

3 John

Diotrephes and Demetrius (3 John 1:9-12)

Our approach each week will be REAP (read, explain, apply, personalize).

Read: Diotrephes and Demetrius (1:9-12)

Greeting to Gaius

1 The Elder,

To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:

2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. 3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Gaius Commended for Generosity

5 Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, 6 who have borne witness of your love before the church. *If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well,* 7 because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

Diotrephes and Demetrius

9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church.

11 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.

12 Demetrius has a *good* testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

Farewell Greeting

13 I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.

Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

Explain: Diotrephes and Demetrius (1:9-12)

Bible study is asking and answering questions about the text. Let's ask some.

Are there any literary/structural observations?

I have thought, on occasion, that it must have been great to be in the early church—to have the apostles as your teachers, to experience first century *koinonia*, to meet daily in each other's homes, to be in the exciting environment of a new thing taking off—being among the first to explain Christianity to the world. Perhaps all of us have thought something like that when reading the first few chapters of **Acts**. Fortunately, God also has a way of reminding us that not everything was perfect early on in Christianity (exhibit A would be all of the epistles describing gross sin in the early church).

The little letter that we call **3 John** gives us a glimpse into early church life. In fourteen verses, we see good people, a not-so-good person, politics, relationships, pride, commendations, warnings and so on. We also see ourselves.

3 John is the shortest letter in the New Testament (219 Greek words) and is about three men:

1. Gaius (highly regarded, delightful, charitable, and prosperous) (we looked at him last week)
2. Diotrephes (highly resentful, deceiving, carnal, and prominent) (we meet him this week)
3. Demetrius (highly respected, dependable, consistent, and pleasant) (we meet him this week as well)

Are there any repeated words?

As a reminder, the following words show up more than three times in **3 John**: **You**/your (14), do/does (10), I (10), beloved/**love**/loves (7), not (6), **truth** (6), us/we (6)

What do the words mean?

9 I wrote [aorist active indicative; to “grave”, especially to write; figuratively, to describe: describe, write(-ing, -ten); used in **1:9**, twice in **13** **to the church** [*ekklesia*; a calling out, i.e., (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): assembly, church; used in **1:6, 9, 10**; note: every single commentator I read all agreed the contents of this letter mentioned by John are lost

as they must have referred to accepting traveling missionaries—and since **1 John** and **2 John** do not deal with this topic, we must not have the letter John refers to here; **Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary: That Epistle** [the one John mentions in **3 John 1:9**] **was not designed by the Spirit for the universal Church, or else it would have been preserved.**¹⁷, **but** [other things, i.e., (adverbially) contrariwise (in many relations): and, but (even), howbeit, indeed, nay, nevertheless, no, notwithstanding, save, therefore, yea, yet; used in **1:9, 11, 13**] **Diotrephes** [Jove-nourished (a Greek god also named Jupiter, similar to the Roman Zeus)], **who** [the definite article; the (sometimes to be supplied, at others omitted, in English idiom): the, this, that, one, he, she, it, etc.] **loves to have the preeminence** [*philoproteuon*; present active participle (i.e., repeatedly loves); from a compound of G5384 and G4413; to be fond of being **first**, i.e., ambitious of distinction: love to have the preeminence; **Stott: The root of the problem was sin. Diotrephes . . . loves to be first or (RSV) 'likes to put himself first' (philoproteuon). He did not share the Father's purpose that in all things Christ should have the supremacy (Colossians 1:18, proteuon).**¹⁸] **among them** [the reflexive pronoun self, used of the third person, and (with the proper personal pronoun) of the other persons: her, it(-self), one, the other, (mine) own, said, (self-), the) same, (him-, my-, thy-)self, (your-)selves, she, that, their(-s), them(-selves), there(-at, - by, -in, -into, -of, -on, -with), they, (these) things, this (man), those, together, very, which; used in **1:7, 9**, twice in **10, 12**], **does not** [the absolute negative adverb; no or not: long, nay, neither, never, no, none, (can-)not, nothing, special, un(-worthy), when, without, yet but; used in **1:4, 9, 11, 13**] **receive** [present active or middle or passive deponent indicative; to admit (as a guest or (figuratively) teacher): receive; used in **1:9, 10**] **us** [accusative case plural; us: our, us, we; used in **1:9, 10**]; **Robertson: Some forty years ago I wrote an article on Diotrephes for a denominational paper. The editor told me that twenty-five deacons stopped the paper to show their resentment against being personally attacked in the paper.**¹⁹ **Marshall: Diotrephes is a standing warning against the danger of confusing personal ambition with zeal for the cause of the gospel.**²⁰ **InterVarsity Press Commentary: The author's words about Diotrephes may seem harsh, especially when it is not clear that Diotrephes has done anything other than oppose [John] and his messengers. . . . Diotrephes' failure to**

¹⁷ *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, Jamieson, Fausset, Brown (1973), page 1,515

¹⁸ *The Letters of John*, John R. W. Stott (1988), page 234

¹⁹ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, A. T. Robertson (1982)

²⁰ *The Epistles of John*, I. Howard Marshall (1978), page 90

support [John] **is not just a personal affront; it is an assault against the unity of Christian fellowship.**²¹ **10 Therefore** [*dia*; a primary preposition denoting the channel of an act; through (in very wide applications, local, causal, or occasional): after, always, among, at, to avoid, because of (that), briefly, by, for (cause) ... fore, from, in, by occasion of, of, by reason of, for sake, that, thereby, therefore, through(-out), to, wherefore, with (-in); used in **1:10, 12**] [that thing: here (-unto), it, partly, self(-same), so, that (intent), the same, there(-fore, -unto), this, thus, where(-fore)], **if** [a conditional particle; in case that, provided, etc.; often used in connection with other particles to denote indefiniteness or uncertainty: before, but, except, (and) if, (if) so, (what-, whither-)soever, though, when (-soever), whether (or), to whom, (who-)so(-ever); used in **1:5, 10**] **I come** [second aorist active subjunctive; to come or go (in a great variety of applications, literally and figuratively): accompany, appear, bring, come, enter, fall out, go, grow, pass, resort, be set; used in **1:3, 10**], **I will call to mind** [future active indicative; to remind **quietly**, i.e., suggest to the (middle voice, one's own) memory: put in mind, remember, bring to (put in) remembrance] **his** [the reflexive pronoun self, used of the third person, and (with the proper personal pronoun) of the other persons: her, it(-self), one, the other, (mine) own, said, (self-), the same, (him-, my-, thy-)self, (your-)selves, she, that, their(-s), them(-selves), there(-at, - by, -in, -into, -of, -on, -with), they, (these) things, this (man), those, together, very, which; used in **1:7, 9**, twice in **10, 12**] **deeds** [*ergon*; toil (as an effort or occupation); by implication, an act: deed, doing, labor, work] **which** [one, (an-, the) other, some, that, what, which, who(-m, -se); used in **1:1, 5**, twice in **6, 10**] **he does** [present active indicative; to make or do (in a very wide application, more or less direct): abide, agree, appoint, band together, be, bear, betray, bring (forth), cast out, cause, commit, content, continue, deal, without any delay, (would) do(-ing), execute, exercise, fulfil, gain, give, have, hold, keep, lay wait, lighten the ship, make, mean, none of these things move me, observe, ordain, perform, provide, have purged, purpose, put, raising up, shew, shoot out, spend, take, tarry, transgress the law, work, yield; **Guzik: In rebuking an individual by name, the apostle of love is not acting outside of love . . . he is following the clear command of . . . Romans 16:17.**²²], **prating against** [present active participle (i.e., **repeatedly** prates against); to be a babbler or trifler, i.e., (by implication) to berate idly or mischievously: prate against] **us** [accusative case plural; us: our, us, we; used in **1:9, 10**] **with malicious** [hurtful, i.e., evil (properly, in effect or influence); figuratively, calamitous; also (passively) ill, i.e., diseased; but especially (morally) culpable, i.e., derelict, vicious, facinorous; neuter (singular) mischief,

²¹ *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, 1-3 John*, Marianne Meye Thompson (2011)

²² *The Enduring Word Bible Commentary*, David Guzik (2013)

malice, or (plural) guilt; masculine (singular) the devil, or (plural) sinners: bad, evil, grievous, harm, lewd, malicious, wicked(-ness)] **words** [*logos*; something said (including the thought); by implication, a topic (subject of discourse), also reasoning (the mental faculty) or motive; by extension, a computation; specially, (with the article in John) the Divine Expression (i.e., Christ): account, cause, communication, doctrine, fame, intent, matter, mouth, preaching, question, reason, reckon, remove, say(-ing), shew, speech, talk, thing, none of these things move me, tidings, treatise, utterance, word, work]. **And** [and, also, both, but, even, for, if, or, so, that, then, therefore, when, yet; used in **1:2, 3, 5**, three times in **10**, three times in **12, 13, 14**] **not** [(adverb) not, (conjunction) lest; also (as an interrogative implying a negative answer) whether: any but (that), God forbid, lack, lest, neither, never, no (X wise in), none, nor, (can-)not, nothing, that not, un(-taken), without; used in **1:10, 11**] **content** [present passive participle (i.e., **repeatedly** is not content); properly, to ward off, i.e., (by implication) to avail (figuratively, be satisfactory): be content, be **enough**, suffice, be sufficient] **with that** [superimposition (of time, place, order, etc.), as a relation of distribution (with the genitive case), i.e., over, upon, etc.; of rest (with the dative case) at, on, etc.; of direction (with the accusative case) towards, upon, etc.: about (the times), above, after, against, among, as long as (touching), at, beside, (be-, (where-))fore, in (a place, as much as, the time of, -to), (because) of, (up-)on (behalf of), over, (by, for) the space of, through(-out), (un-)to(-ward), with] [to (for, in, with or by) these (persons or things): such, them, there(-in, -with), these, this, those], **he himself** [the reflexive pronoun self, used of the third person, and (with the proper personal pronoun) of the other persons: her, it(-self), one, the other, (mine) own, said, (self-), the same, (him-, my-, thy-)self, (your-)selves, she, that, their(-s), them(-selves), there(-at, - by, -in, -into, -of, -on, -with), they, (these) things, this (man), those, together, very, which; used in **1:7, 9**, twice in **10, 12**] **does not** [not too, i.e., neither or nor; by analogy, not even: neither, none, nor (yet), (no, yet) not, nothing] **receive** [present middle or passive deponent indicative; to admit (as a guest or (figuratively) teacher): receive; used in **1:9, 10**] **the brethren** [*adelphos*; from G1 (as a connective particle) and *delphys* (the womb); a brother (literally or figuratively) near or remote (much like G1): brother; used in **1:3, 5, 10**], **and** [and, also, both, but, even, for, if, or, so, that, then, therefore, when, yet; used in **1:2, 3, 5**, three times in **10**, three times in **12, 13, 14**] **forbids** [present active indicative; to estop, i.e., prevent (by word or act): forbid, hinder, keep from, let, not suffer, withstand] **those who wish to** [present middle or passive deponent participle (i.e., repeatedly wish to); to "will," i.e., (reflexively) be willing: be disposed, minded, intend, list, (be, of own) will (-ing)], [not translated here in the NKJV; and, also, both, but, even, for, if, or, so, that, then, therefore, when, yet; used in **1:2, 3, 5**, three times in **10**, three times in **12, 13, 14**] **putting** [present active indicative; to

eject (literally or figuratively): bring forth, cast (forth, out), drive (out), expel, leave, pluck (pull, take, thrust) out, put forth (out), send away (forth, out)] **them out of** [a primary preposition denoting origin (the point whence action or motion proceeds), from, out (of place, time, or cause; literal or figurative; direct or remote): after, among, at, betwixt(-yond), by (the means of), exceedingly, for(-th), from (among, forth, up), grudgingly, heartily, heavenly, hereby, very highly, in, ...ly, (because, by reason) of, off (from), on, out among (from, of), over, since, through, with(-out); used in **1:10, 11**] **the church** [*ekklesia*; a calling out, i.e., (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): assembly, church; used in **1:6, 9, 10**]. **[Wiersbe: The New Testament does teach church discipline, and these instructions ought to be obeyed. But church discipline is not a weapon for a dictator to use to protect himself. It is a tool for a congregation to use to promote purity and glorify God.²³ Matthew Henry: Ambition will breed malice against those who oppose it.²⁴ Stott: Self-love vitiates all relationships. Diotrephes slandered John, cold-shouldered the missionaries and excommunicated the loyal believers—all because he loved himself and wanted to have the preeminence. Personal vanity still lies at the root of most dissensions in every local church today.²⁵ Albert Barnes: From any thing that can be shown to the contrary, if it had been a private and personal affair merely, the matter might have been dropped, and never referred to again. But what had been done was public. It pertained to the authority of the apostle, the duty of the church, and the character of the brethren who had been commended to them.²⁶ Stedman: [Diotrephes] also puts people out of the church who would have taken these men in. He indulges in what we would call today “secondary separation.” He not only objected to the men who came, but he objected to those who would have received them. . . . Because of this tendency to refuse fellowship to someone who likes someone you do not like, a wide divisiveness has come into the church, doing injury and harm beyond recall. Now let us see what John’s counsel is in this situation. Notice that he does not advise Gaius to organize a split away from the church. Rather, he says, **Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. He who does good is of God; he who does evil has not seen God. . . . If you see somebody****

²³ *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*, Warren W. Wiersbe (2007), page 1,018

²⁴ *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Matthew Henry (1998), page 2,459

²⁵ *The Letters of John*, John R. W. Stott (1988), page 235

²⁶ *Notes, Explanatory and Practical on the General Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude*, Albert Barnes (1852), page 426

who is always jockeying for position in Christian relationships . . . do not follow him. He is following his own way and not that of God.^{27]}

11 Beloved [*agapetos*; (dearly, well) beloved, dear; used in **1:1, 2, 5, 11**], **do not** [(adverb) not, (conjunction) lest; also (as an interrogative implying a negative answer) whether: any but (that), God forbid, lack, lest, neither, never, no (X wise in), none, nor, (can-)not, nothing, that not, un(-taken), without; used in **1:10, 11**] **imitate** [present middle or passive deponent **imperative**; to imitate: follow; **Stott: Everybody is an imitator.^{28]}** **what is evil** [worthless (intrinsically, such), i.e., (subjectively) depraved, or (objectively) injurious: bad, evil, harm, ill, noisome, wicked], **but** [other things, i.e., (adverbially) contrariwise (in many relations): and, but (even), howbeit, indeed, nay, nevertheless, no, notwithstanding, save, therefore, yea, yet; used in **1:9, 11, 13**] **what is good** ["good" (in any sense, often as noun): benefit, good(-s, things), well]. **He who does good** [present active participle (i.e., **repeatedly** does good); to be a well-doer (as a favor or a duty): (when) do good (well)] **is** [present indicative; he (she or it) is; also (with neuter plural) they are: are, be(-long), call, can(-not), come, consisteth, follow, (that) is (to say), make, meaneth, profit, remaineth, wrestle; used in **1:11, 12**] **of** [a primary preposition denoting origin (the point whence action or motion proceeds), from, out (of place, time, or cause; literal or figurative; direct or remote): after, among, at, betwixt(-yond), by (the means of), exceedingly, for(-th), from (among, forth, up), grudgingly, heartily, heavenly, hereby, very highly, in, ...ly, (because, by reason) of, off (from), on, out among (from, of), over, since, through, with(-out); used in **1:10, 11**] **God** [a deity, especially the supreme Divinity; figuratively, a magistrate; by Hebraism, very: God, god(-ly, -ward); used in **1:6**, twice in **11**], **but** [but, and, etc.: also, and, but, moreover, now (often unexpressed in English); used in **1:11, 12, 14**] **he who does evil** [present active participle (i.e., **repeatedly** does evil); to be a bad-doer, i.e., (objectively) to injure, or (genitive) to sin: do(ing) evil] **has not** [the absolute negative adverb; no or not: long, nay, neither, never, no, none, (can-)not, nothing, special, un(-worthy), when, without, yet but; used in **1:4, 9, 11, 13**] **seen** [perfect active indicative; to stare at i.e., (by implication) to discern clearly (physically or mentally); by extension, to attend to; by Hebraism, to experience; passively, to appear: behold, perceive, see, take heed] **God** [a deity, especially the supreme Divinity; figuratively, a magistrate; by Hebraism, very: God, god(-ly, -ward); used in **1:6**, twice in **11**].

²⁷ *3 John: A Tale of Three Men*, Ray C. Stedman (1968)

²⁸ *The Letters of John*, John R. W. Stott (1988), page 236

12 Demetrius [his name means belonging to **Demeter** (the goddess of agriculture), so certainly he was not named by a Christian parent—he was likely a convert (possibly the same type of background as Diotrophes, but he has a better outcome relative to the gospel)] **has a good testimony** [*martyreo*; perfect passive indicative; to be a witness, i.e., testify (literally or figuratively): charge, give (evidence), bear record, have (obtain, of) good (honest) report, be well reported of, testify, give (have) testimony, (be, bear, give, obtain) witness; used in **1:3, 6**, twice in **12**] **from** [under, i.e., (with the genitive case) of place (beneath), or with verbs (the agency or means, through); (with the accusative case) of place (whither (underneath) or where (below) or time (when (at)): among, by, from, in, of, under, with; used twice in **1:12**] **all** [all (manner of, means), alway(-s), any (one), ever, every (one, way), as many as, no(-thing), whatsoever, whole, whosoever; used in **1:2, 12**, **and** [and, also, both, but, even, for, if, or, so, that, then, therefore, when, yet; used in **1:2, 3, 5**, three times in **10**, three times in **12, 13, 14**] **from** [under, i.e., (with the genitive case) of place (beneath), or with verbs (the agency or means, through); (with the accusative case) of place (whither (underneath) or where (below) or time (when (at)): among, by, from, in, of, under, with; used twice in **1:12**] **the truth** [*aletheia* (uh-LAY-thay-uh); true, truth, verity; used in **1:1**, twice in **3, 4, 8, 12**] **itself** [the reflexive pronoun self, used of the third person, and (with the proper personal pronoun) of the other persons: her, it(-self), one, the other, (mine) own, said, (self-), the same, (him-, my-, thy-)self, (your-)selves, she, that, their(-s), them(-selves), there(-at, - by, -in, -into, -of, -on, -with), they, (these) things, this (man), those, together, very, which; used in **1:7, 9**, twice in **10, 12**]. [not translated here in the NKJV; but, and, etc.: also, and, but, moreover, now (often unexpressed in English); used in **1:11, 12, 14**; **Henry: Some have a good report, but not of the truth itself. Happy are those whose spirit and conduct commend them before God and men.**²⁹ John referred to truth when he wrote about Gaius and Demetrius, but not about Diotrophes. This commendation of Demetrius is not based on feelings but based on **'the truth itself.'**] **And** [and, also, both, but, even, for, if, or, so, that, then, therefore, when, yet; used in **1:2, 3, 5**, three times in **10**, three times in **12, 13, 14**] **we** [we (only used when emphatic): us, we (ourselves); used in **1:8, 12**] **also bear witness** [*martyreo*; present active indicative; to be a witness, i.e., testify (literally or figuratively): charge, give (evidence), bear record, have (obtain, of) good (honest) report, be well reported of, testify, give (have) testimony, (be, bear, give, obtain) witness; used in **1:3, 6**, twice in **12**], **and** [and, also, both, but, even, for, if, or, so, that, then, therefore, when, yet; used in **1:2, 3, 5**, three times in **10**, three times in **12, 13, 14**] **you know** [perfect active indicative; to see (literally or figuratively); by implication, (in the perfect tense

²⁹ *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Matthew Henry (1998), page 2,459

only) to know: be aware, behold, consider, (have) know(-ledge), look (on), perceive, see, be sure, tell, understand, wish, wot; used in **1:12, 14** **that** [demonstrative, that (sometimes redundant); causative, because: as concerning that, as though, because (that), for (that), how (that), (in) that, though, why] **our** [of (or from) us: our (company), us, we] **testimony** [*martyria*; evidence given (judicially or genitive case): record, report, testimony, witness] **is** [present indicative; he (she or it) is; also (with neuter plural) they are: are, be(-long), call, can(-not), come, consisteth, follow, (that) is (to say), make, meaneth, profit, remaineth, wrestle; used in **1:11, 12**] **true** [*alethes*; true (as not concealing): true, truly, truth].

General disclaimer: it's usually inferred by readers of **3 John** that Diotrephes, Demetrius, and Gaius were in the same church, but the text does not explicitly state (nor explicitly imply) that.

Apply (What is the point?)

1. Some in the church will be ambitious (those like Diotrephes)
2. Some in the church will be marginalized (those that wanted to receive the traveling missionaries)
3. Some in the church will be faithful (those like Demetrius)
4. Repeated action **reveals**

Personalize (What do we do with that?)

1. **Rebuke** the ambitious (note: I am not referring to general ambition in work or in life where the results of which are to be offered to God—e.g., “I want more so I can give more for the cause of Christ” (as the apostle himself prayed for Gaius’ prosperity early in the letter)—but rather I am specifically referring to ambition that is to be consumed via our personal desires—e.g., “I want more so I can have more”—whether it be power in the church or material possessions to consume)
2. **Listen** to the marginalized
3. **Encourage** the faithful
4. Compare behavior with the **truth**

Next week: Farewell Greeting (1:13-14)

13 I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.

Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

Homework

1. Ask the Holy Spirit for help
2. Read next week's text (multiple times in multiple ways) (**3 John 1:13-14**)
3. Talk to someone about the text
4. Share ([fb.com/OurSundaySchool](https://www.facebook.com/OurSundaySchool)) insights and questions by Thursday
5. Invite a member or non-member

Resources

Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible, Jamieson, Fausset, Brown (1973)

The Letters of John, John R. W. Stott (1988)

Word Pictures in the New Testament, A. T. Robertson (1982)

The Epistles of John, I. Howard Marshall (1978)

The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, 1-3 John, Marianne Meye Thompson (2011)

The Enduring Word Bible Commentary, David Guzik (2013)

The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament, Warren W. Wiersbe (2007)

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, Matthew Henry (1998)

Notes, Explanatory and Practical on the General Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude, Albert Barnes (1852)

3 John: A Tale of Three Men, Ray C. Stedman (1968)