



Discerning Love From the Letter of 3 John

March 1, 2020 | 3 John 1-8

The third letter of John is written to a man named Gaius between AD 80 and 95, possibly the last book written in the New Testament. This little letter (the shortest New Testament epistle in the original Greek) gives us a glimpse into an early assembly, its people, and its problems. This week we'll focus on verses 1-8. Next week is 9-15.

Read 3 John 1-8:

¹ The elder, To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth. ² Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. ³ It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

⁵ Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you. ⁶ They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God. ⁷ It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. ⁸ We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth. (NIV)

John commends Gaius in four areas of his life.¹

1. Live Spiritually (3 John 1-2)

John prays for his beloved friend, Gaius, that he would be as physically well as he is spiritually well.

[Q] What if someone were to pray for you and ask God to bless your physical health to the same degree as your current spiritual health? (And what if He answered that prayer request?)

What would happen to you?

- I'd be fit and strong.
- I'd need some vitamins.
- I'd be sick in bed.
- I'd be in the ICU, nearly dead.

What steps might you need to take to become more *soul* healthy?

2. Walk Truthfully (3 John 3-4)

Living spiritually is intimately connected to walking truthfully.

[Q] Why is John so joyful in Gaius's faithfulness? What is the source of your joy? Is it connected to the spiritual fruitfulness of other Christians?

¹ Adapted from Daniel Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, & 3 John*

[Q] Think about what brings you joy in a relationship. Would you say you have “no greater joy” than seeing the Christlike obedience of those you love? Please explain.

3. Serve Faithfully (3 John 5-6)

[Q] What additional insight do we gain about Gaius and his activities from verses 5-8? What sort of person does he appear to be?

[Q] What insight do we gain about the “brothers” and their activities from verses 5-8?

4. Minister Generously (3 John 7-8)

John underscores several reasons we should support those whom God has called and sent out.

- The Name (of Jesus Christ) under which they went/set out (v.7)
- The source of their financial support (v. 5-8)
- To join as co-workers for the truth (v.8)

[Q] What kind of support do you think John has in mind for us to offer in v. 8? To help with your answer read Philippians 4:14-20 to see how Paul commended those who supported his ministry efforts. What was the nature of their support? What assurance did Paul give them in light of their faithfulness? (Philippians 4:19)

[Q] How do you show hospitality and generosity to believers doing Kingdom work? Why is it important for Christians to demonstrate hospitality? What causes us to hesitate to extend hospitality or generosity? Why might these hesitations be unjustified?

To walk in truth is to follow after Jesus, and Jesus leads the way in radical generosity and obedience to God and His Kingdom. —Brandon Sanford

Pray
