

The Third Epistle Of John



**A Study Guide With Introductory Comments,
Summaries, And Review Questions**

Student Edition

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The outlines were developed in the course of my ministry as a preacher of the gospel. Feel free to use them as they are, or adapt them to suit your own personal style.

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Table Of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Chapter One</i>	5

This study guide was designed for adult Bible classes, though it might be suitable for junior and senior high classes as well. Some have used it for personal devotions, and others in small study groups. In whatever way it can be used to the glory of God, I am grateful.

- **Points to ponder** for each chapter are things I emphasize during the class.
- **Review questions** are intended to reinforce key thoughts in each chapter. There is a “teacher’s edition” available with answers included.

The Third Epistle Of John

Introduction

What was the early church like? We know a lot about its early leaders, such as apostles Paul and Peter; but what about the average Christians themselves? Were they more spiritual than Christians today? Did they experience the kind of problems seen so often in churches today?

Several books of the New Testament reflect the life of the early church, and this is especially true of **The Third Epistle of John**. It is a private letter, between "The Elder" and a Christian named Gaius. It provides portraits of three different men, and in so doing gives us a glimpse of 1st century life in local churches.

When one examines the portraits found in this letter, we learn that there is not much difference between people back then, and in the church today. Therefore this epistle is very relevant, though we may live almost 2000 years later.

Author

"The Elder" (**3Jn 1:1**) is believed by most conservative scholars to be **the apostle John**. The **internal evidence** for the third epistle is similar to that of the second:

- The **three epistles** of John utilize much the same language and ideas
- All bear similarity to concepts and language to the **Gospel of John**
- The term "elder" would be a fitting description of John as the author, writing in his old age

The **external evidence** is slight, but Dionysius of Alexandria, living in the third century A.D., credits John with being the author.

Recipient

The epistle is addressed to "beloved Gaius". **Gaius** was a common Roman name, and appears five times in the New Testament (**Ac 19:29; 20:4; Ro 16:23; 1Co 1:14; 3Jn 1:1**). Whether he is one of those mentioned by Luke or Paul cannot be determined. He was evidently a dear friend of John, known for his hospitality (more below).

Place and Date

Ephesus is usually suggested as the location from which John wrote this epistle, as he was known to live there in the later years of his life. Estimation of the date of writing varies widely, some placing it before the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.). Most however place it around **90-95 A.D.**

Purpose and Theme

The **purpose** of the epistle is threefold, related to the three men mentioned by name:

- To confirm that **Gaius** did right in supporting those teachers who came his way, encouraging him to continue this hospitality - **3Jn 1:5-8**

- To express his condemnation of **Diotrephes** for rejecting John and others whom he should have received - **3Jn 1:9-10**
- To encourage Gaius to imitate what is good, commending **Demetrius** as a good example - **3Jn 1:11-12**

As for the **theme**, with the examples of the three men preserved for us in this letter, let me suggest one based on the words of John in verse 11:

Do not imitate what is evil, but what is good

Outline

Here is a simple outline of the book...

Greetings, with an expression of great joy (**1-4**)

The confirmation of Gaius (**5-8**)

The condemnation of Diotrephes (**9-10**)

The commendation of Demetrius (**11-12**)

Concluding remarks (**13-14**)

Review Questions

- 1) **Who is author of The Third Epistle Of John?**
- 2) **Who was the recipient of this epistle?**
- 3) **When was it written? From where?**
- 4) **What has been suggested as its threefold purpose?**
- 5) **What has been suggested as its theme?**
- 6) **What are the main divisions of this epistle as outlined above?**

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Chapter One

John greets Gaius, praying for his prosperity and health, rejoicing to hear that he is walking in truth (1-4). John approves his hospitality toward brethren and strangers, especially those serving the Lord (5-8). John condemns the deeds of Diotrephes (9-10), commends the testimony of Demetrius (11-12), and concludes with a hope to see Gaius soon (13-14).

Points To Ponder

- The joy of seeing one's converts growing in Christ
- The importance of hospitality in the spread of the gospel
- The contrast between spirituality and carnality among Christians

Review Questions

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?
- 2) To whom is this epistle addressed? (1)
- 3) For what does John pray in behalf of Gaius? (2)
- 4) What gave John his greatest joy? (4)
- 5) For what does John praise Gaius? (5-7)
- 6) What benefit do we receive when we support those who serve the Lord? (8)
- 7) Of what was Diotrephes guilty? (9-10)
- 8) What exhortation does John give to Gaius? Who does he commend? (11-12)