

=SMALL BOOKS OF THE BIBLE=

Lesson 10

III John

AUTHOR: The Apostle John

THEME: “Three Types of Church Members”

INTRODUCTION: In perhaps no other place in the Bible do we have such an inclusive and concise outline and summary of the types of church members. John is now old. He writes to a church that had allowed a man named Diotrephes to run the church. Diotrephes had rejected John’s letters and apostolic authority. He had been guilty of mistreating God’s servants. So, John writes a letter to Gaius, who was perhaps the outstanding Christian in the church, warning him about the danger of Diotrephes.

I. GAIUS.

1. He was faithful to the truth. In other words, he was a fundamentalist. Notice in III John 1, the words, “whom I love in the truth.”
2. He was spiritual. In III John 2, notice the words, “that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” What John is saying is that he trusted that Gaius would be as healthy physically as he was spiritually. He was complimenting his spiritual health and wishing for him comparable physical health.
3. He had a good testimony. In III John 3, notice the words, “when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee.” Notice especially that the “brethren” testified of this truth. In other words, he had the right kind of testimony, and it was obvious to all.
4. He believed the truth. In III John 3, notice the words, “the truth that is in thee.”
5. He not only believed the truth, but he lived it. In III John 3, notice the words, “even as thou walkest in the truth.” His walk was consistent with his talk. His life was consistent with his belief.
6. He was a joy and comfort to his pastor. In III John 4, notice the words, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” This is the greatest joy of the true pastor—to watch his people grow and walk in the truth of God.
7. He was faithful. In III John 5, notice the words, “thou doest faithfully.”
8. He treated other church members properly. In III John 5a, notice the words, “Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren.” He promoted unity among the saints. He helped to edify the Christian brethren.
9. He was hospitable. In III John 5b, notice the words, “and to strangers.” (Teacher, discuss here the importance of church members being friendly to visitors.)
10. He helped others. In III John 6, notice the words, “Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church.” In other words, he was a constant help, thinking of others and supplying or providing their needs.
11. He was part of the pastor’s work. In III John 8, notice, “We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.” Here John was talking about helping the preachers, and he was admonishing Gaius that when he helped the preacher, he became a part of his ministry. This is certainly true. When our pastor preaches to people around the country from place to place, the members of this church are certainly a part of that ministry. In fact, everything the pastors do for God is made possible by the faithfulness and help of the members. Hence, every member has a part in all the work of God’s men.

II. DIOTREPHESES.

1. He wanted to be a big shot. In III John 9, notice the words, “loveth to have the preeminence among them.”
2. He was a thorn in the flesh to God’s men. In III John 9, notice the words, “receiveth us not.”
3. He was wicked with his tongue. He was guilty of criticism, gossip and malicious words. See III John 10a.
4. He sowed discord among the brethren. In III John 10 notice the words, “neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would.”

III. DEMETRIUS. Demetrius was the kind of church member who did not have the talent or leadership ability of Gaius, nor was he a divider, gossip and critic, as was Diotrephes. He was that faithful, solid church member who does his job without fanfare and who supports loyally the work of the Lord under the leadership of the pastor.

1. He had a good reputation. In III John 12, notice the words, “hath good report of all men.”
2. He walked in the truth. In III John 12, notice the words, “and of the truth itself.”

CONCLUSION: Teacher, lead your class members to be the right kind of church members. Ask them what kind they are, and lead them to be like Gaius or Demetrius, not Diotrephes.