



Study Guide: 3 John – Chapter 1

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This study guide provides an educational overview of 3 John Chapter 1 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

3 John Chapter 1 offers a personal and pastoral glimpse into the life and ministry of the Apostle John. As the final epistle attributed to John, this brief letter provides valuable insight into early church relationships, hospitality, and the importance of faithfulness in Christian service. This chapter contributes to the book's flow by emphasizing the practical outworking of love and truth within the community of believers. Readers should watch for the interpersonal dynamics between John, Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius, which reveal challenges in church leadership and the call to support those who labor for the gospel.

Context

3 John is a short, personal letter written by the Apostle John near the end of his life, likely in the late first century. It is addressed to a beloved friend named Gaius, a faithful Christian leader or elder in a local church. The letter is set against the backdrop of early Christian communities struggling with issues of authority, hospitality, and doctrinal integrity. John writes to commend Gaius for his faithfulness and hospitality toward itinerant missionaries, to rebuke Diotrephes for his domineering and divisive behavior, and to recommend Demetrius as a trustworthy servant of the truth. This letter fits within the Johannine corpus, reflecting themes of love, truth, and fellowship that are central to John's theology and pastoral concern.

Outline

The chapter unfolds in three distinct movements. First, John opens with a warm greeting to Gaius, expressing joy over his faithfulness and love for the brethren. Second, John addresses the issue of hospitality, commending Gaius for supporting traveling Christian workers and contrasting this with the negative example of Diotrephes, who refuses to welcome these workers and even exerts control over the church. Third, John concludes with a commendation of Demetrius, endorsing him as a worthy example of Christian



character and service. These movements highlight the themes of love in action, the importance of supporting ministry, and the dangers of pride and divisiveness.

Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1–3: John begins by addressing Gaius as “the beloved,” expressing deep affection and praying for his well-being in both soul and body. This opening sets a tone of personal warmth and spiritual concern, emphasizing holistic health.

Verses 4–6: John rejoices greatly because some believers are walking in the truth, specifically commending Gaius for his faithful love and hospitality toward the brothers and strangers. This hospitality is presented as a tangible expression of walking in the truth and love.

Verses 7–8: John explains the importance of supporting traveling Christian workers, noting that such support is a partnership in the truth. This underscores the interconnectedness of the early church and the shared responsibility to aid those spreading the gospel.

Verses 9–10: John contrasts Gaius’s faithfulness with the behavior of Diotrephes, who refuses to welcome the brothers and even expels those who do. This reveals a conflict involving church authority and hospitality, highlighting the destructive impact of pride and control.

Verses 11–12: John exhorts Gaius not to imitate evil but to imitate what is good. He warns against the harm caused by those who do not walk in the truth and commends Demetrius as a positive example, likely a respected leader or messenger.

Verses 13–14: The letter closes with John expressing a desire to visit Gaius personally to speak face to face, affirming the importance of personal fellowship and encouragement in the Christian life.

Key Themes

One key theme is the practical outworking of love, especially through hospitality to traveling missionaries. This love is not abstract but demonstrated in concrete support for those laboring in the gospel. Another theme is the importance of walking in the truth, which involves both doctrinal integrity and ethical behavior. The letter also highlights the dangers of prideful leadership, as seen in Diotrephes’s refusal to welcome others and his divisive actions. Finally, the theme of fellowship and partnership in ministry underscores



the interconnectedness of believers and the shared responsibility to uphold the gospel message.

Cross-References

John's emphasis on love and truth echoes themes found throughout his other writings, such as 1 John 3:18, which calls believers to love in deed and truth. The importance of hospitality to itinerant workers recalls Paul's instructions in Romans 16:23 and Hebrews 13:2, which encourage welcoming strangers and supporting those who preach the gospel. The conflict with Diotrephes parallels warnings about false teachers and divisive leaders in 2 Timothy 3:1–5 and Titus 3:10, highlighting the need for humility and submission within the church. Lastly, John's desire for personal fellowship resonates with the broader New Testament emphasis on community and encouragement, as seen in Hebrews 10:24–25.

Application

Modern disciples can learn from 3 John the vital role of hospitality and support for those who serve in ministry today. This may involve welcoming missionaries, church workers, or anyone laboring for the gospel, recognizing that such support is a partnership in advancing God's kingdom. The chapter also challenges believers to examine their attitudes toward church leadership and community, warning against pride, control, and divisiveness. Instead, Christians are called to imitate what is good, walking in truth and love. Furthermore, the letter encourages personal fellowship and accountability, reminding believers of the importance of face-to-face encouragement and mutual care within the body of Christ.

Summary

3 John Chapter 1 is a brief but rich letter emphasizing the practical expression of love through hospitality, the necessity of walking in truth, and the challenges posed by divisive leadership. Through his personal commendations and rebukes, John encourages faithful support of gospel workers and warns against prideful control within the church. The chapter ends with a call to imitate good and maintain personal fellowship, underscoring the interconnectedness and mutual responsibility of believers in the early Christian community. This letter serves as a timeless reminder of the character and conduct expected of those who follow Christ and serve His mission.