

Introduction

In 1981, I was playing professional golf in Florida on the Spacecoast Golf Tour. At that time, I had only won one tournament as a professional. I had been making swing changes for several years, and the work had not yet paid off. At the same time, there was an older player by the name of Larry Mowry. He had just come off the PGA Tour, where he had played for many years. He was keeping his game sharp, and was probably anticipating the PGA Senior Tour. A few years later, he joined the Senior Tour and won five events, including the 1989 PGA Senior Championship. He won a total of ten professional tournaments in his career. Larry took notice of me, and came over to me one day as I was practicing my putting. He said that he could not figure out why I was not winning all the time. He said I had the game, and the mental toughness. He encouraged me to keep working at it, and he also gave me his vote of confidence. Within a couple of years, I did start winning. I ended up winning thirty-four tournaments as a professional. Larry's encouragement to stay the course was very encouraging.

In 1982, the United States was facing major financial problems. Ronald Reagan was the president at that time. Inflation was running 13.5%, considerably higher than the current inflation rate. The interest rates peaked near 20%, and the economy was stagnant. Unemployment had topped 10%, and many people were suffering. Reagan developed an economic program called, "The Program for Economic Recovery," which became known as Reaganomics. In the mid-term elections, one of Reagan's closest advisors, Edwin "Ed" Meese, and other key cabinet members urged Reagan to ignore the political pressure to change the plan, and to "Stay the Course."

The term, "stay the course," is an encouragement to persevere and endure the trial that you are going through. It implies a conviction that you are doing the right thing, and to patiently endure, because you will eventually have success if you stick with it.

What was the course for Reagan? His plan was to cut taxes. In particular it was to reduce the top marginal bracket from 70% to 50%, and eventually 28%. Second, the plan was going to deregulate the banking, energy, and transportation sectors. Third, it was to restrain government spending, with the exception of defense. Fourth, it was to tighten monetary policy. Reagan stayed the course, and the results over the next eight years were very positive. The inflation dropped from 13.5% to 4.1%, which I think is still high. The interest rates fell from 20% to 10%. I remember having our first home mortgage, and our ARM rate was 12.25%, which is twice what the current market rate is. There was strong economic growth and job expansion. Twenty million new jobs were added and the unemployment dropped from 10.8% to 5.5%. Gross National Product rose by 26%, so by staying the course, things did get better. Unfortunately, our national debt rose from nearly \$1 trillion to nearly \$3 trillion. I wish that we were still only \$3 trillion. Our current national debt is nearly \$40 trillion. We need another plan which begins to reduce our national debt. Reagan had stayed the course, and our country benefited from his plans.

Our passage today is not about our country's need to stay the economic course. It is about a church that was in trouble. A man named Diotrephes had taken control of the church. We do not know if he had been just an elder, or had been the lead elder, but he is now running the church. He was functioning like an autocratic leader, or what I call a king pastor. We have a lot of those in the church today. Furthermore, he had rejected a letter that the apostle John had sent to him. John sent some of his team members, and Diotrephes did not receive them either. Furthermore, he prevented the church members from showing hospitality to the men John sent, and he expelled any members that did house them. He was ruling like a tyrant.

There was a faithful man in that church that was walking in the truth, and his name was Gaius. John wrote and encouraged him, and told him what he had done so far, and how Diotrephes had rejected everything. John encouraged Gaius to stay the course. He told him to act faithfully and continue taking care of the brethren, particularly the strangers. He told him to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. Finally, he tells Gaius that when he comes, he is going to call attention to his deeds. Help was on the way, and in the meantime, he was encouraging Gaius to stay the course.

In our passage today, we will look at John's salutation. Second, we will look at John's encouragement to Gaius to support workers of truth. Third, we will look at the reason for writing, which is the problem of Diotrephes. Fourth, we will look at John's concluding remarks.

Stay the Course

1. Salutation
2. Reason for writing
3. Conclusion

(3 Jn 1-4) "The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. {2} Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. {3} For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, *that is*, how you are walking in truth. {4} I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth."

(3 Jn 5-8) "Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially *when they are* strangers; {6} 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. {7} For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. {8} Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth."

(3 Jn 9-11) "I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. {10} 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. {11} 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."

(3 Jn 12-15) "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. {13} I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write *them* to you with pen and ink; {14} but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. {15} Peace *be* to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name."

1. Salutation

Just as John did in his second letter, he identifies himself as "the elder." It is the Greek word, *presbuteros* (Strong's G4245), which means an elder or older man. Generally, it refers to the office of elder. Even though John was an apostle, he was also an elder in the church at Ephesus, where he has been serving for twenty to thirty years. In verse four, John mentions hearing his children walk in truth, so John probably led him to Christ, and had been his pastor, which is why he used the term elder.

(3 Jn 1) “The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.”

Just as we saw in 2 John, there is both internal and external evidence that it was John who wrote the letter. The external evidence are the writings of church fathers who referenced John as the writer. The internal evidence is the style and the choice of words, known as Johannine phrases.

John addressed this letter to Gaius. We do not know much about Gaius, outside of what we find in this letter. We do not know the meaning of his name, only that it was originally from Latin. Gaius was a very popular name at that time. Most people have heard of Julius Caesar, the famous Emperor of the Roman Empire. His full name was Gaius Julius Caesar. Gaius is mentioned four other times in the New Testament, but scholars do not link them with the Gaius in 3 John.

In Acts 19:29, we find that Gaius and Aristarchus are two of Paul’s traveling companions, and they are from Macedonia. We find in Acts 20:4, that Gaius is from Derbe. Scholars do not believe this is the same Gaius that we find in 3 John, and one of the primary reasons is that there is about forty years between these.

(Ac 19:29) “The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia.”

(Ac 20:4) “And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, *the son* of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.”

Another Gaius is mentioned in Romans 16:23 as the host of Paul and the whole church. Paul wrote the letter from Corinth, so this Gaius is from Corinth. The church was probably meeting in his home. That letter was written in 57 A.D., and again, this is nearly forty years later, so scholars do not believe this is the same Gaius. In 1 Corinthians 1:14, Paul mentioned that he had baptized Crispus and Gaius when he was planting the church in Corinth. So, this is the same Gaius mentioned in Romans 16, but not the Gaius in 3 John.

(Ro 16:23) “Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother.”

What do we know about Gaius that John is writing to? First, we know that he is loved by everyone. John addressed the letter to “the beloved Gaius whom I love in truth.” John loved him, but so did everyone else. In fact, John refers to him as beloved four times. If we are going to be known for one thing, this should be at the top of the list. Loving others is the identifying mark of a believer. Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

(3 Jn 1) “The elder to the **beloved** Gaius, whom I love in truth.”

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

(3 Jn 5) “**Beloved**, you are acting faithfully....”

(3 Jn 11) “**Beloved**, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good....”

(Jn 13:35) “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

We also know that Gaius is a man of truth. John loved him in truth, and then in verse three John wrote, “For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth.” Gaius knew the Word of God, and better yet, he walked in truth. John said, “I have no great joy than this, to hear of my children walking in truth.” This brought John great joy to hear that Gaius was walking in truth.

(3 Jn 3–4) “For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, *that is*, how you are walking in truth. {4} I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”

James would have also been full of joy hearing this because he exhorted all of us to be doers of the Word, not merely hearers who deluded themselves. James exhorted us to look intently at the Word so that we could be doers of the Word.

(Jas 1:22) “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”

When Moses turned over the reigns to Joshua, he told him to meditate on the Word, day and night, so that he would be careful to do according to all that is written in it. That is what we must do if we are going to walk in truth like Gaius. We have to read, study, look intently, meditate, and then apply the Word of God in our lives.

(Jos 1:8) “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”

John did not just greet Gaius with encouraging words about being loved and a man of truth, he also greeted him with a prayer. He wrote, “Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.” That is a wonderful prayer to pray for people. God wants us to prosper in all respects. He wants our marriages and relationships to prosper. He wants our businesses to prosper. He wants us to prosper in all respects. He wants us to be in good health. He wants our souls to prosper. These are also very interrelated. When someone’s soul is not prospering, because of bitterness, unforgiveness, jealousy, anger, or bitterness, research has shown statistically that these will impact our physical health. When our souls are not prospering, our relationships are also not going to prosper. It is a great prayer to pray for anyone.

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

Jennifer Graham, at Penn State, and Janice Kiecolt-Glaser and Ronald Glaser at Ohio State found that “chronic relational conflict is associated with:¹

- Slower wound healing
- Higher inflammatory markers
- Greater cardiovascular risk

¹ Graham, Jennifer E., Cognitive Word Use During Marital Conflict and Increases in Proinflammatory Cytokines. Health Psychology 28, no. 5 (2009): 621–630.

- Impaired immune function
- Increased risk for chronic disease.

We know from the Scriptures that “a joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.” We know that a tranquil heart is life to the body, but jealousy is rottenness to the bones. We know that giving attention to God’s word and keeping them in our heart gives life and health to our bodies. So, praying for people to prosper and be in good health as their soul also prospers is a very powerful prayer for people.

(Pr 14:30) “A tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion is rottenness to the bones.”

(Pr 17:22) “A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.”

(Pr 4:20–22) “My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. {21} Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart. {22} For they are life to those who find them and health to all their body.”

Some scholars believe that Gaius had some health struggles, which is why John prayed that specific prayer. I am not convinced of this, but it is certainly a possibility. At the same time, when someone greeted a person with a blessing of peace, it was a blessing for them to prosper. With everything going on in Gaius’ life, it was a very apropos greeting.

Where is Gaius? Some scholars, like Daniel Whedon, say that this was the church in Pergamum, which is one of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2:12-17. His source is a 4th century work called Apostolic Constitutions. Since it is three centuries later, and it has no sources given, most scholars do not treat the claim as historical proof. Pergamum was located about 125 miles north of Ephesus, and since John said he was going to go visit, it is certainly not unrealistic.

2. Reason for writing

The main reason for John writing to Gaius was to bring him up to date on Diotrephes. He tells him that he has written Diotrephes, but he did not accept what “we” had said. We don’t know who “we” is, but it is probably John and his team of ministers. Paul had a team of men working with him, and it is very probable that John had a team of men doing apostolic work, and they had written a letter to Diotrephes. John gives us some insight on why Diotrephes did not accept what he had written; “he loves to be first.”

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

Then, John tells Diotrephes that if he comes, he will call attention to his deeds which he was doing. Diotrephes was unjustly accusing John and his team members with wicked words. These were false allegations and accusations.

(3 Jn 10) “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.”

Not only did Diotrephes not accept what John had said, but John had sent some brethren, i.e., his team members, to Diotrephes, and Diotrephes had not received them. Not only did he not receive

them, but he forbade anyone else from receiving them, and put out of the church any brethren that did receive them.

When we look at a sketch of Diotrephes, we see someone who loves to be first. When Jesus was with His disciples, they were always trying to jockey themselves into being first, even sitting at His right hand in the heavenly kingdom. Jesus told them to learn to be the least, and to be the servant of all. Diotrephes apparently did not learn that lesson. He still loved being first.

(Mk 9:33–35) “They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He *began* to question them, “What were you discussing on the way?” {34} But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which *of them* was the greatest. {35} Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”

Second, we see that he refused to be hospitable. One of the requirements for elders was to be hospitable, and Diotrephes was not hospitable. Not only was he not hospitable, but he would not others in the flock to be hospitable.

(1 Ti 3:2) “An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, **hospitable**, able to teach,”

Third, Diotrephes was domineering, controlling, and self-willed. In 2 John 7-11, John had taught not to receive antichrists and deceivers, but Diotrephes was applying this to the Apostle John and his team, who were not deceivers or antichrists. He was twisting Scripture to protect his control of the flock. He was domineering, and controlling. He was seeking his own will, not God’s will.

(Tt 1:7) “For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,”

Fourth, Diotrephes was lording over the flock, rather than leading them by example and with a servant’s heart. Peter had learned the lesson from Jesus, and in his first letter, he addressed the pastors. He gave them three exhortations about how to pastor the flock. He exhorted pastors not to lord over those allotted to their charge, but to prove to be examples to the flock. Diotrephes was an example, but not a positive one; he was a poor example to the flock.

(1 Pe 5:3) “nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”

Fifth, Diotrephes did not receive counsel, even from the Apostle John. We do not know whether John had ordained Diotrephes. If John had ordained Diotrephes, he would have had responsibility for the sins of Diotrephes, which may explain why he was addressing the matter, and planning to go there to bring much needed correction. I believe in the autonomy of the local church. I believe the elders of the church are to lead, shepherd, and manage the local church. I do not believe that apostles in other places lead a church from afar. So, John would have been a point of counsel to Diotrephes, which he was choosing not to receive. However, I do not see any indication that the elders, the presbytery, were leading the flock; I see Diotrephes running the show, and this is not a proper New Testament government. Unfortunately, I see many churches today with a similar autocratic leadership, rather than by a team of elders.

When John said that he was going to call attention to his deeds which he does, that is not something that we normally do. We do not expose the sins of others, especially publicly, unless it is a matter of church discipline. John has written to Diotrephes, and he has not accepted what he said. He sent his team members there, and Diotrephes did not accept them either. John is telling these things to Gaius to let him know what he intends to do when he comes. In 1 Timothy 5:19-20, Paul lays out the steps of correction for elders. A church is not to receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. In this case, John and his team members satisfy that condition. Elders who continue to sin are to be rebuked in the presence of all, which is what John intends to do when he comes. This is a matter of correction of an elder, and in this case, probably the lead elder in the congregation. I believe this is why John has shared with Gaius what Diotrephes is doing, where they are in the process of correction, and what he plans to do when he arrives.

(3 Jn 10) “For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does...”

(1 Ti 5:19–20) “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. {20} Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful *of sinning*.”

After John’s greeting to the beloved Gaius, he tells him that he is acting faithfully in whatever he accomplishes for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers. Scholars are not sure about whether Gaius was or had been part of the leadership team at his church. Most believe he was an influential and well-to-do member in the church. He has apparently been hosting some of the brethren that John has sent, and since he was beloved and well-respected by everyone, he has not yet been exiled from the church by Diotrephes. We do not know any more than he has been practicing hospitality, and John encourages him to stay the course, to keep helping the brethren when they are there. John has received testimony of Gaius’ love from the brethren that were helped by Gaius, and John is encouraging him to keep up the good work.

(3 Jn 5-6) “Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially *when they are* strangers; {6} 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.”

I shared this encouragement to Gaius after the verses on Diotrephes because I wanted to give the right perspective to what John was saying. Gaius could face expulsion from the church by Diotrephes for not following his orders, and for receiving the brethren into his house. This was an encouraging and much-needed word to stay the course, to keep receiving the brethren, and to make sure they are well-taken care of.

Next, John vouches for his team members, saying they went out for the sake of the Name. His team members were not serving their own needs, having their own agenda. They were doing kingdom business in the Name of Jesus. They were laboring on behalf of Jesus. Furthermore, these men had not accepted anything from the Gentiles. The normal Greek word for Gentiles is *ethnos* (Strong’s G1484). The Greek word for Gentiles here is *ethnikos* (Strong’s G1482), and it is only used three other times, and all of those were by Jesus. In all other three uses, Jesus was speaking about unbelievers. Here, John is not saying that Gentile believers, of which there were many in the church, could not support the brethren. He was saying that they did not seek to raise money from unbelievers; they received their support from believers and were doing God’s work. Therefore, John encouraged Gaius to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

(3 Jn 7-8) “For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. {8} Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.”

In Matthew 10, Jesus said, “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 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. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.” When you support a prophet or minister doing God’s work, you are a fellow worker with him, and you shall be rewarded for your support. John was encouraging Gaius to support the brethren and to send them off in a worthy manner, and in so-doing, they would be fellow workers in the truth.

(Mt 10:40–42) “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. {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. {42} And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.”

He concludes his encouragement to Gaius to stay the course by telling him not to imitate what is evil, but what is good. He said the “one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.”

(3 Jn 11) “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.”

The Apostle Paul often contrasted evil and good. In Romans 12:9, he wrote, “Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.” Then, in verse twenty-one, he wrote, “do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Finally, in his closing remarks he wrote, “Be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.” Gaius had a very poor leadership model, John did not want him picking up any of Diotrephes’ ways. He wanted him to focus on doing what was good, which was to receive the brethren, take good care of them, and send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.

(Ro 12:9) “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.”

(Ro 12:21) “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

(Ro 16:19) “For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.”

Next, John brings up a man named, Demetrius. He said that Demetrius had received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. John also added their own testimony of Demetrius, and he reminded Gaius that his testimony is true. Who is Demetrius, and why does John introduce him to Gaius?

(3 Jn 12) “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.”

Demetrius is a Gentile believer. We know from his name that he is a Gentile believer. His name means devoted to Demeter. In Greek mythology, Demeter was the goddess of agriculture, grain, and fertility. Demeter was the sister of Zeus, who was the chief god. No Jew would name their son or devote their son to a pagan god, but this was a common name throughout the Roman Empire. There is one other Demetrius' mentioned in the Scripture. In Acts 19, a silversmith named Demetrius led a riot against Paul. There is no evidence that this is the same man, and since there is a huge time gap between these two books, it is highly unlikely that they are the same person.

Why did John introduce him? Most scholars believe that Demetrius is delivering this letter to Gaius. Demetrius is one of John's team members. John wants Gaius to know that Demetrius is a man of God and of good character. He wants Gaius to treat him honorably, and take good care of him.

3. Conclusion

John finishes his letter very similarly to his letter to the chosen woman. He said he had many things to write to him, but was unwilling to write to him with pen and ink. John was hoping to go see Gaius shortly. The Greek word for shortly is *eutheos* (Strong's G2112), which means immediately, straightway, or at once. John was intending to go very soon afterwards, and he would speak to him face to face.

(3 Jn 13-14) "I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write *them* to you with pen and ink; {14} but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face."

When I read that it reminded me of a story my father told me. He was working as a chemist in Memphis, Tennessee, making \$75.00 a month. He was waiting to get accepted into medical school. He said he could not even afford a bus ticket. His uncle visited him, and asked him when he was going to get a real job. He told my father that he could get him a job in the oil business if he was interested. My father told his uncle that he did not have enough money to get to Houston, so my uncle gave him a hundred dollars. My father went to his boss to put in his two-week notice, and his boss told him that he did not need a two-week notice; he could leave right then. So, my father left and took a bus to Houston, and he nearly beat his uncle to Houston. He left immediately. I thought to myself, "if John was going to leave immediately, he could have possibly beat Demetrius there. If Pergamum was the city that Gaius was in, it would have been a two or three day walk.

John closes the letter with a common salutation, "Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name." The church in Ephesus was connected to this church. John's team members were also friends of Gaius, and they sent their greetings. John also knew Gaius' friends. I believe that John had spent time there helping to establish the church, and had built relationships with the people there. I believe this is part of the reason that John cares so much about what is happening in that church, and he wants to get this matter cleared up as soon as possible.

(3 Jn 15) "Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name."

Bad leadership hurts people. I have personally witnessed this happen many times in my forty years as a pastor. These are God's sheep, God's people, God's family or household. These are

people that Jesus laid His life down for, and that He loves very much. John wants this resolved as soon as possible.

Conclusion and Applications

Our passage today gives us insight into what John was going to do with a leader that has gone astray. Diotrophes has taken over and was ruling like a tyrant. He was not receiving John's letters, his delegates that he sent, and was falsely accusing John and his team members. He was forbidding the church members from receiving and exercising hospitality to John's delegates. And he was putting out of the church anyone that wanted to receive them. He was a very bad leader, and John was intending to visit and call him to account. John was going to expose his deeds, which is one of the steps of discipline that Jesus had taught the disciples. In the meantime, John wanted Gaius to open up their homes to John's team members and other workers of truth, and to support them in a manner worthy of God.

Our first application is to support workers of truth. We need to support missions work, and we need to be coworkers in the truth.

(3 Jn 8) "Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth."

Our second application is to exercise hospitality. 2 John and 3 John are both very personal letters, one to a respected woman, and the other to a well-respected man. In 2 John, John exhorted the chosen woman not to practice hospitality in certain situations. She was not to receive or greet someone if they were a deceiver or antichrist. She was not to participate in their evil deeds. In 3 John, he encouraged Gaius to receive the brethren, the workers of truth, and to participate and be fellow workers with the truth. Both addressed hospitality, but the focus and applications were very different. Our passage today is an encouragement to all of us to practice more hospitality, especially to ministers and missionaries that are visiting. We are to receive them, take care of them, and send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.

Our third application comes from John's closing, where he said to imitate what is good and not what is evil. There are going to be people that do things that are not worth imitating. There will be church leaders like Diotrophes, who made false accusations of John, and there will be people who falsely accuse us of things. I have been falsely accused many times. We are exhorted not to follow their example. There will be church members that will do or say hurtful things, and we are not to follow their example. We need to avoid what is evil and cling to what is good.

(3 Jn 11) "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."

Our fourth application is to confront sin. Jesus taught us in Matthew 18:15-18 that when our brother sins, we are to go to him in private and confront him. This is what John did and was doing. When people say or do harmful things, we need to be like John and confront them. We cannot sweep these things under the carpet and ignore them. God tells us to confront our brother when he sins, and this is not commonly practiced in the church today. We live in a day where we accept sin. We need to fear God, and He is a holy God. We need to confront in a loving way and with the right attitude, which Paul discusses in Galatians 6:1-4.

Our fifth application is to forgive people, so that you maintain a healthy soul. When people do or say evil things to us, we need to forgive them. We are not to take revenge. We are to forgive them. We will be the ones who suffer if we harbor unforgiveness. Learn to practice forgiveness so that your soul prospers at all times.

(Mt 18:15) “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”

Our sixth application is to fix your eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 12 tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. By keeping our focus on God, and not on the evil actions or words of people, we can have the right perspective, attitude, example to follow. We are to be imitators and followers of Jesus, and that will help us when we are in difficult circumstances.

(Heb 12:2) “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for inspiring John to write these letters. Thank You for the truths that we find in these books. Help us to practice hospitality. Help us to receive and support men of truth. Help us to support missionaries and those who are risking their lives for Your Name. Lord, help us to confront sin, just as John was doing. Help us to imitate what is good, not what is bad. I pray for us to prosper and be in good health, just as our souls also prosper. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think John gives the greeting to Gaius about prospering and being in good health, as well as having his soul prosper? Is it possible that Gaius is sick over what is happening in his church, and that his soul is not at peace?
- Does poor leadership bring peace or unrest in a congregation?
- What do you think John said to Diotrephes in the letter that he wrote?
- Why is Diotrephes rejection of John's letter and the team that he sent so important?
- Why do you think that the apostle John is getting involved in this situation?
- If you were writing the letter to Diotrephes, what would you say to him?
- If your soul is not at peace or prospering, what are some things you can do to put your soul at rest?
- Why is John's exhortation to Gaius about not imitating what is evil, but what is good, so critical in this situation?

Stay the Course (3 Jn 1-15)

Introduction (3 Jn 1–15)

- 1. Salutation** (3 Jn 1-8, Ac 19:29, 20:4, 3 Jn 11, Jn 13:35, Jas 1:22, Jos 1:8, Pr 14:30, 17:22, 4:20-22)

- 2. Reason for writing** (3 Jn 5-12, Mk 9:33–35, 1 Ti 3:2, Tt 1:7, 1 Pe 5:3, 1 Ti 5:19-20, Mt 10:40–42, Ro 12:9, 12:21, 16:19)

- 3. Conclusion** (3 Jn 13-15)

Conclusion and Applications (3 Jn 8, 3 Jn 11, Mt 18:15-18, Ga 6:1-4, He 12:2, 3 Jn 4)

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