

3rd John

Please Send On Those Sent Out



Seven years ago, my daughter-in-law's dad opened a law office in Paducah, so we were invited to the grand opening. After the grand opening, she and Kory invited us to take them to Doe's Restaurant in downtown Paducah (kids are good at inviting you to take them out), and they asked her parents to go as well. We had just ordered and our appetizer had arrived when Kory stood up, raised his glass, took a knife, and began dinging on the glass. He said, "Katie and I have an announcement." At that point, we already knew! A big smile of joy began to break out into our hearts when Kory announced that Katie was carrying their first child. That young man, Crider, would be born and be a blessing to our lives, and before long, two brothers would follow. Now, Crider has just finished kindergarten at New Covenant Christian Academy. We attended their final program, and when the program was over, (the other set of Grandparents were there too) we all decided to go to Cracker Barrel in Murray. The kids rode with us, and Kory and Katie got there a little ahead of us. As we unloaded the grandkids, Kory and Katie told Crider to come over there because they wanted to give him his present for finishing Kindergarten. So Celisa and I go on into the restaurant and take our seats, along with the other set of grandparents. When Kory and Katie came in, Kory tells Crider to tell everyone what he got for graduating. Crider stood up and said, "Mommy is expecting again." Wow! Number four is on the

way! The other grandfather and I were a little shocked, but the grandmothers were tickled all over again. When we left that night, my wife looked over at me with a big grin on her face and said, "It would be really special if Katie were carrying twins."

You guys know how my wife loves the farm, and she has had an unusually high number of twins born on the farm lately. She is believing God could bless us with twins. When we were first married, we thought how neat it would be to have a set of twins. We love our two children, but to have twins would just have to be awesome. We are blessed here at church because we have several families with twins. There is one set of twins that is just extra special to my wife and me, not only because they are in our spiritual family, but also because they are part of our physical family. They are the twin sons of Kayla and Caleb; Aiden and Evan. They are precious. They look just alike to me. As a matter of fact, we were camping just a couple of weekends ago, and those boys were there. I found myself often asking if it was Aiden, or if it was Evan. I just guessed most of the time because I had no idea if it was Aiden or Evan. You have to love twins because all of the things that are similar, yet there is always something just a little different in every set of twins.

We are at Exit 64, or the 64th book of the Bible. This is Exit 25 of 27 in the New Testament. We are going to study the twin of 2nd John, which is 3rd John. Many scholars and pastors believe these are twin letters. You know my opinion that they are really postcards, so we will not call 2nd John and 3rd John twin letters; we are going to call them twin postcards. If you are under a certain age, you might prefer to call them twin text messages, twin tweets. Because of the brevity of this postcard, we will read the entire postcard.

"The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. 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. For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are

walking in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth. I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true. I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, every one of them."

Similar Characteristics of 2nd and 3rd John

It will not take us a long time to cover 3rd John since it is just a postcard, and the twin of 2nd John. Let me first tell you how much these books look alike. When you study 3rd John, you will see some characteristics in common with 2nd John:

1. Both postcards are from the elder, John.
2. The recipient of each of these postcards is someone whom the elder loves in truth.

3. The relationship each recipient has with the elder causes great rejoicing in his life.
4. The children of these recipients are walking in the truth.
5. The elder has heard good reports of both recipients from other people.
6. Both postcards also contain a warning about something.
7. In the conclusion of each postcard, the elder makes the same statement that he really wishes to see them face to face. He has so much more he would love to say to them, but he will not do so with pen and ink. He will wait until he actually sees them face to face. In the Greek text, the literal meaning is mouth-to-mouth, close proximity. He wants to be with them.
- 8.** Each of these postcards ends with a greeting from someone else.

Differences in 2nd and 3rd John

Praise the Lord; these twins aren't identical. If they were identical, there would be no need to study both 2nd and 3rd John. Because they aren't identical twins, there is a need for us to discuss this letter as we journey down Route 66 in order to get the big picture about our responsibility because we have received the great salvation that God has bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus.

The first difference is that one of these postcards was written to an elect lady and the other was written to a beloved man. If you have twins and they are both the same sex, it can be hard to tell them apart. If you have twins with one male and one female, it is easy to tell the difference. It is easy to tell the difference between 2nd and 3rd John because one was written to a man and the other to a lady. But the main difference is that in 2nd John, the elder is warning about supporting those people who have a ministry that teaches a false gospel. They do not teach the truth about Jesus Christ. But in John's twin postcard, 3rd John, he is writing to encourage us to support those who teach the truth about Jesus Christ. So one is written to warn us not to support people who teach false gospel, but

the other is written to a beloved man encouraging him to continue what he is already doing, which is supporting people who are teaching and preaching the true gospel.

3rd John

With that in mind, the theme of this little postcard is "Please Send on Those Sent Out." If someone asks you why 3rd John is in the Bible, you should say that we are encouraged to send on those who are sent out, just as Gaius was. This little postcard breaks down quite simply:

Outline

The Introduction: Verses 1-4

The Body (John's message): Verses 5-12

The Conclusion: Verses 13-15

The Introduction: Joy in Gaius walking in the truth

When this postcard opens up, you quickly realize that Gaius has a special relationship with the elder. He calls him "beloved" three times in this little postcard. He calls him one of his children who brings great rejoicing to him because he hears that as his child, he is walking in the truth. You have to recognize the Apostle John as an elder statesman of the church, and he is writing to Gaius. Though John doesn't say this, when he uses the language of my child walking in truth, you get this picture that the elder believes he is a spiritual father to this young man. That is the image he has.

There are two distinct possibilities of why the elder, John, would call Gaius his child and tell him there is no greater joy that can come to him than to know his child, Gaius, is walking in the truth. The first is that spiritually, John may have played a part in his salvation. The elder, John, may have been the very person who personally shared Christ with Gaius, and Gaius repented from a lifestyle of sin, and put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

The elder may have personally baptized him or witnessed his baptism. But he saw him come to faith in Christ, and because he played a part in it, he felt like a spiritual father to him. Remember that the Apostle Paul, on three different occasions, wrote to the church at Corinth, to the church at Galatia, and to the church at Philippi, and because of the role he played in their salvation, he looked at them as his children and they as their spiritual father. But sometimes people come to know the Lord under the ministry of one pastor, but then come under the leadership of another pastor who plays such a critical role in their sanctification that they develop a spiritual bond that it is almost like a spiritual father and spiritual son relationship. So the two possibilities are that John was either Gaius' spiritual father because he personally led him to Christ, or he was the one influencing him in his growth in Christ. It could have possibly been both. But you need to recognize that this postcard isn't just written to anyone. It is written to a person who has a special unique relationship with the elder.

I don't know if you have ever had the privilege of sharing Jesus with someone who is in sin, and right before your very eyes, they turn from a lifestyle of sin, and put their faith and trust in Jesus. You get to hug them for the first time as a newborn baby in Christ. When you get that privilege, there is a special bond that takes place. For you, the one that led them to Christ, it is as if you are their spiritual father. You pray for them, worry about them, and check on them because they are a newborn babe in Christ. Just as you may have fathered a physical child, you don't merely bring the child home and leave him to his own self. No, you know you play an important role. I pray that you have had that privilege of leading someone to Christ. Let me ask you this; can you name someone that you are a spiritual father or spiritual mother to? Could you name one, two, three, four, five, six people? How big is your spiritual family, where you are a parent and they are a child? I pray that none of us is barren, that we have no one who comes to mind that we have personally led to Christ.

Let me ask you another question. Could you name someone who looks to you as a spiritual parent and comes to you for advice, seeks your counsel

and you are getting to pour your life into them? As a parent, there is no greater joy than knowing your child is walking in the truth. You see, the elder here is making a correlation between physical children and spiritual children. If you are a parent, you know there is no greater joy than when your children are walking correctly, living correctly. But there is no bigger heartache than when that child turns from walking correctly to walking in disobedience. It will break mom's and dad's heart.

People often tell me, especially after Kory preaches, that I must really be proud of him. People tell me that I must be proud of my daughter, Kiki, when you find out she is a nurse and you see her in action managing the 3rd floor at Lourdes Hospital. But I have to tell you, as a pastor, some of you will never know how proud I am to get to be your spiritual father and having the privilege of leading you to Christ, or watching you grow as you submit yourself to the teaching ministry of this church. There is no greater joy! I can identify with John because I know what it is like to be a pastor and to know that many of your children are walking in the truth. So as we get this postcard, know we are reading a postcard with this simple message: send on those who have been sent out, and know the deep relationship between John, the elder, and this young man named Gaius.

The Body: Send on those who are sent out

The body of the letter is saying to send on those who are sent out. In verses 5 through 8, you will see that Gaius is doing what he is supposed to be doing as a Christian. In the Biblical World, especially in Greek society within the Roman Empire, there was this thing called hospitality. The Greek word literally means 'love for strangers.' To be hospitable doesn't mean to be nice to those in your family. To be hospitable means you are nice and caring for those whom you don't know. Are you hospitable? Do you have a love for strangers? In the Biblical world, if we had been traveling at the time John was getting near the end of his life and the gospel was starting to spread throughout the Roman Empire, we couldn't check into a Motel 6. We couldn't look for a Sheraton. You didn't stay at an inn because an inn

was a place of bad behavior. When you were traveling, you literally depended on the hospitality of strangers. The people of the Roman Empire had tokens, so families carried specific tokens to their families. When you traveled to another region where you had a relative, you would show your token and if your token matched theirs, they would take you in because they knew you were family. Even though you were a stranger and they knew nothing about you, they knew you were safe; you were not going to rob them or harm them. Can you imagine in that day opening up your home to a stranger? So here is what the church would do as the church began to grow, and the gospel was penetrating the Roman Empire. There were men who were called to go out from the church. We have the example of Paul, Silas, and Barnabas, and many other men who were sent out by the church. The great commission was as you go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them all things whatsoever has been commanded you, and then Jesus said I will be with you, the church, until the end of the age. But get this picture; the church didn't go everywhere. I mean in their daily walk, they wouldn't cover the entire Roman Empire. So the church believed there were people called of God to be traveling preachers, traveling evangelists, traveling missionaries, if you will. They would go from one place to another where the gospel hadn't been as yet. While they were being sent out and journeying to other locations, they were depending on Christians to take them in, house them, feed them, and send them on their journey.

Now in 2nd John, we were told if someone comes to your home saying he is a preacher or missionary and he teaches a false gospel, you are to kick him out of your house. Don't even give him a farewell as he leaves. Just kick him out. Don't support him at all. You can imagine how it would make the church afraid to take someone into their homes. If you allow someone into your home who is teaching a false gospel and you support him, it wouldn't be good. So John is following up with an example of a man who is discerning of who to support and who not to support, and he is writing this letter thanking him for his support of these missionaries.

- **Reasons to Support Missionaries**

In verses 5 through 8, you will see three reasons why we should support missionaries, why we should support people who have been sent out to go somewhere else to tell someone else about the gospel. We are supposed to send them on. We are supposed to help them out on their journey. We are supposed to help them get there, and then be able to stay there when they get there. But remember, this isn't written to the church.

- 1. They are Worthy of God**

Please know this. At Hardin Baptist Church, 10% of what you give every Sunday goes to support our missionaries through the cooperative program. Above that 10%, we support other missionaries and ministries here in the United States and around the world. As a church, we do that. But this isn't written to the elect lady, the church; this is written to an individual. You and I should still be sensitive about what we do with the money we keep. You aren't done when you put what you do in the offering plate. What you give is God's, but what you keep is God's too. He makes the church, as a group, the steward of our first fruit. But whatever you keep for you is still God's, and you are a steward of that too. There are going to be times when opportunities will come and you will have to make a choice of whether you support another ministry. You will have to choose if you believe someone has been sent out, and whether you should support them. 3rd John would say to you; 'please.' That is what the phrase, "It is well for you," means in the Greek. I don't know why English translates it the way, but it does. That doesn't capture for me what the Greek is saying. The Greek is saying, 'please send on their journey, these brothers.' Send them on in a manner worthy of God. Wow! Why should we individually support ministers and missionaries out of what we believe is ours? It is because those people are worthy of your support, and you should put the same value on them as you do on God. Wow! The word, "worthy," means 'to weigh as much as.' When you weigh out God and what He is worth, and you weigh out these men and women who have been called of God to

leave us and go somewhere else, we are to support them in a manner that reflects how we view God.

2. They Preach Christ

The second thing he says is they go out for the sake of the name. The name is Jesus. There is no other name under Heaven whereby men must be saved than the name Jesus. When Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, the life and no man comes to the Father but by Me," He meant that. There will be no one in Heaven, from the New Testament age on, who did not hear the name Jesus preached to them. Anywhere the name of Jesus Christ is not preached, there will not be anyone in Heaven. You can't be saved outside the name of Jesus Christ. So when people have been sent out from our church, they are worthy of our support. The only way people can be saved is if they hear about Jesus.

Then, John throws this in; they are not going to charge the Gentiles. Can you imagine a missionary going to a place and expecting the people, who don't know Christ, to receive and support him and give him enough money to live once he gets there? That would be crazy. You can see where pagans would get the wrong idea...*you will tell me about your God if I pay you to do it. Then you tell me that what He wants to give me is free, but you can't give it to me, until I pay you for it?* That just wouldn't look good and it would be a hindrance to evangelism. Now if the pagan knew what he was going to get, it would be worth what he had to pay. If a pagan village really knew the truth, they should take up an offering and beg for someone to come tell them about Jesus, amen! But they don't know the truth. We know the truth. So what is the truth? If there are people willing to go, then we, as individuals, not just as a church, need to weigh out those worthy of our support so that we, the Christians, support them there. Then they can freely preach the gospel once there.

3. You Partner in the Truth

Notice the “therefore” in verse 8. In other words, based on what has just been said, John says, “Therefore, you become a fellow worker for the truth.” When you support other people in ministry, you become a co-worker with them, a co-partner with them. I think some of us who give and invest in others don’t realize how big a role we play. I have noticed that most of the people who are called can’t afford to go. Most of the people who aren’t called to go can support someone who does go. Isn’t it amazing how God puts us together? He puts those of us who have been richly blessed with material things in contact with people who don’t have material things. While some have a call to go, others have a call to stay. But in staying, we can still go and be a partner with those who go. If you have been called to go, you go. You trust that if you are sent out, the Lord will bring it to the minds of churches and individuals to send you on once you have been sent out. But if you haven’t been sent out, that doesn’t mean you don’t play a part. You still play a part in the kingdom by making sure those that are sent out can get there, and once they get there they can stay for the honor and glory of God. Someone said, “We can’t all go, but we can all give.” Can I say this? We need more of us to go. We really need more of us to pray over whether God would want them to go on a short-term mission trip, whether it is Nicaragua, Brazil, Thailand, Arizona, or wherever. Maybe you don’t have the money, but if God sends you out, He is already putting it on the heart of others to get you there and keep you there for as long as you need to be there.

- **Diotrephes**

The reason this letter is being written is because there was a man in the church who put himself ahead of the church and he wouldn’t listen to John. His name was Diotrephes. He wouldn’t let any traveling missionary into the region, nor would he let anyone in the church support them. He would kick them out. John wrote a letter to this church where Diotrephes was, but he didn’t pass it on to the church. As a matter of fact, scholars call this the 4th

letter of John, but we don't have it. When this man got the letter from John that was written to the church, you can imagine what he did with the letter. What do you do with things you don't want other people to see? You get rid of them. How would you like to be Diotrephes on the Day of Judgment when God asks him why he burnt the letter He wrote, by the hand of the elder, to the church? This man was in the church, but he wasn't a believer. John makes it clear that he wasn't a believer and he had not seen God because he practiced evil. He actually hindered the work of the gospel.

The Conclusion: Imitate Good, not Evil

John closes telling Gaius to imitate good, not evil. That is how we would say it in English, but that is not what John said. He said, "Do not imitate evil, but imitate good." We get our English word, 'mimic,' from this word imitate. If you have ever been to an amusement park or a place of entertainment where there were professional mimes, you might have seen them mimic your behavior. A mime does everything the person he is mimicking does. Sometimes in our households, in our relationships, we feel like people are mimicking us. Have you ever had someone mimic you? You think...*Do I really look like that?* That is why we don't want people to mimic us. We don't want to see what we look like. John's plea to Gaius is don't mimic this person who hinders the transmission of the gospel, and doesn't help to send on those who have been sent out; keep doing what you are doing and mimic good men like Demetrius.

So who are you mimicking? If someone mimicked you, what would their life look like? If someone mimicked you, would they be sending on those who have been sent out?