

3 John 1-8 || Contrasting Examples – The Good || 1-24-21

PREVIOUSLY:

As Jason finished 2 John last week, he mentioned some *pitfalls* and *excuses* we make for ourselves and others who aren't displaying devotion to other believers.

- And, as convicting as it was to hear, he was right when he said that *"The problem isn't that we don't have enough good examples or enough time, the problem is that we don't think rightly about Christ."*

Jesus' command is to love one another, and when we fail to do so we reveal our wrong theology.

There are unlimited joys found within the body of Christ (Gospel community), and one unexpected benefit found in the end of 2 John is discerning deceivers.

Walking in communion with other believers helps guard us against false teaching.

- As we'll see in 3 John today, living in Gospel community guards us against false teachers.

READ TEXT

3rd John is the shortest book of the Bible with just over 200 words, and its tone and content is like a personal letter to a friend, much like Paul's letters to Timothy, Titus, & Philemon.

It's possible that this letter was written *after* John left the island of Patmos, which would then make it the last book of the NT to be written.

- Whenever it falls in the timeline of NT writing, John was up in age at the time and had many years to reflect on life since being sent out by Christ.
- This wasn't a new Christian.
- This wasn't even a guy fresh out of seminary.
 - This was an *experienced* and *battle-worn* pastor.

[v.1] – *"The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth."*

John refers to himself as *"the elder"*, denoting both his age and his standing in the church.

- The title *"elder"* had been used for pastoral leaders for probably about 30 years by this point, so it would have been a familiar and reassuring part of John's letter.

Whereas 2nd John isn't addressed to anyone in particular, 3rd John addresses a specific man named **Gaius**.

2nd John doesn't mention any specific names (other than Jesus), but 3rd John calls out two other men, who we will discuss in more detail today & also next week.

- It's really interesting to me how 2nd John is so general and 3rd John is so specific.

It's interesting, but not surprising, really. → This is how people learn.

In mathematics you don't start by teaching someone the details of long division or how to find the square root of a number.

- You start with the general basics of math – the order of numbers, simple addition, subtraction, etc.

In teaching the English language, you wouldn't start with diagramming sentences or explaining the difference between prepositions and adjectives.

- You'd start with letter recognition, phonics, sentence structure, etc.

We usually learn best by starting with the broad basics of a subject and then moving on to specific examples of how to implement those basics.

- ***This is exactly what John is doing with 2nd & 3rd John.***

2nd John gave us a broad and general understanding of how to love one another and guard against false teaching.

3rd John gives us specific examples of people who do that well, people who do that poorly, and what that means for the church.

- 3rd John focuses intently on several contrasting examples, different men he lists by name, and as you can see, they couldn't be more different.
 - *The differences of between these men's behavior & belief are stark & obvious.*
- This letter is addressed to Gaius, a man whom John says he loves "*in truth*".
 - It's clear that John really treasures this guy – "*beloved Gaius*".
 - Gaius is a good friend, but not just because he "had John's back" or anything like that.
 - John will explain why in v.3-6.

We don't know anything about this Gaius except what John says about him here in 3rd John.

- Gaius was a fairly common name in that day, and this man is one of 4 guys with this name mentioned in the NT.
 - Gaius of Corinth – Rom. 16:23
 - Gaius of Macedonia – Acts 19:29
 - Gaius of Derbe – Acts 20:4
 - Gaius of Ephesus – 3rd John 1

John loves Gaius "*in truth*" because the truth is where their common ground is.

- The truth of Jesus, the truth of His word, is the shared truth that John & Gaius have both built their lives around.
 - They've both dedicated their lives this truth, and it's where the mutual love for one another thrives.

➔ Let's apply this to our relationships today.

Where do your closest friendships come from?

- The people you spent years with in high school or college?
- The people you spend hours with every day at work?

Does the common ground of attending the same school make relationships deep & good & right?
Does spending most of your day working next to someone automatically make them a good candidate for being a good friend?

Our friendships should thrive on a shared relationship with Jesus, the Truth.

For John, he dearly loved his beloved friend Gaius "*in truth*", because that's where friendship for the Christian is rooted.

- In the Gospel, in the Truth.

[v.2] "*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.*"

John will address his friend Gaius as "*beloved*" 3 times in this book – v.2, 5, & 11.

John prays for Gaius in two ways here in v.2:

- that all may go well with him
- that he may be in good health in accordance with the health of his soul

➔ Pause and think about what we just read.

The first thing John prays isn't unusual – we pray this way for people still today.

- We pray for God to bless them and for things to go well for them.
- As a Christian, we desire to see other Christians flourish in every way.
 - We shouldn't hope for other believers to fall on hard times, even secretly.

Notice the 2nd thing John prays for Gaius: he prays that he would be in good health "*as it goes with his soul*".

➔ If we're honest, this is NOT the way we pray for people, is it?

We pray that God would bless people despite the condition of their souls, but John ties the two together.

- Is it possible for your soul to be healthy while your body is sick? --- YES
- Scripture is full of people whose souls were healthy in the midst of suffering.

John prays that Gaius' physical health would go along with his spiritual health.

➔ What if we prayed for people like that?

What if we asked God to bless someone physically to the same degree that they are healthy spiritually?

- What if I prayed for YOU that way, and what if God answered that prayer?
 - o How physically healthy would you be?

If your physical health mirrored your spiritual health, would you be fit and energetic?

- Would you be in bed with a prolonged sickness?
- Or would we need a crash cart for you today?

The truth was alive and well within Gaius – his soul was healthy – and John knew it because it was obvious to everyone.

[v.3] *“For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.”*

John mentions being visited by “*the brothers*” who came and testified to the truth Gaius was proclaiming, but it wasn’t only that Gaius was talking the talk – he was walking the walk.

- *“as indeed you are walking in the truth”*

Believers from Gaius church came to John and testified to the kind of life Gaius was living.

➔ You’ve heard it said this way: **Gaius’ reputation preceded him.**

Not only was he speaking the truth, he was walking in it.

- **It’s a joyful thing when a Christian’s profession and practice match!**

It was obvious how much delight this brought to John.

[v.4] *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”*

Nothing made John happier than to know that his friend was walking in the truth.

➔ Is this what we get most excited about for our friends?

Do we celebrate when a brother or sister walk in the truth when it would be easier to do something else?

- Or do we express more joy when they reach their goal weight?

Do we encourage a friend more when they’ve completed a home renovation project than when they’ve been consistent in their time with the Lord?

Obviously working hard to reach your goal weight or completing a home project aren’t bad things AT ALL.

- But do we get more excited for our friends about those things than if they are faithfully walking in the truth?

For John, knowing that Gaius' reputation & lifestyle was spiritually healthy was what brought him more joy than anything else.

- Maybe the things we get most excited about in our friendships needs to shift from the physical to the spiritual?
 - Would my Christian friends be proud of my reputation?
 - Could they say that the way I am living my life brings them godly joy?

➔ John was excited about the man who Gaius was becoming.

He could pray that God would make him as physically healthy as we was spiritually healthy because it was well with his soul.

But again – it wasn't necessarily well with his soul because his health was great and his life was perfect.

- It was well with his soul because his relationship with God was right.
- ➔ I've heard [v.4] quoted by parents who are proud of their kids walking with the Lord and I get that.
- I think that is absolutely a proper application of this verse.

But they don't have to share your DNA in order to bring you joy as a parent.

- In John's case, he was a spiritual parent to Gaius.

More than any business model and more than any mentoring program, Christians are involved and connected with seeing a person succeed.

- It's deeper than any other kind of relationship, and here's why:

The Big Brother / Big Sister kinds of programs have some positive benefits, to be sure.

- But if the person you're mentoring doesn't listen to you and ends up leaving the program and going off the rails, it would be disappointing and heartbreaking, but it doesn't really change the trajectory of your life.

But it's not that way for the Christian.

Believer, if the people we're ministering to and discipling walk away from the Truth, their eternal destiny is in the balance.

Not only that, but the future of Christianity depends on the people who you share the Gospel with.

- Is that a frightening thought?
- ➔ If the future of our faith is determined by how you share and live out the Gospel, how long will it last?
- Will it die with you, or will it go on in someone you are discipling?

Thankfully, it doesn't all depend on YOU.

- There's someone named the Holy Spirit who really does the work, but He oftentimes sends and uses people like you and me to go & preach & live out the Good News! (Rom. 10:14)

Christian: you are not a disciple alone.

- Christians are to be a **disciple-making** disciples.

→ Can you think of a Gaius in your life?

- Someone whom you poured into who brings you joy because of their walk with God?
- Are that person for someone else?

Not everyone we preach to and not everyone we disciple turn out to be disciple-making disciples, but when a person does, you can identify with John and the joy it brings.

- In Christ, I am proud of the men and women who have been raised up & sent out from this body & who continue the disciple-making process wherever the Lord takes them.
- And I am excited – full of joy – to see and walk alongside you here at RCBC as more disciples are being raised up and sent out for the glory of God.

→ In what he taught and in how he lived, Gaius was a godly example.

- Can the same be said for me?

In [v.5-8] John gives a specific example of *how* Gaius lived out his commitment to the Lord and to the Church.

The “*brothers*” John mentions in v.5 were probably travelling Christian missionaries sent out by John or other churches to Ephesus and the surrounding region.

- Even though they were “*strangers*” to Gaius, he still supported them and welcomed them into the church, and probably into his own home.

These people also testified to Gaius' love and hospitality in front of the church in [v.6].

- John encourages Gaius to just keep doing what he's doing, and to send them off “*in a manner worthy of God*”.

This would most certainly include financial support, because if these men were travelling missionaries they wouldn't have permanent jobs for income.

- It would also include prayer support, as this was a custom in the early church when sending out missionaries.

These men were sent out “*for the sake of the name*”, meaning the name of Jesus.

- It's His name and His alone that Christians take to the nations.
- They didn't go out to strike it rich or become influencers, they went out for the glory of God and the name of Jesus.

- If a missionary is going out with any other purpose in mind, we should probably not consider supporting them.

They also “*accepted nothing from the Gentiles*”.

This means that these missionaries didn’t ask the people they were preaching to to support them.

- This is why the support from Gaius and from the church itself were so important.

➔ This should inform how we send out missionaries and how we practice evangelism today.

These early missionaries didn’t ask for money from the people who heard them preach because it would seem like they were all about the money.

- There were people in the 1st century and people still today who pedal the Good News for gain, and they are wrong to do it.

Paul gives pretty clear instructions about paying elder/shepherds to lead churches.

- This is why many churches pay full-time and part-time pastors to lead & preach & train.

But that’s not what we’re talking about here.

These guys didn’t want to confuse the people they were ministering to by asking for money, so the church supported them.

- They depended on the generosity of the church.

➔ **The church should support missionaries.**

- [v.8] says so in no uncertain terms.
- “*Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*”
- This is why I love that our church supports several full-time missionaries.
 - As one of them said, the missionary goes down the well to rescue the lost sheep, but the churches hold the rope.
- Stick around after worship next week for the Soup Lunch where we get to hear a report from the family of the Dieringer family, one of the missionary families we support who minister to the people of Vanuatu (near Papua New Guinea, Australia, & New Zealand).

You may never go to Vanuatu, Romania, Kenya, or even Charleston, MO.

- **But by financially and prayerfully supporting the missionaries there, you are their co-workers in the truth.**
 - Fellow laborers, co-workers “*for the truth*”.

The early church was built on the work of missions.

- Jesus sent His disciples OUT to preach the Gospel.
- Had they not gone out, you & I wouldn’t be here today.

But you know what – it's no different today.

- If Christians do not GO OUT and preach the Gospel, the world won't know the truth about God.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?" (Rom. 10:12-15)

- ➔ Are you being called to be the sender?
- ➔ Or are you being called to be the sent?

I like what Danny Akin says, *"All are essential as we cooperate together in the work of God."*

- *"God, multiply the sent. God, multiply the senders".*
 - Do you rejoice greatly when your friends testify to the truth?
 - Do you find great joy in discipling others & seeing them walking in truth?

Maybe the most telling and challenging question I can leave you with is this:

- Are you someone else's Gaius?
- ➔ Does your profession and your practice match?
 - **Are you walking in the truth?**

If you are walking in the truth, praise God – keep doing what you're doing!

- Bring someone else along with you and disciple them!

Are you now being called as a sender or one who is sent?

Every believer is *"sent"* to make disciples, but not every believer is sent to the same place.

- Some are sent overseas, some are sent to adopt, some are sent to their grandkids...
- How are you & your family supporting missionaries?
 - Do you pray for them often?
 - Do you financially give to their efforts?
 - How are you "holding the rope"?

This week we looked at the Good Example of Gaius found in 3rd John.

- Next week John shows us the Bad Example of a man named Diotrephes.

Let's pray.