

Work Together for the Truth

3 John 1:1-14
SS Lesson for 05/03/2015

Devotional Scripture: 1 Cor 3:1-9

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson helps us learn and apply why and how we should **Work Together for the Truth**. The study's aim is to learn how important godly fellowship is in God's work and to know that each of us can be an effective coworker in the ministry of God's Word. The study's application is to put into practical use the pertinent lessons about fellowship seen in 3 John. (*Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*).

Key Verse: 3 John 1:8

We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

After praising the general conduct of Gaius, the writer moved directly to a matter that concerned him. Those who go forth to preach the truth need the support of Christians in the places where they travel. Unlike Diotrephes, Gaius gave this kind of assistance and the apostle wished to assure him that this was the proper course of action. This contrasts, interestingly, with the emphasis in 2 John 10-11 on *not* giving hospitality to false teachers.

Addressing Gaius again as “beloved” (**dear friend**; cf. vv. 1, 2, 11), the writer commended his hospitality to Christians who came his way. The NIV adopts a form of text in which **brothers** and **strangers** are equated. But many manuscripts read, “for the brothers and for strangers.” Read in this way, the writer would refer to the traveling preachers as “the brothers,” while also asserting that Gaius’ hospitality did not stop there but extended also to “strangers” (probably esp. Christians) who happened to be in the vicinity. (Regarding Christian responsibility to entertain strangers, see Heb. 13:2.) About this course of conduct, the apostle declared, **You are faithful in what you are doing**. That is to say, such conduct is praiseworthy because it is an act of fidelity to the truth of God. Again, as in 2 John 1-2, love stems from truth. The report of Gaius’ hospitality (**your love**) had reached **the church** where John now was. This may well have been the church at Jerusalem if the epistle was written before A.D. 66. Undoubtedly, if this is so, Gaius would have been pleased to know that the highly respected Jerusalem congregation had heard of his service to the servants of God. But John now followed up this encouragement with an exhortation: **You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God**. The words “you will do well” are idiomatic in the original and virtually equal to “please.” The verb for “send... on their way” (*propempsas*) no doubt carried in general usage the connotation of making adequate provisions for one’s guests, both while they stayed and at the time of their departure. The force of the apostle’s words was to enjoin on Gaius an openhanded generosity toward the traveling brethren. Nothing less than such generosity would be “worthy of God,” who expressed His supreme generosity in the giving of His Son. The reason for such behavior (the verse begins in the Gr. with the untranslated “for,” *gar*) is that those whom Gaius should help have gone out **for the sake of the Name**. The “Name” here is, of course, that of Jesus which was now exalted above every name (Phil. 2:9-11). To go out on behalf of that Name was a supreme honor (cf. Acts 5:41 for the honor of suffering for it). Naturally, it was inappropriate for those who did so to seek support from those who did not believe in or honor that Name. Thus the Lord’s servants **went out, receiving no help from the pagans**. Even in the present day, there is something unseemly in a preacher of the gospel soliciting funds from people to whom he offers God’s free salvation. But the fact that faithful Christian preachers sought no help from the unsaved meant that Christians were under a special obligation to assist them. By extending the needed help (showing **hospitality to such men**), Christians such as Gaius could **work together for the truth**. This last phrase might be better rendered “be fellow workers with the truth” (NASB). The thought is of partnership with what the truth accomplishes in people’s hearts and lives. It was a noble objective for Gaius to follow.

Not everyone shared this worthy objective, however. John stated, **I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us.** The simple reference to “the church” suggests strongly that this was the church to which Gaius belonged. It sounds as if Gaius may not have known about John’s letter to the church. It may well be that Diotrephes had suppressed it and kept it from the church’s attention. Diotrephes, John observed, was motivated by a love for preeminence in the church. He was not the last church leader to be so motivated. The temptation to use a role in the Christian assembly as a means of self-gratification remains a real one that all servants of God need to resist. As a result of his personal ambitions, Diotrephes resisted the apostle’s wishes. The expression, “will have nothing to do with us,” may also be translated, “does not welcome us as guests.” The apostle was probably thinking of Diotrephes’ refusal to accord hospitality to the traveling brethren (cf. v. 5) who came to the church (perhaps with the letter just mentioned), and he took Diotrephes’ rejection of the brothers as a rejection of himself. Quite possibly Diotrephes did not present himself as a personal opponent of John, but in rejecting John’s representatives he was rejecting John (cf. John 13:20). The writer, however, knew that he could deal with this matter in person. **So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing.** This assertion should probably be taken as an understatement. The verb (*hypomnēsō*) means basically “to remind” or “to call to mind.” Here the phrase might be translated, “I will call his works to mind” with the manifest implication that Diotrephes’ works would be dealt with appropriately. Diotrephes, the writer asserted, had been guilty of three things. First, he was **gossiping maliciously about us.** These words are literally “bringing false charges (*phylarōn*, used only here in the NT) against us with evil (*ponērois*) words.” No doubt that self-willed leader did his best to tear down the reputation of those whom he was not prepared to receive (as in v. 9, the “us” may refer chiefly to John’s representatives). But Diotrephes went beyond mere talk, wrong as that was. **Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers.** This was his second wrongdoing. His malicious prattle no doubt laid the groundwork for actual refusal of hospitality (in contrast with Gaius’ hospitality). And, third, like many other ecclesiastical dictators since his time, Diotrephes did all he could to enforce his will on others: **He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.** Using his self-acclaimed authority, having a prominent position (v. 9), he forced other believers to be inhospitable or, if they weren’t, even prevented them from gathering with the church. Perhaps Gaius already knew most of these facts. It is likely that John was indirectly reminding him of the potential difficulties he faced in welcoming men who served the truth. But Gaius’ obvious dedication to hospitality (vv. 5-6) suggests that he was a man of some means and probably in a good position to resist the authority of Diotrephes. He would be further encouraged by John’s promise that he would deal with Diotrephes when he arrived. At any rate, Gaius was **not to imitate what is evil but what is good.** Diotrephes’ behavior was to be avoided, not copied. One’s conduct clearly reflects one’s relationship with God. **Anyone who does what is good is from God.** The words “from God” translate the Greek phrase *ek tou theou*, which occurs a number of times in 1 John (e.g., 3:10; 4:1-4,6-7). It suggests that the source of one’s actions or attitudes is in God. Conversely, **anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.** With this, the statement of 1 John 3:6 should be compared. The assertion should not be watered down. Evil never arises from a real spiritual perception of God but is always a product of darkness of heart and blindness toward Him. John was not questioning Diotrephes’ salvation, but he *was* affirming that Diotrephes’ conduct manifested real blindness toward God. Gaius was to be careful to shun such an experience as this.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

One peculiarly American distortion of the gospel is known as the health and wealth gospel or the gospel of prosperity. Religion columnist Cathleen Falsani has put this teaching in her category of “The Worst Ideas of the Decade,” so this is not a false teaching hidden behind closed doors. There are many variations to this teaching, but essentially it ties together physical, material, and spiritual health. Those who preach this doctrine tell their listeners that God wants them to be wealthy and healthy. To prosper in these ways requires strong faith, so the lack of a large bank account and/or a healthy body is a sign of spiritual failure. Sometimes this is tied to a teaching that faithfulness is measured by how much you give to a ministry and that God will multiply

your monetary offering many times over in your personal life. This message has funded some very large ministries. The gospel of prosperity has been picked up by preachers outside North America and delivered with gusto to the poor of Africa, Asia, and particularly Latin America. Christianity is proclaimed not so much as a message of reconciliation with God but as investment wisdom, a path to wealth. How all this will play out has yet to be seen, but the empty promises of this distorted gospel have already alienated many seekers of truth. One Bible text used by prosperity preachers comes from 3 John, the focus of today's study. We will look at the entire book to see what John really intended his friend Gaius to know in this area, among other things.

We do not know the order in which 1, 2, and 3 John were written; they are simply arranged in our Bibles by length. It is likely, though, that 2 John (lesson 9) and 3 John were written at approximately the same time because of similarity in content. Therefore the background for the two is the same, so that information from lesson 9 need not be repeated here. We can add that 3 John is the shortest book in the Bible, containing a mere 211 words in the Greek; by comparison, 2 John has 245 words and Philemon has 337. The little book of 3 John has many points of similarity with 2 John, but differs in being more specific regarding those addressed. Both 2 and 3 John deal with the issue of hospitality in the first-century church. Nothing like our modern network of motels, hotels, and bed-and-breakfast lodging existed at the time. Therefore itinerant teachers needed to be hosted by families within a congregation. In 2 John, the apostle forbade extending hospitality to false teachers; this included denial of room and board as well as not allowing them to attend congregational meetings, which likely took place within the homes of believers. The opposite issue is addressed in 3 John.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Loving, Praying and Rejoicing With Fellow Workers (3 John 1:1-4)

- 1 The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:
- 2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.
- 3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth.
- 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Loving in truth (1)

Loving one another through being imitators of God (Eph 5:1-2)

5 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Loving one another through Jesus making love increase (1 Thess 3:12)

12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

Loving one another because it is taught by God to do so (1 Thess 4:9)

9 Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

Loving one another through obedience to the truth of God's word (1 Peter 1:22)

22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

Praying for workers to prosper (2)

Prosper in righteousness (Ps 92:12-14)

12 The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; 13 planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. 14 They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green,

Prosper through remaining in Jesus (John 15:3-5)

3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Prosper through the fear of the Lord (Ps 128:1-2)

128 Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. 2 You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours.

Rejoicing because the truth is in workers (3-4)

The truth living in us will be with us forever (2 John 1:2)

2 because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever:

The truth lives within us because God has hidden His Word in our hearts (Ps 119:11)

11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

The truth lives within us because God anointed us (1 John 2:27)

27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit-just as it has taught you, remain in him.

The truth lives within us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13-15)

13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

Support for Fellow Workers (3 John 1:5-8)

5 Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers,
6 who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well,
7 because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.
8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

Support through faithfulness (5)

It is a requirement that we be faithful because we have been given a trust (1 Cor 4:2)

2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

We are to be faithful to the truth to live a life worthy of God (Col 1:10)

10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

We are to be faithful to the truth so that God will consider us a faithful servant (Matt 25:21)

21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Without faithfulness, we cannot please God (Heb 11:6)

6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Support through providing resources (6-8)

Provisions through God's supplying directly through us (2 Cor 9:10)

10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

Provisions of faith (1 Thess 3:10)

10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Provisions that should evoke thanksgiving to God (2 Cor 9:12)

12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

Provisions through God's glorious riches (Phil 4:19)

19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Confronting Erring Fellow Workers (3 John 1:9-11)

9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.

10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.

11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.

Confronting by exposing evil (9-10)

Lies, No Matter How They Are Told! (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Have you heard about the program that has been in your computer for months taking pictures of you unawares and sending them out over the Internet? Or the map put out by the Fuji company that deletes Israel from the Middle East? Or the poisoned envelopes at the ATM machine? Or the HIV-infected hypodermic needles attached to the underside of gas pump handles? Or the . . . well, you get the idea! All of the above are hoaxes! They can be checked out at <http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org> or similar Web sites. Something about us humans makes us fall for lies, whether fraudulent moneymaking schemes or chain letters or almost-plausible stories that trigger our fears and fantasies. Falling for falsehoods is an age-old human trait; only the technology seems to have changed! John warns us strictly against those who deny

the testimony of the eyewitnesses that Jesus, the man, was God's Son. It doesn't matter how (or by how many) the message is spread. It is still a lie.

We should expose evil because there is no fellowship with sin (Eph 5:11)

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

We should expose evil because by doing so we may win over a brother (Matt 18:15)

15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

We should expose evil because others may take it as a warning (1 Tim 5:20)

20 Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

Confront by being a good example (11)

Be an example of godly speech, life, love and purity (1 Tim 4:12)

12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

Be an example of following the example of Jesus (1 Cor 11:1)

11 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Be an example of God's patience and grace (1 Tim 1:16)

16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Be an example by doing good (Titus 2:7-8)

7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Sharing with Fellow Workers (3 John 1:12-14)

12 Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

13 I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink;

14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

Share through good testimonies (12)

Good testimonies whose goal is to aid others to believe (John 19:35)

35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.

Good testimonies from things you know are true (John 21:24)

24 This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

Good testimonies through living a godly life (1 Thess 4:11-12)

11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Share through visitations (13-14)

Visitations to spend time with one another (1 Cor 16:7)

7 I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.

Visitations to provide or gather financial aid (2 Cor 9:5)

5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

Visitations to refresh (Rom 15:32)

32 so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from David Guzik

Greeting and introduction

1. (3 John 1:1) The writer and the reader.

THE ELDER, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

a. The Elder: The writer of this book identifies himself simply as the Elder. Presumably, the first readers knew who this was, and from the earliest times, Christians have understood that this was the Apostle John writing, the same John who wrote the Gospel of John 1:1-51 and 2 John, and the Book of Revelation.

i. Perhaps he does not directly refer to himself for the same reason he does not directly refer to his readers in 2 John - the threat of persecution may be making direct reference unwise; and of course, unnecessary.

b. To the beloved Gaius: We don't know if this specific Gaius is connected with the other men by this name mentioned in the New Testament (Acts 19:19; Acts 20:4; 1 Corinthians 1:14; Romans 16:23).

i. The identification is difficult because Gaius was a very common name in the Roman Empire.

2. (3 John 1:2-4) A blessing for faithful Gaius.

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

a. Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things: The word for prosper literally means "to have a good journey." It metaphorically means to succeed or prosper. It is like saying, "I hope things go well for you."

i. "Both verbs [for prosper and be in health] belonged to the everyday language of letter writing" (Stott). This phrase is so common that sometimes it was condensed into only initials, and everyone knew what the writer meant just from the initials.

ii. The abbreviation used in Latin was SVBEEV, meaning *Si vales, bene est; ego valeo* - "If you are well, it is good; I am well."

b. I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers: John used this common phrase in his sending of best wishes and blessings to Gaius. Some have wrongly taken this as a guarantee of perpetual wealth and perfect health for the Christian.

i. Of course, we should *always* remember that God wants our best and plans only good for us. Often present material prosperity and physical health are part of that good He has for us - and this prosperity and health are absolutely promised as the *ultimate* destiny of all believers.

ii. Yet, for the present time, God may - according to His all-wise plan - use a lack of material prosperity and physical health to promote greater prosperity and health in the scale of eternity.

iii. Nevertheless, *some* live in poverty and disease simply because they do not seek God's best, follow God's principles, and walk in faith. As well, there are *some others* who say we should use God's general promises of blessing as a way to indulge a carnal desire for ease, comfort, and luxury.

c. Just as your soul prospers: John here made an analogy between the condition of our health and the condition of our soul. Many Christians would be desperately ill if their physical health was instantly in the same state as their spiritual health.

d. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth: John's goodwill towards Gaius came from his understanding that he walked in the truth. Nothing pleased John more than to know that his children walk in truth.

i. John knew that Gaius walked in truth because brethren came and testified of the truth that was in Gaius. His walk of truth was noticed by others, and they could talk about it because they saw it.

e. That my children walk in truth: This means more than living with correct doctrine. "What is it to 'walk in truth'? It is not walking in *the* truth, or else some would suppose it meant that John was overjoyed because they were sound in doctrine, and cared little for anything else. His joyous survey did include their orthodoxy in creed, but it reached far beyond." (Spurgeon)

i. To walk in truth means to walk consistent with the truth you believe. If you believe that you are fallen, then walk wary of your fallenness. If you believe you are a child of God, then walk like a child of heaven. If you believe you are forgiven, then walk like a forgiven person.

ii. To walk in truth means to walk in a way that is real and genuine, without any phoniness or concealment.

Learning from good and bad examples

1. (3 John 1:5-8) Gaius: A good example.

Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. *If* you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

a. You do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers: John praised Gaius for his hospitality. This may seem somewhat trivial to us, but it is not to God. This is a practical outworking of the essential command to love one another; it is love in action.

i. This was a great compliment: you do faithfully whatever you do. Whatever God gives us to do, we should do it faithfully. Jesus said that when we see Him face to face some will hear the words, *well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.* (Matthew 25:21) Of the good servant, it is said he was *faithful*.

b. Send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God: In that day, Christian travelers in general and itinerant ministers in particular were greatly dependent upon the hospitality of other Christians. John knew that when Christians assist those who contend for the truth, they become fellow workers for the truth.

- i. The reward for these support people is the same as those who are out on the front lines. 1 Samuel 30:21-25 shows this principle, where the spoils are distributed equally among those who fought and those who supported. King David understood that the supply lines were just as vital as the soldiers, and God would reward both soldiers and supporters properly and generously.
 - ii. Jesus promised that even the help offered in a cup of cold water to one of His children would not be forgotten when God brings His reward (Matthew 10:42).
 - iii. This also explains why John would pray for the prosperity of Gaius: he used his resources in a godly way, being a blessing to others. If God blessed him with more, others would be blessed more also.
- c. Taking nothing from the Gentiles: The ancient world of the early church was filled with the missionaries and preachers of various religions, and they often supported themselves by taking offerings from the general public. But John said that these Christian missionaries should take nothing from the Gentiles (non-Christians). Instead of soliciting funds from the general public they were to look to the support of fellow Christians.
- d. In a manner worthy of God: Christians are not only called to help, but to help in a manner worthy of God. We are to do our best to help others excellently.
- i. Christians must first see that they are doing something to help the spread of the gospel. Then they must see that they do it in a manner worthy of God. God calls every one of us to have a part in the great commission, the command of Matthew 28:19 : *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. One can have a part by going or have a part by helping, but everyone has a part and should do it well.
 - ii. 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.* (Matthew 10:40-41) This should make us consider how we receive and help those who are preach the gospel.

2. (3 John 1:9-11) Diotrephes: A bad example.

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.

- a. But Diotrephes: John publicly rebuked a man named Diotrephes, and he rebuked him by name. In rebuking an individual by name, the apostle of love did not act outside of love. Instead, he followed the clear command of the Scriptures (Romans 16:17) and the example of other apostles (2 Timothy 4:14-15).
 - i. However, any such public rebuke must be made only when necessary, and we must be careful to not judge a brother against any standard that we ourselves would not be judged (Matthew 7:1-2).
 - iii. By presenting himself as a “prominent Christian leader” (at least in his own mind), Diotrephes knew that he was open to public criticism - just as much as he would publicly criticize the apostle John and his associates (prating against us with malicious words).
- b. Who loves to have the preeminence among them: Simply, the problem for Diotrephes was *pride*. In his pride, he did not receive the apostles such as John. This was in contrast to the humble hospitality of Gaius, who walked in the truth.
 - i. We can imagine a man like Diotrephes, a leader in the church in some city, looking at John and saying to himself, “Why should these big shot apostles get all the attention and honor? Look at my ministry! Isn’t it just as good?” And pride would lead him, like many others, to destruction.

ii. Boice on who loves to have the preeminence among them: “This is the original and greatest of all sins. It is the sin of Satan, who was unwilling to be what God had created him to be and who desired rather to be ‘like the Most High’ (Isaiah 14:14). It is the opposite of the nature of Christ ‘who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant’.”

c. Prating against us with malicious words: Diotrephes not only failed to receive John and the other apostles, but he also spoke against them. His malicious gossip against the apostles showed what kind of man he really was.

i. “The Greek verb which is here translated ‘gossiping’ comes from a root which was used of the action of water in boiling up and throwing off bubbles. Since bubbles are empty and useless, the verb eventually came to mean indulgence in empty or useless talk. This was the nature of Diotrephes’ slander, though, of course, the words were no less evil in that they were groundless.” (Boice)

ii. “The word signifieth . . . to talk big bubbles of words . . . it is a metaphor taken from over-seething pots, that send forth a foam; or . . . from overcharged stomachs, that must needs belch.” (Trapp)

d. Putting them out of the church: Diotrephes not only used his influence to forbid others from showing hospitality to John or his associates; he even tried to excommunicate those who tried to show such hospitality.

i. “To begin with, a man named Diotrephes had assumed an unwarranted and pernicious authority in the church, so much so that by the time of the writing of this letter John’s own authority had been challenged and those who had been sympathetic to John had been excommunicated from the local assembly. Moreover, due to this struggle, traveling missionaries had been rudely treated, including probably an official delegation from John.” (Boice)

ii. The example of Diotrephes shows that those who love to have the preeminence also love to use whatever power they think they have as a sword against others.

e. Do not imitate what is evil, but what is good: John gave us two clear examples, one good (Gaius) and one bad (Diotrephes), and he now applies the point - follow the good, for we serve a good God and those who follow Him will likewise do good.

i. John did not excommunicate Diotrephes, though as an apostle he had the authority to do so. Instead, he simply exposed him - and he trusted that discerning Christians would avoid Diotrephes as they should.

3. (3 John 1:12) Demetrius: A good example.

Demetrius has a *good* testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

a. Demetrius has a good testimony from all: John recommended this man to Gaius. Perhaps he was the one who carried the letter from John to Gaius, and John wanted Gaius to know that he was worthy of Christian hospitality.

b. Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself: Demetrius was so faithful to the truth that even the truth was a witness on his behalf.

Conclusion

1. (3 John 1:13-14 a) John explains such a short letter to Gaius.

I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.

a. I had many things to write: We can sympathize with John’s preference for personal, face to face communication rather than the writing of letters. Yet we are thankful that John was forced to write, so that we have the record of this letter of 3 John.

2. (3 John 1:14 b) Final blessings.

Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

a. Our friends greet you: In addition to a familiar blessing of peace upon Gaius, John also reminded him (and us) of the common ties of Christians - even if they are separated by miles, they are still friends in Jesus, and appropriately they should greet one another.

b. Peace to you: This is a letter about contention and conflict; yet John appropriately ends the letter with a desire and expectation for peace. As Christians, we can and should have a sense of peace even in the midst of difficult times. Christians have the resources in Jesus Christ to have peace even in unsettled seasons.

(Adapted from URL: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/view.cgi?book=3jo&chapter=001>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

If we are spiritually healthy, we will more easily bend our lives to the needs of others. This may result in extending hospitality to folks we barely know, with many applications in churches today. I have been a guest teacher or preacher in numerous churches over the years. Sometimes it has been necessary for me to stay in a hotel; but, when possible, I have always enjoyed staying with one of the church families. I get great meals, have a clean bed, and make new friends. I especially enjoy it when there are children in the household (since my children are adults), so I can again experience the world through the eyes of a child. Such hospitality makes my time of teaching and preaching all the more meaningful and precious to me and to the congregation. I come as a stranger, become a guest, and leave as a friend. Churches may also live this out when they support field missionaries. I have always thought that a church should have at least one missionary family for whom it provides at least partial funding, so that a long-term, fulfilling relationship may be developed with these folks. When the member of a missionary family is home on furlough, he or she should be given proper hospitality while visiting the church. This is more than money. It is friendship, encouragement, and acceptance. That may be reciprocated if members of the church take the time and expense to visit the missionary family on the field, something that was unthinkable 30 or 40 years ago. Hospitality between Christians builds a bond that strengthens ministry and contributes to the mission of spreading the truth of the gospel to all. The need to extend hospitality endures, and the words of 3 John on this topic continue to be of great value for us.

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

In the workplace, employee team efforts have a better outcome when there is a common goal. In this week's lesson, this concept seems to have been apparent to John, Gaius, and Demetrius, as they shared not only love for one another but also the pursuit of the truth. Together they contributed to the edification of the saints and the spread of the gospel. How easy it is for us to think more highly of ourselves than we should, like Diotrephes! We must remember that only Christ is to be preeminent in our personal lives and in our church. Let us determine to imitate that which is good, follow godly examples, and share our loving fellowship with those who are faithfully serving our Lord.