

Session 8: 3 John

OPEN

Have you ever learned something by watching someone else do it? Maybe ride a bike? Play a sport or a video game?

Why was it helpful to have someone show you, rather than tell you, how to accomplish your goal?

In this session, we're going to look at two men: One will show us how to live out everything that John's talked about in his last two letters. The other will give us a very real example of what happens when a believer refuses to listen to God's Word.

Read 3 John.

WATCH

Show Session 8: *3 John* (9 minutes).

DISCUSS

Over the course of this series, we've homed in on John's pastoral heart. We've seen his passion for God's children, for love among the people of God, and his zeal for truth. Here at the end of the series, we tighten the zoom a bit.

Dr. Tony Evans described 3 John as a postcard. Not one written to a church this time, but to one of John's dear friends, Gaius.

How does John greet Gaius? How would you describe his relationship to this younger brother in Christ?

Given everything we've studied in John's letters about how to live as a Christian, what stands out to you about John's attitude here?

One of the beautiful things that 3 John does for us is paint a practical picture of everything John's been admonishing us to do: cling to truth, love the children of God, and encourage others in holiness.

Read verses 5–8.

What is John commending Gaius for here? (Caring for the brothers and sisters in Christ who are traveling missionaries.)

How does John describe the people? (Strangers.)

Why is Gaius's behavior so compelling? (He treated them in a manner worthy of God.)

Gaius is, in every way, carrying out the mission that John set his readers on in his first two letters. He welcomed people who were strangers to him

because they were his brothers and sisters in Christ. And he equipped and sent them out with resources to continue to advance God's truth.

What opportunities have you (or do you) have to care for God's people? At church? In your family? Neighbors?

How could you reach out to them this week? What could you do to show them the love of God?

Just like today, not everything was peaceful in Gaius's world. Read verses 9–10.

John identifies a potential hitch in his plan to write to the church. What was it? (Diotrephes resisting John and the Apostles.)

What charge does John have against Diotrephes? (He's selfish and advancing only himself.)

In the session, Tony called Diotrephes the first "Tyrant of the Church." He wanted the church to remain firmly under his control, and he went so far as to reject even the authority of Jesus's disciples, including John.

Who else was Diotrephes rejecting? (The other brothers and sisters who were traveling.)

What does Diotrephes illustrate for us in light of John's letters? (Those who refuse to love God's children, and therefore who don't have the love of God at all.)

One of the sobering things about this short letter is how plainly it depicts the behavior that John has been warning against. We may not consider

ourselves hateful people, but we certainly struggle with feelings of pride and self-centeredness.

Have you ever found yourself itching to resist the authority of God’s Word, or the leaders God has ordained for the Church? Why or why not?

When faced with the temptation to seize power, what do you do?

PEEK AT THE GREEK

John devotes the majority of this letter to the contrast between the behaviors of Gaius (vs. 5–8) and Diotrephes (vs. 9–10). The former walks in deep hospitality and love for those around him, whereas the latter illustrates ungodly self-centeredness. By putting himself first, Diotrephes rejected the authority of John (v. 9), which led to Diotrephes “talking wicked nonsense” against John and his disciples. The term *phluareo* refers to the act of indulging in speech that makes no sense or needlessly disparages. In addition, John makes clear that Diotrephes condemns the discipline of hospitality and seeks to dispose of those who offer it to others in the church. His ambition became an arrogant rejection of truth, which led to false speech and rebellious behavior. Diotrephes is a case study of an ambitious individual who wanders from the Lord, an example we would do well to consider in our own lives.

If you've been in the Church for any length of time, chances are you've seen first-hand someone like Diotrephes. Not every "tyrant" is the pastor. Sometimes they're the person talking bad about the elder board or the worship leader. Sometimes they're the person who refuses to shake the hand of the African-American greeter in the lobby.

Or sometimes they're the person who looks at their phone through the whole sermon.

At the heart of Diotrephes's attitude, who is he most concerned with? (Himself.)

How do you respond when faced with inconveniences in your church? What about people who inevitably make demands on your time? (I'm too busy, I don't have the money/skills/talent, it's not my gifting, we have a church program for that, etc.)

What could you do in those instances to show love to God's people? To welcome them as brothers and sisters?

As we finish out this little postcard of a book, John reminds Gaius not to follow in Diotrephes's footsteps. **Why would it be tempting to do what Diotrephes did?**

When you see people in the church focused on themselves, how do you respond? How do you deal with the temptation to imitate their bad behavior?

It would be easy to fall into the mindset that says, "Everyone else is out for themselves. If I don't take care of myself, no one else will." But that's precisely what John warns Gaius against.

Imitate the good that comes from God.

John concludes his letter by pointing out that both Gaius and Diotrephes received the exact same testimony from the exact same people. The information they were given was the same. What they did with it, however, is what matters.

What will you do with what you've learned in this study in the letters of John?

How will your life be different—even this week—as a result of the testimony of truth you've heard?

What would you like to change in your Christian life to grow closer in fellowship with God?

What obstacles will you face in that journey? What can you do to deal with those obstacles?

How can your fellow sisters and brothers in Christ help you? How can they pray for you?

This journey through John has taken us into the very heart of our Christian faith. God has called us into close fellowship with Him, and equipped us with all the tools necessary for that relationship to flourish.

However, obstacles stand in our way—threats from the outside, deceivers from within the church, and even our own hearts can pull us far from the God we love.

The question that stands before us today is simple: will we love God and love others, even if it means loss for ourselves? Will we—like Christ—give up our rights, our power, and even our lives to show love to our God and our fellow believers?

If we will, God has promised us eternal life. And He will help us overcome.

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Pray: Ask God this week to open your eyes to those brothers and sisters in Christ that you may be overlooking. Ask Him to give you an opportunity to reach out to them and show them the love of God.

Write: Take fifteen minutes this week and write out a description of what you'd like your Christian life to look like. How would you like someone to describe your Christian faith? Select one of those characteristics, and commit yourself to developing in that area.

Connect: Ask your pastor (or investigate for yourself) if there are people in your church who are struggling to connect. Make the commitment to show them hospitality in the next two weeks.

Memorize: Pick the verse that most stuck out to you in this study of 1, 2 & 3 John, and commit it to memory. Then, this week, share it with someone.

Share: Identify the one most important lesson you've taken away from this study. Take five minutes this week and share what you've learned with a friend or coworker. Use that time as an opportunity to talk about the new family that God has given you.

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RightNow Presents **1, 2 & 3 John**
LEADER'S GUIDE

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