

## 3 John

Support Missionaries								
1-8			9-11			12-14		
Gaius			Diotrephes			Demetrius		
Commended			Condemned			Recommended		
Supported Missionaries			Opposed Missionaries			Is a Missionary		
Greetings & Prayer 1-2	Joy over Godliness 3-4	Support Confirmed 5-8	for Rejecting John 9	for Opposing Missionaries 10	for Doing Evil 11	Good Reputation 12	Visit Anticipated 13-14a	Affectionate Greetings 14b-d
Asia Minor								
c. AD 90								

**Key Word:** Missionaries

**Key Verse:** “We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men [missionaries] so that we may work together for the truth” (3 John 8).

**Summary Statement:** The way to obey God’s truth was for the godly Gaius to *support missionaries* like Demetrius despite opposition from Diotrephes.

**Application:**

How do you advance the gospel by supporting missionaries in hospitality and finances?

# 3 John

## Introduction

- I. **Title:** The Greek title (Ιωάννου γ *Third of John*) follows the standard practice of naming the General Epistles after their authors and distinguishes this epistle from John's two others.
- II. **Authorship**
- A. External Evidence: John the Apostle wrote this shortest biblical writing as the leader of the Ephesian church in Asia Minor and author of his Gospel, 1 John, 2 John, and Revelation.
- B. Internal Evidence: The title "the elder" (v. 1) was always interpreted as John until the rise of liberal scholarship. Themes such as love (v. 6), joy (v. 4; cf. 1 John 1:4), and truth (vv. 1, 3-4, 12) resemble emphases in 1 John and the Gospel of John.
- III. **Circumstances**
- A. Date: Most conservative scholars believe John wrote around A.D. 90, but nothing in the epistle excludes an earlier date (see 1 John notes).
- B. Origin/Recipients: John wrote his friend named Gaius who regularly opened his home to show hospitality to traveling missionaries, probably in Asia Minor, where John lived.
- C. Occasion: As explained in the 2 John notes, before the New Testament writings were completed and circulated among the early believers, the churches relied on traveling missionaries (prophets and teachers) for truth. Because inns were unsafe and few, these missionaries stayed with Christians. Gaius faithfully extended hospitality to such men (vv. 5-8) despite opposition by another man in the church named Diotrephes (vv. 9-10). John wrote to encourage Gaius to keep practicing hospitality and support to missionaries. Whereas in 2 John the Apostle John warns against supporting *false* teachers, 3 John speaks to the "flip-side" of the issue: supporting *true* missionary teachers.
- IV. **Characteristics**
- A. **People** in the Postcard: This warm, personable letter revolves around three people:
1. Gaius was godly and wholeheartedly supported the missionaries (vv. 1-8).
  2. Diotrephes ("nourished by Zeus") was a carnal believer opposing hospitality to missionaries by Gaius and other believers (vv. 9-11). While the common first-century practice for Gentiles saved from idolatry was to change their names after embracing Christianity, Diotrephes did not change his pagan name after his conversion.
  3. Demetrius was a missionary the church should support (v. 12).
- B. The latter two epistles of John differ in several ways:
- |                     | <u>2 John</u> | <u>3 John</u>                              |
|---------------------|---------------|--|
| Recipient           | A Woman       | A Man                                      |
| Names               | Anonymous     | Gaius, Diotrephes, Demetrius               |
| Mood                | Condemns      | Commends                                   |
| Missionaries        | False         | True                                       |
| Hospitality/Support | Misplaced     | Missing (Diotrephes)<br>Maintained (Gaius) |

- C. If 2 John addressed a church, then 3 John would be the only NT letter by John to an individual. All second-person pronouns ("you") are singular.

## Argument

The letter of 3 John teaches believers to show hospitality and support for true teachers sent from the church (missionaries) to enable them to spread the gospel freely. John wrote Gaius this "postcard" to commend him for this kind of hospitality. John first commends Gaius for his faithful support of these men (vv. 1-8), then condemns his opposer, Diotrephes, for rejecting the missionaries and those who supported them (vv. 9-11), and concludes with an introduction of Demetrius, who is worthy of support (v. 12) along with some personal matters (vv. 13-14).

## Synthesis

### Supporting missionaries

<b>1-8</b>	<b>Gaius confirmed</b>
1	Greetings
2	Prayer for health
3-4	Joy over godliness
5-6a	Past support commended
6b	Future support encouraged
7-8	Believers' responsibility
7	Not non-Christians
8	Partnership in spreading truth
<b>9-11</b>	<b>Diotrephes condemned</b>
9	for rejecting John's instructions
10	for opposing missionary support
10a	Gossip
10b	Inhospitableness
10c	Excommunications
11	for doing evil
<b>12</b>	<b>Demetrius recommended</b>
<b>13-14</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
13-14a	Personal visit anticipated
14b-d	Affectionate greetings

## Outline

### Summary Statement for the Book

The way to obey God's truth was for the godly Gaius to *support missionaries* like Demetrius despite opposition from Diotrephes.

#### I. One way the godly Gaius obeyed God's truth was to support missionaries (1-8).

- A. John writes a dear Christian brother, Gaius, with apostolic authority and approval of him to all who read the letter—especially Diotrephes (1).
1. The Apostle John identifies himself so readers recognize that the letter has apostolic authority (1a).
  2. John writes Gaius, a wealthy Christian man, to publicly affirm him before all readers—especially Diotrephes (1b).

- B. John prays that Gaius' health and general well-being might equal his spiritual vitality to show care for both Gaius' physical and spiritual needs (2).
  - C. John's joy over Gaius faithfully living the Christian life is the best news John could receive about one of his spiritual children (3-4).
    - 1. John notes his joy over the good report from some missionaries returning from Gaius to commend his faithfulness to God's workers (3).
    - 2. The best news John could ever hear is that someone he led to Christ keeps obeying the truth (4).
  - D. Gaius gained a good reputation for his love and hospitality for missionaries even though he did not know them (5-6a).
  - E. Gaius should continue missionary support in the future (6b).
  - F. Missionary work is for Christ, so the world does not support it, thus reminding all believers to fund God's work (7-8).
    - 1. Non-Christians rarely support outreach for Jesus (7).
    - 2. Believers must support missionaries as partners in spreading God's truth (8).
- II. One way the ungodly Diotrephes disobeyed God's truth out of personal ambition was to hinder missionaries, unlike the good example of Gaius (9-11).**
- A. Gaius's church leader, Diotrephes, rejected John's last letter out of his ambition (9).
  - B. John condemns Diotrephes for hindering missionary support and promises to condemn it again personally if John visits the church (10).
    - 1. The malicious gossip of Diotrephes about John hindered the integrity of the missionaries visiting the church (10a).
    - 2. The inhospitable actions of Diotrephes hindered the work of the missionaries (10b).
    - 3. Diotrephes obstructed and excommunicated hospitable believers and thus showed his egotism and opposition to God's truth (10c).
  - C. The evil actions of Diotrephes should be avoided but the good deeds of Gaius should be imitated (11).
- III. One way the godly Gaius could obey God's truth was to support the missionary letter carrier Demetrius and others like him (12).**
- A. All the churches spoke well of Demetrius, so Gaius would "imitate what was good" with hospitality to Demetrius (12a).
  - B. Even if no one praised Demetrius, God's truth would honor him, so Gaius should also (12b).
  - C. John and his fellow workers endorsed Demetrius, so Gaius should also when Diotrephes rejects Demetrius (12c).

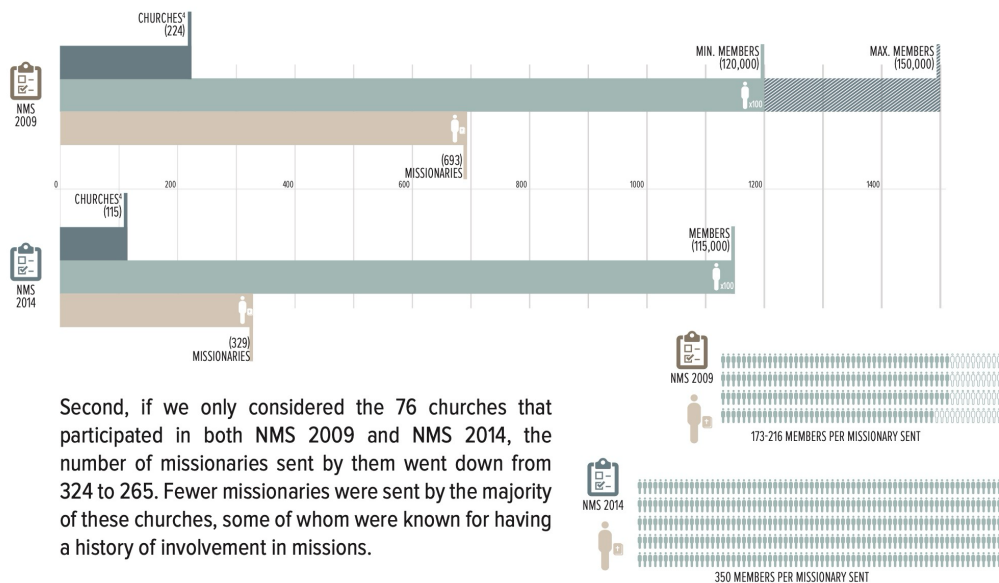
**IV. One way Gaius could obey God’s truth was to prioritize face-to-face relations but also written greetings when needed (13-14).**

- A. John expresses hope for a personal visit so Gaius would know both John's affection for him and his displeasure with Diotrephes (13-14a).
- B. John wishes Gaius peace and exchanges greetings to end the letter affectionately and lovingly (14b-d).
  - 1. He wishes Gaius peace in his difficulty with Diotrephes to reinforce his love (14b).
  - 2. He sends greetings from his friends with him as an affectionate gesture (14c).
  - 3. He requests Gaius to greet John’s friends each by name to show the concern and value he had for every believer in Gaius' church (14d).

**“The Scope of Missions: Report for SCGM National Missions Survey 2014,”**  
Singapore Centre for Global Missions, pages 3-4

We followed the NMS 2009 definition of a career missionary, namely: One who is sent by a recognized church or mission agency, serving outside Singapore fulltime as a career missionary for at least two years.

The 115 churches reported sending 329 missionaries. Compared to NMS 2009, our data suggest that local churches are sending out fewer missionaries. Two observations bear this out. First, as a proportion of the number of members represented by the churches, career missionary sending has clearly gone down (See Infographic below)<sup>3</sup>.

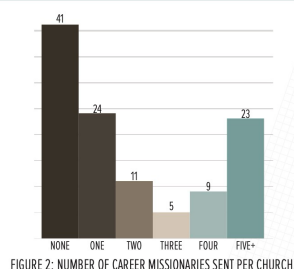


Second, if we only considered the 76 churches that participated in both NMS 2009 and NMS 2014, the number of missionaries sent by them went down from 324 to 265. Fewer missionaries were sent by the majority of these churches, some of whom were known for having a history of involvement in missions.

<sup>2</sup> Reasons given included: (a) Unique characteristics of the church’s missions philosophy, without specifying further; (b) unwillingness to share missions information that is deemed confidential or sensitive; (c) not interested, without specifying why. Occasionally, our data collection staff encountered unpleasant responses from church pastoral and administrative staff.  
<sup>3</sup> Due to imprecise data in NMS 2009, we estimate that the total number of members to be between 120,000 and 150,000. If we assume 150,000 members for NMS 2009, that’s 216 members per missionary sent. Compare with NMS 2014 which is 350 members per missionary sent.  
<sup>4</sup> This is the number of churches that reported data on career missionaries in NMS 2009.



**Number of Career Missionaries sent per church**



41 (35.7%) of the churches reported not sending out any career missionary. This may represent a decrease from NMS 2009 where 41.5% of the churches did not send out any career missionary.