

3 JOHN

In his third letter, John is writing a more personal letter to a church member named Gaius, commending him for his actions and encouraging him to continue his walk with Christ. We will be taking a closer look at the story behind the letter and see what insights John provides us about walking with Jesus and the responsibilities of our local church as we work together in the Kingdom of God.

Read 3 John, then consider the following.

1. Who is Demetrius and what happened to him at Gaius' church?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Demetrius was a traveling brother-in-Christ, i.e., a traveling preacher.
 - b. ANSWER 2: He was looking for a place to stay, and the church rejected him.
2. Who is Diotrephes?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Diotrephes was the dominant force in Gaius' church, but he was an evil influence on the truth and the church there.
 - b. ANSWER 2: He did not extend hospitality to Demetrius, who, as indicted previously, was a traveling brother-in-Christ.
 - c. ANSWER 3: In fact, Diotrephes wanted to drive out anyone from the church who thought that extending hospitality to Demetrius was a good thing to do.
3. Who is Gaius, and what had he done?
 - a. ANSWER: Gaius was a church member who resisted Diotrephes' wishes and extended hospitality to Demetrius a traveling preacher working in the Kingdom.
4. What does it mean to walk in the truth? (This topic was also covered in our study of 2 John.)
 - a. ANSWER: We can only "walk in the truth" if first, we know what the truth is, and second, if we are obedient to the truth that God has made known to us. John 14:6 quotes, "...I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." [NIV] Conversely, we can also determine what *not* walking in the truth looks like. 1 John 1:6 asserts, "If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth." [NIV]
5. In 3 John 1:11, what does it mean to imitate what is good? (See also Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 4:8, and John 10:32.)
 - a. ANSWER: John tells us that if we "do good," it is "from God." We are thus called to imitate the good works of Christ. As we have learned from all of John's teachings in the series of his epistles, at the center of any good work is love. If we love Jesus and do things in his name out of love, then we are then doing, or "imitating," good works. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:10, we were created by God for this exact purpose. Furthermore, in Philippians 4:8, Paul provides a measure by which we can always be sure if something is true and good. These are the things that we should think on—and do—if we are to imitate Jesus our Savior.
6. What does it mean to imitate what is evil? (See also John 7:7 and 1 John 2:16.)
 - a. ANSWER: We probably don't have to struggle very much to come up with many examples of doing, or imitating, what is evil. Jesus tells us that following the ways of the world is evil and that we are to avoid the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"—as these do not come "from the Father but from the world." [NIV]
7. What is John teaching the church about traveling workers for Christ and how we are to treat them?
 - a. ANSWER: John is teaching us that, as individual followers of Christ and also as a local church body, we have responsibilities toward fellow workers in the kingdom. We cannot ignore them simply because it might be inconvenient, or because they don't belong to our membership, or because helping them doesn't serve our own agenda. How can we say that we are doing or imitating good works when we turn away a brother or sister in need; more importantly, how can we do this when they are fellow workers in the kingdom?

Gaius' faith and service were commended by John in this letter, and we should view him as commendable as well. What an example he sets for us as individuals and as a church body! On the other hand, even though John and others spoke well of him, because Demetrius was a stranger in their congregation, Diotrephes turned Demetrius away and worked hard to see that no one helped him. Despite Diotrephes' negative influence and admonishments, Gaius was quick to help Demetrius, and he demonstrated to everyone what a true walk in the faith looks like.

I pray that you have been blessed by our study of 3 John—and all of John's three letters—and that through this study, your walk with Jesus has been strengthened. May all of us work hard to imitate good works and avoid evil, so that God will use us in His kingdom—just as He used Gaius.

In Christ,

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