

**A LOOK AT THE BOOK  
3 JOHN  
LOVING THOSE WHO WALK IN TRUTH**

Ralph Porter  
© 2004

**AUTHOR AND DATE**

Although the letter itself identifies neither author nor date, tradition attributes the book to the apostle John.

The grammatical style supports that conclusion.

The description “the elder” indicates that he was an old man.

A date around A.D. 90 is usually suggested.

**BACKGROUND**

John has just received word of Gaius' hospitality from a group of brethren who traveled through the area.

The same brethren reconfirmed what John himself had experienced regarding Diotrephes' refusal to accept others.

**PURPOSE AND THEME**

John decided to write to Gaius to congratulate him for his hospitality and to encourage him to continue his assistance to the brethren.

He may also have hoped that Gaius might try to help Diotrephes or the church to correct the problem.

His message complements 1 and 2 John.

All three deal with true fellowship.

1 John demonstrates that true fellowship is based on common interests.

Fellowship with God and His people is for those who are like Him.

God is holy.                      To enjoy fellowship with God, we must be holy.

God is love.                      To enjoy fellowship with God, we must love one another.

God (Jesus) is life.              To enjoy fellowship with God, we must have life.

2 and 3 John teach that fellowship is based on love and truth.

2 John emphasizes the role of truth.

True fellowship *excludes those who do not walk in the truth.*

3 John emphasizes love.

True fellowship *includes all those who do walk in truth.*

We should love all those who walk in the truth.

We ought to demonstrate love and hospitality to brethren who need assistance as they travel.

## **ORGANIZATION**

The main body of the letter is structured around the three main people named:

Gaius is commended for his hospitality to the brethren 3-8

Diotrephes is condemned for his unwillingness to receive others 9-11

Demetrius is recommended by his testimony as one they should receive 12

Customary greetings open (1-2) and close (13-14) the letter.

### **INITIAL GREETING 1-2**

John's initial greeting combines the two basic elements which he believes essential to fellowship: love and truth.

His love for Gaius, to whom he directs himself, causes him to seek that God might bless him physically, as He has spiritually.

### **AUTHOR AND RECIPIENT 1**

### **DESIRE FOR GOOD HEALTH AND PROSPERITY 2**

### **COMMENDATION OF GAIUS 3-8**

*The Beloved Host*

John praises Gaius because of his hospitality which demonstrates his love for the truth and for those who walk in it.

### **JOHN'S CAUSE FOR REJOICING 3-4**

John has heard about his hospitality from those who had visited him as they traveled because of Christ.

Gaius walks in the truth himself.

John rejoices when he sees his spiritual children walking in the truth.

There's no greater joy for those committed to ministry than seeing those to whom they minister walking in obedience to the truth.

There's no greater sorrow for those committed to ministry than seeing those to whom they minister walking in disobedience to the truth.

### **GAIUS' COMMENDATION FOR HIS HOSPITALITY 5**

Their report caused him to rejoice.

Therefore, he praises Gaius for his faithfulness.

### **TRAVELERS' TESTIMONY CONCERNING HIS HOSPITALITY 6a**

John attempts to motivate Gaius to continue showing hospitality by informing him of their testimony before the church concerning him.

### **JOHN'S EXHORTATION TO CONTINUE SHOWING HOSPITALITY 6b**

John exhorts him to continue showing such hospitality.

### **JOHN'S REASON FOR SHOWING HOSPITALITY 7-8**

John explains the main reason they should assist such brethren.

They have gone out on account of Christ and expect no help from the pagans.

Assisting brethren who are serving the Lord in this way allows the host to be a co-worker with them in their ministry.

This is the second time John focuses on this principle.

In 2 John he emphasized that when we assist those who teach false doctrine we become co-workers with them in their false ministry (2 John 10-11)

## CONDEMNATION OF DIOTREPES 9-11

*The One who Loves to Be First*

In contrast to his commendation of Gaius' hospitality, John condemns Diotrephes for his refusal to welcome others.

### THE CAUSE 9

The reason he won't accept them is that he wants to keep control of the group and have first-place among the brethren there.

He is afraid that others might come along and threaten his position.

### THE RESULT OF HIS WORKS 10

John presents a warning for others who may be like-minded.

John plans to confront Diotrephes publicly if God allows him to go there.

Diotrephes is guilty of malicious gossip, of refusing to welcome other brethren, and of stopping or expelling others in the church who dare to contradict his policy.

### THE WARNING 11

Don't imitate him!

John warns his readers against imitating this kind of attitude and conduct.

He who is characterized by doing what is good belongs to God.

He who is characterized by doing what is wrong has never seen God!

These are lifestyle issues that will enable us to recognize God's children.

## RECOMMENDATION OF DEMETRIUS 12

*A Person of Integrity*

John recommends a third individual, Demetrius, to Gaius.

He may be the carrier of the letter or perhaps another traveler John expects to pass that way soon.

In any case, he should be welcomed because of his testimony before others and his walk in the truth.

John has no reservations concerning his character.

He demonstrates the evidence of a person who is characterized by doing what's right.

**TESTIMONY OF THE OTHER BRETHREN 12a**

**TESTIMONY OF THE TRUTH ITSELF 12b**

**TESTIMONY OF JOHN HIMSELF 12c**

**FINAL GREETING 13-14**

The letter closes with a final note of greeting.

**DESIRE TO VISIT THEM 13-14**

He would like to say more, but not in a letter.

Perhaps God will permit them to see each other soon.

**PERSONAL GREETINGS 15**

In the meantime, he sends a wish for peace and a greeting from the brethren with him to those with Gaius.