

# Lover of Truth

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3 John / 3 John 1–8

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## INTRODUCTION

- We are beginning a new book today
- It's 3 John
- It appears after 2 John and before Jude
- It is written by the same author as the gospel of John, first and second John and Revelation
- That man is the apostle John, disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ
- John is committed to two inseparable things: truth and love
- Those two inseparable virtues are found in all of his writings
- John begins his letter in verse 1 by identifying himself as “the elder”
- He used this same title in [2 John 1:1](#), “The elder”
- The Greek word is presbyteros which is a term used to identify age and leadership
- One writer says “it likely indicates ‘a position of great dignity’” (BDAG)
- The term conveys his advanced age and his authority in the church
- His audience is “the beloved Gaius” whom he loves in truth (v.1)
- Gaius is not the only individual mentioned in this letter: Diotrephes (9-11), Demetrius (12)
- 3 John is the shortest of all the books in the NT with only 219 words in the Greek text
- There are some interesting similarities between 2 and 3 John:

### **In both letters...**

- The author describes himself as “the elder” ([2 John 1](#); [3 John 1](#))
- The recipients are those whom he “loves in the truth” ([2 John 1](#); [3 John 1](#))
- The recipients are the occasion of “great rejoicing” ([2 John 4](#); [3 John 3](#))
- The recipients “walk in the truth” (2 John 4; [3 John 3](#))
- The elder has received good reports about both ([2 John 4](#); [3 John 3, 5](#))
- Both letters contains a warning ([2 John 8](#); [3 John 9](#))

- The elder desires to see both face to face ([2 John 12](#); [3 John 14](#))
- Others sent their greeting ([2 John 13](#); [3 John 14](#)) (Lexham Bible Dictionary)
- The structure of the two letters overall is also similar
- The brevity of each would have allowed them to fit on a single piece of papyrus paper
  - In 2 John the greeting & salutation appears in verses 1-3
  - In 3 John the greeting & salutation appears in verses 1-4
  - In 2 John, vv.4-6 is an exhortation to love
  - In 3 John the exhortation to love appears in verses 5-8
  - In 2 John there is a warning concerning false teachers in vv.7-9
  - In 3 John there is a warning concerning Diotrephes in verses 9-10
  - In 2 John there is a charge to reject false teachers in verses 10-11
  - In 3 John there is a commendation to receive Demetrius in verses 11-12
  - In 2 John the letter concludes with a greeting in verses 12-13
  - In 3 John the letter concludes with a greeting in verses 13-15
- Listen and follow with me as I read [3 John 1-15](#).
- Read 3 John
- There are three individuals named in this letter
- They are Gais (1-8), Diotrephes (9-11), and Demetrius (12)
- The letter is written to Gais about Diotrephes who wanted to be “first among them” and who “does not accept what we say” (v.9)
- Before he addresses the problem with Diotrephes, he commends Gais for his treatment of his fellow workers for the gospel as well as his service to the church

· Notice...

## **LESSON**

### **I. The Commendation of Gais (vv.1-8)**

· John tells us 3 things about Gais:

· First...

- He was “beloved” by John (vv.1-2)
  - “beloved” (agapetos, adj.), means, “dearly loved and cherished”

- It is translated “dear friend” in the NIV
- This is the same word that God uses about His Son in [Matthew 3:17](#) and in the Gospels: “and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.””
- Paul also uses it of the believers at Rome and adds the preposition “of God” to it in [Romans 1:7](#), “to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- It is used by Luke in [Acts 15:25](#) to speak of “our beloved Barnabas and Paul”
- Paul said the Corinthians were his “beloved children” in [1 Corinthians 4:14](#).
- He referred to Tychicus as “the beloved brother” in [Ephesians 6:21](#), Onesimus as “our faithful and beloved brother” in [Colossians 4:9](#), and Epaphras as “our beloved fellow bond-servant” in [Colossians 1:7](#).
- The use of this term indicates that believers are the “object of [God’s] affection, one who is loved” (Louw-Nida)
- John uses it again as he begins 3 John in verses 2, 5 11
- Verses 1-3 is a common form of writing at that time
- It is the salutation or greeting
- It includes the name of the author (elder), the reader (Gaius) and the greeting itself (thanksgiving)

#### > But...

- There are two principles here we can glean from in this salutation:

#### > First...

- Christians love Christians (John makes that point in all 3 of his epistles)
  - [1 John 2:10](#), “The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.”
  - [1 John 3:10-11](#), “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;”
  - [1 John 3:14](#), “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.”
  - [1 John 3:16](#), “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

- [1 John 3:18](#), “Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”
- [1 John 3:23](#), “This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.”
- [1 John 4:7](#), “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”
- [1 John 4:11-12](#), “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.”
- [1 John 5:1](#), “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.”
- [2 John 1:1](#), “The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,”
- [2 John 1:5](#), “Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.”
- [3 John 1:1](#), “The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.”
- [3 John 1:6](#), “and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.”

### › Not only do Christians love Christians but...

- When you are loved or the object of one’s affections, you become the object of their prayers

John said to Gais, “Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.”

- John cared about his spiritual brother Gaius
  - He was concerned for his physical well being
    - The word “prosper” (euodoo, pres.pass.inf.) is a reference to “good health” or physical well being not to money like the prosperity preachers say today
    - In an article entitled “How to Prosper from the Inside Out,” Kenneth Copeland asks, “How does God prosper His people?” The answer, he says, is in [3 John 2](#): God “blesses you materially as your soul prospers on His Word.” Copeland asserts that most Christians believe that God will make them prosper “as the economy prospers or even as [their] employers decide to promote [them].” This is wrong, he says; instead, “as the seeds of prosperity are planted in your mind, in your will and in your emotions...they eventually produce a great financial harvest.”

- Gloria Copeland interprets the verse in a similar way. She writes, “God’s plan is for us to grow financially as we grow spiritually.” The reason: God “knows it is dangerous to put great wealth into the hands of someone who is too spiritually immature to handle it.” She, too, interprets John’s wish as a divine promise: “God wants us to increase financially at the same rate we increase spiritually.” (<https://www.equip.org/articles/how-much-does-3-john-2-promise>)
- John was not saying any of this. He was simply wishing him well not stating a promise
- This was an official greeting in the style and form of the day

### · Not only was Gaius beloved by John but he was also...

- He was “walking in truth” (v.3)

John said He was “very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth” (v.3)

- It brings joy when you hear that another believer is walking in truth
  - Again this is part of the official greeting or salutation
  - It was customary for the writer to commend or exhorts his audience
  - This was how Paul wrote his letters:
    - To the Romans he said in [Romans 1:8](#), “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.”
    - To the Corinthians he said in [1 Corinthians 1:4](#), “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus”
    - To the Philippians he said in [Philippians 1:3](#), “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you”
    - To the Colossians he said in [Colossians 1:3](#), “We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you”
    - To the Thessalonians he said in [1 Thessalonians 1:2](#), “We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers”
    - In his second letter to the Thessalonians he said in verse 3, “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater”
    - In his letter to Timothy, he said in [2 Timothy 1:3](#), “I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day”

> Last...

- In his letter to Philemon, he said in [Philemon 1:4](#), “I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers”
- John was filled with joy when “brethren came and testified” that Gaius was being obedient to God’s Word
  - This is the same joy he heard from the “chosen lady’s” “children” who were also “walking in truth”
  - He said in [2 John 1:4](#), “I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.”
  - “The divine “command” which Christians have “received” (elabomen) refers to a particular moment in history” (Smalley)
  - [R.C. Sproul](#) says it’s “the central command given to Christians by Jesus Himself in [John 13:34](#), “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”
  - [Stephen Smalley](#) says, “The thought [also] harks back directly to [1 John 3:23](#), where God’s “command” is designated as twofold: to believe in Jesus *and* to love one another. Once again, truth (the truth revealed in Jesus) and love (the love which God commands and inspires; [1 John 4:19](#)) belong together (cf. vv 1, 3). Both are enjoined upon the faithful believer, and both are to characterize his way of life.”
  - The “Father’s commandment” is the standard of “the truth” (JFB) and his standard of truth is to “love” one another
  - [Kenneth Wuest](#) again says, “We are to order our behavior, conduct ourselves, dominated by the commandments of God. They are to be the dominating factor in our behavior. In the clause, “ye should walk in it,” the word “it” refers to “love,” not “commandment.” We should conduct ourselves in the sphere of love. Divine love, produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit, is the motivating factor that impels saints to observe the commandments of God.”
- John heard that Gaius had a good reputation among other believers
  - He was doing what John said in [1 John 3:17-18](#), “But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”
  - He was loving one another ([2 John 5](#))
  - Those who were recipients of Gaius hospitality had nothing but good to say about him ([v.3](#), “came” - pres.)
  - He was a man of truth

- [Proverbs 8:7](#), “For my mouth will utter truth; And wickedness is an abomination to my lips.”
- [Psalm 51:6](#), “Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.”
- He lived what he preached and had genuine love for Christian strangers
  - [Colossians 2:6](#), “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,”
  - [Psalm 15:2](#), “He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart.”
  - [1 Corinthians 13:6](#), “[love] does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;”

› He was beloved by John, walking in truth and...

- He was faithful to the brethren and strangers (vv.5-8)

John says in verse 5 that he was “acting faithful in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers”

This is literally you “do faithful in whatever you do for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers”

- “Faithful” translates the Greek adjective pistos which means “reliable and trustworthy” (Mounce)
- [Kenneth Wuest](#) says, “The hospitality of Gaius was not merely a kind and generous act, but he considered it a religious or spiritual service. That is, the hospitality he afforded travelling preachers and teachers, he considered a definite piece of work for the Lord Jesus, as Christian service.”
- He was doing what God required
  - He contributed to the needs of the saints ([Rom.12:13](#))
  - He did “good...to those who are of the household of the faith” ([Gal.6:10](#))
  - He did “not neglect to show hospitality to strangers” ([Heb.13:2](#))
  - He opened his doors “to the traveler.” Like [Job 31:32](#) says, “The alien has not lodged outside.”
  - He ministered for Jesus and to Jesus - Jesus said in [Matthew 25:35](#), ““For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;”
  - He was “continually engaged in caring for the needs of the servants of the Lord who were ministering the Word from place to place” (Wuest)

- Gaius' behavior caused the believers to testify to his love for the church
  - They “bore witness” or gave “testimony” (testify, martureo, aor.act.ind.) to his “love before the church”
- So John now encourages him “to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth” (vv.6-8)
- These are further instructions John gives for the Christian preachers:
  - Send them...in a manner worthy of God (v.6)
  - They accepted nothing from the Gentiles (v.7)
  - They went out for the sake of the Name (v.7)
  - We ought to support such men (v.8)
  - When we support them we become “fellow workers with the truth” (v.8)

## CONCLUSION

- Loving Christian preachers by providing for their needs, food, lodging is walking in the truth
- Hospitality is what God commands His children:
  - [Hebrews 13:2](#), “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.”
  - [1 Peter 4:9](#), “Be hospitable to one another without complaint.”
  - [Leviticus 19:33-34](#), “33 ‘When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. 34 ‘The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.’”
- Hospitality included:
  - A greeting with bow or kiss
    - [Genesis 18:2](#), “When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth”
    - [Genesis 19:1](#), “Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.”
  - A welcome for the guest to come in - Laban said to Abraham's servant in [Genesis 24:31](#), “And he said, “Come in, blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside since I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels?””



- An invitation to rest and wash - Abraham said to his three guests in [Genesis 18:4](#), “Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree”
- A provision of food and drink was given to Sisera the commander of Jabin’s army in [Judges 4:18-19](#), “18 Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, “Turn aside, my master, turn aside to me! Do not be afraid.” And he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 He said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” So she opened a bottle of milk and gave him a drink; then she covered him.”
- A provision of security - [Genesis 19:8](#), “Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof.””
- The Mosaic law records significant guidance in the treatment of neighbors and strangers living among the tribes of Israel
  - They were commanded to treat foreigners well because of their own background as foreigners ([Ex.22:21](#))
  - They were to welcome their poor fellow Israelites into their homes ([Lev.25:35](#))
  - They were to celebrate festivals along with aliens who were living among them ([Deut.16:11, 14](#))
- In the NT Jesus urged hospitality to be extended beyond the confines of home and tribe, as illustrated in the parables of the midnight visitor ([Lk.11:5-8](#)) and the good Samaritan ([Lk.10:25-37](#))
- Jesus scolded Simon the Pharisee for being a poor host - [Luke 7:44-46](#), “44 Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 “You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. 46 “You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.”
- Christians are to show hospitality ([Rom.12:13](#)) not to unrepentant believers ([1 Cor.5:11](#)) or false teachers ([2 Tim.3:5](#))
- Are you walking in truth by being obedient to whatever God commands?
- Are you faithful to the brethren and strangers?
- I would like to close by reading from [Ephesians 4:17-25](#), “17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the

lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. 25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.”

- Singer John Charles Thomas, at age sixty-six wrote to syndicated columnist Abigail Van Buren: “I am presently completing the second year of a three-year survey on the hospitality or lack of it in churches. To date, of the 195 churches I have visited, I was spoken to in only one by someone other than an official greeter—and that was to ask me to move my feet.” (Cited by “Eutychus and His Kin.” Christianity Today, June 3, 1977.)
- If you’re here today and you have never repented and given your life to Jesus, you can do so right now
- The Bible says you must “receive Him” ([John 1:12](#)), confess Him as Lord ([Rom.10:9](#)), believe God raise Him from the dead ([Rom.10:10](#)) and call upon Him ([Rom.10:13](#))
- I would love to talk with you more after the service
- Let’s pray.

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