

=BOOKS OF THE BIBLE=

Lesson 63

III John

Objects to have:

The sign for this Bible book: III JOHN
Live Right

A letter in a sealed envelope

A mirror that is larger than a lady's purse-sized mirror, or an aluminum foil-covered board

Six strips of paper that can all fit onto the mirror at one time. They should be lettered as follows:

1. GAIUS
2. CLEAN
3. DIOTREPES
4. DIRTY
5. DEMETRIUS
6. CLEAN

Scotch tape

Your Bible.

Introducing the lesson:

(Have all six strips in order ready to be Scotch-taped to the mirror at the appropriate times. Either hold the mirror in your hands throughout the lesson, or set it up on your table, depending upon the size of the mirror. Have the tape ready to use whenever the strips need to be taped to the mirror.) Do you ever look into a mirror? What are some reasons why we look into a mirror everyday and several times a day? (Discuss with the children the fact that by looking into the mirror they can see whether their faces are dirty, their hair is not combed, their teeth are dirty, their clothes are not buttoned properly, there are rips in their clothes, etc. Discuss also with the children the fact that by looking in the mirror as they wash they can be sure that their faces or their teeth are getting clean, that their hair is being combed properly, etc.) A mirror helps us to see ourselves as we really are.

Today we are going to talk about three men who saw themselves as they really were. We know about these three men from the book of Third John. (Show the children the location of the book of III John in your Bible.) This book was written by John, also. Last Sunday we heard about two other books of the Bible John wrote; they are called First John and Second John. This book is called Third John. John wrote down the words that are in this book. God the Holy Spirit told him the words to write.

Telling the story:

(Slit open the envelope that you have, talking about the fact that somebody got a letter from a mailman or a messenger. Take out the letter. Act as if you are reading it. Then tell the children that the letter is to a man named Gaius.) Gaius read the letter. He knew that the letter was from John. This was the same John who had been with Jesus while Jesus was on earth. John had been one of Jesus' disciples. Even after Jesus went back to Heaven, after He died on the cross and rose from the dead, John was still preaching about Jesus. John wrote a letter to Gaius. Gaius got the letter, and he read it. When Gaius read the letter, he saw himself as others saw him. (Put the name Gaius on the "mirror.")

John wrote, "Gaius, I love you. I am so glad that you believe the Bible. It is so good that you want to live according to what the Bible says." How good: whenever John or anyone else would watch Gaius or listen to him talk, anybody would know that Gaius loved the Bible!

John wrote, "I have been talking to some people, Gaius. Some people have seen you and talked with you, and they told me that you tell about Jesus. They tell me that you are faithful in doing the work of the Lord." I am a Sunday school teacher, children. I want to be called faithful. Every Sunday I want to be in Sunday school and in church service. Every Sunday I want to be doing God's work. Once in a very great while I am on vacation. Even on a Sunday when I am on vacation, I am in Sunday school. Of course, the only time I cannot be in Sunday school is when I am sick in bed. I want to be called faithful to do God's work. I want to be called faithful in telling other people about Jesus. John told Gaius that he knew that Gaius was faithful.

I wonder how else Gaius saw himself? John wrote, "Beloved Gaius, you do right to other people who love Jesus. I notice that you are kind and that you are loving toward them. Whenever anybody needs help, you are willing to give them help. I notice that whenever you teach, your teaching is helpful, also. Whatever you do toward other people in God's family, you do very well."

So far, as Gaius looked into the mirror that shows him what he is really like, he sees himself as a person who is trying to please Jesus. Let us see what else John wrote to Gaius. "Gaius, you're friendly to people who visit our church. You are friendly to the ones who come for the very first time—the new people in Sunday school and in church. You say, "hello" to them. You talk to them. Sometimes some visitors need food to eat at home. Gaius, I know you give these needy people some food to take home. Sometimes people need a ride to and from church. I have known that you have helped people with transportation to church. You have been kind to new people who come to our church.

"Gaius, you have not only been kind to fellow Christians and been kind to visitors who have come to our church, but you have also been helpful and loving toward your pastor. You have been a joy to your pastor. You have been faithful. Because you have loved God's Word and have wanted to please Jesus, and because you have been helpful to other people, your pastor has also been happy because of kind letters which you have written to him."

Children, let's think of some ways in which we can make our pastor happy. (Discuss with the children the fact that our pastor is happy when we do as he preaches we should do. Use some illustrations of this. Tell them also that he is happy when we write notes of appreciation to him and give gifts to him and his wife because we love them, and because we are glad that he preaches the truth to us. Be sure the children know the name of our pastor.)

Well, Gaius has been looking into a kind of mirror. John told Gaius what he was like. Gaius was not living in dirty, wicked sin. Gaius was living as a good, clean Christian. Let's put the word CLEAN below the name GAIUS on our mirror. (Do that.)

In the book of Third John is the name of another man. (Put the name DIOTREPHESES on the mirror in a location away from the name GAIUS.) Now you don't know a boy or a man by this name, either. This is a different name. The name is Diotrophes. (Say this to the children slowly enough so that they will get the pronunciation. Have them repeat the name with you.) This is how Diotrophes would see himself as he looked into the "mirror" that John is holding up for him.

John said, "Diotrophes wants to be the most important person in the church. He loves to have people think that he is important. Diotrophes wants to be the boss over everybody. Diotrophes is a very proud man." It does not sound as if Diotrophes was the kind of man that Gaius was. But let me tell you something else that John wrote about Diotrophes before we decide how Diotrophes saw himself in this "mirror."

John wrote in the letter of Third John, "Diotrophes does not welcome God's men." Diotrophes would not listen to men who were preaching God's Word. Diotrophes also did not welcome men who came to his church, preaching God's Word. That is bad. Jesus commands that everybody is to treat God's men properly. Jesus also commands that everybody is to listen to preachers who preach the truth of God's Word. Diotrophes was disobeying Jesus' commands.

John wrote, "Diotrophes has a wicked tongue. When Diotrophes talks, he talks about other people; he criticizes other people." It is not right for anyone to gossip. Diotrophes gossiped; he had a wicked tongue.

Well, we know about Diotrephes. Let us decide how Diotrephes would look whenever he looked into John's "mirror." Diotrephes lived in dirty, wicked sin. He was not living a good, clean Christian life. Let us put the word DIRTY under the name DIOTREPHESES on the mirror. (Do that.)

There was Gaius, and there was Diotrephes. They were two entirely different men. Let's talk about another man who shows up in John's "mirror." This man's name was Demetrius. (Put that name on your "mirror.") Will you say that name with me, please. This is what John wrote about Demetrius. "People have good words to say about Demetrius. People have said that Demetrius lives as a good Christian. Demetrius is honest. Demetrius is a hard worker. Demetrius loves Jesus and wants to please Him." John said, "We know that this is true about Demetrius: He loves and believes the Bible."

Now, whenever Demetrius looked into John's "mirror," he would not see himself as a dirty sinner. He would see himself as a Christian who was living a clean life. Let us put the word CLEAN under the name DEMETRIUS on our mirror. (Do that.)

(Hold up the Bible which is open to the book of III John.) The Bible is like a mirror. Let's think about ourselves as we read about Gaius and Diotrephes and Demetrius. The mirror of God's Word shows us to be either kind, helpful, obedient, loving God's Word; or it shows us to be mean and selfish, not loving God's Word! The Bible is a wonderful Book by which we can live all our lives.

LEARN OUR BIBLE VERSE: III John 11, "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."