

Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Studies

III John

“How to Take Care of Missionaries”



Bible Studies
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How to Take Care of Missionaries **III John** – (the whole book is only one chapter)

Following are some Discussion Questions you can use to help you read and talk through this Bible Study. Answers are next.

"The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth" III John: 1

1. Who is writing this letter, and to whom is it written?

"Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in the truth." III John: 2&3

2. What had John heard about Gaius which gave him much gladness?
3. What does "walking in the truth" mean?

"I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." II John: 4

4. What gives you your greatest joy in life?
5. Do you have any spiritual children?

"Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth." III John: 5-8

6. The "brethren" John is referring to here are those who are traveling from place to place spreading the Gospel message. How was the church supposed to take care of these "brethren"?
7. What would "support" mean?
8. When we support those traveling with the Gospel, what does that make us?
9. What are some ways people are "missionaries" today?
10. What is the one thing which separates a "missionary" from anyone else who is caring for people?

"I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true." III John: 9-12

11. What else is John concerned about with Gaius' church?
12. Is John saying it is wrong for a church leader to act independently of a higher ecclesiastical authority? In other words, is John sort of like a head honcho in a group of churches,

and he is chastising a Pastor of an individual church who will not follow his lead? What is really happening here?

13. Who is John wanting Gaius to imitate? Who is he wanting him to not imitate?

"I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name." III John: 13-15

14. Why does John want to speak to Gaius in person?
15. Why does he say "the friends" instead of naming individual people?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

16. What missionaries are a part of your life?
17. What could you do to be more active in supporting a missionary?
18. Do you support any "missionaries" who are actually not missionaries? What should you do about that?
19. What resources are available to teach us how to show hospitality and true caring to missionaries?
20. Should you choose someone new to imitate? What steps could you take to set that in motion?

How to Take Care of Missionaries III John – Answers to Questions

"The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth" III John: 1

1. It is written to a man named Gaius, written by the Apostle John.

From the rest of the context of the letter, it would seem that a man named Diotrephes, a leader in one of the churches of the province of Asia, was turning away itinerant missionaries sent out by the Apostle John. John is using this letter to show Gaius how wrong Diotrephes was, and probably to warn Diotrephes, too.

These itinerant missionaries, or preachers, were common in this time. Today we would call them "missionaries". They were traveling far away from their homes in order to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In II John, John warns about accepting any itinerant preachers who were not preaching the truth, saying that to offer hospitality to them would be tantamount to endorsing their lies. (II John: 9-11)

But in this letter John is looking at this from the opposite angle. He is saying, "...on the other hand, you have a responsibility to take care of those who truly are walking in the truth."

John is still defending and fighting for the truth of the Gospel in this letter. But his words are very personal and practical....not theoretical. Yes, you need to speak out against lies....but also, you need to passionately support the spreading of the truth.

"Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in the truth." III John: 2&3

2. What had John heard about Gaius which gave him much gladness?

He had heard that Gaius was walking in the truth, which simply meant that Gaius was sticking to the Gospel story as told by the apostles. He wasn't watering down or straying away from the truth.

3. What does "walking in the truth" mean?

It means reading, listening to, totally embracing, and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, every word of it, and not adding anything to it, or changing it in any way. It means also that the truth of God's Word is changing you, not just adding to your knowledge.

"I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." II John: 4

4. What gives you your greatest joy in life? Personal Answer

5. Do you have any spiritual children? Personal Answer

"Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth." III John: 5-8

6. The "brethren" John is referring to here are those who are traveling from place to place spreading the Gospel message. How was the church supposed to take care of these "brethren"?

They were supposed to support them. Accomplish things for them. Love them. Send them on their way with generosity....in the same manner the Lord Himself would send them.

7. What would "support" mean?

Most of the time we think of this as giving money. But surely there is more to it? What else would you suggest should be done for these traveling brethren?

8. When we support those traveling with the Gospel, what does that make us?

It makes us co-workers with them.

9. What are some ways people are "missionaries" today?

Going to foreign cultures...some within our own country....and using every means available to spread the Gospel.

10. What is the one thing which separates a "missionary" from anyone else who is caring for people?

Telling the story of Jesus Christ. If "help" is being given, in any wonderful or compassionate form, that is an awesome thing to do....but if the main purpose and intent is not to spread the Good News of Jesus, that person is not a missionary. Yes, they are doing something good, but they should not be supported or promoted as a missionary....since that would mean a true missionary may be going without that support.

Is it wrong to help people without spreading the Gospel? Well....no. But why would you?

What else "defines" what a Missionary is?

- One who goes out to the world, educating people with the Word of God about Jesus and salvation
- One who ministers in any way for Jesus Christ. Doctors, nurses, teachers – all of these could use their chosen occupation to be a missionary
- Does a person have to go to a different culture in order to be considered a Missionary?
- One who has a passion and desire to do what they are doing....in other words...a "calling"

These are a few of the definitions the Wednesday Bible Study at Southside Bible came up with.

"I wrote something to the church; but Diotrefes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not

receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.” III John: 9-12

11. What else is John concerned about with Gaius’ church?

He’s very concerned about the leader in Gaius’ church who is turning away legitimate missionaries, and making sure that other people in the church turn them away, too. John is pointedly telling Gaius to not follow in this man’s footsteps.

12. Is John saying it is wrong for a church leader to act independently of a higher ecclesiastical authority? In other words, is John sort of like a head honcho in a group of churches, and he is chastising a Pastor of an individual church who will not follow his lead? What is really happening here?

No...of course he’s not “lording it” over this church. He’s simply stating the truth. John, the Apostle, knew what the truth of the Gospel was. If anyone questioned his word, they were questioning the truth of Jesus Himself. John’s Gospel was verified by many other sources, and had been well-accepted by churches all over the known world. There was no room to question John’s Gospel. Anyone who did was veering away from the simple truth and beginning to dabble in false teaching.

Today, we would say the same about any Pastor of any church who was teaching anything different from what is in the whole Bible.

Individual churches and individual Pastors do not have to have someone “over them” in order to recognize the truth. They need only to accept as true the total Word of God. And to cling tenaciously to the Gospel as taught and written by the Apostles.

13. Who is John wanting Gaius to imitate? Who is he wanting him to not imitate?

Imitate Demetrius.
Do not imitate Diotrephes.

"I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name." III John: 13-15

14. Why does John want to speak to Gaius in person?

He loves him and he has supremely important things to tell him.

15. Why does he say "the friends" instead of naming individual people?

I'm not positive about this, but I'm assuming he was protecting other believers if this letter should get into the hands of someone who was wanting to persecute Christians in that area.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

16. What missionaries are a part of your life?

17. What could you do to be more active in supporting a missionary?

Here are some of the suggestions contributed other Bible Study groups studying this lesson:

- **Pray**
- **Giving**
- **Encourage**
- **Hospitality**
- **Find out what their material needs are and meet them**
- **Remember their children**
- **Go to their mission field and visit them**
- **Don't forget they have spiritual needs.**
- **List missionaries in the bulletin occasionally**
- **Have a 10-minute-before-the-service-begins powerpoint presentation with pictures of a specific Missionary family**
- **Monthly "Mission Minutes" about Missionaries around the globe.**
- **Sunday School kids' class adopts a Missionary child**

- **Corporate prayer for specific missionaries**
 - **A map with the latest info**
 - **Talk about the way events in the news are affecting our missionaries**
 - **Newsletters posted or e-mailed**
 - **Small Groups adopt a Missionary. A point person who intentionally focuses on that Missionary's needs**
 - **Mission trips to the areas where our Missionaries serve**
 - **Material projects taken on by groups or by the whole church.**
- 18.** Do you support any "missionaries" who are actually not missionaries?
- 19.** What resources are available to teach us how to show hospitality and true caring to missionaries? **(Check out www.learn-care-go.com for great ideas on supporting missionaries)**
- 20.** Should you choose someone new to imitate? What steps could you take to set that in motion?