the words of Jesus in [John 15:13](#).

**Finally, the elder entreats Gaius to also greet the friends and to do so by name (*kat’ onoma*).**

**Burdick points out** a possible twofold reason for the specificity of the request: *“First, it was more personal and more readily conveyed John’s warm affection to them, and second, because of Diotrephes’ stranglehold on the church, the greetings could not be conveyed in a corporate fashion.”*

John thus ends his letter as he began it:  
on a positive note.

**The Diotrephes affair has grieved him and caused him sorrow and embarrassment. Nevertheless, he is hopeful about what will unfold in the future.**

**The gospel will prevail.**

**Right will win out.**

*Such confidence should characterize all who live their lives under “the Name.” He will honor our faithfulness. We should not grow weary in doing good on his behalf.*

**- New American Commentary**

## Sacrificial Love for Those Faithful to the Truth ([3 John 1-8](#))

*The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth. (1-8)*

**Truth is the theme of this letter, especially in the opening section where the word appears five times.** It is a call to give hospitality, but especially to those who were faithful teachers of the gospel truth (cf. [2 John 10-11](#)).

When the apostle Paul detailed his suffering for the cause of Christ ([2 Cor. 11:22-33](#)), some of that suffering involved travel far different from the comfort and safety of modern travel. But

the apostle's experience reflected the common reality of life in the ancient world: "I have been on frequent journeys," he wrote, "in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea" (v. 26)... "three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep" (v. 25). As that list indicates, travel was arduous, unpleasant, and even dangerous. **The few inns that existed (cf. Luke 2:7; 10:34) were often little more than vermin-infested brothels and their keepers dishonest and of ill repute. As a result, travelers seeking safety were largely dependent on people opening their homes to them.**

**Hospitality therefore was both a necessity and a duty.** Even in pagan cultures necessity rendered it one of the highest virtues. In fact, some of the gods invented by the Canaanites were designed to act as protectors of strangers and travelers. The Greeks also viewed travelers as being under the protection of the deities and hence to be shown hospitality, as William Barclay notes:

In the ancient world hospitality was a sacred duty. Strangers were under the protection of Zeus Xenios, Zeus the god of strangers (*Xenos* is the Greek word for a *stranger*).... The ancient world had a system of *guest-friendships* whereby families in different parts of the country undertook to give each other's members hospitality when the occasion arose. This connection between families lasted throughout the generations and when it was claimed the claimant brought with him a *sumbolon*, or *token*, which identified him to his hosts. Some cities kept an official called the *Proxenos* in the larger cities to

whom their citizens, when travelling, might appeal for shelter and for help. (*The Letters of John and Jude* [rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976], 149)

### **The Bible certainly stresses the importance of**

**hospitality**. What the false god Zeus Xenios supposedly did, the true God actually did. [Psalm 146:9](#) says, "The Lord protects the strangers" (cf. [Deut. 10:18](#)). God charged Israel, "You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt" ([Ex. 23:9](#); cf. [22:21](#); [Lev. 19:33-34](#); [25:35](#); [Deut. 10:19](#)). Among those whom God indicted in [Malachi 3:5](#) were those who turned away aliens.

The Old Testament relates many examples of hospitality. Melchizedek provided Abraham with bread and wine after he returned from rescuing Lot ([Gen. 14:18](#)). Abraham provided food for the Lord and two angels ([Gen. 18:1-8](#)), and soon afterward Lot took the two angels into his house ([Gen. 19:1-3](#)). Laban offered hospitality to Abraham's servant ([Gen. 24:31-33](#)), Jethro to Moses ([Ex. 2:20](#)), Samson's parents to the angel of the Lord ([Judg. 13:15](#)), an old man in Gibeah to a Levite ([Judg. 19:15, 20-21](#)), and the Shunammite woman to Elisha ([2 Kings 4:8](#)). Defending his integrity against the false allegations of his friends, Job declared, "The alien has not lodged outside, for I have opened my doors to the traveler" ([Job 31:32](#)).

**Hospitality is equally stressed in the New Testament. The general Jewish cultural view of hospitality underlies Jesus' charge to the seventy in [Luke 10:4-7](#):**

*"Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house."*

**Zaccheus extended hospitality to Jesus** ([Luke 19:5-7](#)), as did the Samaritan village of Sychar ([John 4:40](#)), Simon the Pharisee ([Luke 7:36](#)), another unnamed Pharisee ([Luke 14:1](#)), **Mary, Martha, and Lazarus** ([Luke 10:38](#)), Simon the leper ([Matt. 26:6](#)), and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus ([Luke 24:29-30](#)).

**The apostles also enjoyed the hospitality of both Jews and Gentiles**. Peter stayed in the homes of Simon the tanner ([Acts 9:43](#); [10:5-6](#)) and Cornelius ([Acts 10:24-33](#), [48](#)). Paul and his companions received hospitality from Lydia ([Acts 16:14-15](#)), the jailer at Philippi ([Acts 16:34](#)), Jason ([Acts 17:5-7](#)), Priscilla and Aquila ([Acts 18:1-3](#)), Titius Justus ([Acts 18:7](#)), Philip the evangelist ([Acts 21:8](#)), Mnason ([Acts 21:16](#)), and Publius ([Acts 28:7](#)).

**Hospitality was not merely a cultural obligation, but even more a Christian duty. It is one very necessary and practical expression of the love that should mark the fellowship of believers** (cf. [John 13:34-35](#)).

In [Romans 12:13](#) Paul wrote that believers are to be "practicing hospitality," while Peter exhorted, "Be

hospitable to one another without complaint" ([1 Peter 4:9](#)). The writer of Hebrews commanded his readers, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it" ([Heb. 13:2](#)). In [1 Timothy 5:10](#) Paul listed hospitality as one of the virtues of a godly Christian woman. Elders in particular are required to be hospitable as one of the exemplary qualifications for that office ([1 Tim. 3:2](#); [Titus 1:8](#)).

**Hospitality was also a significant responsibility because the home was central to the life of the early church** (cf. [Acts 2:46](#); [5:42](#); [12:12](#); [16:40](#); [18:7](#); [20:20](#); [Rom. 16:5](#); [1 Cor. 16:19](#); [Col. 4:15](#); [Philem. 2](#)).

**The believers met in homes for worship (the earliest known church building dates from early in the third century), prayer, fellowship, teaching, preaching, and discipleship.**

Thus it was common for Christians to open their doors to travelers visiting the church, especially the faithful teachers of the truth ([3 John 6-8](#)).

*While the theme of showing love by hospitality is clearly commanded in both 2 and 3 John, the foundational reality below*

*that duty is love for and obedience to the truth.*

**John exalts the truth in his second letter in that he sets the exclusive limit that only those who embrace the truth are to be shown hospitality. In his third letter he affirms the inclusive approach that all who are in the truth are to be loved and cared for.**

That emphasis is made evident in John's greeting, **the elder to the beloved Gaius.**

Unlike modern correspondence, it was customary for the ancient writer to name himself at the opening of the letter. As noted in the discussion of [2 John 1](#) in chapter 19 of this volume, **elder does not only designate John's age (he was a very old man when he wrote this letter), but more significant, it points to his position of spiritual oversight.**

**As the last surviving apostle of Jesus Christ, John was not just *an* elder, but *the* elder, the most revered and respected figure in the church.**

**Details concerning Gaius are not known.** There are several other men with that name in the New Testament ([Acts 19:29](#); [20:4](#); [Rom. 16:23](#); [1 Cor. 1:14](#)). But **since Gaius was one of the most common names in Roman society, it is impossible to identify this individual** with any of them. He

evidently was a prominent member of a local church, probably somewhere in Asia Minor, whom the apostle John knew personally.

Although his life remains hidden, Gaius's sterling character is disclosed in a grand tribute by the noble apostle. **The rich term *agapētos* (beloved) can include not only the thought that this Gaius was loved by the Christian community (cf. its use in [Acts 15:25](#); [Eph. 6:21](#); [Col. 1:7](#); [2 Peter 3:15](#)), but also by the Lord (cf. [Rom. 1:7](#); [Eph. 5:1](#)).** John addressed the lady to whom he wrote his second epistle as "chosen" ([2 John 1](#)); here he addresses Gaius as **beloved**. All who love the Lord Jesus Christ are both chosen by God and loved by Him.

**In [Colossians 3:12](#) Paul referred to Christians as "those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved."**

**The Bible repeatedly speaks of God's love for His elect ([Zeph. 3:17](#); [John 13:1, 34](#); [14:21, 23](#); [15:9, 12-13](#); [16:27](#); [17:23, 26](#); [Rom. 5:5, 8](#); [8:35-39](#); [2 Cor. 13:14](#); [Gal. 2:20](#); [Eph. 1:4-5](#); [2:4](#); [5:2, 25](#); [2 Thess. 2:16](#); [Heb. 12:6](#); [1 John 3:1](#); [4:9-11, 16, 19](#); [Rev. 1:5](#); [3:9, 19](#)).**

John, too, loved this man (cf. [vv. 2, 5, 11](#)) and confessed so by saying that Gaius is a man **whom I love in truth** (cf. [2 John 1](#)).

**Truth**, as always, is the common sphere in which genuine biblical love is shared by believers; again, love and truth are inseparably linked (cf. [vv. 3, 4, 8, 12](#)).

There is a sense in which Christians are to love all people (cf. [Gal. 6:10](#)), just as God loves the world ([Matt. 5:44-45](#); cf. [John 3:16](#); [Mark 10:21](#)). But **the love John spoke of here is the unique love that believers have for those who are in Christ and faithful to the truth** ([John 13:34-35](#); [15:12, 17](#); [Rom. 12:10](#); [13:8](#); [1 Thess. 3:12](#); [4:9](#); [2 Thess. 1:3](#); [1 Peter 1:22](#); [4:8](#); [1 John 3:11, 23](#); [4:7, 11, 12](#); [2 John 5](#)).

**This letter revolves around three individuals and their relationship to truth and love:** Gaius, who walked in the truth and loved sacrificially ([vv. 1-8](#)); Diotrophes, who rejected the truth and hindered sacrificial love ([vv. 9-11](#)); and Demetrius, who was to receive sacrificial love for his faithfulness to the truth ([v. 12](#)). **John opens by expressing to Gaius his concern, commendation, and counsel.**

### John's Concern for Gaius

*Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. (2)*

The phrase **I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health** was a standard greeting in ancient letters, so it

does not imply that Gaius was ill. **Prosper** translates a form of the verb *euodoō*. The term, used only here, [Romans 1:10](#), and [1 Corinthians 16:2](#), means "to succeed," "to have things go well," or "to enjoy favorable circumstances." The first use of **prosper** in [verse 2](#) refers to Gaius's physical **health**, as the contrast with the last part of the verse makes clear. **The apostle's wish was that Gaius's physical health would be as good as that of his spiritual.**

**John's concern for Gaius is a pastoral desire that he be free from the turmoil, pain, and debilitation of illness so as to be unrestricted in his service to the Lord and His church.** This attitude mirrors God's concern for the physical health of His people. The Old Testament dietary laws, and the regulations concerning hygiene (e.g., [Deut. 23:13](#)), even circumcision, were designed to protect the health of the people of Israel for their usefulness as well as their preservation. In the New Testament, Paul advised Timothy, "No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments" ([1 Tim. 5:23](#)). Wine in biblical times was usually mixed with water, which the alcohol in the wine helped disinfect. Drinking that relatively purified water would help guard Timothy from further illness. **Paul's concern for Timothy's physical health was characteristic of any apostle's affection for a child in the faith (cf. [Titus 1:4](#)).** The same was certainly true of John's love for Gaius.

But **Gaius's healthy soul brought far more delight to John.** He knew he had a vibrant spiritual life. To borrow from some other apostles, Gaius was among those who are "sound in the faith" ([Titus 1:13](#)); constantly "grow [ing] in the grace and

knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" ([2 Peter 3:18](#)); "walk[ing] in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" ([Col. 1:10](#)). John knew this to be true by the testimony of those who had personal knowledge of Gaius, as he states in the next verse.

### John's Commendation of Gaius

*For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; and they have testified to your love before the church. (3-6a)*

John was **very glad when** some **brethren**, probably traveling preachers to whom Gaius had shown hospitality, **came and testified to** him of the **truth** that was operative and evident in Gaius's life. **The repeatedly used image of walking refers metaphorically in the New Testament to daily conduct** (e.g., [Mark 7:5](#); [Luke 1:6](#); [John 8:12](#); [11:9-10](#); [12:35](#); [Acts 21:21, 24](#); [Rom. 6:4](#); [8:4](#); [14:15](#); [1 Cor. 3:3](#); [7:17](#); [2 Cor. 4:2](#); [5:7](#); [10:2-3](#); [Gal. 5:16, 25](#); [6:16](#); [Eph. 2:2, 10](#); [4:1, 17](#); [5:2, 8, 15](#); [Phil. 3:17-18](#); [Col. 1:10](#); [2:6](#); [3:7](#); [1 Thess. 2:12](#); [4:1](#); [1 John 1:6-7](#); [2:6, 11](#); [2 John 4, 6](#)).

Showing hospitality was a manifestation of love—all the more remarkable when contrasted with Diotrophes' ugly rejection ([v.](#)

10). John, however, did not commend Gaius for his love but, more fundamentally, for his commitment to the truth.

*As is always the case with believers, Gaius's genuine love flowed from his obedience to the truth. John commended him because he not only knew the truth, but lived in it.*

**Such commendations are not unusual in the New Testament.**

Phoebe was commended for being a faithful servant and helper in her church ([Rom. 16:1](#)). Priscilla and Aquila, the husband and wife team who were so dear to Paul, were commended for the great sacrifices they made on his behalf ([Rom. 16:3](#)). Stephanas and his household, along with Fortunatus and Achaicus, were commended for their service to the saints ([1 Cor. 16:15-18](#)). Epaphroditus was commended for ministering to Paul—even at the risk of his own life ([Phil. 2:25-30](#)). Epaphras was twice commended for his fruitful service to Christ, especially his laboring in prayer for the saints ([Col. 1:7](#); [4:12](#)). Despite his earlier lapse ([Acts 13:13](#); cf. [15:37-39](#)), Paul commended John Mark for his useful service to him ([2 Tim. 4:11](#)). Peter commended Silvanus as a "faithful brother" ([1 Peter 5:12](#)). But there is no higher commendation for a Christian than the one given to Gaius by John—that he not only knew the truth revealed by God, but also lived in conformity to it (cf. [Luke 6:46-49](#); [11:28](#); [John 13:17](#); [James 1:22-23](#)).

**QUOTE:**

*John's general comment, **I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth** (cf. [2 John 4](#)), expresses the ultimate goal of every true minister. That goal is not just to teach the truth, or even to know that his people understand it, but to know that his people believe, love, and obey the truth (cf. [1 Cor. 4:14-16](#); [1 Thess. 2:11, 19-20](#); [3:1-10](#)).*

**The writer of Hebrews exhorted his readers, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you"** ([Heb. 13:17](#)).

*The great grief of ministry is people who are indifferent or rebellious toward the Word of God.*

With Gaius there was no dichotomy between creed and conduct, between profession and practice. The emphatic position of **my** in the Greek text may mean that Gaius had been converted under John's ministry.

The apostle spells out Gaius's obedience to the truth as **acting faithfully in whatever** he labored to **accomplish for the**

**brethren.** Gaius no doubt gave the gospel preachers shelter, food, and perhaps money, meeting their needs even though they were **strangers** to him. **Genuine saving faith, such as Gaius possessed, always produces good works** ([Eph. 2:8-10](#); [1 Tim. 2:10](#); [5:10](#); [6:18](#); [James 2:14-26](#)). The missionaries were so impressed with Gaius's humble service to them that after returning to Ephesus **they... testified to his love before the church.**

Consistent with Gaius's devotion to the truth, he was a model of one who "contributed to the needs of the saints [by] practicing hospitality" ([Rom. 12:13](#)).

### **John's Counsel to Gaius**

*You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth. (6b-8)*

John encouraged this godly man to continue his generous love when other preachers of the truth arrived in the future. The apostle advised Gaius, **You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.** **You will do well** is an idiomatic Greek expression equivalent to the English word "please." John entreated him to **send** any missionaries that came to him **on their way** refreshed and fully supplied for the next stage of their journey. John's exhortation is reminiscent of Paul's command to Titus, "Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and

Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them" ([Titus 3:13](#)).

**The standard is high; Gaius was to treat them in a manner worthy of God. He was to give to them generously as God would give. Three reasons are suggested for supporting all faithful servants of Christ.**

**First, they went out for the sake of the Name.**

God's **Name** represents all that He is. Their work is the work of God Himself for His own glory ([1 Cor. 10:31](#); [Col. 3:17](#)), the motive that underlies the church's evangelistic efforts (cf. [Matt. 6:9](#); [Luke 24:47](#); [Acts 5:41](#); [9:15-16](#); [15:26](#); [21:13](#); [Rom. 1:5](#)). It is an affront to God when people do not believe in the name of His Son, who is worthy to be loved, praised, honored, and confessed as Lord. When believers proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, people are saved, and as a result, "the grace which is spreading to more and more people... cause[s] the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God" ([2 Cor. 4:15](#)).

**Second, preachers of the truth could expect nothing from the Gentiles.**

**It goes without saying that unbelievers are not going to support those who preach the true gospel.**

## **If Christians do not support them, no one will.**

And, as Paul explained to Timothy, those who faithfully proclaim the Word of God are worthy of financial compensation ([1 Tim. 5:17-20](#)).

Of course, while it is right for them to be paid for their labor, true ambassadors of the gospel are never in the ministry for the sake of money. In fact, it is precisely the issue of money that separates true preachers from false ones. Scripture is clear that the latter are invariably in it for the money, and have no honest commitment to the truth. **They are hucksters, spiritual con men guilty of "peddling the word of God" ([2 Cor. 2:17](#)), "teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain" ([Titus 1:11](#)). "Woe to them!" Jude exclaimed, "For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah" ([Jude 11](#)).**

The Didache, an early Christian writing, offered the following wise advice about how to distinguish a false prophet:

Welcome every apostle [teacher; evangelist] on arriving, as if he were the Lord. But he must not stay beyond one day. In case of necessity, however, the next day too. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet. On departing, an apostle must not accept anything save sufficient food to carry him till his next lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet. (11:4-6; cited in Cyril C. Richardson, ed., *Early Christian Fathers* [New York: Macmillan, 1978], 176)

To avoid any suspicion that he might be a charlatan, Paul worked with his own hands to support himself ([Acts 20:34](#); [1 Cor. 4:12](#); [9:18](#); [1 Thess. 2:9](#); [2 Thess. 3:7-9](#); cf. [1 Peter 5:1-2](#)).

**Finally, we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth. In [2 John 10-11](#), John cautioned against participating in false teachers' evil deeds by supporting them, even verbally. But by supporting those who present the **truth**, Christians partner with them.**

**Jesus said in [Matthew 10:41](#), "*He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.*" Thus, He promised eternal reward, as if the one caring for a prophet was himself a prophet. In His limitless grace God not only rewards a true prophet, preacher, or missionary for his faithfulness, but also rewards anyone else who receives him. Receiving a prophet refers to embracing his ministry—affirming his call and supporting his work.**

Receiving a righteous man is that same principle, extended to every believer who is accepted for Christ's sake. In an incomprehensible sharing of blessing, God showers His rewards on every person who receives His people because they are His people.

Whenever we become the source of blessing for others, we are blessed; and whenever other believers become a source of blessing to us, they are blessed. In God's magnificent economy of grace, the least believer can share the blessings of the greatest, and no one's good work will go unrewarded.

### **The Man Who Loved the Preeminence ([3 John 9-14](#))**

*I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true. I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name. (9-14)*

**One of the defining characteristics of every sinful human heart is pride ([Prov. 21:4](#)). Pride causes people**

to forget God ([Deut. 8:14](#); [Hos. 13:6](#)), be unfaithful to Him ([2 Chron. 26:16](#)), be ungrateful to Him ([2 Chron. 32:24-25](#)), and become an abomination to Him ([Prov. 16:5](#)).

**It was through pride that sin entered the universe, when Satan sought to exalt himself above God** ([Isa. 14:12-14](#); cf. [1 Tim. 3:6](#)).

### QUOTE:

*As was the case with the Devil, pride drives people to seek to exalt themselves. There have always been proud, egotistical, self-promoting people, who try to usurp authority, seize a place of preeminence, and elevate themselves over others, even God. They tend to gravitate to and even manipulate themselves into positions of power, influence, and prominence. Scripture records many such people; they form a sort of "Hall of Shame," in contrast to the heroes of the faith listed in [Hebrews 11](#).*

The story of human pride began in the Garden of Eden. As it had been in Satan's fall, pride was a major component in the act of disobedience that catapulted the human race into sin. Eve ate the forbidden fruit in part because she believed Satan's lie that it would make her wise like God ([Gen. 3:5-6](#)). Moreover, by choosing to eat the fruit, without consulting Adam, she elevated herself above her husband, usurping his role in the created order

([1 Tim. 2:13](#); cf. [1 Cor. 11:3-10](#)). Clearly, then, pride was at work from the very moment sin entered the world.

The next chapter of Genesis introduces Lamech, a descendant of the first murderer, Cain. Like his ancestor, Lamech was also a murderer (as well as the first recorded polygamist). As Cain's murder had been motivated by proud envy, Lamech's killings were a result of pride. In the first recorded poetry in human history, Lamech boasted arrogantly to his wives,

"Adah and Zillah,  
Listen to my voice,  
You wives of Lamech,  
Give heed to my speech,  
For I have killed a man for wounding me;  
And a boy for striking me;  
If Cain is avenged sevenfold,  
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold." ([Gen. 4:23-24](#))

Perhaps Enoch had Lamech in mind when he prophesied, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" ([Jude 14-15](#)).

[Genesis 10](#) and [11](#) relate the story of Nimrod, another proud figure. [Genesis 10:8](#) describes him as "a mighty one on the earth." His name probably is related to a Hebrew word meaning "to rebel," while the word translated "mighty one" refers to

someone who magnifies himself, acts proudly, or is tyrannical. The description of Nimrod as a renowned hunter ([v. 9](#)) may indicate his skill in hunting animals—or in hunting people to enslave them. It was under his leadership that the Tower of Babel, a monument to human pride and rebellion against God, was built ([Gen. 11:1-9](#)). Nimrod also was the founder of what later became the Babylonian and Assyrian empires (cf. [Gen. 10:10-12](#)). Derek Kidner writes concerning Nimrod's character, "Nimrod looks out of antiquity as the first of 'the great men that are in the earth', remembered for two things the world admires, personal prowess and political power" (*Genesis*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1979], 107).

During Israel's wilderness wandering, "Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord" ([Lev. 10:1-2](#)). These two priests, sons of Aaron, in their first priestly act violated in some unspecified way the divine prescription for offering incense. Their behavior, possibly while they were drunk (cf. [Lev. 10:8-10](#)), betrayed their rebellious carelessness, irreverence, and preference for their own will over God's very specific commands. The two decided to do things their own way, and paid the ultimate price for such proud independence. Also during the wilderness wandering, Moses' own brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, sought to elevate themselves to his level ([Num. 12:1-3](#)). The Lord severely judged both of them for their arrogance and presumption ([vv. 4-15](#)).

During the lawless days of the judges, Abimelech, the son of Gideon, wanted to be king. So passionate was his lust for power that he murdered seventy of his brothers in an attempt to eliminate any possible rivals ([Judg. 9:1-6](#)). But Abimelech's reign came to an untimely and embarrassing end. During his siege of the city of Thebez, "a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head, crushing his skull" ([v. 53](#)). In the throes of death, he made a desperate, prideful attempt to avoid the shame of being killed by a woman. He "called quickly to the young man, his armor bearer, and said to him, 'Draw your sword and kill me, so that it will not be said of me, "A woman slew him.'" So the young man pierced him through, and he died" ([v. 54](#)). Despite his attempt to cover it up, Abimelech's shameful death was recorded for all time in Scripture.

**Absalom's quest for power and prominence led him to stage a coup against his own father, King David. But his day in the sun was shortlived, and he met an ignominious end. While he was fleeing from David's men through a dense forest, Absalom's mule went under an oak tree. His flowing hair became entangled in the tree's thick branches, leaving him dangling helplessly in midair. He was soon executed by David's general, Joab ([2 Sam. 18:9-15](#)).**

Another of David's sons, Adonijah, also sought to usurp the throne of his father. In the waning days of David's life, "Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king.' So he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him [like his brother Absalom had done;

[2 Sam. 15:1\]](#)" ([1 Kings 1:5](#)). His attempt to claim the throne failed, however, thwarted by the quick action of Nathan the prophet ([vv. 11-48](#)). Granted mercy by King Solomon ([vv. 50-53](#)), Adonijah repaid that kindness by scheming to overthrow him ([1 Kings 2:13-21](#)). Solomon saw through his plot, however, and had him executed ([vv. 22-25](#)).

Not content with being king, Uzziah attempted to usurp the function of the priests. According to [2 Chronicles 26:16](#), "When he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense." Uzziah was courageously opposed by Azariah and eighty priests, who warned him that he was overstepping his bounds ([vv. 17-18](#)). Enraged, the proud and self-confident Uzziah threatened the priests, and was immediately stricken by God with leprosy ([v. 19](#)). For the rest of his life Uzziah, the outcast, lived in a separate house and his son Jotham assumed his royal duties ([v. 21](#)).

**The book of Esther relates the story of Haman, the great foe of the Jewish people. Obsessed with his self-importance after being elevated to a high position in the Persian Empire, Haman was enraged at Mordecai's refusal to do homage to him ([Est. 3:5](#)). He therefore instigated a program to exterminate Mordecai's people, the Jews ([v. 6](#)). In the end, however, it was Haman who perished, hanged on the very gallows on which he had planned to hang Mordecai ([Est. 7:10](#)).**

Nebuchadnezzar was the king of the mighty Babylonian Empire. One day as he walked on the roof of his royal palace in Babylon,

"the king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'" ([Dan. 4:30](#)). But his pride was swiftly and humiliatingly crushed:

While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes." Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws, ([vv. 31-33](#))

In the New Testament, pompous King Herod Agrippa I decided to hold a celebration. As he gave a speech his enraptured subjects, unable to contain themselves, "kept crying out, 'The voice of a god and not of a man!'" ([Acts 12:22](#)). Because Herod neglected to give glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him and he died ([v. 23](#)), thus bringing an abrupt and unexpected end to the festivities.

**The four Gospels describe an entire group of boastful men who sought the preeminence, namely the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus said of them,**

*They do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their*

*garments. They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. ([Matt. 23:5-7](#))*

They were those who justified themselves in the sight of men ([Luke 16:15](#)), "for appearance's sake offer[ed] long prayers" ([Luke 20:47](#)), "receive[d] glory from one another" ([John 5:44](#)), and "loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God" ([John 12:43](#)).

Prideful ambition had an ugly presence even among Jesus' own disciples. In [Matthew 20:20-21](#) "The mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.'" James and John used their mother's presumed influence with Jesus to ask for preeminent places in the kingdom. But instead of granting their request, Jesus used the occasion to instruct His disciples concerning the importance of humility:

*But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." ([vv. 25-28](#))*

In this third epistle the apostle John introduces Diotrephes, another in the long line of men who sought the preeminence. [Verse 9](#) marks an abrupt shift in the tone of the letter. The first eight verses praise Gaius for showing sacrificial love to missionaries who came to his church. But beginning in [verse 9](#), the tone is just the opposite, as John sharply rebukes a man called Diotrephes for refusing to show hospitality to the servants of the gospel, and for refusing to permit others to do so. **The apostle exposed Diotrephes' personal ambition and perverted actions, and offered yet another man, Demetrius, as a commendable contrast to him.**

### **Diotrephes' Personal Ambition**

*I wrote something to the church; but  
Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them,  
does not accept what we say. (9)*

**The contrast between righteous Gaius and unrighteous Diotrephes is striking;** the two men were poles apart. Gaius was graciously hospitable, Diotrephes ungraciously inhospitable. Gaius loved the truth and loved everyone humbly ([vv. 3-6](#)); **Diotrephes refused the truth and loved himself, and threatened everyone from his position of self-appointed authority in the church.** One submitted to the words of truth; the other spouted words of contempt. **The difference between the two men was not primarily doctrinal but behavioral;**

## *John did not rebuke Diotrephes for heresy, but for haughtiness.*

The letter John **wrote** to Gaius's **church** is now lost, perhaps because Diotrephes intercepted and destroyed it. It could not have been 2 John, since that letter was not written to a church but to an individual. Nor could it have been 1 John, which does not address the issue of showing hospitality to missionaries.

John's parenthetical description of **Diotrephes** as **one who loves to be first among them goes to the heart of the issue.**

**Loves to be first translates a participial form of the Greek verb *philoprōteuō*, a compound word from *philos* ("love") and *prōtos* ("first"). It describes a person who is selfish, self-centered, and self-seeking.**

**The present tense of the participle indicates that this was the constant pattern of Diotrephes' life.**

*Prōteuō* appears in the New Testament only in [Colossians 1:18](#), where it refers to the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. By rejecting those who were representing Christ, Diotrephes was in effect usurping His role as head of the church. **The name**

**Diotrephes (lit., "nourished by Zeus" or "foster child of Zeus") was as uncommon as Gaius was common.**

Some believe that it was used exclusively in noble families. If Diotrephes was from a noble family, his arrogant behavior may have been cultivated in that elevated environment.

**That Diotrephes did not accept what John said indicates just how far he had gone in his arrogance. Shockingly, his desire for power and self-glory had driven him to reject the authority of Christ mediated through the apostle John.**

Diotrephes was guilty of spiritual pride of the rankest kind. His attitude was that of a self-promoting demagogue, who refused to serve anyone but wanted all to serve him. That attitude utterly defies the New Testament's teaching on servant leadership (cf. [Matt. 20:25-28](#); [1 Cor. 3:5](#); [2 Cor. 4:5](#); [Phil. 2:5-11](#); [1 Peter 5:3](#)).

### **Diotrephes' Perverted Actions**

*For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. (10)*

**For this reason** (Diotrephes' prideful defiance of John's apostolic authority) the apostle declared, **If I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does.**

**John would not overlook this challenge to his apostolic authority and to Christ's rule in the church. He would expose Diotrephes**

before the congregation, make his conduct a matter of church discipline ([1 Tim. 5:19-20](#)), and, if need be, use his apostolic authority to deal with him.

Paul issued a similar challenge to the rebels at Corinth when he wrote, "I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power" ([1 Cor. 4:19](#)), and again in his second letter to Corinth, when he stated,

*This is the third time I am coming to you. Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses. I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again I will not spare anyone. ([2 Cor. 13:1-2](#))*

**John indicted Diotrephes on four counts. In each case, the present tense of the verb indicates that these were continual, habitual behaviors on Diotrephes' part.**

**First**, he was guilty of **unjustly accusing** John with wicked words. **Character assassination is an all too common ploy of those who seek to elevate themselves. They gain people's trust not positively by manifesting a godly character but negatively by destroying people's trust in other leaders.** The verb translated **unjustly accusing** appears only here in the New Testament, but a related word is translated "gossips" in [1](#)

Timothy 5:13. **Scripture repeatedly condemns gossip** (Prov. 20:19; Rom. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:20; 1 Tim. 3:11; 5:13; 2 Tim. 3:3; Titus 2:3), and slander (Lev. 19:16; Ps. 15:3; 101:5; 140:11; Prov. 10:18; 16:28; Matt. 15:19; Rom. 1:30; 2 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; 1 Peter 2:1).

The adjective translated wicked is used five times in 1 John to describe the Devil (2:13, 14; 3:12; 5:18, 19) and once of Cain's evil deeds (3:12). In 2 John 11, it describes the evil deeds of the false teachers.

**Diotrephes' malicious accusations were evil, false, and slanderous. He saw John as a threat to his power and prestige in the church and savagely attacked him. This is similar to the way the false teachers in Corinth had assaulted Paul** (2 Cor. 7:2-3; 10:10; 11:5-7; 12:15; 13:3).

**Second**, not satisfied with merely assaulting John, Diotrephes defiantly did **not receive the brethren**, the traveling preachers who proclaimed the apostolic message of the gospel. **Seeing the preachers as a threat to his own power in the church, Diotrephes refused to extend hospitality to them.**

Since Scripture commands such hospitality ([Rom. 12:13](#); [Heb. 13:2](#); [1 Peter 4:9](#)), **Diotrephes was also guilty of rejecting the Word of God.** As one commentator explains,

Not only are Diotrephes' words vicious; his deeds are equally reprehensible. He willfully breaks the rules of Christian hospitality by refusing to receive missionaries sent out to proclaim the gospel. By denying them shelter and food, **he hinders the progress of the Word of God.** In brief, **Diotrephes is thwarting God's plans and purposes and consequently he faces divine wrath.** (Simon J. Kistemaker, *III John*, New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986], 9-10)

Not only did Diotrephes personally refuse to extend hospitality to the brethren; he also forbade **those who desire[d] to do so.** **He further abused his power by obstructing or preventing others in the church from showing hospitality to the itinerant preachers.**

Those who defied Diotrephes and showed hospitality were put **out of the church.** **So threatening was Diotrephes that he had the clout to excommunicate anyone he perceived as an apparent threat.** Perhaps that had actually happened to Gaius, which could explain why John had to tell him about what was going on in the church. **If he was still in the church, Gaius was facing hostility and opposition from Diotrephes, prompting John to encourage him not to give in,**

**but to continue to show hospitality in the future**

(cf. the discussion of [3 John 5-8](#) in the previous chapter of this volume).

**Like most conflicts in the church, this one**

**stemmed from pride.** It was pride that caused Diotrephes to slander John, snub the missionaries, and eliminate those who defied him.

**His arrogance led to ambition, which resulted in false, slanderous accusations, defiance toward apostolic authority, and the crushing of any opposition to his power.**

**Sadly, there have always been people like Diotrephes in churches.** Even more tragically, many churches, either because they are fearful of them, or in the name of tolerance, refuse to deal with their own Diotrephes types. **The apostle John, however, had no hesitation in confronting such a sinner for the good of the church and the honor of Christ.**

### **Demetrius' Commendable Contrast**

*Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius*

*has received a good testimony from everyone,  
and from the truth itself; and we add our  
testimony, and you know that our testimony is  
true. (11-12)*

At first glance [verse 11](#) appears to interrupt John's flow of thought. But it is a necessary introduction to the section commending Demetrius. John urged Gaius **not** to **imitate** Diotrephes' **evil** behavior by refusing to welcome Demetrius. Instead, the apostle urged Gaius to pattern his life after **what is good**, like Demetrius did. John's reminder that **the one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God is a practical application of the moral test of genuine faith that he gave in his first epistle (see the exposition of 1 John 2:3-6 and 5:2-3** in chapters 5 and 16 of this volume).

The Bible is clear that good works do not save; "a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus... since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified" ([Gal. 2:16](#); cf. [Rom. 3:20](#)). **Obedience is, however, the external, visible proof of salvation ([John 14:15, 21](#)).** Diotrephes' refusal to obey God's commands demonstrates that he was not saved.

**In contrast to his strong indictment of Diotrephes, John warmly commended Demetrius.**

Like Gaius, the name Demetrius ("belonging to Demeter," the Greek goddess of grain and the harvest) was common. A silversmith in Ephesus by that name sparked a riot over Paul's teaching, because the gospel was financially damaging to him and his fellow idol makers ([Acts 19:23-41](#)).

Demas ([Col. 4:14](#); [2 Tim. 4:10](#); [Philem. 24](#)) was a shortened form of Demetrius.

**Nothing is known apart from this verse of the Demetrius whom John commended. He may have delivered this letter from John to Gaius.**

**That he was a man of noble Christian character is evident from three sources.** First, he had **received a good testimony from everyone.** His reputation was well known among the Christian community in that region. **Second, Demetrius was committed to living the truth (v. 3).** Finally, John added his own testimony—which Gaius knew to be true—to commend **Demetrius' character.** The example of Demetrius shows that **a man's worth** can be measured by his reputation in the community, his faithfulness to the truth of Scripture, and the opinion godly Christian leaders have of him. **Demetrius received high marks on all counts.**

**The conclusion of this epistle closely parallels that of 2 John.**

John wrote, *I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face.* In both epistles

John had much more to say to those to whom he wrote, but he preferred to do so not **with pen and ink**, but **face to face**.

The apostle's farewell wish, *peace be to you*, was an appropriate one for that **strife-torn congregation**.

Gaius and John evidently had mutual **friends** who asked John to **greet** Gaius for them. John also asked Gaius to **greet** some other mutual **friends** who were with him. The phrase **by name** adds a personal, intimate touch. **Though well into his nineties, John still cherished those to whom he had ministered throughout his life.**

Without question, the concept of the truth stands out in this brief letter. First, believers must know the truth and obey it ([v. 3](#)). Second, they are to be hospitable to other faithful believers, who preach the truth ([vv. 6-8](#)). Finally, they are to pattern their lives after godly examples who live in the truth ([v. 11](#); cf. [Heb. 13:7](#)). Where the truth prevails, the Lord is glorified in His church.

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

### 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 Diotrefes, 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.

### **Vital Statistics**

#### ***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 being faithful to God when you care for the traveling teachers who pass through, 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 ([1:13-14](#))

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.

<b>MEGATHEMES</b>		
<b>THEME</b>	<b>EXPLANATION</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>
<i>Hospitality</i>	John wrote to encourage those who were kind to others. Genuine hospitality for traveling Christian	Faithful Christian teachers and missionaries need our support. Whenever you can extend

	workers was needed then and is still important today.	hospitality to others, it will make you a partner in their ministry.
<i>Pride</i>	Diotrephes not only refused to offer hospitality but also set himself up as a church boss. Pride disqualified him from being a real leader.	Christian leaders must shun pride and its effects on them. Be careful not to misuse your position of leadership.
<i>Faithfulness</i>	Gaius and Demetrius were commended for their faithful work in the church. They were held up as examples of faithful, selfless servants.	Don't take for granted Christian workers who serve faithfully. Be sure to encourage them so they won't grow weary of serving.

**- Life Application Study Bible.**

### **3 John**

#### Introduction

**The shortest book in the New Testament, 3 John is a letter with a kind but business-like tone.** "The Elder" sought to encourage Gaius, who was perhaps a pastor under his oversight. The epistle gives mostly positive counsel but also warns against a power-hungry leader named Diotrephes. **Truth, love, and the goodness of God are predominate themes.**

## Circumstances of Writing

**Author:** Same as the author of 1 and 2 John (see Introductions there).

**Background:** Same as 2 John (see Introduction there). **The two short epistles of 2 and 3 John are often described as "twin epistles," though they should be viewed as fraternal and not identical.**

There are some significant similarities worth noting. In both epistles the author described himself as "the Elder" ([2Jn 1](#); [3Jn 1](#)), and the recipients were those whom he loved "in truth" ([2Jn 1](#); [3Jn 1](#)). The recipients were a cause for great rejoicing by John ([2Jn 4](#); [3Jn 3](#)). They were "walking in the truth" ([2Jn 4](#); [3Jn 3](#)), and the elder has received good reports about them ([2Jn 4](#); [3Jn 3,5](#)). Both letters contain a warning ([2Jn 8](#); [3Jn 9-11](#)), and the Elder desired to see the recipients face-to-face ([2Jn 12](#); [3Jn 14](#)). Finally, both letters convey greetings from others ([2Jn 13](#); [3Jn 14](#)).

## Message and Purpose

Third John is a personal letter that revolves around three individuals: (1) Gaius, the recipient of the letter; (2) Diotrephes, the one causing trouble; and (3) Demetrius, who was probably the bearer of the letter. **The purpose was to give a word of exhortation to Gaius and encourage him not to imitate the bad example of Diotrephes. Instead, Gaius was to continue the good work he was doing in receiving and supporting the traveling teachers or missionaries.**

## Contribution to the Bible

**This brief letter of apostolic instruction underscores certain central Christian convictions:**

- love, truth, faithfulness, the church, and witness.
- It also testifies to the God-centeredness of apostolic faith ([vv. 7,11](#)). Jesus and the Spirit are not mentioned specifically (unless "the truth itself" in [v. 12](#) refers to Jesus; see [Jn 14:6](#); [1Jn 5:20](#)). But in the writer's view, Jesus and the Spirit were undoubtedly included in the reference to "God" whose "truth" this epistle appeals to so frequently ([3Jn 1,3,4,8,12](#)).

## Structure

The letter follows the basic epistolary pattern with an introduction ([vv. 1-4](#)), body ([vv. 5-12](#)), and a conclusion ([vv.](#)

[13-14](#)). Though [verses 1-4](#) clearly function as the salutation, it is also possible to outline the letter around the four personalities of the book. [Verses 1-8](#) contain a multifold commendation of Gaius. [Verses 9-10](#) condemn the highhanded and malicious autocracy of Diotrephes. [Verses 11-12](#), taken as a unit, praise the godly Demetrius. [Verses 13-14](#) close with a glimpse into the heart of the Elder. **Four men and their reputations (growing out of their behavior) are the sum and substance of 3 John's subject matter.**

*John constructed this letter with the building blocks of key-word repetition: "dear friend" ([vv. 1,2,5,11](#)); "truth" or "true" ([vv. 1,3,4,8,12](#)).*

Third John provides insight into a personality conflict that arose at the end of the first century and the strategy adopted by the Elder to resolve it.

## Outline

- I. Greeting to Gaius ([vv. 1-2](#))
- II. Joy at Seeing Christians Demonstrate the Truth ([vv. 3-4](#))
- III. Pressing Issues ([vv. 5-12](#))
  - A. Support for traveling ministers ([vv. 5-8](#))

- B. The problem of Diotrephes ([vv. 9-10](#))
- C. Commendation of Demetrius ([vv. 11-12](#))
- IV. Impending Visit and Blessing ([vv. 13-14](#))

- HCSB Study Bible.

## Introduction To The Third Letter of John

### Author and Title

See Introductions to [1 John](#) and [2 John](#). Like 2 John, 3 John claims to have been written by “the elder,” most likely the apostle John. **In NT times and into the post-apostolic era, “elders” (Gk. *presbyteroi*) could refer to the pastoral leaders of local congregations.** They appear by this title first in [Acts 11:30](#), which speaks of church leaders (pastors) in Jerusalem in the mid-40s A.D. Paul and Barnabas appointed “elders” to be ministers in the churches they planted ([Acts 14:23](#)). **“Elders” presided at the Jerusalem council (c. A.D. 49) alongside the apostles** ([Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4](#)). Nearly a decade later Paul addressed the “elders,” apparently the pastors of churches at and probably around Ephesus ([Acts 20:17](#)). “Elders” at Jerusalem were alongside head elder James when Paul reported back to the church at the end of his third missionary journey ([Acts 21:18](#)). This shows that **the title “elder” for pastoral leaders at Ephesus had been in use 20 to 40 years by the time**

**2 and 3 John were written.** It was widely employed in the early church, particularly around Jerusalem but also in distant areas like Ephesus. **The fact that Peter understood himself to be a “fellow elder” of church leaders across a wide geographical area (1 Pet. 5:1) makes it plausible for John to have referred to himself in the same manner.**

## Date

See [Introduction to 2 John](#). John probably writes from around Ephesus in the last quarter of the first century.

## Theme

**The theme of 3 John is steadfastness in the face of opposition.** The recipient of the letter, Gaius, faces a troublemaker named Diotrephes. **By “walking in the truth” (vv. 3, 4), Christians can embrace and live out the apostolic message that John conveys in all his letters.**

## Purpose, Occasion, and Background

**It has been suggested that 2 and 3 John were originally preserved because they were part of a single packet containing all three Johannine letters.** On this view, 3 John was a personal letter to Gaius commending the courier of the shipment, Demetrius (v. 12); 2 John was to be read aloud to Gaius’s church; and 1 John was a sermon for general distribution and not a letter in the strict sense. This scenario cannot be verified but is a useful hypothesis in envisioning how

John's letters could have arisen and been preserved in early Christianity. Unfortunately, no other information about Gaius has survived.

## Key Themes

1. **The support of traveling Christian workers is noble and needful.** [5-8](#)
2. **Church discipline can be necessary for healthy ministry to flourish.** [9-10](#)
3. **The integrity of faith is proven by actions.** [11](#)

Third John is so brief, personal, and situation-specific that its “themes” are really just emphases:

## History of Salvation Summary

Since Christ has accomplished salvation, believers are to continue in his truth. (For an explanation of the “History of Salvation,” see the [Overview of the Bible](#).)

## Literary Features

Third John is a personal epistle, addressed to a friend of the author. The customary epistolary conventions are evident: an opening salutation, a body of instruction, and concluding greetings. Reinforcing the identity of this book as a personal letter is the way in which it is built around references to specific acquaintances from start to finish. Whereas 2 John was written to an unidentified church, this letter is filled with references to specific people and situations. It speaks of hospitality to

traveling Christians. **The main motif is “a home away from home,”** and accompanying that, the pattern of arrival and welcoming of guests.

## Outline

1. Greeting: The Elder’s Joy at Gaius’s Faithfulness ([1-4](#))
2. Praise for Gaius’s Support for Itinerant Christian Workers ([5-8](#))
3. Concern about Diotrephes ([9-10](#))
4. Advice and Commendation of Demetrius ([11-12](#))
5. Closing with Promise to Visit ([13-15](#))

## TEXT:

**1-4 Greeting: The Elder’s Joy at Gaius’s Faithfulness.** John’s opening tone is affectionate and positive.

**1 Beloved** (cf. [vv. 5, 11](#)) conveys the truth that Christians are linked by the love God has shown them in Christ (cf. [1 John 4:9-10](#)). **Love in truth** could mean simply “truly love” as a Christian brother, or it could refer to the “truth” of the gospel, in the service of which the lives of John and Gaius are intertwined.

**2** Wishes for **good health** were standard in the openings of ancient Greek letters, but John prays for Gaius’s health and also expresses care for his **soul**. Though spiritual growth can come through sickness and affliction (cf. [Ps. 119:67, 71](#)), it is right to

pray for good health, as Jesus' earthly healing ministry also demonstrated.

**3 the brothers came.** Apparently John had been visited by Christians from Gaius's church, who told John of Gaius's faithful Christian life. **Truth is fidelity to Christ and his commands.** (See also note on [John 14:6](#).)

**4 joy.** See [1 John 1:4](#) and [note](#). **my children.** His readers are first of all "children of God" (a signature Johannine expression; [John 1:12](#); [11:52](#); [1 John 3:1, 2, 10](#); [5:2](#)). But John as their spiritual overseer could view them as his own children too (see note on [1 John 2:1](#)). Paul's usage was similar ([1 Tim. 1:2, 18](#); [Titus 1:4](#); [Philem. 10](#)).

**5-8 Praise for Gaius's Support for Itinerant Christian Workers.** Whereas [2 John 10](#) warns against supporting the wrong people, John affirms Gaius's work on the behalf of faithful laborers, even though they are "strangers" ([3 John 5](#)).

**5 these brothers.** Traveling Christian workers. **The early church was centered on missionary outreach, otherwise it would not have survived and spread** (see [Heb. 13:2](#)).

**6 Send... on their journey** (Gk. *propempō*, "to send forth") in contexts like this carries the sense of sending with necessary

material (e.g., financial) support. The word with this sense is found also in [Rom. 15:24](#); [1 Cor. 16:6, 11](#); [2 Cor. 1:16](#); [Titus 3:13](#). **worthy of God. Those laboring at large for the gospel work not for themselves but for the One who sends them.**

**7 the name.** The very person of God himself, though John may refer here to Christ, signifying his deity. Cf. [Acts 5:41](#) and [Phil. 2:9](#). The workers accepted **nothing from the Gentiles**, that is, the non-Christian populace. Just as Paul normally did not accept aid from those among whom he labored ([1 Cor. 9:14-15, 18](#); [2 Cor. 11:8](#); [1 Thess. 2:9](#)), the workers did not want to be accused of hawking their message for personal gain.

**8 we ought to support. Not everyone is called to go and minister elsewhere. But all Christ's followers are called to play their part in this enterprise** ([Matt. 28:19-20](#)). **the truth. The gospel message** (see [Col. 1:5](#)).

**9-10 *Concern about Diotrephes.*** Just as Jesus and Paul had their detractors, John and Gaius encountered people who worked against the progress of God's kingdom.

**10** talking... against us. **The problem of “Christians” who reject things taught by the apostles persists today. not content with that. Sinful personal ambition is never satisfied but seeks to expand. refuses to welcome the brothers. Stands in the way of the support of traveling Christian workers.**

**11-12** *Advice and Commendation of Demetrius.* As John prepares to end his letter, he issues terse remarks of guidance.

**11** do not imitate evil. Probably **encouragement not to give in to Diotrephes or to descend to his level of “dirty politics.”**

**12** Normal postal service could not be entrusted with Christian correspondence like this letter (and possibly other letters from John as well; see [Introduction: Purpose, Occasion, and Background](#)).

**So someone like Demetrius served as courier. Phoebe probably served this function in delivering Romans (Rom. 16:1-2), and Tychicus likely hand-carried Ephesians (Eph. 6:21-22) and Colossians (Col. 4:7-8).**

**13-15 *Closing with Promise to Visit.*** John echoes the words of [2 John 12](#). Sometimes pastoral oversight requires physical presence for successful execution.

**13 had much to write.** Third John is a bare outline of many more things that John wants to communicate.

**15 friends.** An unusual term for fellow believers; but see [John 15:15](#). **every one of them.** Lit., “by name.” **John’s pastoral care is not remote and bureaucratic but personal, as Jesus commended and modeled** ([John 10:3, 14](#)).

- ESV Study Bible, The