

III John: Lesson #93 – Imitate Good, Not Evil

Notes for Parents to Study With Their Children

For Wednesday, April 29th

Read III John 1-14 (a simplified explanation of the text will be supplied at the end of these notes.)

Memory Verse: III John 11a “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.”

John Writes His Third Letter

- John is writing his third letter. When he calls himself an elder, this is probably talking about him being an older man. He may have been in his 80’s by this time.
- The letter is addressed to someone named Gaius. This is a Gentile name (not a Jewish name). There are names of two other men John mentions, Diotrephes and Demetrius, which are also Gentile names. John seems to have worked among the churches of the area called Asia Minor. In Revelation, Jesus reveals a message to John for the 7 churches in the region of Asia Minor.

The Three Men in III John

- **Gaius** – Gaius, the man John is writing to, was someone John thought very highly of and loved very much. Gaius had shown hospitality to preachers of the gospel that had come through their area, even though such men were strangers to him (vv. 5-7). John was proud of Gaius for doing this because these preachers were working very hard and needed help. John was so happy that Gaius continued to walk in truth. He prayed that he would continue to do well.
- **Diotrephes** – Diotrephes was an entirely different person. He was a member of the church, but he wasn’t acting right. Unlike Gaius, Diotrephes didn’t want preachers coming there. He wouldn’t help them and he didn’t want anyone else in the church to help them. In fact, if he knew that someone had helped these preachers, he would have them thrown out of the church. The apostle John had written the church there a letter, but Diotrephes wouldn’t allow the church to receive it. Instead, Diotrephes made ridiculous charges against John – he made things up about him that weren’t true. Why did Diotrephes act this way? John says it was because “he loved to have first place”, he wanted to be more important than anyone else there. He wanted to run the church. John warned that at some point he would come and confront Diotrephes for his evil ways.
- **Demetrius** – Thirdly, John mentions Demetrius who had shown that he was a faithful and diligent worker for God. John says, “Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.” We don’t know for certain who Demetrius was, but we know he set a good example.

John Encourages Gaius to Follow the Good Examples

- It is sad to say this, but sometimes there are people that get into the church that don’t act right and don’t have good attitudes. You know that must make Jesus sad to know that some people don’t really live the way He commands. Diotrephes was obviously

one of those people. Just because people become Christians and go to church doesn't necessarily mean that they are living the way they should. You just hope that there will be someone part of the church like Demetrius who is trying to set everyone a good example of what a Christian is supposed to act like.

- John reminded Gaius of an important truth, one that we need to remember, too: “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.” We won't always see perfect examples in the church. We have to learn who we should and shouldn't imitate. “Imitate” means to follow someone and do what they do. When people do good things, they are worth imitating. When people do evil things, then we should make up our minds not to follow their ways.

John Calls His Fellow Christians “Friends”

- In the last sentence of III John, the apostle closes with these words, “Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.”
- We always need to remember that though we may have many different friends in life, those who are at church are very special friends. Some of the best friends you will ever have will be those from church. We need to always love them and appreciate them and help them. Because of God and Jesus, we share something special with them that we don't share with anyone else.
- Someone has said that friends who are Christians are our “forever friends” because these are the people we will be with in heaven forever.

Simplified Explanation of the Text

John's Joy that Gaius Walks in the Truth

III John 1:1 The elder to the much loved Gaius, who I love in the truth.

2 Beloved, I pray above all us that things will go well for you and that you'll be in good health, just as your soul continues to do well.

3 I rejoiced so much when the brethren came reporting how the truth is still in you, just as you've always walked in the truth.

4 There is no greater joy for me than when I hear that my children are walking in truth.

Helping Workers in the Kingdom

5 Beloved, whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, you are acting faithfully.

6-7 These have told of your love in the presence of the church. You are doing good when you help send them on their journey in a respectful and worthy way, because such men have gone out in behalf of the Lord's name, and they have taken no money from the Gentiles.

8 Therefore it's our duty to receive these men, so that we can work together with them in regard to the truth.

Don't Follow the Bad Example of Diotrephes

9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be over everyone else there, is not willing to receive us.

10 So, if I come, I will remember all these deeds he has done, making ridiculous and empty charges accusing us with evil words. It's not enough that he won't take in the brethren, but he also forbids others to do this, and throws them out of the church if they try.

11 Beloved, don't follow what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God, but the one who does evil has not seen God.

Follow a Good Example Like Demetrius

12 Everyone has good things to say about Demetrius. The truth itself testifies to his goodness, and I'll add my witness to that, that he is a good man, and you know what we say is true.

13 I had many more things that I'd like to write, but I'll not do it with pen and ink.

14 I hope to come to see you soon and speak with you face to face. Peace to you. Loving friends greet you. Greet each of our dear friends there by name.