

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

BY

Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship

Lesson 18

Following Good Examples

By

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I will give you just a few minutes to find [3 John](#) in your Bibles. I suppose many believers, including myself, have never been taught this passage. I honestly do not ever recall hearing a message on [3 John](#) at any church I ever went to, from any preacher I ever listened to. I have to be straight with you, according to the polling data and all the stuff I have read about how people think and how they feel today, you should not even want to study this. Because according to the statistics, you are supposed to think that the Bible is kind of boring. You are supposed to think that going verse by verse through the Bible has nothing to teach you. That is what a lot of people are telling preachers about how people feel today, but I do not buy it. I think we need to let the word of God speak for itself because “it is living, it is active, it is sharper than a two edged sword” (cf. [Hebrews 4:12](#)).

The Bible speaks to our hearts and it has something to say to us right now today. Let’s jump right into [3 John](#). I do not have to say chapter one—there is only one chapter. You are going to go through a whole book of the Bible in this lesson.

Starting at [verse 1](#), John says,

- 1 The elder,
To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:
- 2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.
- 3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth.
- 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

John begins this letter and he is writing to a friend named Gaius. You might say that you don’t see where it says that it is the apostle John writing at all. Well, we know from comparing Scripture with Scripture, and from church history, and just from the whole nature and character of the letter that the person who identifies himself as the elder in [verse 1](#), is the apostle John. And he is writing to a guy named Gaius. We do not know who exactly this guy named Gaius is. There are three or four people mentioned other places in the New Testament by this name. But the name “Gaius” was very common in the ancient Roman Empire. So we do not know who is was exactly; but it does not really matter because whoever it was, God has something to say to us through this very letter here today.

So John is writing to a man named Gaius and notice what he says there in [verse 2](#), “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” Now when we write a letter today, we usually have a certain format that we go by. You put the date at the top and then you put who you are writing the letter to and at the very end you put who you are. You sign it “sincerely, so-and-so.” And in the ancient world they had a protocol or format for writing letters as well. In some ways their format made a lot more sense. They would always start out a letter with who was writing it. I mean that a lot of times I don’t know who is writing the letter until the very end, which is where you put your name. But in the ancient world they put their name first.

So John starts off “The elder [himself].” And then he says who it is to—this fellow Gaius—and then he goes on and he gives an expression of greeting and well wishing. In [verse 2](#) he says, “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” Now some people have interpreted this statement from the apostle John as if he was making a very specific prayer for Gaius in wanting him to be rich and wanting him to be in perfect health all of his life—all of his days—as if that was sort of his birth right as a Christian.

Well, it is kind of interesting because when you go through and study the Bible as it would have been understood by ancient readers, you find that this kind of greeting that John gives was very customary. It was a very commonplace greeting. As a matter of fact, it was so commonplace that sometimes they would abbreviate it just with the first letter of each word and put it all together. Often at the end of a letter one might put a “p.s.” and then say something as an afterthought. Well, “p.s.” stands for “post script” and you do not write that out, you just put “p.s.” and the recipient gets the idea. Or sometimes when people are writing a mushy love letter at the very end they will put “S.W.A.K.” which stands for “sealed with a kiss.” And they do not write out those words, they just put the letters and everyone is supposed to know what it means. Well, they would abbreviate this phrase in the same way because it was such a commonplace expression for a greeting or well wishing.

What I am trying to get at here is not so much about the customs of ancient letter writing, but just to let you know that what John was saying here was not anything special or unique. It is not some broad promise that God wants every Christian to be always wealthy and to be always in perfect health. Why do I bring this up? Basically, I bring it up because there are people out there teaching the wrong things about this passage. There are people causing difficulty and stirring up a faulty understanding in the church today and their basic teaching is that God intends for every Christian to be rich and in perfect health every day of their life. And if you are not rich and if you are not in perfect health, there is a reason why—you do not have enough faith! These false teachers say that if you only had enough faith then you would be rich! If you only had enough faith, you would be in perfect health. Some people call this the “health and wealth” gospel and that is really what it is. It is all about being healthy and wealthy. I can understand why this philosophy resonates among the people today in our American culture. We want to be rich and we do not want any problems with our health. And then somebody comes along and says, “God has given you a free ticket on both of these items.” Who wouldn’t say, “Yea, I’ll take that!”? The problem is that it is not true and it is not biblical.

Now, we should always remember that God only wants what is best for His children. I can assure you of the fact that God is a good God and He only wants what is best for you and what is best for me. I wish we would latch on to that truth more in our lives. Sometimes we forget it.

Psalm 34 says, “Taste and see that the Lord is good” ([Psalm 34:8](#)). And God is good. He only wants good for you, but what we think is good for us and what God thinks is good

for us can sometimes be two different things. Sometimes we think it would be good if only we were rich. And sometimes we think it would be good if we never had a physical problem in all of our days. A lot of times that is the way a child thinks. He thinks it would be good if he could have ice cream at every meal! Children think it would be good if they could stay up all night every night because that is what they want. That is not good. And a child may say, “My mom and dad don’t love me because they won’t give me what is good.” We need God to decide what is good for us all the time. And I know that there have been powerful times in my life where God has spoken to my heart, and I am sure you have experienced the same thing, when because of some financial difficulty or because of some problem with our bodies, God speaks to us in a way that we could not hear otherwise. And He speaks to us and ministers to us in the midst of all of this.

Now let me say something else here that I think is very important. I do believe that there are some Christians who could be healed by God or could be blessed by God financially in a way that they have not already been blessed; yet they haven’t been blessed in this way because they lack faith. I think that there are some things that God wants to give us and some things that God wants to do in our lives that we just don’t receive, simply because we *won’t* believe that He *will* bless us in this way. I think that every Christian should be encouraged to have a greater faith and to have a greater trust in God. God wants to do so many great things in our lives but that is a different thing entirely from saying, “If you are not rich, if you are not perfectly healthy, it is because you do not have enough faith.”

You have seen it on the television set, haven’t you? The big fancy healing evangelist, who is at a big crusade and he has just finished pumping the audience full of this kind of doctrine and letting them know that the only obstacle is your faith. He says: “And if you believe, you can have it. You can write your own ticket with God. If you will only believe, He will do anything you want Him to, if you will only believe.” And he goes through the healing line with the people in wheel chairs and he doesn’t spend very much time with them. He just kind of makes a matter-of-fact gesture coming down the line; and when people don’t come up out of the wheelchair, what can that evangelist say to them except, “You don’t have enough faith.”? So he says, “Well, if you only had enough faith you would be up out of the wheel chair.”

Friends, that man is teaching a damnable doctrine. It is heaping condemnation upon people who God wants to comfort and encourage. It is a short-cited view of what God does and how He works in our lives. Friends, I stand before you completely convinced that God blesses people financially; that God does heal people, but He does it in His own way and in His own time and according to His own purposes. And those things are just beyond our finding out. I rejoice that one day God has promised perfect health and perfect prosperity for each and every believer. We call it “resurrection.” And you know anything He does with our bodies up until that time is just taxing the tent. You can tax the tent all day long, but there is no doubt about it, these tents are going down hill. None of us is getting any younger.

Almost a year ago I injured my knee playing basketball. Boy, did I start hearing the criticism! “Well, you know Pastor David, you are not getting any younger. Maybe it is time to start cutting back on that kind of thing.” And I did not want to hear that at all. I know I am not getting any younger, I am only getting older, and so are all of you might I add! And as we go on we realize the years are passing and these bodies are just getting older and older and more in decay and going down hill. That is all there is to it. But God has a perfect plan to address that problem. He calls it “resurrection.” One day we are going to be perfectly restored and our bodies are going to be made whole before the Lord. He will not be just patching up the tent, friends. He is going to move us into a mansion. and that is what we are waiting for as Christians. God promised resurrection for our bodies just as much as He has promised it for our souls.

I have a bigger question for you. Take a look at [verse 2](#) where he says, “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” He makes a correlation there between the health of your soul and the health of your body. Let me ask you a question. If the health of your body right now could immediately reflect the health of your soul, how would you look? Some of you come to church and will admit that you are a little flabby, a little weak, a little out of shape. But if your body could reflect the health of your soul, man you would look so pumped up and buffed out! People would look at you and say, “Wow he looks like Samson! Look at that person. That is amazing! Look at the strength—that is wild!” Others of us might look pretty good physically, but if your body could instantly reflect the health of your soul, you would be in bed in a coma for heaven’s sake. You would be very close to death, based on the condition of your soul. So ask yourself what you would look like right now. That is a scary thought, isn’t it? How healthy would your body be right now if it reflected the state of your soul? We need to have a healthy soul and God wants us to have one.

He goes on and talks about what will make your soul healthy and that is: *the truth*. Look at [verse 3](#), he said: “For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” What got John pumped up about his disciples, his followers, his “sheep” so to speak, as a pastor? What got him pumped up was to know that they were walking in the truth. They were staying in the truth, and abiding in the truth.

You could tell that Gaius was walking in the truth. Look at [verse 3](#), “I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you.” People could look at the life of Gaius and say, “There is a man full of the truth. Look at the truth of God that is in him. It is all over his life.” That is what God was doing in the life of Gaius. The truth of God was in him.

Going on here, John is going to begin a section in [verse 5](#) that I think is very interesting to consider. He is going to speak to us about three examples. We can learn a lot from examples in our life, can’t we? We can learn a lot from good examples and we can also learn a lot from bad examples. And the first example he is going to give us is a good one. The second example is a bad one, and then he is going to wrap up with a third example which is a good one.

Let us look at the first example of this fellow named Gaius in [3 John 5-8](#).

Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers,
who have borne witness of your love before the church. *If* you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.
We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

Now I want you to consider just for a moment here what it is you are holding in your hand. You are holding a Book in your hand that has ink on its pages. The words on those pages are represented in ink, but those words themselves are the eternal word of God. The word is just that—eternal. The Bible tells us that “The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever” (cf. [Isaiah 40:7](#)). And in the eternal word, this one man named Gaius receives great praise from the apostle John. By the way, wouldn't you like that? Wouldn't you like to be complemented like that in God's eternal word? This is going to be with us in heaven forever! And Gaius is praised—for what?—for hospitality. It was for the fact that he opened up his home and he fed and took care of, in this case, visiting Christian missionaries and teachers and evangelists. He opened up his home and that is a lot of praise and a pretty high honor for something rather basic. It is almost routine, but God did not see it as routine.

Now why is Gaius's hospitality so important to God? I can tell you a few reasons. First of all it was because he did it so well. Look at [verse 5](#) where he says, “Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers.” Whatever God calls you to do, do it faithfully. You may say, “Well wait a minute. You know I am just serving the Lord in my home. I am taking care of my children. I am trying to raise up godly children unto the Lord.” Then you need to do it faithfully and God will bless you. Another person may say that here at the church they just hand out bulletins or that they are just an usher, or they help out a little bit with the kids in the children's ministry. Then you need to do it faithfully.

Listen, all Gaius did was provide a clean bed, good food for people to eat, and some warm hospitality in his home, and he is commended in God's eternal word forever! Why? It is because he did it faithfully. The Bible tells us that when we get to heaven, some of us are going to hear the words from Jesus Christ: “Well done good and faithful servant” ([Matthew 25:21](#)). And far beyond the success of your work, far beyond the size of your work, far beyond what the human view of the importance of your work is, God looks at the faithfulness of your work. That is what God is concerned about—how faithful you have been.

It is very important for people to be faithful in the area of hospitality back in the ancient world. You know in that day, generally Christian travelers and itinerant ministers in

particular were dependent upon the hospitality of other Christians. They could not just go into a town and stay at the Ramada Inn or the Clarion or whatever. They did not have places like that. Hotels were few and far between in the ancient world and when you found one, it was usually notorious for the immorality. They were usually known to be hot beds for prostitution.

So what is a visiting Christian minister going to do? Is he going to go stay in a place that has a reputation for being a brothel? No, he is not going to do that. Then what must he do? Well, he has to trust that when he gets into town there will be Christians who have the gift of hospitality that will take him into their home. If he does not do that he is going to literally be sleeping on the streets. Plus the missionary is not going to have much money; so he is going to need to have someone say, “Here eat my food. I will help you and support you.” They were dependent upon this hospitality and I want you to know that this is so important to God.

What Gaius was doing in supporting these Christian ministers is that he was actually doing their ministry too! Do you want to see this? Look at [verse 8](#), “We therefore ought to receive such that we may become fellow workers for the truth.” In other words, when you support somebody who is in a position of ministry serving God you become a fellow worker with them. You might be saying, “I don’t feel called to be a missionary. I don’t feel called to be a preacher. I don’t feel called to be in some place of prominence or in front of people.” Perhaps not, but you can share in other people’s ministry by being a fellow worker with them by helping them. You help them and you are then a fellow worker.

I want you to think about this. Take a man like Billy Graham and think of the hundreds of thousands of people that he has preached to and the hundreds of thousands of people that he has led to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He has had an amazing ministry. I want you to know that the rewards of a man like Billy Graham are not just going to him, but literally to the thousands of people who have helped him and supported him all through the years, they are going to share in his reward. And you can do that too!

This whole example that we find in the Old Testament is exciting. In [1 Samuel 30](#), David fought a battle and some of the people went out and fought as frontline soldiers and some of the people stayed back and were the support staff. And when the battle was over the frontline soldiers got paid for the battle from all the spoils of war that they received. And when they came back from battle these soldiers said that they were not sharing it with the support people. And David said “No, the support people get to share in the same rewards as the people on the frontlines.” And that became a law in Israel and it is a spiritual law before the Lord right now. You can share in the same rewards as people who are out front doing the work of the Lord by sharing with them and helping support them in whatever God leads you to do.

Friends, I think that is an exciting principle. I think that everyone of us needs to be busy with the work of serving the Lord and getting out the gospel in this way. You many say, “Well I am not called to be a missionary.” Well find a way to help a missionary and

support them and you are doing their work too. You are helping them and you are a fellow worker with them. Whether it is a missionary, a church, a preacher or some person out there doing the work of God, find someone you can help and God will bless you.

I will tell you another way to do that—take a look at [verse 6](#). He says, “*If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well.*” That is how John tells Gaius to do this ministry of helping out these people. He says to do it “in a manner worthy of God.” In other words, when these people came and visited Gaius, he was to minister to them as if he was ministering to the Lord Himself. When you set out that table for dinner, think of it as if the Lord is going to come eat at the table. You will want to put out the clean dishes and you will make sure that the bent fork isn’t put out there. You may say, “Wait a minute, then if the Lord is going to be staying in that bedroom, I need to clean it in a manner as if I am doing it unto the Lord. I need to change the sheets on that bed because I am going to do it in a manner worthy of God.”

What I am just trying to say, friends, is that whatever the Lord puts in front of you to do, do it with all of your heart. Do it as unto the Lord and do it faithfully and God will bless you and he will give you a great reward in heaven for what you are doing. You can look forward to that. You can know that you are working hard and doing whatever you can as unto the Lord and trust that there is going to be a great reward. This man Gaius was a great example of this process.

Now we have a bad example, look at [verses 9-11](#).

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.

Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church.

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 think of Gaius there in heaven and when we meet Gaius he might say to us, “Hey, did you read about me in 3 John? That is me he is talking about.” Now I don’t know if we are going to meet Diotrephes in heaven. Maybe the guy repented and got right with God. I do not know, but if you see Diotrephes in heaven he is going to be the guy covering up his name tag. Right here John has to call him out and say that this man was stirring up all kinds of trouble in the church.

Now what was Diotrephes doing that was so bad if Gaius was so good? Take a look first of all at his heart, which was bad. Look at [verse 9](#), “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.” What was the biggest problem with Diotrephes? Plain and simple, it was pride. He loved to have the preeminence among the brethren. Can’t you just imagine a man like Diotrephes, a leader in the church, in some city looking at a man like the apostle John and saying to himself:

“Why should the big shot apostles get all of the honor and all the attention? Look at my ministry, isn’t it just as good?” And pride would lead him just like it has led many other people into destruction.

Why is it so bad to have a heart that loves the preeminence? I am going to say this strongly and I can say it biblically. When you have a heart that loves the preeminence you have the devil’s heart because that is what he loves. That is what Satan said when he fell. When Satan rebelled against God he said, “I will be like the most High.” In his heart he wanted to have the preeminence. He wanted to have top billing or at least equal billing with God and it was his own pride that led to his fall. Please watch out for the sin of pride. Watch out as it infects us and corrupts us. The Bible does say that “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (cf. [James 4:6](#)). You don’t want God to resist you, do you? You want God to give you His grace. Ask God to search your heart about pride and lay it aside.

Maybe God has given you a place of preeminence in some area of your life. Maybe you are a boss or foreman at work. Maybe you are a teacher in a class so you have preeminence some place. If you have a place of preeminence somewhere, then don’t love it. That was Diotrephes’s problem—not that he had a place of preeminence—it was that he loved to have that place. And that is when our heart becomes corrupted, when we love to have it. You might be doing fine in the place of preeminence, but how do you do in a place of humble service? The greatest way to tell if you are a servant is to see how your heart reacts when people treat you like a servant, and then you will see if you really are one. This pride is what comes from Satan.

“Jesus Christ who was in the very nature of God did not consider equality with God something to hold on to, but He made Himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant” (cf. [Philippians 2:6](#)). That is the attitude that God wants us to have and Diotrephes’s first problem was that his heart was filled with pride. He loved to have the preeminence.

Secondly, I want you notice that Diotrephes was a gossip. We see this in [verse 10](#). “Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words.” What does that mean? It means that he was a gossip! It means he went around spreading false statements, lies, and innuendos about John and the other apostles. And John just simply says that he is going to have a talk with this man when he sees him face to face, because he is a malicious gossip. Friends, just because you hear something does not mean it is true. I wish gossips had died out in the church with Diotrephes, but they have not and you have to be on guard against this. We should not only avoid gossip ourselves, but we should not buy into it either.

Finally, I want you to notice that Diotrephes’s other problem. In some measure or another he was a control freak. [Verse 10](#) says, “And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church.” In other words, Diotrephes would look over the church congregation and say, “Hey you let the apostle John stay at your house last month. I heard about that. You are out of here. I

do not like the apostle John, so if you let him stay at your house you are not any part of this church.” Diotrephes had some place of leadership in this church and he was using it to coerce people, to brow-beat them, and trouble them—supposedly in the name of the Lord.

Friends, Diotrephes was forbidding people to show hospitality to John or to the other apostles, even to the point of putting them out. I think it is amazing that even though this man is putting people out of the church, John does not put Diotrephes out of the church. John does not say, “I excommunicate this man”—although I think he had every right to kick him out. You know what he does? John exposes Diotrephes before these Christians and then he trusts that as believers they will use proper discernment to know what to do next.

[Verse 11](#) concludes the thought where John says, “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, [like Diotrephes] but what is good [like Gaius]. He who does good [like Gaius] is of God, but he who does evil [like Diotrephes] has not seen God.”

Now I told you that we had a third “good example” and that is found in [verse 12](#). Take a look at it. He 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.” I love it. Demetrius has three testimonies here, three people vouching for him, three letters of reference. The first is from everybody. He has a good testimony from all. Everybody who knows Demetrius says that he is a great guy. He is a godly man.

Secondly, Demetrius has a testimony from *the truth* itself. Isn’t that great! *The truth* itself is a testimony to him. Wouldn’t you love it to be said of you that this Book is a testimony of you? That is what John says about Demetrius. And then the third thing is that even the apostle John and the people with him testify of what a great man Demetrius is. John doesn’t say much about Demetrius. I think he brings him up here (and I hope I am not reading too much into the text) but I think that John is speaking to Gaius and maybe there were two leaders in this church. There was Diotrephes and there was Demetrius, and basically John was saying: “Hey, don’t respect the leadership of this Diotrephes guy, but Demetrius is a man that you can respect.” You see, in the midst of this kind of conflict, John is saying that Demetrius is the kind of man you should be following. He is the type of man you should respect.

Sometimes I think we have an overly romantic view of what the early church was like. We walk around thinking, “Oh it was so close to the time of Jesus and the church was so close to the apostles and there was just love and joy and peace. It must have been so great then and I wish we could get back to the days of the early church.” Well, sometimes when you see conflict and you feel like this, just think about it—you are back to the days of the early church! They had conflict then too! And John is telling Gaius, “Listen, this Diotrephes is not the kind of leader you should follow. Demetrius is the kind of leader you should follow;” which I think leads us right into the last two verses perfectly.

Take a look here at [verses 13-14](#), “I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.” I can appreciate John’s heart there. It is great to write to people, it is great to talk to them on the phone, but there is nothing like talking with people face to face. That is what John is saying that he has a lot more to share and he just cannot wait until he sees them face to face.

But I want you to see how John concludes [verse 14](#) and the end of the letter. He says, “Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.” Now the first thing he does is talk about friends. In other words, “In the midst of all this conflict, don’t forget that you have friends in the gospel.” Isn’t it true that sometimes conflict in a church family can make us really suspicious of everybody? I don’t think John wants Gaius to be like that and he reminds Gaius that he has friends—people who are following the Lord. He does not want him to be suspicious of everybody.

I really like what John says before that. It is very simple, it is just three words. He says, “Peace to you.” What a great way to conclude the letter. Friends do you realize that there was a lot of conflict going on in this church where Diotrephes and Demetrius and Gaius were And Diotrephes was kicking people out of the church because they were faithful to the apostle John. There was a lot of conflict and trouble; but in the midst of all of that John says to Gaius, “Peace to you.”

Now can you have peace in the midst of a time of conflict in your life? Are you one of those people who cannot have peace unless everything is easy and good? God speaks to us in His word about a “peace that passes understanding” (cf. [Philippians 4:7](#)). I am pretty good at the peace that is according to understanding. When everything is fine in my life, I have a lot of peace. Well, of course, who doesn’t? But how about: “the peace that passes understanding?” That is a peace which comes from God alone. And what John is saying to Gaius is that even in the midst of all this conflict he is having, he can have the peace of God.

I don’t know what areas of conflict might be in your life right now or what conflict there might be in the future, but you can have the peace of God in the midst of it. This is not a peace that just comes automatically. You have to seek God for it and you take His heart and receive His heart in the midst of it. It is just the same as when Jesus brought calm to the disciples in the midst of the storm. God can bring you peace even in the midst of conflict. When you have that peace then you can faithfully minister to the Lord in a way that you have never known before.

I think God has put a lot on our plate. He has given us a lot to think about from this passage and He wants us to be able to have peace no matter what kind of conflict might be ahead.