

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, Johannine Epistles, Session 3, 3rd John: Notes to a Trusted Friend, Gaius Audio Overview Podcast from NotebookLM

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Okay, let's dig in. We're doing a deep dive today into, well, a really short letter in the New Testament, one you might kind of flip past maybe. Three John.

Exactly. But according to our source material, it's surprisingly significant. That's right.

And for this duck dive, we're drawing on notes from Dr. Robert Yarborough's teaching, specifically his session on the Ohanian Epistles, session three, which zooms right in on this little letter. And our goal here really is to pull out the key insights, those nuggets of knowledge from his teaching, and maybe more importantly, figure out why this ancient letter still speaks to your life today. What's the practical takeaway? Yeah, absolutely. And just to set the scene quickly, place it in the Bible's big picture.

The source uses that P-M-E-C structure. Right. Preparation: Old Testament.

Manifestation in the Gospels, Expansion in Acts. Then E for Epistles, like Three John, which show how the gospel was actually lived. Exactly.

How it was taught, received, even opposed in real cities, facing real issues. And then the final C is Consummation Revelation. So these letters, like Three John, they're like snapshots, aren't they? Real life.

Definitely. And the source gives us a pretty simple two-step approach for looking at them. First, C. Observe.

What was happening back then, right there. And then second, say. Okay.

What does it mean for us? Here and now. Faithfully, right? Understand the original context deeply to apply it well. We'll try to stick with that.

Okay. Sounds good. So let's start at the beginning.

Verses one to four. The writer just calls himself the Elder. And he's writing to Gaius, described as beloved and whom I love in truth.

That word beloved- the source really emphasizes this, doesn't it? It's not just like a casual dear sir. No, not at all. It's loaded.

It expresses this deep affection that flows from God's own love for his people. It creates what the source calls agape force field. I like that phrase, agape force field.

This relational network. Yeah. And you notice the style.

It feels a bit repetitive sometimes. The source kind of wonders why. Maybe Aramaic influence.

Maybe the Elder's age. Could be. But the source argues the repetition isn't a flaw.

It actually makes John's main point super clear. Which is? That a real relationship with God always spills over into these thick, meaningful relationships with other believers. Right.

And it's anchored in prayer. Speaking of prayer, there's that specific prayer for Gaius in verse two. I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health as it goes well with your soul.

So it's holistic: body and soul together, thinking about the ancient world. Yeah. With short life expectancies, physical health was a huge deal.

But the source warns us, right? Don't build a whole gospel of physical health just on this one verse. Definitely not. It's a loving prayer for well-being, but not the core gospel promise itself.

Okay. Then observation three from these verses. The Elder's joy.

Yeah. His delight in the integrity of other believers. Verse three.

I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth. And that word greatly is apparently even stronger in Greek. Like exceedingly.

He's overjoyed. And notice it's joy because someone else is walking in the truth. The source contrasts this with maybe a kind of pious self-focus.

Right. It mirrors Christ's focus on others. And then verse four, where he calls believers, my children.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. That hits hard, doesn't it? This idea of a legacy. The source shares a story about his grandfather.

Oh, yeah. Lead-in singing in the country church. Right.

Singing hymns like every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. As a kid, it seemed like, you know, an exaggeration. Sure.

But later in life, he realized how profoundly true it felt. That growing joy in knowing God, especially seeing it in others you've invested in. And that's discipleship, isn't it? Not just teaching, but encouraging people, living it out yourself.

That tangible example. Finding that deep joy in seeing faith take root in someone else. So connecting this to you listening.

Why are these things, these deep relationships, prayer, delighting in others, growth, building that faithful legacy? Why does the source say these are like the calling cards of believers? Because fundamentally, they're the outward signs of a life genuinely changed by the gospel. Okay, moving on. Verses five to eight.

Here, the elder praises Gaius for something specific. His actions. Yeah.

It is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are. So Gaius was showing hospitality to these traveling Christians, likely missionaries or ministers. Exactly.

And John tells him, you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. And the source highlights that Greek word *propempo*. Right.

It's not just see you later. It means actively equipping them. Sending them off with provisions, resources, whatever they needed for their work.

And the reason why Gaius should do this is crucial. Because they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. They're legit, dedicated to Christ and the name, and not funded by nonbelievers.

They rely on fellow believers. Which leads to the big principle in verse eight. Therefore, we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

Yeah. It shows that the mission Jesus gave, the Great Commission, is making disciples everywhere. It's a shared task.

Even if you aren't the one physically going, you're still called to be a fellow worker. Through praying, supporting financially or practically, or maybe by going yourself. That's the call.

So thinking about this for you today, how does Gaius's example help you think about supporting ministry? Being a fellow worker, right where you are. And maybe how do those criteria working for the name, not taking funds from outsiders- help you discern who is genuinely worth supporting? Good questions. Now, things weren't all smooth sailing.

Verses nine and 10 introduce the problem child. Diatrophes. Yeah.

The bad guy enters the scene. John writes, I wrote something to the church, but Diatrophes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. He's directly challenging John's apostolic authority.

And John's not backing down. He says, if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, including talking wicked nonsense against us. But it's more than just talk, right? He's actively obstructive.

Yeah. He refuses to welcome the brothers, those same missionaries Gaius helped. And worse, he stops those who want to welcome them and puts them out of the church.

He's changing the whole dynamic. The source digs into his motivation, focusing on that phrase: he likes to put himself first. Yeah.

The Greek is apparently really strong, like their first-place-loving Diotrophes or maybe even their heavyweight guy. Wow. So it points to this recurring problem, doesn't it? People in the church who maybe only have a cosmetic experience with the gospel.

Right. Maybe drawn by the community, the resources, whatever. Right.

But no real heart change. Diotrophes, the source suggests, loved prominence. Power-loving, influence-loving.

Maybe he had money or leadership gifts or charisma that drew people, but it was fundamentally self-serving. And the response, the source calls it church discipline. Which sounds harsh, but he defines it as enforcement of the terms of the relationship with God and with each other.

So it's about protecting the community's integrity and the truth of the message. Exactly. Think about things like membership commitments or doctrinal statements today, ways churches try to keep things aligned with the gospel and help people whose lives are, well, at a step.

And it's crucial, the source argues, not to see this as just some, you know, petty squabble. Right. Or paint John as rigid and Diotrophes is just like the fun guy stirring things up.

No, the source is clear. Diotrophes was opposing apostolic authority and hindering the dominical mission, Jesus's mission. John's stand wasn't about his own ego.

It was about defending truth, relationship with God, obedience to Christ, not worldly power. So for you listening, how might this ancient problem, this desire for prominence over faithfulness, show up today in communities you're part of? And how can this story help you become more discerning about who you follow and which teachings you accept? Important stuff. Okay.

Verses 11 and 12. John gives some direct counsel. Yeah, pretty straightforward.

Beloved, do not imitate evil, but imitate good. And given the context, it seems pretty clear who the evil example is, right? Diotrophes, don't be like him. Imitate the good.

And this leads to that core principle of discernment. The source connects straight back to Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. By their fruits, you'll know them.

John puts it. Whoever does good is from God. Whoever does evil has not seen God.

It's a powerful check. It's not about slick words or charisma. It's about the actual fruit, the actions, the character.

That's what reveals connection to God. Right. And then he introduces Demetrius.

The positive example. The source thinks maybe he was the one carrying the letter. Possibly.

And look at his commendation. He has received a good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself. Plus, John adds his own personal testimony, saying you know that our testimony is true.

That idea of testimony is key here. It's not just what you claim about yourself. Which can be self-serving or just plain wrong.

Exactly. The source says true testimony is what other people know us to be. Especially the people close to you.

The ones who, you know, have your number. Huh. Yeah.

They know the real you. And the encouragement is to grow by seeking that honest feedback, affirmation, or critique from godly friends. Let their view of your fruits help you see clearly.

So again, bringing it back to you, who are you imitating? Are you more focused on the image, the appearance, or on cultivating real, tangible fruits that show a connection to God? How do you think about your own testimony? Not just your words, but the reality known by those closest to you. How could seeking their honest input help you grow? Good challenges. Finally, verses 13 and 14: the wrap-up.

John says, I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. He wants that face-to-face connection. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face-to-face.

And the source makes a neat point here. These letters are like readable deviations of larger truths and concerns. Snapshots limited by scrolls and dictation.

There's a bigger conversation happening off the page. Right. And the farewell itself reinforces themes we've seen.

First, the gospel creates attraction. He calls them friends. That warmth.

Second, it creates a desire for well-being. Peace be to you. That deep shalom blessing.

And third, it creates community. Shared purpose. The friends greet you.

Greet the friends each by name. Yeah, friends is such a great word for the Christian community there. And the source ties it all together with a powerful thought.

These deep connections aren't just nice human things. They're nourished by Christ's presence. They exist for the glory of God.

And get this, they offer the deepest gratification that the human soul can experience on this earth. Wow. And the source connects that directly to us.

To you. Suggesting that fostering these kinds of real, Christ-centered connections. Like we see between John and Gaius.

Might be a powerful antidote to the anxiety and loneliness so common today. Maybe even made worse by purely electronic connections. It really makes you think: how can you intentionally cultivate that kind of genuine community in your life? So, wrapping up this deep dive.

It's amazing how much is packed into this tiny letter, isn't it? Yeah, from deep affection and hospitality. To really sharp conflict and the need for discernment. And ending with the beauty and power of genuine community.

It's been great digging into this. Absolutely. Thanks for joining us for this deep dive into 3John.

Our source material does continue, so next time we'll be looking at 2John. And maybe a final thought for you to mull over, drawing from all this. How am I really focusing on living out your faith authentically? So much so that your testimony is what those closest to you see and affirm.

How might that not only shape your own life, but also strengthen that whole agape force field around you?