

### 3 JOHN

As with the gospel of John, this epistle is also anonymous. In this epistle (as well as the second), the writer refers to himself as “the elder.” Similar to Paul’s epistles (and unlike Peter’s two epistles), the books written by John all bear similar characteristics between them.

John was in the “inner circle” of the ministry of Jesus along with James and Peter (witnessing many of the miracles that the other disciples of Jesus did not see). John wrote five books in the New Testament (John, 1, 2, 3 John & Revelation) which accounted for 20% of the New Testament.

John was the son of Zebedee whose brother, James, was the first disciple of Jesus to be martyred (Acts 12). John refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” (John 21:20-24) John was the cousin of Jesus as his mother (Salome) was the sister of Jesus’ mother, Mary. (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40). John and his brother were called the “sons of thunder,” so they may have had fierce tempers. (Mark 3:17; Luke 9:51-56) John is the only disciple to have remained at the foot of the cross during Christ’s crucifixion (John 19:26), and he is the only one of the twelve who was not martyred for his beliefs. During His ministry, Jesus seemed to indicate that John would live a long time. (John 21:19-23)

This third letter is written to the beloved and faithful Gaius who supports itinerant ministers and teachers. Gaius is warned against Diotrefes who is a competitive minister that is jealous of other teachers. John wanted to give quick insights without elaborating because he planned to visit shortly.

<b>Audience of John’s Epistles/Letters</b>	
<b>Book</b>	<b>Recipient(s)</b>
1 John	The Masses
2 John	Local Fellowship
3 John	The Individual - Gaius

3 John may have been a companion letter to 2 John since Diotrefes may not have allowed 2 John to have been read to the church. While 2 John warned against false teachers, 3 John encourages assisting legitimate Bible teachers. While 2 John was written to a church, 3 John was written to a leader of the church (Gaius).

<b>The Five Shortest Books in the Bible</b>		
1.	3 John	219 Words
2.	2 John	245 Words
3.	Philemon	335 Words
4.	Obadiah	440 Words
5.	Jude	461 Words

#### **Outline of 3 John**

3 John 1:1-4	Introduction to Gaius
3 John 1:5-8	Hospitality to Ministers
3 John 1:9-10	Condemnation of Diotrephes
3 John 1:11-12	The Choice to Do Good
3 John 1:13-15	Closing

## 8 3 John 1

### Read 3 John 1:1-4 ... Introduction to Gaius About His Faithful Spiritual Walk

1:1 In the writings of "Apostolic Constitutions" (the Nicene Fathers), this Gaius of 3 John was appointed by John to be the Bishop/Pastor of Pergamum.

- The name "Gaius" (meaning "of the Land") is used by three individuals in Scripture:
  - Gaius of Macedonia, Acts 19:29;
  - Gaius of Derbe, Acts 20:4;
  - Gaius of Corinth, Romans 16:23; 1 Corinthians 1:14.
- The Greek term "elder" (presbyteros πρεσβύτερος) is the root word for "presbyterian" and described the writer of 2 & 3 John (1:1).
  - The "elder" could describe an older man or a church official like the pastor or bishop (Titus 1:5-7).
- John is not using the term "love" lightly or haphazardly, but he genuinely loves Gaius. John affirms his statements often by the phrase "in truth." (2 John 1:1, 2, 3, 4; 3 John 1:1, 3, 4, 8, 12)

John's Essence of Truth	
John 14:17	Holy Spirit
John 8:32; 14:6	Jesus
1 John 3:23	The Gospel Message

1:2 The prayer of John is that the material possessions and health of the faithful believer prosper as his faith prospers.

- The phrase "I pray" may have been a common Greek greeting, so this may not refer to a specific prayer, but instead it is a polite way of saying that the speaker hopes the other individual was doing well.
- The Greek term "soul" (psyche ψυχή) is the essence of an individual. It is more accurate to say that a person is "a soul with a body" than "a body with a soul."
  - Instead of "I have a soul," it is more accurate to say "I am a soul."

1:3 John spent his final days in Ephesus, so believers may have visited him from churches in other areas.

1:4 *"I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are walking in the truth."*

- The term "walking" (peripatountas περιπατούντας) is synonymous with "lifestyle." Christianity is an initial decision (similar to a marriage vow) that initiates a relationship that is followed by a lifestyle of submissive obedience.
- John repeatedly called the recipients of his letters "my children" (1 John 2:12, 13, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21) as a reference to John's apostolic authority and affection for the receiving believers.

### **Read 3 John 1:5-8 ... Hospitality Towards Ministers**

1:5 Gaius had been faithfully welcoming and providing for itinerant ministers as well as the needy. Even when inconvenient, Gaius had been faithful to the calling of the Lord. (Matthew 25:31-46; Hebrews 13:2)

1:6 Beyond worship and teaching, believers should share testimonies of God's work in their lives. Believers tell and retell salvation testimonies; however, God is actively working in their lives every moment of every day.

- The Greek phrase “*send them on their way*” (propempsas προπέμψας) includes the concept of assisting, equipping and preparing with food and finances. (Acts 15:3; Romans 15:24; 1 Corinthians 16:6; 2 Corinthians 1:16; Titus 3:13)
- The Greek phrase “*worthy of God*” (axiōs tou theou - ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ) means in a way befitting a servant of God (Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Matthew 10:40)

1:7 Godly leaders, ministers and missionaries accept no funding or gifts from unbelievers (Genesis 14:23; Deuteronomy 23:18).

- The Greek term “*Name*” (onomatos ὀνόματος) is speaking of the Lord Jesus who is unnamed in this letter. The “name” identifies the individual; it is their character and the essence of the individual.
- The unbeliever needs to understand that God doesn't need their resources; God wants them.

1:8 Each believer should support their work to be a co-laborer with them (Matthew 10:8)

- Christians are Christ-followers, so because Christ did something, a believer “ought” (opheilomen ὀφείλομεν) to do the same. (1 John 2:6; 4:11)

### **Read 3 John 1:9-10 ... The Discipline of Diotrephes Who Is A Prideful Preacher**

1:9 John may be referencing the book of 2 John which condemns false teachers.

Diotrephes did not allow John's previous letter to be presented to the church.

- The actions of Diotrephes are opposite the gracious actions of Gaius (2 John 1:5).
- This is the only mention of Diotrephes in the New Testament.
- It is ironic that the name “Diotrephes” means “nursed of Zeus” because “Zeus” was the “protector of travelers” and could appear as a traveler; however, Diotrephes was unreceptive towards travelers.
- Diotrephes desired to have status over the church (this may have come through leadership or wealth). Diotrephes did not understand that leadership in the church came through service to others. (Matthew 20:16; Mark 10:45; Luke 13:30)

1:10 Believers should be wary of the self-seeking pride of pompous church leaders.

- The Greek term “talking” (phlyarōn φλυαρῶν) literally means to “boil over,” “babble” or talk nonsense. This falls in the category of gossip.
- Diotrephes wanted to remove any opposition from church fellowship and possibly excommunicate them. (2 John 1:10)

### **Read 3 John 1:11-12 ... Believers Should Imitate What Is Good**

1:11 Believers should be careful not to imitate worldly successes, but instead, role models should be honorable and selfless “heroes in the faith.” (2 Thessalonians 3:7, 9; Hebrews 6:12; 13:7)

- The Greek term for “*imitate*” (mimou μιμοῦ) is the root word for “mime.”

<b>John's Three Tests of Those in God's Will</b>	
Selfless Love	(2 John 1:5; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-12, 16-21; 5:1-2)
Obedient Lifestyle	(2 John 1:6; 1 John 2:3-6; 3:1-10; 5:2-3)
Doctrinal Truth/Spiritual Authority	(2 John 1:7; 1 John 1:1; 2:18-25; 4:1-6, 14-16; 5:1, 5, 10)

- When an individual genuinely encounters Christ, change towards Christlikeness will be witnessed in the individual (John 1:18; 1 John 3:6).
- 1:12 In the writings of "Apostolic Constitutions" (the Nicene Fathers), this Demetrius was appointed by John to be the Bishop/Pastor of Philadelphia.
- Demetrius is a companion of John and was likely the bearer of John's letter from their town of Ephesus.

### **Read 3 John 1:13-15 ... Desire to Visit in Person**

1:13 The ending of 3 John is similar to the conclusion of 2 John 1:12-13.

- The term "paper and ink" is actually "papyrus and soot." Papyrus is a reed that was slit and opened. A stone would be used to smooth out the reed as it overlapped with other reeds and glued together. As the writer used soot to write, the soot would bleed into the papyrus and could not be erased.
  - Sheets of ancient papyrus were discovered by archeologists in an ancient Egyptian "trash dump." Most sheets were typically 8"x10," so it would take multiple sheets for a single book of the Bible.
  - 2 & 3 John are the shortest books in the Bible, and are the only two books that could fit on a single sheet of papyrus.

1:14 Whereas a letter has value, John hoped to visit Gaius in person.

1:15 John concludes with "peace" (eirēnē εἰρήνη) which is the culmination of those who hope in Christ (John 16:33; 1 Peter 3:11; Philippians 4:6-7; Colossians 3:15)