

Show Hospitality, for the Truth

3 John discussion notes

Reflect

On your own or in a group, take time to reflect on the way we support those who proclaim the Christian message, whether local ministers or cross-cultural missionaries. Think/describe as broadly as possible: who? where? how? why?

Read 3 John

Read the whole letter, perhaps more than once. If it helps you navigate the letter, here's the outline from the sermon. It highlights the three paragraphs in the body of the letter:

vv.1–4	letter opening
vv.5–8	Directive: show hospitality ... for the truth!
vv.9–10	Diotrephes: an evil example to avoid!
vv.11–12	Demetrius: one good example to imitate?
vv.13–14	letter closing

The letter is primarily written to commend Gaius. The main issues are captured in the letter's opening (vv.1–4) and the first main paragraph (vv.5–8).

1. List all the behaviours for which Gaius is commended.
2. What is he instructed to do?
3. There are two or three *reasons* why Gaius is instructed thus. Can you find them (vv.7–8)?
4. What role would 3 John envisage for us Christians today?

For further thinking/leading, these quotes from scholars may be helpful in understanding and applying verses 6–8:

'In this context the verb "send forth" [v.6] refers to a request for assistance with food, money, arranging transportation, and so forth.' (Jobes, 302) It 'functioned as a technical term for missionary support in the early church (cf. Acts 15:3; 20:38; 21:5; Rom 15:24; 1 Cor 16:6, 11; 2 Cor 1:16; Tit 3:13)'. (Kruse, 223)

'Not all are called or gifted for evangelism, preaching, or teaching, but all can provide assistance to some extent as allowed by their means and situation. ... To put our money where our mouth is shows the world our commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ.' (Jobes, 305, 306)

'There are many good causes which we *may* support; but we *must* support our brothers and sisters whom the world does not support.' (Stott, 227)

Karen Jobes, *1, 2, 3 John* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT 19; 2014)

Colin Kruse, *The Letters of John* (Pillar NT Commentary; 2000, 2nd ed. 2020)

John Stott, *The Letters of John* (Tyndale NT Commentaries 19; 2nd ed. 1988)

Act!

Brainstorm, commit to, and pray for ways you will support Christian workers. These may be existing activities or something(s) new to develop. You might work through questions similar to those above:

- *Whom* could we support?
- *How* can they be supported? (financial giving? individual prayer? group prayer? communicating? other?)
- *Why* are we motivated to do this?

If you're in contact with others, share your plans and work out how to hold each other accountable.

Optional extension

The remaining two paragraphs (vv. 9–10, 11–12) give Gaius additional encouragement and examples.

5. What is Diotrephes doing *unhelpfully* in the local church?

(we can pronounce his name something like the English words: *die-oh-tree-fees*)

6. What does the final main paragraph (vv.11–12) add for Gaius's benefit?