

Sermon Title: Who Will You Be When You Grow Up?
Scripture Text: 3 John 1-15 (Bible Postcards #5)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 10-16-22

Come with me, if you will, in your Bible to Third John. This is the fourth of our "Bible Postcards" books; that's what I call the one-page books of the Bible. We have already been to Obadiah; and then two visits to Philemon; last Lord's Day, Second John; and Third John now for today.

And like the other one-page books, this book tends to suffer from neglect, and we need to realize why God put it here in His Word; it is so very, very helpful for us (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The background of Third John is essential to understanding the book, and the background of this book is the same as Second John, so you need only a quick reminder:

With Second John, the biggest issues are the identity of the author and the identity of the original recipients. The author of Second John is the same as the author of Third John; in both cases, he calls himself "the elder." He doesn't give us any more hints of his identity, so whoever "the elder" was, that was his well-known nickname, and the recipients of his writings knew exactly who he was when he used that term. I could take you through a bunch of details of how we know this, but let me just assure you—and you can check it out for yourself if you want to—that the evidence is very strong that "the elder" is "John" the Apostle, "the brother of James" (Mk. 3:17); they were both the "sons of Zebedee" (Mk. 10:35). John is the author of the Gospel of John, First John, Second John, this book, and the Book of Revelation.

We know that this book was circulated well by the beginning of the Second Century, and it was only written toward the end of the First Century, so that tells you that it was widely regarded as acceptable and authoritative for the churches (cf. Matt. 10:40; Jn. 13:20; 15:20b; 1 Jn. 4:6). It was quoted early in the Second Century by others who both attested to John as the author, and to the value of the book. So there is no reason at all to reject the long-standing tradition that this book was written by John the Apostle.

All five of the books that he wrote were written between approximately A.D. 85 and 95—or 96 or 97, in there. John outlived all of the other original Twelve.

There is a very obvious outline to this book, based upon three people that are mentioned in this book. I have decided to call this: "What Will You Be When You Grow Up?"—spiritually-speaking, that is. And you will perhaps be like one of these three men, and there is one of them we pray you are *not* at all like. The outline is very simple: Gaius—he is The Role Model. Then there is Diotrephes: The Problem. And then there is Demetrius: The Faithful Servant.

Verse 11 of this book says: "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted). So it's a book about imitation. Who are you going to imitate so that you will be like them when you grow up, spiritually?

The first time I preached on this, I was just so clever I could hardly stand myself. One day, it was back in the era when there was a certain movie out, and so I called this book "Three Men And A Little Letter." "Three Men And A Baby" was a dopey movie back in those days. Now, it's "Who Will You Be When You Grow Up?"

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Come with me and meet these three men, the first of whom is Gaius: The Role Model. Verse 1—"The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth."

What do we know about Gaius? Well, we know that his name was "Gaius." We don't know for sure who he was. It *could* be a man named "Gaius" who was one of Paul's travelling companions mentioned in Acts 19, Verse 29. It could be another "Gaius" who was from the city of Derbe; he is mentioned in Acts 20, Verse 4. There was another man named "Gaius" who was a Christian in Corinth, one of only two people that Paul himself personally baptized; he is mentioned in Romans 16:23 and First Corinthians 1:14. But we have no certainty that *this* Gaius is any of those Gai—is that the plural of Gaius?

We don't know anything about him except what we can glean from this letter, and he was a good guy. We would like to be like Gaius. John calls him "beloved Gaius." That means there was a relationship of love between John and Gaius, and a trust of each other. And not only was he "beloved" by God, he was loved and trusted by the last of the Apostles, and the other Christians in the area. It was more than human friendship; it was that "fellowship of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Phil. 2:1; Eph. 4:3) that is beyond human description (cf. Mk. 10:29-30; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:26).

And he says he is the one "whom I love in the truth" (KJV). That should give you some echoes from back to last week in Second John. "Truth and love" are inseparable for a Christian (2 Jn. 3; cf. 1 Cor. 13:6).

John's next words—Verse 2—are among my favorites in all of the Bible; and when I pray for you, I try to make this the pattern for my prayers. In Verse 2, John writes: "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers."

We don't know for sure what prompted him to choose those words. Maybe Gaius had been ill; we don't know. Maybe, had he been ill, perhaps he had suffered a financial crisis due to a prolonged illness; or maybe he became ill through the pressure of a financial crisis—business troubles, or whatever it might be. Maybe Gaius had just grown by leaps and bounds spiritually, though he was struggling in some other way, and John wanted him to enjoy commensurate physical and fiscal blessings to go along with the blessings on his soul.

This is a *great* way to pray for any Christian you know: "I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers." If you are in Christ, how is your *soul* doing? Wow! It is doing *really well!* Romans 8:16-17—"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God"—we are *adopted* by Him (Eph. 1:5)—"and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

That's just like what Peter said in First Peter Chapter 1, that we have this "inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled"—it "*will not fade away*," it is "*reserved* in heaven for you"; and until you get there, you are "kept by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:4-5; cf. 1 Jn. 5:18b). Your *soul* is doing really, really well (cf. Ps. 94:19; Jn. 4:14; 2 Cor. 1:22).

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Or, there's Ephesians 1:3—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

So I pray that your life on Earth will be blessed and prosperous and healthy in some way that even *resembles* the health and prosperity of your soul in Christ.

Now, Verse 3. John says to his "beloved" Gaius: "For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth" (NASB-1977).

The "brethren" had come: brothers in Christ; they were probably travelling missionaries, evangelists who had been helped along by Gaius whenever they had passed through his city, wherever that was—probably somewhere in Asia Minor, in the overall region surrounding Ephesus. We will hear more about those travelers as we go along. But he says the "brethren" reported that Gaius was "walking in truth."

There are two of our key words again: "Truth"—to "walk in the truth" is to walk according to what God has said (e.g., 1 Ki. 6:12; Lk. 1:6; Rom. 6:4; 8:4; Gal. 5:15, 25; Col. 1:10); and then, "walking" is the description of how a person lives their life—that's their lifestyle (e.g., Eph. 2:1-2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; Phil. 3:17-18). Gaius's lifestyle demonstrated that "truth" had a grip on his heart, and it is safe to assume that John may have been, and probably was, the one who introduced Gaius to Christ, based mainly on what he says in Verse 4—"I have no greater joy than this, to hear of *my children* walking in the truth." He could have been describing "my children" in the sense of his sense of spiritual guidance over *all* of them in that region, like he wrote in First John, Chapter 2—"I am writing to you, little children...fathers" and "young men" (vss. 12-13). But I think Gaius was probably one of many that John had personally had a role in leading to Christ.

And here is what Gaius was known for; and there are singular personal pronouns in this next verse that make us know that he is talking about Gaius, personally. Verse 5—"Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers."

Remember what we said from Philemon and from Second John, that early church missionaries and evangelists—even the Apostles themselves, while they were around—were dependent on the "hospitality" of fellow believers (Rom. 12:13). A while back, we saw that Paul told Philemon: "Please prepare the guest room for me." In Second John, we saw instructions concerning taking care of travelling believers. We know this was a big deal in the early church—much bigger than it is for us, with all of the conveniences that we have these days. But if you go to a poorer part of the world and you travel among the Christians, you'll go to the house of a Christian; and it is incredibly humbling and exciting to see people living the same truth in a totally different way, and without all the goodies that we have.

There was a well-known document, a body of teaching in the early church that touches on this subject. The document is known as the Didache—that's the Greek word for "teaching," and the full title is: "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." It is not part of Scripture, but it takes some of the principles and ministry concepts of the First Century

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and spreads them around, if you will, and codifies them for us. One of the statements from there says this: "Let every apostle"—and that doesn't have to be a capital-A Apostle: one of the Twelve or the Apostle Paul; it can be any messenger who brings the message of the Gospel (e.g., Ac. 14:14a; Rom. 16:7; Gal. 1:19)—"Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord; but let him not stay more than one day, or if need be a second as well; but if he stays three days, he is a false prophet."

That's pretty specific! That could be kind of harsh. But the thinking behind it is: If they are on their way spreading the Gospel, they are not going to want to stop and get all from you that they can; they're going to want to move on. If they come and they just want to say, "Okay, how much longer can you feed me? How much more can you set me for my trip?"—that may be a false prophet.

And notice, he says here: "...whatever you accomplish for the brethren, *and especially when they are strangers.*" It is one thing to welcome a friend into your home; it is something else to serve strangers solely on the basis of their love for "Christ" (Mk. 9:41).

I remember going to Russia for the first time—it happened about the first three or four times that I went there: I would go there, and I was this nobody from someplace in the U.S. that they had never heard of; and you ought to hear them try to pronounce "Idaho." Those vowels don't work with them, and they don't even have an "h." "And *who is* this strange looking guy that doesn't talk right?" What would they do when we teachers came? Someone would *move out of their apartment* so that the two American teachers could come and stay there, and have their own privacy and their own time to themselves. And then they would come back on the weekend and clean, recycle for the next week—recycle for the next teachers that came. That's humbling, but that's Christianity at work.

Now, we have other things, and it is not wrong for us to take care of people in other manners. But what a wonderful thing that Gaius had this reputation for—even "strangers."

And then he says, in Verse 6—"and they"—referring back to "the brethren"—"have testified to your love before the church." This was his *reputation*, wherever they went. They would say, "Have you heard about that guy Gaius, over in the town of such-and-such?"

"You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God." That's an interesting statement. How do you "send" somebody "on their way in a manner worthy of God"? Well, after you give them lodging for the night: you supply them with food, money—so they can continue where they are going; and maybe even connect them with other travelers, if you know somebody else going that way—that would make their journeys more enjoyable and safer in larger numbers. And Gaius did this in such a way that it was "worthy of God," and people were blessed and grateful.

So here is a principle we can apply from here: God is honored with generosity, with graciousness—"kindness" (Prov. 19:22). If you want to know what God wants you to do for somebody else, and you want to be sure you do it in a manner "worthy of God," well,

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you might employ the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12): Put yourself in the other person's shoes, discern what his or her needs are, meet those needs, add whatever encouragement and money or other resources that are going to make that person rejoice over God's goodness through you (cf. 2 Cor. 9:12). That is "worthy of God."

The word "worthy" is an interesting word for its root. It comes from a root that means "sufficient weight." Over the years, I have been gradually becoming more and more "worthy." It means there is enough substance to give credibility, something that makes an impact. To be *unworthy* of God would be to scrimp, to cut corners, to be as tight as possible when you represent Him to other people (cf. Deut. 15:10). "After all, you know, you need to suffer for Jesus, so we will help you suffer."

John reiterated why the ministry of men like Gaius was so crucial to the spread of the Gospel. In Verses 7 and 8, he says: "For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles." In John's writings, and here, "Gentiles" is sometimes used not just to mean non-Jewish people, but unbelievers in general; you have to pay attention to the context to know how to take it (cf. Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 10:20; Gal. 2:15; Eph. 4:17; 1 Thess. 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:3). They were "accepting nothing from" unbelievers. "Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth."

So, who do you support? People who go "out for the sake of the Name." That means they represent "the Name"—capital "N"—of Jesus (cf. Acts 15:26; 21:13; Col. 3:17). The motivation of the servant of God is to represent Him as an "ambassador" of His Kingdom (2 Cor. 5:20), to bring Him glory (2 Thess. 1:12), and to proclaim the "good news" of salvation in Him alone (Rom. 10:15).

"Ought" in this sentence—"Therefore we *ought* to support such men"—that word implies obligation. It is a moral responsibility of all Christians to support generously—in a manner "worthy of God"—those who are the catalysts for the ministry of the Body of Christ.

I should stop here and insert the promo: Two weeks from today is going to be our Mission Sunday. We are going to have two of our foreign missionaries with us, and we will also hear from Scott Basolo and how he has been able to help indigenous pastors elsewhere. When we have that Sunday, think of it as "Second John and Third John Practicum"—here is how it *looks* in real lives.

Jesus Himself stated this principle when He sent out the Twelve to preach on their own for a while. He said, in Matthew 10:41—"Anyone who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. And anyone who welcomes a righteous person because he's righteous will receive a righteous person's reward." (HCSB). In other words: *You* get to participate in the overflow of the rewards for the people who are sacrificing to do that ministry.

And John says: "...so that we may be fellow workers with the truth." He said that on the negative side, back in Second John; last week, we saw this in Second John 10 and 11—"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching"—this specific "teaching" about

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Jesus—"do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds." So if it is a *bad* thing and "participating in *evil* deeds" to help a *false* teacher, and that is going to be something that God will chasten (cf. 2 Chr. 19:2)—well then, it's a *good* thing and it's "worthy of God" to help one who goes "out for the sake of the Name"; and the opposite of "participating in the *evil* deeds" is that you become a "worker with the truth."

We probably ought to put a caution in here. Yes, there *is* a moral obligation that we *all* share to support the work of God through His Church. When people come to Christ, they tend to become generous, loving, caring, giving people. But we need to make sure that we have some wisdom and some discretion. It is no accident that God included Second John and Third John in His Word so that we can help develop that discernment. We cannot support those who teach wrong doctrine about Jesus Christ, and we do not want to be taken advantage of. There has to be that balance: I don't want to be gullible; I don't want to be used and abused. And people *know* how to use and abuse the generosity of Christians (cf. 2 Pet. 2:3); it's way bigger than you probably realize that it is, and people with good intentions *can* be taken advantage of. But we want to be wise.

If you doubt that there is a problem with that, well, I could start naming names of well-known people who raise *millions* of dollars, despite teaching false doctrines; or who live lives full of sin. So-called "Christian" television and radio are *riddled* with bad examples like that (cf. 1 Tim. 6:3-5).

So, *be generous*, do it in a manner "worthy of God," and don't be sucked into something. And sometimes I would say, "If you just can't tell, I would rather err on the side of generosity, and leave that person to answer to God."

I had a friend one time who was in seminary, dirt-poor. His transmission needed to be replaced in his car. He had to cash out a life insurance policy to be able to pay for it. And of course, he was away from home. Of course, it was in a rather unpleasant part of town. And the guy gave him a quote, and then he called him back in five days and said, "Okay, your car is going to be ready tomorrow"—and he added a bunch onto the quote. And my friend went back to him—and I wish I had this kind of holy boldness, but I haven't lost a transmission, so I don't know if I would—and he said, "Now okay, so this is the amount, right?" And he said, "Okay." "Well, you know, that's not the amount you quoted me, and you never told me a reason for the increased amount." And the guy said, "Well, I just didn't get it right the first time." My friend said, "Okay, I'm going to pay you. And I want you to know: All of my money belongs to God, and I am His servant; and if you are ripping me off, you're ripping off God. Here's your check." The price came down about a thousand dollars before he left that day.

Now, you can't do that with the average person sitting on the street corner or knocking on your door, or whatever. But, *be wary*. A lot of people will say things like, "We want you to support us. We are coming through your town. This is a 'Faith Mission'—I'm just living by faith, going from place to place." And that is actually a spiritual euphemism that means: "The people who know me very well won't support me, so I'm going to people who *don't* know me."

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Look: When God is truly at work through an individual or an organization, it will be verifiable; and they will *want* you to know, and have confidence (cf. Acts 20:33; 2 Cor. 12:17-18; 2 Thess. 2:10).

So I will rather shamelessly ask people: "What's your home church? Can I get the name and number of your pastor, so I can call and validate that they support you and would like us to?" *That* can make a lot of people have a sudden urge to go to an appointment on the other side of town, sometimes.

But be like Gaius! He is a delightful model of kind, humble generosity and faith (cf. Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:10). He ministered selflessly and generously to the saints.

But there was another guy around, and the next man mentioned was *not at all* like Gaius. His name is "Diotrephes," and he is The Problem.

Before I read you the three verses about Diotrephes, listen to the words of Jesus from Matthew 20, Verses 25 through 28—"Jesus called them to Himself"—the Disciples—"and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.' "

John was there that day. John heard that. John believed that. John lived that. And eventually, he wrote this about Diotrephes: Third John 9 through 11—"I wrote something to the church"—that might have been First John, it might have been Second John, it could have been something else that isn't included in Scripture; we don't know. "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."

So this Diotrephes—about whom we know nothing except what is here; we don't have any other men named Diotrephes in the Scriptures. What *do* we know about him? Well, he wasn't *necessarily* a false teacher; John doesn't talk about his doctrine, he talks about his personal ambition, his ego, his lust for power. So he said, "First thing is: well, he didn't like what we wrote; he was rejecting it."

It *is* logical to assume that after the Apostles died off—and we are down to just one now, by the time this is written; only John was alive—in many places where an Apostle may have settled for some time, and the Apostle goes to be with the Lord, there could have been somewhat of a power vacuum, an authority vacuum, and there may have been a struggle to *take* authority and the oversight of the churches. And ever since, well, the Church—capital "C"—has had to deal with men like Diotrephes.

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I want to paint a picture of this kind of person for you. Consider this like the police sketch; it's a composite drawing from several perspectives—what John says here; other things we know from the Scripture; and, frankly, 50 years of ministry experience. You can describe a person like this. Let me see if I can paint the picture for you:

Number 1: He is in leadership. He "loves to be first," so he probably volunteers frequently and loudly, and says he is willing to do almost anything. If you want to do the jobs that nobody else wants to do, you will be welcome to do that; and then you can do that and get some attention, and you can parlay that into more and more responsibility. And people like that usually—in one way or another, subtly or otherwise—let it be known that they want to be in leadership: "Well, sure, I'll take that over. I'll do that for you. You relax; take a month off. I'll cover that for now."

The second thing is: He does not submit to others, once he *has* been accepted in their circles. He "does not accept what we say." He clings tenaciously to *his own* opinions and *his own* convictions (Prov. 18:2); but since he works so hard, people are usually unwilling to challenge him.

That's why First Timothy and Titus have such clear instructions that Paul gave; wherever he went, they were "appointing elders...in every church" (Acts 14:23; cf. Titus 1:5), and there *should be* "elders" in every church (Jas. 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1)—there should be a *plurality* of "leaders" (Heb. 13:17, 24; cf. Acts 20:28).

And if you happen to be a teaching pastor (1 Tim. 5:17), you need to realize that you are a *leader among equals* (cf. 1 Cor. 14:29). You are not an authoritarian who dictates what everybody does; you *lead* your co-laborers. And you have to realize that you are *also* an *equal among leaders*; you have to be willing to realize that God has designed that there be "shepherds" in the flock, plural (cf. Phil. 1:1). And Diotrephes doesn't like that idea. He wants to be The One.

A third thing we know about a person like this is that he criticizes people behind their backs. John says he is "unjustly accusing us with wicked words." There is one verb that is translated as "unjustly accusing," and it literally means "talking nonsense"; he makes things up about other people to lower them in your estimation so that *he* can rise in his own never-to-be-humble opinion of himself.

The Legacy Standard Bible captured that phrase; it says he was "unjustly *disparaging* us with wicked words." "Wicked words" do a lot of damage. They can ruin good people (e.g., Is. 32:7; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:16). They can cause *huge* problems (e.g., Prov. 16:28).

It is bad enough when there is a scandal because of sin—that *always* is grievous. But do you understand, especially in our world now: an accusation doesn't have to be true to be devastating? It just has to be in the direction the political winds are blowing these days.

So at any moment that someone talks to you about the sins of another person, you are *at that moment* about to be entangled into a web called "gossip" (Prov. 20:19). And the spirit of Diotrephes is alive and well in *any* situation like that!

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So, stop that conversation, call it what it is, and get back to where you belong. Say, "Why are you talking to me about the sins of Betty? *How does that help Betty?* All you're doing is demeaning Betty in my eyes. Have you talked to Betty about this? (cf. Matt. 18:15) And if you have, then you *still* shouldn't be talking to me. And if you haven't, I'll go with you and we will talk to Betty about this." Call gossip what it is—*don't let it happen to you!* It will *suck you in* (cf. Prov. 18:8; 26:22). And Diotrephes—boy, he is the Velcro of defiling speech.

The fourth thing we know about him: His first reaction to most ideas, if they come from somebody else, is opposition. He can be real humble about it, like: "Well, I would *rather* see us do such-and-such"—but, you know, if it's *your* idea, it can't be a good idea. And if a decision is made and he is not part of it, he'll cry "Foul!" He will accuse others of impropriety; he will make up stuff disparaging them, and "Why would they want to do that?"

Number 5: We know that men like Diotrephes nix creativity, they stifle faith, they abhor taking risks.

I have heard this one almost verbatim, several times in several places over the years: Somebody will say, "Well, I know about those needs that those missionaries brought to us, but we need to concentrate on meeting the needs in *our own* congregation before we reach out. There are *plenty* of needs *here* to keep us busy!" And that is just *wrong!* It's *never* a matter of, *either* meet the needs here or meet the needs there, because *you'll never meet all of the needs!* It is *always* important to minister to those under your nose, and to those that you have a chance to influence elsewhere. Neither one works without the other.

To launch any aspect of ministry is kind of like getting married or having a child: If you want to wait until you are confident that for sure you can afford it, you are going to have a lot of years alone, childless; because *that's not how it works.* Do what is right. Do what is best. Minister to the saints. Support those who spread the Gospel, and trust God to enable you (cf. Prov. 3:9-10).

Another thing about Diotrephes: He is proud of his successful manipulation. He is the guy that, if something goes a little bit sideways, he loves to say, "I told you so! I *tried* to tell you, that was a *bad idea!*"

Number 7: He corrupts others. John said: "Do not imitate what is evil." Why else would he say that, if Diotrephes wasn't a corrupting influence?—his hyper-critical, ultra-conservative, play-it-safe attitude (cf. Heb. 12:15b). No, we need to think about, "What can we *possibly* do, by God's grace, for His glory? And then, let's go that way." Diotrephes won't like that.

And finally, most importantly: He may not be a Christian! He might be a "tare among the wheat" (Matt. 13:25), who is able to make people think he is the real thing, and do his evil. Why else would John say, "The one who does evil has not seen God"?

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But he is talking about somebody *in the church*. Satan loves to *infiltrate* (Acts 20:29-30; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Jude 4, 12-13), and Diotrephes is an example of an infiltrator, more than likely (Matt. 7:15).

So, I want to make a few suggestions to you, if you should ever be in a situation like this. How should we deal with modern Diotrepheses? [Pronounced: *Dee-AW-truh-fee-seez*] Yeah, I said that on purpose, and I am going to leave it *right there!* I have met several versions of this guy, over the years; and every pastor will tell you the stories, and it doesn't have to be a pastor. The most valuable thing John could possibly have done was to bring this guy to light—*expose him*—and he needs to be confronted.

So, here is how to deal with a Diotrephes—primarily for leaders, of course, but this applies to all of us; we need to know this:

Number 1: Call behavior what it is. If you smell manipulation in the vicinity, sniff out the source and *deal with it!* Sometimes these people are manipulators so committed to it that they don't even realize they are doing it.

Number 2: Realize that he might be just too immature for the position to which he has risen (e.g., 1 Tim. 3:6). First Timothy 3:10 and 5:22 tell us that if you have helped somebody get into a position of influence and leadership they were not ready for, you "share responsibility" for the results! That's why we are so rigorous to "vet" those that we put before you and say, "These are going to serve us as our leaders for the next year." And sometimes, a person can be the one on whom they "laid hands too hastily"—not ready for it—and that causes grief to that person, but it can also turn him into a Diotrephes. And it may be that he was able to get there because somebody else wasn't playing the position *they* should have been playing on the team. So, realize that there are a lot of factors in play here, but don't be afraid to deal with it.

So if necessary, Number 3: Have a showdown. Speak the truth, by all means! Sometimes you have to say, "Brother, are you on board, or not? Do you *want* this to succeed? Are you putting your efforts behind us being able to spread the Gospel the best we can, and to help those who spread it where we can't?"

Speak the truth, but always speak it "in love" (Eph. 4:15; cf. Prov. 3:3). Don't forget: Second John is also here. I think it's a lot better to spend a little time recovering from a blowout than to deal constantly and perpetually with a slow leak that can cause a serious crash if left unattended.

As I said, Verse 11 is like the application for the whole letter: "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."

So, put this to work for yourself for the rest of your life. Find people who are effective—copy them, follow them, come alongside them; say, "Can I help you with that? Show me how you do that. Help me get better, to do that." And then do it, and stay away from people who do the opposite.

Sermon Title: Who Will You Be When You Grow Up?
Scripture Text: 3 John 1-15 (Bible Postcards #5)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 10-16-22

Well, there is one other guy here: Demetrius. Verse 12—"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."

Apparently, Demetrius was an up-and-comer in this hospitality ministry, whatever it was; and John was commending Demetrius to Gaius. Maybe Demetrius was from a different town than Gaius, and John wanted Gaius to know about him; we don't know for sure.

We also don't know for sure anything about this Demetrius. There is only one other place that somebody named Demetrius is mentioned in the New Testament, and it is the idolatrous silversmith in Acts 19, who caused a lot of trouble. Now, if it *is* the same man—oh, man, we have a sermon series right there, on the transformation of Demetrius. That would preach, for sure. We don't know; and if he *was* that guy, it would probably say so. I *will* say, though that at least Ephesus is the *region* in which John lived, and so *it could be*. I would sure like to think that it is.

But notice how John says essentially the same thing three times: "Everyone" speaks well of Demetrius. "The truth" speaks well of him—that means he lives according to the truth. And John himself testifies that Demetrius is a good guy.

So he must have been a faithful servant: not seeking the glory, walking by faith, serving humbly; he didn't seem to care who noticed his work, as long as it was worthy of God.

And then the end of this letter is straightforward: Verses 13 through 15—"I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink..." Sound like Second John? "Yeah, okay, I'm writing you a letter because some things have to be taken care of; but, oh, I want to be *with you*! That's how we can *really* make strides." He says, "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."

Now, again, it's like an inside joke: *What* "friends"? We don't know. But if you were Gaius or you were John, you knew exactly who he was talking about.

Take this letter. It doesn't take a long time to get through it; you can probably read it in two minutes on your own.

Understand: *Some* of us are called to be like Gaius—well-known, responsible, visible leaders who oversee ministries and shepherd the flock and help send Gospel-preaching people on their way.

All of us are called to be like Demetrius—serve God faithfully, let Him take care of the results.

And of course, *none* of us are called to be like Diotrephes. If you see any of *his* characteristics starting to bubble up in your heart—oh, stop it right now! Repent right now. And if you suspect that Diotrephes' deeds are developing in your brother or sister, *challenge* them *in love* to get right.

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And maybe—*maybe*—somebody has gone as far as Diotrephes, and "has not seen God." It may be time to quit "practicing religion" and come to know God's grace and forgiveness in Christ. It implies that he had not seen God. Satan loves to plant counterfeits among the real thing—and *sometimes*, they get saved. And isn't that wonderful?

So, let's call out to our Lord, shall we?

Father, thank You. You so thoroughly know every one of our hearts. Your Word searches even to the depths of our souls and our spirits. Thank You for Your grace to deal with what is there. I pray, Father, for each one of us. May You make us evermore like Gaius and Demetrius. May You always have us on the alert for the deeds of Diotrephes and others like him. Have Your way with us to that end, that Heritage Bible Church might be a place where all who love our Savior are welcome, a place from which Gospel servants are constantly sent in a manner that is worthy of You, and where You continue to build Your church as You would have it to be. We pray in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.