**3 John - Introduction**

*“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 your, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”  
 (2-4)*

**Book in a Nutshell**

A short letter written to Gaius, a man John trusted, to deal with a severe problem in the congregation of which Gaius was a member. A man was controlling the church, and acting in an ungodly way.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Mention some of the themes that are present in all three of John’s letters.

2. John was an elderly man. Please give some scripture citations that explain how the elderly are to be treated by other Christians.

3. What characteristics about Gaius do you find to be most commendable?

4. Can we determine the identity of Gaius? How? or Why not?

**Authorship**

* The author does not explicitly identify himself in the text. Instead, as in 2 John, he refers to himself as “The elder” (Greek, *presbuteros*).
* The writer has unanimously been recognized (from the time of writing) as the apostle John, who also wrote the gospel of John, as well as 1 & 2 John.
* Numerous themes and phrases found in 1 John are also present in 3 John. It is obvious the letters (as well as 2 John) were written by the same hand.

**John the Apostle**

* Together with James, sons of Zebedee (Mark 1:20)
* One of the best known of the disciples, and often mentioned with Peter (Acts 4:13; 8:14-25)
* Wrote the gospel of John, 1, 2 & 3 John, and the book of Revelation (about 20% of the New Testament)

**Date of Writing: (90 A.D.)**

* John refers to himself as an elderly man.
* Though there is nothing in either 2 or 3 John to indicate either the time or place of writing, it is believed likely that they were written near the time of the writing of 1 John, (due to similarities in the text of each epistle), and near the end of the apostle’s life.

**Persons Addressed**

* *“Gaius*.” An individual. A faithful Christian well known and dear to John.
* There are three men by the name of Gaius that are mentioned in the New Testament. Gaius of Macedonia, who accompanied Paul in his travel, and were taken for a short period by an angry mob in Ephesus (Acts 19:29). Gaius of Derbe, who met up with Paul in Troas (Acts 20:4). Gaius of Corinth, who was one of only two (Crispus) who had been personally baptized by Paul.
* As all three of these men were all companions of Paul, and had no direct connection to John, there is no telling which of them (or perhaps another) is the Gaius of 3 John.

**3 John - Text**

*“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” (11).*

**Book in a Nutshell**

Diotrephes was a classic “church boss”, creating havoc in the church with his divisive ways and strong personality. John promised Gaius that he would come and help deal with the ungodly man, and urged Gaius not to imitate his behavior.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Is it necessary for us to have a personal relationship with other Christians to love them? If not, what is the basis for that affection?

2. Why is it important to be hospitable? What are some ways we can express hospitality? Should those efforts be extended to Christians we do not know?

3. Explain how the actions of Diotrephes could negatively impact the church of which he was a member.

4. Discuss some ways in our day and time we can avoid and/or deal with the problems a person similar to Diotrephes might cause.

5. What does it mean, that Demetrius had a good testimony *“from the truth itself”*?

*(Please put answers on back of page or another sheet of paper)*

**John’s Greeting (1-4)**

* John states the basis of his relationship with Gaius, they shared a love for the truth of God. (1,3)
* John prayed for blessings upon Gaius (2)
* Consider the concept revealed by John in his commendation of Gaius. While love is unconditional, acceptance and favor is conditioned upon obedience! (3-4)

**Commendation of Gaius (5-8)**

* In addition to his obedience to truth, John commended Gaius for his love and hospitality shown toward brethren and for strangers (5).
* Note: The strangers here were brethren unknown to Gaius. Despite the fact they had no personal relationship with him, they testified of his willingness to support and help them in their evangelistic efforts (6-7)
* Contrast 3 John 8 with 2 John 9-11. We are not to receive the teacher of error. However, we ought to receive (and as such have fellowship with) those who labor in truth (8)

**Dealing with Diotrephes (9-11)**

* Diotrephes, because of his pride and desire to control the church, withstood even John (9)
* John promised to deal with his divisive spirit, his maliciousness, his silliness (prating words), and his efforts to disfellowship the faithful. (10)
* John calls upon Gaius not to imitate the evil actions of Diotrephes, but rather to imitate that which is good (cf. Romans 12:17-21)

**Commendation of Demetrius (12)**

* He is commended because of his faithfulness, which is known to all the brethren (12)

**John’s words of Farewell (13-14)**

* The letter to Gaius is a short, personal one. As with his letter to the “elect lady”, his desire was to communicate with Gaius face to face. (13-14)