

ABIDE: A BIBLE READING CHALLENGE

JOURNEY THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

3 MEN AND A LESSON

3 JOHN

Here is another book that is not touched too often; but once we're done, maybe you'll give this book a chance to make it into a few of your devotions every once in a while.

Once again you'll see that John identifies himself simply as "the elder." There is a hint here that John is including several identifiers about his status as he is writing. This is probably a time when he is advanced in age, but it is also a soft way of expressing his authority and apostleship since what he will be discussing will need to have some force behind it.

What you may not know is that John, in this letter, he is having to deal with some people problems just like in the last letter. What is easy for us to understand is that when we're having people problems, we're not necessarily the most rational people, and it just might be that we need a little force to help us think a bit more clearly.

In this particular instance, what you'll find is a very personal letter to who may have been someone very close to John. The reason we can say this is because out of all the writings of John, this is the only letter that clearly uses the names of the recipient. And as John is writing to his friend, what we are learning is how to address people who are giving you a hard time.

Now, it is important to note that what was happening in 2 John was how to deal with people teaching a false message. In this context, the advice was to run away. In 3 John, the situation has changed. John is addressing a situation when there is not a threat of truth at stake, but a threat of pride. And when there is a threat of pride at stake, John is going to help us through some things that will help us to show hospitality in those kinds of situations.

How to Think About 3 John

As John starts out this letter, we find out that it is to a man named Gaius. There are three men named Gaius in the New Testament— could it have been one of these three? Maybe. No one really knows. Apparently, this was a common Roman name. However, what we do know are the circumstances surrounding this fellow. There is a dealing with three men in this small little letter, and it seems that this is all in the context of a local church setting.

Christian Hospitality Defended (Vs. 1-8)— Once John finishes with the introduction and opening encouragement, he moves in to commend Gaius about how word has gotten around about his generosity. If there was someone in great financial need, Gaius was ready to accommodate. He wasn't just an emotional giver, he was a systematic, consistent giver. If there is

one evidence that God has truly touched someone's heart, it will show up in the way that they give. John defends this kind of Christian hospitality.

Christian Hospitality Offended (Vs. 9-11)— If being generous is one thing that can prove Christian love, there is one thing that will make it want to stop, and that is an unappreciative, bossy, crass, Christian. In these verses, in the first and only time mentioned in the New Testament, we have an example of a Christian who made it his job to try to run everything and be in everything, and as a result, he was ruining everything. His name was Diotrephes, and he was a nightmare to deal with. This was a guy, who, if he didn't like you, he'd simply try to scratch your name off the role, and send you packing. This guy had a "me first" attitude and it was threatening the church body.

Christian Hospitality Extended (Vs. 12-14)— The third character we meet in this short letter is a man by the name of Demetrius. This man was to be a refreshment to Gaius. He was apparently the mail carrier of this very letter, and John was going to use Demetrius, and his sweet personality to encourage Gaius in light of all that he was dealing with at the time. People can drain you, but the right people can fill you up! Demetrius was going to extend the hospitality that Gaius was desperately needed.

What to Look for in 3 John

Key Words—

Witness: If you look in verse 3, you'll see the word 'testified'. If you look in verse 6, you'll see the word 'testified', if you look in verse 12, you'll see the phrase 'bear record.' All of these words are the same word for a testimony a witness would give on a witness stand. It is an indication of the importance of the truth. In Biblical matters, in relational matters, in matters of comfort, a good and faithful testimony is what we all need to stay grounded in reality.

What to Gain from 3 John

So how do we deal with this kind of matter? Are we just supposed to endure it? Are we just supposed to ignore it? What exactly is the procedure for dealing with this kind of situation?

Don't Let Toxic Behavior Continue— 3 John 10, "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

John tells Gaius that if he is able to arrive, that he would take care of this troublemaker himself. He would handle it directly. It didn't matter how much money this man had; it didn't matter how much political influence he had; it didn't matter what family connections he had, John said that he was going to address this matter directly and make sure that this individual was not confused at all about how his behavior was unacceptable.

There is a lesson for us here. A toxic environment in the church is not to be tolerated. The church is a place of healing, fellowship, and most of worship of Jesus Christ. It is not a place for a select few individuals; it's a safe haven for believers and an information center for the lost.

Don't Let Toxic Behavior Consume You— In the very next verse, John says, "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God."

John just says, "Hey, don't be like that." If there is a person who is just being terrible, what good would it do to end up just like them? It is easy to let toxic people poison you. They can mess up your day. They can steal your job. They can grieve your spirit. Listen, that's not who God saved you to be. God saved you to be like Him; not like them.



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