











Hospitality...

- We'll look at it in a little more detail in a later lesson, but for right now just keep this in mind –

As we see hospitality portrayed in 3 John, and throughout Scripture...

- ...we see that it is God-intended
- ...we see it derived from, or flowing from, the very nature of God Himself
- ...we see that it is part of living out not only the commands of God, but the gospel itself
- ...we see that it must be discerning
- ...and we see that its purpose is the display, the preservation, and the spread of the gospel

It is a major theme in 3 John, but more on that later.

What we're going to do first today is take a little tour through 3 John, pull out several things, and get a sense of what is on John's heart as he writes.

Let's take a look at the text for a bit...

First, find the 6 common elements of a NT epistle ~

1. Name of the writer
2. Name of the recipient
3. Greeting
4. Prayer or thanksgiving
5. Body of the letter
6. Final greeting/farewell

Looking at the text of 3 John ~

Ok—what's the main theme of each paragraph?
You take a shot at it first...

v. 1 ~ Greeting

v. 2-4 ~ John's joy that Gaius is walking in the truth

v. 5-8 ~ John's commendation of Gaius' love for the brothers

v. 9-10 ~ John's concern over Diotrephes' pride

v. 11-12 ~ John's testimony of Demetrius' consistent life

v. 13-15 ~ John's desire to speak face to face with Gaius

And now this: What do you think is the main theme of the letter?

And how about a key verse for the letter?

Looking at the text of 3 John ~

So—does John mention why he wrote this letter?
Or can you take a good guess?

My take on it: To preserve the true gospel by encouraging believers to support itinerant teachers of biblical truth.

Do you notice any repeated words or phrases? If so, what are they?

- truth ~ v. 1, 3, 4, 8, 12
- testified/testimony ~ v. 3, 6, 12 (3x)
- beloved ~ v. 1, 2, 5, 11

Why do you suppose John repeats those words?

Looking at the text of 3 John ~

John mentions three people in his letter—what does the text say about them?

Gaius ~

- Very dear to John: v. 1, 2, 3, 5, 11, 14
- Others speak of his obedience to the truth and his love for the saints: v. 3, 4, 5, 6
- Actively supports itinerant teachers: v. 5, 8
- Consistently walks in the truth: v. 3-4
- Well known in John's home church (Ephesus): v. 15

Looking at the text of 3 John ~

John mentions three people in his letter—what does the text say about them?

Diotrephes ~

- Likes to put himself first
- Does not acknowledge the authority of the apostles
- Talks “wicked nonsense” about John and his fellow workers
- Does not welcome itinerant teachers
- Puts out of the church those who welcome the itinerant teachers
- Had some significant authority in the church

Looking at the text of 3 John ~

John mentions three people in his letter—what does the text say about them?

Demetrius ~

- Received a good testimony from everyone—was well spoken of
- Known to live consistently with Scripture
- Received a good testimony from John
- Most writers think that he was the one who carried and delivered all three of John's letters

Looking at the text of 3 John ~

One of the most helpful things in studying the NT epistles is looking for important transition words...

...what in the world do I mean by that?

- Words like *but, and, for, since, therefore, because, instead, yet, as, so*

So—what important transition words do you see?

- *For* in v. 3, 7
- *Therefore* in v. 8
- *That* in v. 8
- *So* in v. 10

How do those words help you understand what John is saying in his letter?

Looking at the text of 3 John ~

Think about this: What was the point John was making in 2 John?

- Compare that to the main thrust of 3 John—can you put the messages of these two short letters together and make one general statement that covers both?
- What is the big central issue John is tackling in these two letters?

He is doing the same thing Paul did in the book of Galatians—he is working to preserve the true gospel (and by extension the teaching of sound doctrine) from distortion, twisting, and confusion.

Here's the outline we'll use for 3 John ~

- John's joy that Gaius is walking in the truth ~ v. 1-4
- John's commendation of Gaius' love for the brothers ~ v. 5-8
- John's concern over Diotrephes' pride ~ v. 9-10
- John's testimony of Demetrius' consistent life ~ v. 11-12
- John's desire to speak face to face with Gaius ~ v. 13-15

Yes...I know it's basically the paragraph themes we saw earlier, but it's what John says, so we're safe sticking with that.

Ok—let's finish up with this today ~

John was writing to believers, but not just to individuals...the issue was the church, and the preservation of proclamation of a saving gospel through the church.

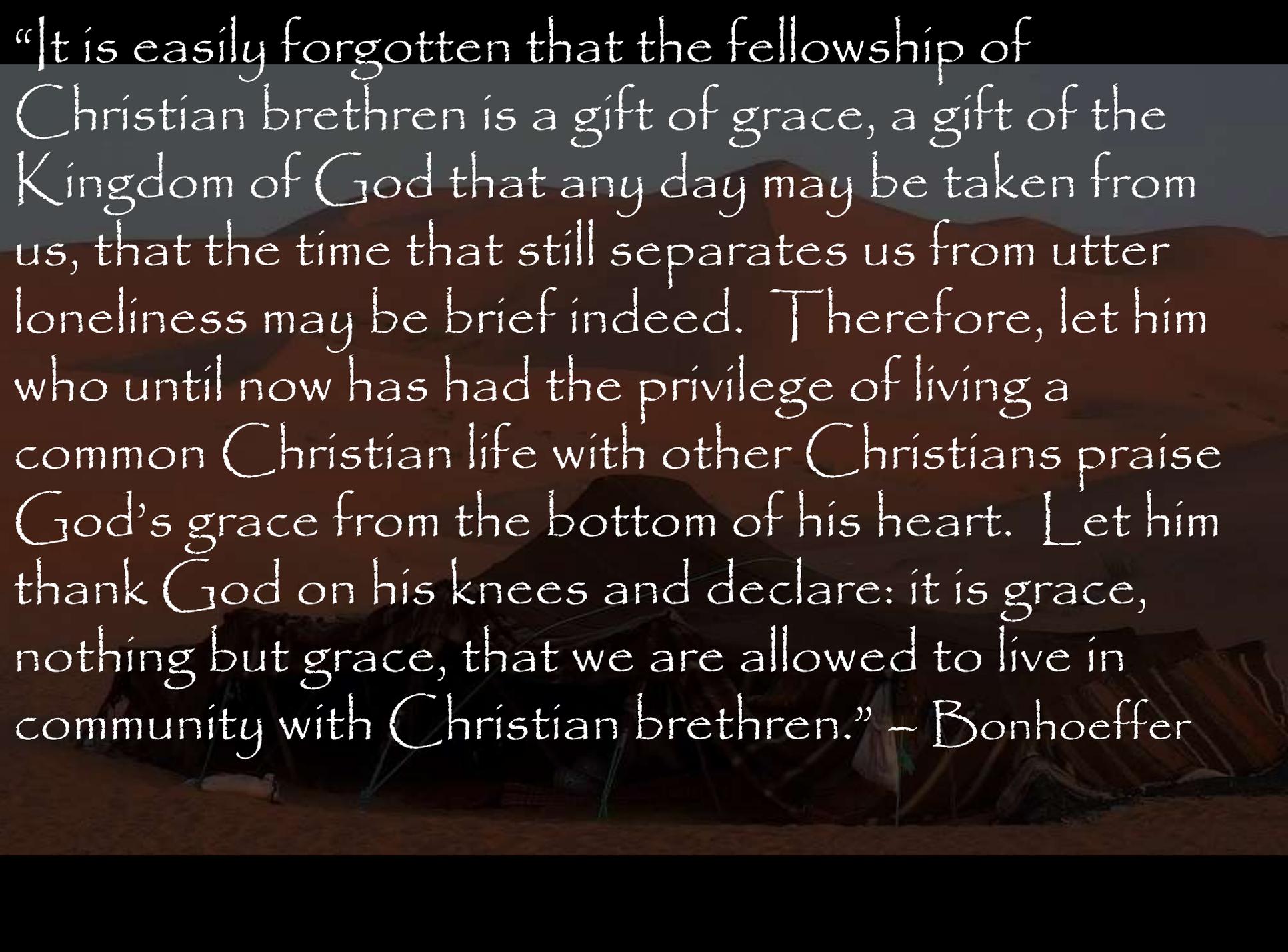
The church. Believers in community.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "So between the death of Christ and the Last Day it is only by a gracious anticipation of the last things that Christians are privileged to live in visible fellowship with other Christians. It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God's Word and sacrament."

Ok—let's finish up with this today ~

Let's glean a few things out of 3 John—what do we see about believers in community there?

- Believers in community preserve the gospel ~ v. 8
- Believers in community overcome error and opposition ~ v. 5
- Believers in community encourage one another ~ v. 3, 5, 8. Also—1 Sam. 23:16
- Believers in community find common ground in the gospel ~ v. 8, “fellow workers for the truth.”
- Believers in community counteract culture ~ v. 4
- Believers in community show the reality and power of the gospel ~ v. 7. Also—John 13:35.

A photograph of a desert landscape with red sand dunes. In the foreground, a dark-colored tent is pitched on the sand. The background shows rolling dunes under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, serif font.

“It is easily forgotten that the fellowship of Christian brethren is a gift of grace, a gift of the Kingdom of God that any day may be taken from us, that the time that still separates us from utter loneliness may be brief indeed. Therefore, let him who until now has had the privilege of living a common Christian life with other Christians praise God’s grace from the bottom of his heart. Let him thank God on his knees and declare: it is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren.” ~ Bonhoeffer

“Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. What does this mean? It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means, third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity.” ~
Bonhoeffer

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Our final apologetic is not persuasive public rhetoric or shrewdly identifying areas of common concern with society; it is our love for one another. Even in the 21st century, some opponents will turn, as early-church detractors did according to Tertullian, and say, ‘See how they love one another.’

And not only will love and harmony in our congregations help win the lost, they will help keep the found. In a day where we are increasingly marginalized and mocked, it is even more important that we find our greatest place of belonging in the church. Mere attendance and association will no longer cut it. Maybe we could get by, when society was on our side, in thin relationships with fellow believers. But as opposition increases, the richness of our life together in the church will matter more than ever.” – David Mathis