

Interestingly, he doesn't appear to be a "false teacher" like the Gnostics we've seen in the previous books. But he wasn't faithful, either.

He was divisive: *prating against us with malicious words*—speaking against the workers in the church and doing everything he could to counter their work—which, in reality, was the work of God! It's interesting: there are four references to "*witnesses*" in this book. But while both Gaius and the soon-to-be-mentioned Demetrius would be described as **μαρτυρέω** (mahr-tuh-RAY-oh)—"*witnesses*"—Diotrephes would not be. **And why?** Because his pride wouldn't let him be.

PV 6.16-19 (NKJV) ~ *These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, ¹⁹ A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.*

AP: These six character traits were all present and abounding in **Diotrephes, the dictator**. And as a result, he constantly worked against the work of God. May we never allow that to happen in us—scheming and whispering against those at work. But rather, let's strive for the example of **Gaius** and, as we'll see next, **Demetrius!**

CONCLUSION: Demetrius, the Exemplar (vs. 11-14)

In this short cover-letter, John teaches powerful truths: presenting us with two examples to how we can respond to the work being done by others: we can participate in it like **Gaius, the encourager**, or we can strive against it like **Diotrephes, the dictator**.

3JN 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.*

Gaius saw the hard work of the itinerant preacher, and he sought to help however he could. Diotrephes saw the same, and he sought to shut them up. God's question was simple: choose well.

He closes with a final example of one who had made that choice: *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. (3JN 12)* In his choice, Demetrius was able to become, again, a **μαρτυρέω** (mahr-tuh-RAY-oh)—a "*witnesses*". And that opportunity is open to us all, too!

In the end, John encouraged a dedicated choice: that Gaius, and by extension, all who'd read this letter, would chose rightly ahead of his arrival: *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. (3JN 13-14)*

INVITATION

#671 [Exp-NTGE]
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Testify!

PC ___ Pchd _____

3JN

QUESTION: What can we learn from the testimony of 3JN?

TRN TO 3JN

INTRODUCTION

ILL—School Essays (my kids get them now; given topic or page count; we'd get around it by writing a bit larger; eventually, teachers started to give us "word counts") The assumption was that if they could come up with some arbitrary word count: 500 words in Middle School, 1000 words in High School, 5000 words in college. Generally, you could tell the seriousness and scholarliness of a work by its word count—the shorter the work, the less time it took to write it, and the less content it had. Of course, what's true for our writings is not true for the Spirit's!

BACKGROUND – vs. 1

3JN is the shortest book in the NT in the original Greek—just 219 words. But those words contain myriad! Much like **2JN**, it's believed that **3JN** might have similarly been a kind of "**cover-letter**"—included with the more general **1JN** or **JN** as a personal note to a local audience. In the case of **3JN**, its **author** and **audience** are stated clearly right from the beginning: *The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: (3JN 1 - NKJV)* **But why was John writing it?**

Much like with **1JN** and **2JN**, John was writing against the popular false Gnostic teachers in the Asian churches of the 1st Century, who taught that Christ didn't come in the flesh, but only in the spirit. This had divided the 1st Century church—and standing on the opposite sides of the divide were **Gaius** and **Diotrephes**—one who stood with John, and the other who stood opposed to him.

BD1: Gaius, the Encourager (vs. 2-8)

ILL—God's Servants in Poor Health (seems to be a recurring theme in the Bible; Epaphroditus in **PH 2.25-30**; Timothy and his stomach ailments in **1TM 5.23**; Paul and his "*thorn in the flesh*" in **2CR 12.7-9**) We see it even today among many of God's most faithful workers—it's almost as if the soul's longing for Heaven weakens its ties to the body.

3JN 2 (NKJV) ~ *Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.*

EX: The same appears to be the case with Gaius—who is widely believed by Biblical scholars and historians to have had some sort of poor health or ailment—and that John hoped that he could be as healthy, spiritually, as he was physically.

One of the key words of the book is **μαρτυρέω** (mahr-tuh-RAY-oh)—the origin of the English word “**martyr**”. It appears four times in this short book, making up nearly 2% of the total word count of the book—5% of the total times the word occurs in the whole New Testament. But while “**martyr**” implies the **murderous** and often painful death of witness, the original Greek word is most translated as “**witness**” or “**testify**”—as it’s used first in **vs. 3** of Gaius.

3JN 3-4 (NKJV) ~ *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.*

ILL—Recent Funerals (been to more than I care to have seen in the past year; I’ve heard compliments on parenting, attendance, and even tennis skill) But while all of these can warm our hearts and bring to memory good thoughts of those who’ve gone on before us, there is only one **μαρτυρέω** (mahr-tuh-RAY-oh)—one witness or testimony that truly mattered, and it was shown in Gaius.

EX: Gaius’ greatest witness and testimony was that of his Christian walk—his faith and faithfulness. *For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. (1TH 2.13 - NKJV)* The Word of God lived in him—and John was proud to see it. But before you think it was simply his lack of bad behavior—his purity from sin, read on!

3JN 5 - NKJV ~ *Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers,* Interestingly, there are two different Greek words translated “**do**” here: **ποιεῖς** (poy-ACE) and **ἐργάζῃ** (her-GAH-say). The first is a general word for something done; but the second carries an assumption of hard effort. Gaius was a hard worker—especially for brethren he knew and brethren he didn’t. And considering that there weren’t exactly Holiday Inns and Marriotts back in the 1st Century, that was needed!

The early church didn’t have YouTube and the UPS—she didn’t even have the completed New Testament. What she did have was itinerant preachers who’d travel from town to town, sharing the inspired Word directly, and via letters and writings from inspired men. And this wasn’t exactly a well-paying gig. They relied on men like Gaius to provide for them to allow them to continue their efforts in the ministry.

3JN 6 (NKJV) ~ *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,* Just as Gaius’ faithful life had borne witness to John, these faithful Christian preachers had done the same—of his selfless dedication and work in partnering with them in their evangelism. *because*

they went forth for His name’s sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. (3JN 7 - NKJV) **Gaius was an encourager** in the work of God. And it was his hard work in caring for and providing for these traveling preachers that allowed for them to continue on preaching the Gospel without having to worry about finding funds out in the field with their new Gentile converts—allowing them to focus, solely, on preaching!

EX: That’s not always possible—often, preachers today have to work hard in two worlds: the spiritual and the earthly. But what a blessing it was for those around Gaius, who did everything he could—toiling on day by day—to ensure that the itinerant preachers around him wouldn’t have to!

I expect Gaius looked on with respect and appreciation for the workers in the church—those men who would travel from town to town, country to country, spreading the Gospel. But he didn’t just quietly do so—he eased their burden: allowing them to focus on the ministry as he worked in the background, seemingly unseen. But John showed that work wasn’t unseen, at all. His efforts spoke well of him—a **witness** of his faith and hard work!

3JN 8 - NKJV ~ *We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.*

AP: How can we stand as a witness for Christ? A large part of that is speaking for Him—telling the story of Jesus. But there are also many additional works to be done—and every effort, every strain that is removed from other workers in the church allows us to share in that work. We do this by providing meals for those in need, by removing tasks and duties from those otherwise busy in the ministry. In doing these things, we share in the work: becoming *fellow workers*!

EH 4.11-13 (NKJV) ~ *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*

BD2: Diotrephes, the Dictator (vs. 9-10)

But sadly, not everyone in the local church was like Gaius. In the next two verses, John points out his opposite: **Diotrephes, the dictator**.

3JN 9-10 (NKJV) ~ *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.*

EX: Unlike Gaius, who was doing everything he could to encourage and grow the church, Diotrephes only cared about getting his way. And as a result, he refused to allow John and his fellow ministers access to the church.