

# LET'S WORK TOGETHER / Sunday, May 3, 2015

## Unifying Topic: COWORKERS WITH THE TRUTH

### Lesson Text

**I. Greetings To The Beloved** (3 John 1-4)

**II. Working Together** (3 John 5-8)

**III. Obstructing The Mission** (3 John 9-14)

**The Main Thought:** We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth. (3 John 8, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** Most people really appreciate the kindness and generosity they have experienced because of good hospitality. What is it about receiving hospitality that makes it so important? Third John says that hospitality is one way that Christians express their faith in Christ to others, making the faith in Christ to others, making the faithful coworkers with the truth.

**Lesson Aim:** To familiarize students with the setting and contents of 3 John and help them apply its lessons for today.

**Life Aim:** To encourage students to abide in God's truth.

### HISTORY:

The authorship of the letter of Third John is Apostle John, just as the First and Second Epistles, written in Asia near Ephesus in the last quarter of the first century. Third John is all about leadership in the church. Leadership within the church is critical. Therefore, how leaders live and behave is of critical importance because their lives affect the lives of the whole church. In this epistle, three leaders are seen: two were godly men, and one was a troublemaker. The three leaders are Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius. Gaius and Demetrius are praised for their faithful work.

### LESSON:

#### **3 John 1-4 Greetings To The Beloved**

**V1 The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.** John is the one addressing this letter and calls himself "*the elder*" again, but this time he is writing to the wellbeloved Gaius whom he loves in truth. John calls him beloved four times (v.1, 2, 5, 11). He was deeply loved. They were definitely friends but their close bond was Christ. He was leader in the church and he did his job well; a great servant of Christ.

**V2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.**

It's always good give good tidings. Gaius prospered spiritually. He might have had some ill health; suffered some illness or disease, or at least subject to being sick a lot. His health crosses John's mind, and John wants him to know that he was thinking and praying for his health just as he is praying for his soul to prosper. John prayed for Gaius to prosper and to be in good health. Gaius' soul did prosper. The idea was that he was growing spiritually, growing stronger and stronger in Christ and in the fruit of the Spirit.

**V3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.** In 2 John, John rejoiced in the elect lady's children walking in truth, now, he rejoices in Gaius who also walks in truth.

1. Gaius, the church leader, had a strong testimony among the believers of the church. Some of the believers had visited the city where John was and shared their testimony of Gaius with John. What they shared was this: Gaius walked in the truth. This means that he walked in the truth of Jesus Christ and in the truth of God's Word. He lived out this truth—according to the message of the apostles.

**V4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.**

2. Gaius brought joy to the hearts of the believers, and it also was a joy within himself to hear of this news. John says, "*my children*", because as a result of his preaching, he was the spiritual father of many, including Gaius.

Gaius was apparently standing firm in the truth despite severe opposition from another church leader and a clique that the divisive leader had drawn around him. It's difficult enough to stand against the normal temptations and trials of life, but when fellow believers begin to attack us, it makes standing up for the truth even more difficult. Gaius stood up for the truth of Christ and of God's Word. He stood against those within the church who were not following the truth and were damaging and destroying the church by their divisiveness.

### *3 John 5-8 Working Together*

**V5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;**— John called him dear friend, who was faithful in whatever he did; whatever he labored in. Gaius was doing all he could to help and support the brethren and strangers; and traveling ministers, even opening his home in order to reach and grow them in Christ.

**V6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:**— These brethren and strangers have borne witness; testified of his charity; his love in the presence of their church. Gaius' reputation for hospitality and kindness exceeded himself in a manner worthy of God, which meant, he treated people as God would treat them on their journey forward. John encouraged Gaius to keep practicing hospitality.

**V7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.** They are traveling for the Lord, and accepted nothing from people who were not believers. John asked Gaius to help these Christians. This was because they were going to serve Christ. Their own church sent them to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ and as they travelled, they had to depend on the help of Christians. They had no other resources to live on. In each place, they needed food and somewhere to stay. They would not ask for help from those who did not believe in Christ (Gentiles).

**V8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.** Traveling ministers should be received and supported because we need to work together promoting truth. It is the very thing that God would do.

### *3 John 9-14 Obstructing The Mission*

**V9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.** Now we come to another prominent leader in the church, his name is Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among the people (loved to be first; to take the lead; loved recognition). He would rule or ruin. John wrote to the church, but Diotrephes didn't accept what he had to say. He had enough authority to reject ministerial leadership. I am not sure what office he held.

**V10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.** John acknowledges that if he comes to confront this matter, he would remember Diotrephes' deed, for he was a divisive leader, rejecting John's authority as an elder and as a minister of God. He had to be disciplined:

- Diotrephes criticized, talked about, and ranted against them with malicious talk.
- He did not receive or welcome the brethren into his house.
- He forbid and interfered with those who would welcome the brethren by casting them out of the church.

Diotrephes would not even allow John's letter to be read before the church. This is the very reason John has

addressed this letter to Gaius. Diotrephes had destroyed John's letter to the church.

**V11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.** John gives this warning that Diotrephes is not to be followed. Don't follow evil, but follow that which is good. Following that which is evil has not seen God, but doing good is of God. No matter who he is; no matter what his position is, his leadership is to be rejected if he begins to sow seeds of divisiveness, for a divisive person continues to do evil, and the person who does evil is not born of God.

**V12 Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.** Our third leader in the church is Demetrius, having a good report of all men; he stands as a dynamic example of a godly leader.

1. Demetrius had a strong testimony among all believers. He was held in high esteem by God's people; highly respected.
2. Demetrius had a strong testimony for walking and being a witness in the truth.
3. Demetrius was highly esteemed by other leaders. John himself was able to bear record to the testimony of Demetrius, and implying that whatever is said is trustworthy, for everyone who knows John, knows that he is also trustworthy.

There is a possibility that Demetrius was one of those who had been opposed and not allowed to teach in the church. Therefore, being one of the traveling evangelist or teachers serving in the church was the one willing to personally deliver the letter of Third John to Gaius and the church to deal with the problems of the division.

**V13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:**– Even in this letter, there is much to say to Gaius and the believers, but it couldn't be written down.

**V14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.** John hopes to shortly see Gaius to speak with him face to face, for the problem was severe.

- He wished peace upon them, the very thing Gaius and the church needed.
- He sends greeting from mutual friends. This was a salute. This was not saying that they are not being rejected or frowned upon by other churches and believers because they were unable to handle the division and to discipline of the divisive leader. No, they saluted them.
- He asks Gaius to greet his friends by name for him.

## **SUMMARY:**

John is the elder in this epistle of 3 John addresses and greets Gaius, commending him for his hospitality towards a group of traveling brethren or ministers and he rejoices that Gaius walks in truth (**vv.1-4**).

John continues to admonish Gaius on how he treated the brethren and strangers because they in turn had given witness of the love Gaius provided; receiving and supporting them as coworkers to the truth (**vv.5-8**).

On the other hand, John describes his conflict with Diotrephes, who does not acknowledge the Elder's authority; does not receive the brethren; criticizes and forbids those who would want to welcome the brethren by casting them out of the church. John gives warning to not follow evil for they that follow evil have not seen God. This would be to not follow in Diotrephes ways, but do what is good. Then John speaks to Demetrius. Like Gaius, Demetrius is walking in the truth. His life matches his confession. He may have carried this letter from John to Gaius. In conclusion, John had more to write but wanted to speak face to face to Gaius and the others. He and other friends wished them peace and salute them (**vv.9-14**).

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