

3 John 1:1-15

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[0 : 00] Good morning, church. It is a joy to get to preach here. If you guys will take your copy of God, God's word. We're going to be in the book of third John. We're going to preach through the whole book, all 15 verses. But as you're turning there, I want to ask you guys a few questions.

Who do you imitate? Who do you look up to and desire to be like? And don't say nobody, because we all look up to someone. We are all influenced by someone. But are those who influence us influenced by Christ?

This text will call us to imitate good and not evil. And if we are not careful, we will slowly be shaped and molded by those who do not walk according to the example we have in Christ.

So let's read our text today from third John verses one through 15. The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health as it goes well with your soul. For I rejoice greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.

[1 : 32] I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church.

You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore, we ought to support people like these that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us and not content with that.

He refuses to welcome the brothers and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate evil, but imitate good.

Whoever does good is from God and whoever does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony and you know that our testimony is true.

[2 : 52] I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon and we will talk face to face. Peace be to you.

The friends greet you. Greet the friends each by name. Amen. So here we have a letter from the elder John and he is writing a personal letter to a man named Gaius, who most likely came to faith through John's witness.

And Gaius is a member of a church along with this man named Diotrephes. And we don't really know much information about Diotrephes. We don't know if he was a pastor or just a regular church member with way too much influence.

But one thing is clear about Diotrephes is that he was a man of evil character. So I'm going to break up today's sermon into four parts.

Part one is going to be the love and joy of John. Part two, the good example of Gaius. Part three, the evil example of Diotrephes.

[4 : 05] And then part four, the conclusion, who do you imitate? So part one, the love and joy of John.

So I want you to look closely at the way that John talks to Gaius. In verse one, he calls him beloved. And then he says, whom I love in the truth.

In verse two, he refers to him again as beloved and mentioned how he is praying for him. And what is the content of his prayer? John prays that Gaius would be in good health as it goes well with his

soul.

So what is John saying here? He is saying that Gaius is spiritually healthy. And he desires that Gaius would be in good physical health as well.

We don't know exactly the context. But it is very possible that Gaius suffered from some kind of physical ailment that constantly plagued him. We don't really know.

[5 : 12] But here is a lesson for us. It is good for us to pray for the physical health of others. But may this not be our primary concern.

May their spiritual health be our fervent prayer. Good health is a blessing, but it is not promised to us. And I would rather see someone with a broken body heading to the celestial kingdom than a man or woman of excellent physical health heading to the place of eternal torment.

There it will not matter whether your body is healthy, strong, or fit because the flames do not show partiality to those they will burn without consuming. So how is your spiritual health?

Would John be able to say the same of you? And I'm thankful that there are many here at church who are concerned about physical health. But do not make physical health your idol.

If it were stripped away from you, could you still rejoice in the Lord? Would someone still look at you and say, My heart really aches for that brother and sister, for the pain that they are feeling.

[6 : 27] But I rejoice because they are spiritually well. So be diligent in taking care of your physical body. But of far more importance is the diligent care of your soul.

So next, let's look how he rejoices in verse 3. He says, I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.

It brought John great joy to see how Gaius was not just talking, but was actually walking in the truth. And he demonstrated this through the way that he treated these traveling gospel workers.

And we will touch on this more when we look at the example of Gaius. But in verse 4, John proclaims, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

It was his greatest joy to know that those he shared the gospel with and disciplined were faithfully walking in the truth. Gaius might have been physically ill, but John rejoiced that Gaius was spiritually well.

[7 : 39] As followers of Christ, this should be the same for those who we've had the opportunity to share the gospel with or disciple. And for pastors, this should be your greatest joy to see the members under your care faithfully walking in the truth.

And so while this text is referring to spiritual children, it can also apply to physical children. Charles Spurgeon, he used to use this text not only to challenge ministers of the word, but also parents.

He used to walk into the home and look parents straight in the eyes, and he challenged them to make spiritual children in their own families. He said, It is a very grievous thing to see how some professedly Christian parents are satisfied so as long as their children display cleverness in learning or sharpness in business, although they show no signs of a renewed nature.

If they pass their examinations with credit and promise to be well fitted for the world's battle, their parents forget that there is a superior calling involving a higher crown for which their child will need to be fitted by divine grace and armed with the whole armor of God.

When a man's heart is really right with God, and he himself has been saved from the wrath to come and is living in the light of his heavenly father's countenance, it is certain that he is anxious about his children's souls, prizes their immortal natures, and feels nothing could give him greater joy than to hear that his children walk in the truth of God.

[9 : 15] So parents, is it your greatest joy to see your children walking in the truth? Mothers, on this Mother's Day, may your greatest joy and prayer be to see your children walking in the truth.

As moms, you get to spend a special amount of time with your children, instilling in them the truths. And when your kids reflect on all the things that mom used to say, don't let the phrases that they think of be, don't forget to wash your hands, or don't talk to strangers, or use your manners, or eat your fruits and veggies.

This would be a tragedy if this is all you are remembered by. But let your children remember how mom used to say, you cannot love Christ and hate the church.

Or, if God cares for the birds, little one, do you not think that he will care for you? Or, remember, my child, that in Christ, all your sins can be forgiven.

Fathers, fathers, lead your wives and kids in a way that instills these truths deep into their soul. Love your spiritual children and physical children as John loved Gaius.

[10:40] So lastly, in part one, let's actually skip down to verses 13 through 15. Most of you guys won't have to turn your page, but some of you may. And let's read what John says here.

He says, I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name. We can see here John's deep longing to be face to face with Gaius.

It wasn't enough for John to just communicate it with pen and ink. He loved him too much. He wanted to see him soon. He wanted to be face to face.

This was indeed his spiritual child, and what parent who truly loves their child would be content only see them over a computer screen or hearing from them in an email or text every once in a while.

[11:50] It would be heartbreaking because there is a deep longing to be together, to be in the presence of one another. So in this letter, we see John's immense love and joy to see his spiritual child, Gaius, walking in the truth.

And honestly, this reminds me of last Sunday, seeing one of our own elders, Clay, tearing up as Jake Hughes and his wife were moving away and would no longer be gathering with Christ Family Church.

Why such tears from a tough Irishman? Because Clay was experiencing the immense joy and love to see his child walking in the truth and the pain of no longer being face to face with him.

So now we're going to move to part two, the good example of Gaius. So let's return back to verses one through four. And I want you to notice how many times the word truth is used here.

Verse one, it says, whom I love in the truth. And in verse three, he says, testify to your truth as indeed you are walking in the truth.

[13:18] And verse four, my children walking in the truth. So Gaius was walking in the truth. But what does this mean that he is walking in the truth?

Well, if we actually go back to John's first letter, we will get a clearer picture of what he means here. So let's go to first John chapter two and we're going to read verses three through six.

First John chapter two verses three through six. It says, and by this, we know that we have come to know him.

If we keep his commandments, whoever says, I know him, but does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word in him, truly the love of God is perfected.

By this, we may know that we are in him. Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. Notice how if someone says they know him, but does not keep his commandments, the text calls him a liar and says the truth is not in him.

[14:49] So the one who knows him obeys his commands and thus walks in the truth. And notice the last part of verse six. It says, whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

In other words, Jesus is the example in which we should be striving to imitate. We should love the way that he loved.

We should obey God the way that he did. But first John is clear that we will not do this perfectly. But this should be our heart's desire and aim to be more like Christ's.

Like the words of a good old hymn, O to be more, O to be like thee, blessed Redeemer. This is my constant longing and prayer.

gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures for thy perfect likeness to wear. And so it was with Gaius.

[15:53] He not only confessed the truth, but he actually walked in the truth. He not only said he had fellowship with God, but he showed the truth that he believed by the way he lived.

And this is contrary to the way of diatrophies. He probably confessed the truth. He was a member of this church. But it seems as if he lived contrary to his confession.

And this is a great place, brothers and sisters, to remind you that you are only saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Walking in the truth does not save you.

But let me be clear. If you genuinely believe that Jesus Christ died as a perfectly righteous substitute on your behalf to save you from the wrath of God and that he gives you his righteousness so that you can stand before God righteous and justified, out of love for God, you will walk in the truth.

You will walk in the truth because you have been saved, not in order to be saved. we are too quick to forget the gospel and try to earn right standing before God.

[17 : 15] By faith you have right standing before God. So live for him and walk in the truth. And if you are trying to earn right standing before God by being a good enough person, then repent and believe the gospel.

people, I've had too many conversations with people where they say they're Christians, so then I'll ask them, I was like, so why do you think you should get into heaven? And the most common answer I've heard from these supposed Christians is, well, I think I'm a good enough person. And to that I tell you, no, you are not good enough. Only Christ is good enough and he died for you. Believe in him alone for salvation. Trust that his sacrifice is enough and let him change you as you keep your eyes fixated upon him and his word.

So Gaius was not merely talking, but he was also walking in the truth. And verses five through six, so we're going to go back to third John.

[18 : 28] And we're going to read verses five through six, which give us a tangible example of how he walked in the truth.

So let's read verses five through six. Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church.

you would do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. So back then, those who would do traveling ministry depended upon the hospitality of others.

And here's an example of a church that should be receiving these gospel workers, but because of deatrophies, they are unwelcomed. And deatrophies tries to put out of the church anyone who would dare to welcome them.

But Gaius boldly welcomes these brothers and shows them an extreme amount of hospitality, even though he barely knows them. To Gaius, they are strangers in one sense, as the text says, but they are beloved brothers in another sense.

[19 : 45] Gaius shows his faith in action by the way he receives these brothers, risking getting maligned and wrongly put out of the church.

His faith was evident in his actions. So let's read verses seven and eight, which say, for they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.

Therefore, we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth. here we have these gospel workers, or we could even say missionaries, who have gone out for the sake of the gospel.

And John is saying that we ought to support people like these. They aren't receiving their support from the Gentiles, that is, the non-believers, because their work is for the building up of the church. And since it is for the building of the church, it should be from those within the church. And so, John says we ought to support workers like these, who are going out for the sake of the name, but he doesn't leave it at that.

[20 : 59] He gives us the reason why we should. He says that we may be fellow workers for the truth. As you support workers who have gone out for the sake of the gospel, you are actually joining, partnering, in their work.

And as my wife and I were just starting to raise support, I remember complaining about having to raise support to a good friend who was actually already supporting us. And I was complaining just kind of about the process.

And he looked at me and sternly but lovingly rebuked me, saying, I work really hard to make extra money so that I can support those taking the gospel to the nations.

this is my way of getting to be a part of the great commission. In other words, what he was saying was, shut your mouth and see it for what it truly is.

You are inviting people in to be a part of the gospel going to the ends of the earth. And this totally changed my perspective and made raising support actually a joy because we realized we were inviting others to take part in the great commission.

[22 : 20] And is this not what John is talking about here in verse eight? Is he not saying that those who support people like these are fellow workers for the truth? So praise God that though you may not go, you have the opportunity to go in your giving, in your praying, and in your encouragement.

commitment. But, there's also a warning here. If your support means that you are partnering in that work, should you not know what you are partnering in?

Should you not be careful and intentional in the work you are supporting? I've known too many people who are giving to different ministries and I'm sure they have a good heart, they're giving and they just want to be generous, but they have no idea what are the aim, what is the aim and mission of these ministries.

Maybe they're given to feel good or maybe they're given because they like the guy and they couldn't say no, but for all they know, they might be supporting a work that is actually contrary to the gospel. So be careful who you do support and be intentional who you are supporting, because in your support, you are also partnering in that work.

[23 : 43] So we see in the example of Gaius that he believed the truth and thus walked in the truth. And one example that evidenced his walking in the truth was the way that he cared for and supported these gospel workers.

Maybe you look to Gaius as a good and faithful example of someone walking in the truth. part three, the bad example of diatrophies.

So verses 9 through 10 in 3 John turn our attention to a man named diatrophies. And as I said earlier, it seems as if he was a leader in the church, but we don't actually have too much information about his position.

One thing is clear, though. It says he was a man who liked to put himself first. first. And in his putting himself first, the text says he does not acknowledge our authority.

It says that he is talking wicked nonsense against us and not content with that. He refuses to welcome the brothers and also stops those who wants to and puts them out of the church.

[24 : 55] He does all of these evil deeds because his self-idolatry was under attack. But does he not contradict the very life and words of Jesus when Jesus said in Matthew chapter 20 verses 27 through 28, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Or Paul's teaching in Philippians chapter two, verse three, when he says do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

We must be like Gaius, who though he was probably ill, though he could have been put out of the church and maligned, he did not put himself first, but cared for these traveling gospel workers.

He put them first. Do not be like diatrophies, who put himself first. And this is so easy to do.

I think about this past week as I was preparing for this sermon, how many times I had don't be like diatrophies playing in the back of my brain, especially with everything going on where I was tempted to put myself first.

[26 : 20] But we must not be like diatrophies. we need to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him.

So fathers and husbands, putting yourself first will cause you to be unkind to your wife and kids. It will cause you to be short tempered, easily irritated, slow to listen, and quick to speak.

Mothers and wives, putting yourself first will cause you to neglect your kids when they need you the most, to see your kids as a burden rather than a blessing, to see them as getting in the way of what you really want to do.

It will cause you not to submit to your husband or to try to subvert his leadership. Bosses, putting yourself first will cause you to see your employees as just tools of making more money or creating more leisure for yourselves rather other than people made in the image of God.

Employees, putting yourself first will cause you to not work diligently, to grumble and complain, to text or be on social media or play games when you probably should actually be working.

[27 : 40] Students, putting yourself first will cause you to go for a career that will benefit you the most, not considering your family, your church or how it could serve the Lord.

It may cause you to be focused on grades to the point that you ignore the people God has put in your life or you would rather spend time studying or working on projects or paper when you should probably be gathering with the church on Sunday.

Children, putting yourselves first will cause you to disobey your parents, be mean to your siblings, to grumble and complain and argue when they ask you to do something.

Lastly, church members, putting yourself first will cause you to grumble and complain when at a member meeting there's a decision put forth that isn't convenient or comfortable for you.

It will cause you to vote in such a way that benefits you the most, not considering your brothers or sisters or your leaders who God has put in charge of shepherding your soul.

[28 : 45] people. These are just a few examples and there's so much more that could be said about this section, but I hope you see the danger of putting yourself first. It does not glorify the Lord and walks contrary to the example we have in Christ.

Do not imitate diatrophies who like to put himself first, but imitate Gaius as he walked in the truth. part four conclusion.

Who do you imitate? Verse 11 gives us the main command in third John. It says, beloved, do not imitate evil, but imitate good.

Whoever does good is from God and whoever does evil has not seen God. He follows this by pointing to another brother, Demetrius, saying Demetrius has received good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself.

We also add our testimony and you know that our testimony is true. Demetrius had a good and faithful reputation and he was another one to be imitated, but we obviously don't have many details surrounding his life.

[29 : 57] But what we do have is an example of Gaius and the example of diatrophies and a call to imitate good and not evil.

And as I said earlier, we all imitate someone. So my question is, who do you imitate? Who is the person that captures an ideal that you desire?

Is it a famous person or singer? If you would pay a lot of money and drive hours to go see this person, it might be a sign that you are greatly influenced by them. And if you aren't careful, you will start to imitate their way of living.

Maybe you desire to imitate someone that isn't evil, but who should not be your ultimate desire to become like. Maybe it is the Instagram influencer mom.

Maybe it's a certain successful businessman, a certain professor, hunter, or athlete, or soldier. You fill in the blank. If the person you are seeking to imitate isn't helping you grow in godliness and holiness, should you ultimately be imitating them?

[31 : 12] Could you say, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11, follow me as I follow Christ? In other words, look at my example in so much as I am following Christ.

He also says in Philippians 3 17, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

We have the truth and this truth teaches us how to live and we need human examples of those truths lived out.

Do you have brothers and sisters in the faith that you could point to and say, be like so-and-so, consider the way he follows Christ? Parents, as your kids are growing up, who can you point to and say, if you want to be a businessman, consider this person and the way his faith is at action in his work.

Or if you want to be a mother, don't only look to my example, but consider this mom and how she is faithfully discipling and training up her children. We need the church on this journey to look to one another and to learn how to live out the truth.

[32 : 31] And parents, if your children do not have godly examples to look to, they will look to the world. Be careful of the role models you put before them.

Be watchful of who you idolize in the home, who is on your TV, and who is on your speakers. Your kids are watching, they're learning, and they're imitating.

This is also my plug for reading good Christian biographies, for the sake of your soul and your families, to have these imperfect examples of believers striving to live like the perfect example, Christ.

So I'd like to end with the command of 3 John verse 11. Beloved, do not imitate evil, but imitate good.

So ask yourself, who do you imitate, whether secretly or openly? And if this person does not point you to Christ, to the gospel, if this person is not walking in the truth, ask yourself, should you be imitating them?

[33 : 39] And ask yourself, who should you imitate? Beware of those who walk in the way of deatrophies, who walk contrary to the truth.

But look for those like Gaius, who walk in the truth, to those who not only believe the truth, but live lives that evidence the truth that they believe.

Let's pray, church.