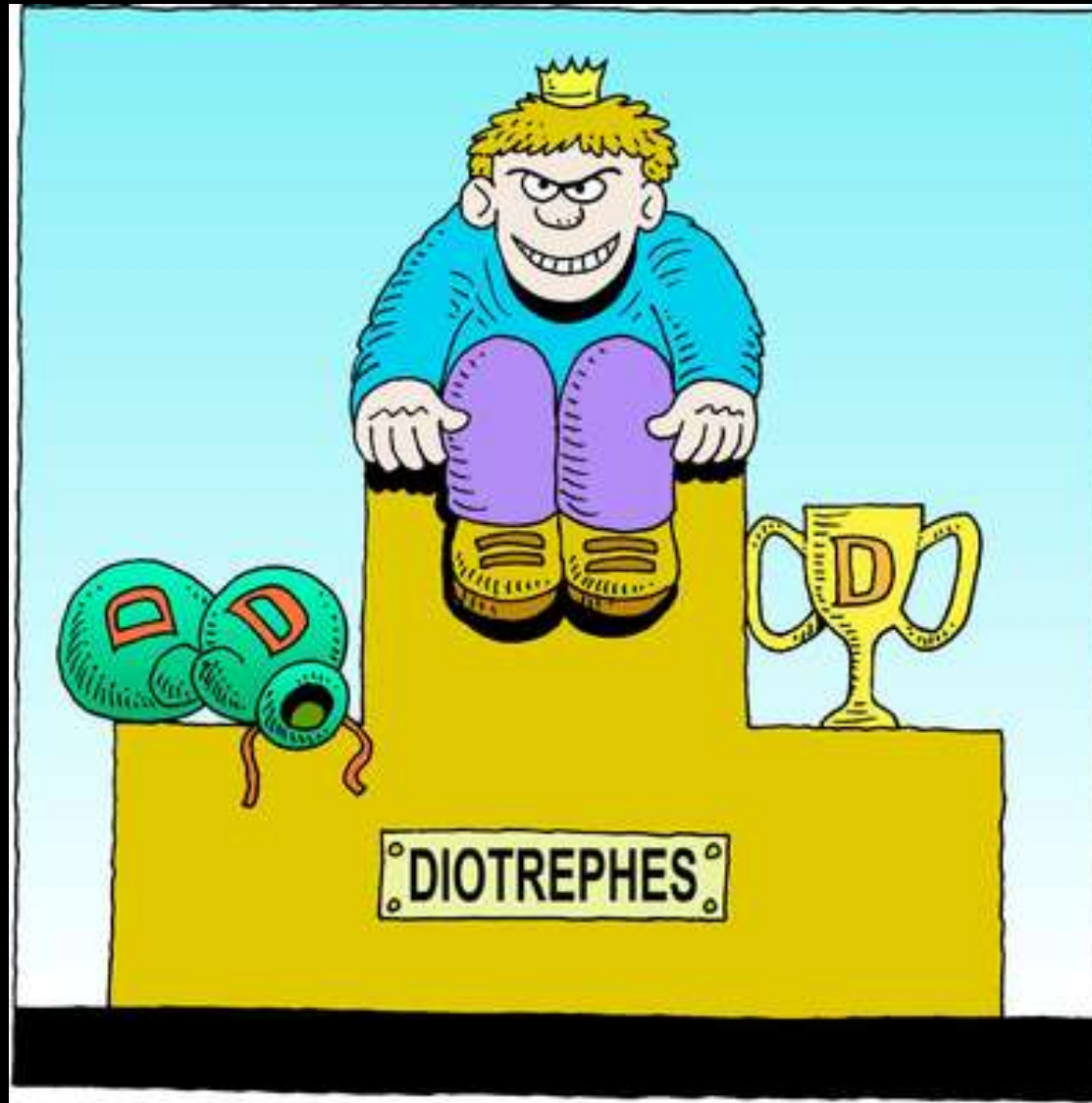


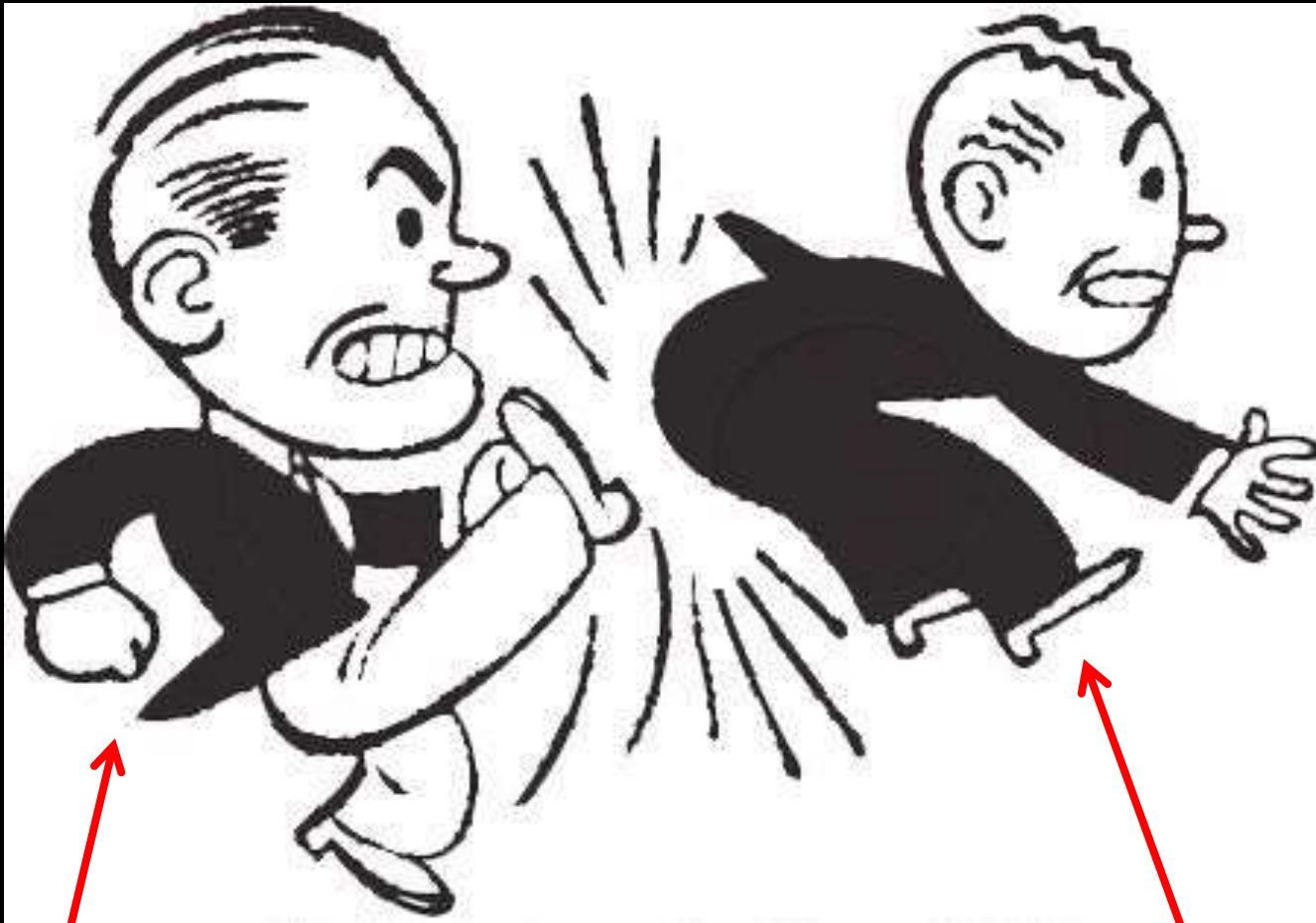
A hand is shown reaching out from a rocky ledge, with another hand resting on the rock. The background features a vast mountain range under a blue sky with light clouds. The text 'WWDD?' is positioned at the top center of the image.

WWDD?

WWDD—What would Diotrephes do?
Let's read 3 John and find out...

He would let go...if it would benefit him.





Diotrephes

Anybody who doesn't agree with him and build up his ego

Here's the outline we're using 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

Pride—I think it's safe to say it is not God's favorite thing. Think back to Obadiah, v. 3 for a minute...

The core of Edom's sin: "The pride of your heart has deceived you."

- Notice that God describes the root, or location, of the pride ("your heart")...
- ...and also the result of that inward pride ("has deceived you")
- As always with sin, it's a heart issue. Always.

Diotrephes was a proud man...and it deceived him.
What does pride do? How does it deceive?

- It exalts self—it has to: if there is no humility and submission to God, self is all that's left to exalt.
- It distorts the way you see things—self is central.

The core of Edom's sin: "The pride of your heart has deceived you."

- Here's where it leads: to a sense of privilege, entitlement, deserving, diminishing others.
- It blinds you to your faults.
- You begin to think your faults are strong points.
- You become deaf to correction and incapable of self-evaluation.
- You begin to compare yourself to others and find you are always right—their sin is always worse than yours. Proud people don't repent.
- So it always leads to being hard-hearted and defiant, and to a lack of love and compassion.

Yeah—like Diotrephes: defiant, no compassion.

So—what is God's opinion of man's arrogant pride?

We can say this: He takes a dim view of it. Let's take a quick run through these verses—it will give us a brief theology of God's view of arrogant pride –

- Prov. 8:13
- Prov. 16:5
- Prov. 16:18
- Isaiah 9:9
- Luke 18:14
- 1 Cor. 13:4
- Titus 1:7
- James 4:6

Pride is the opposite of the character of God (1 Cor. 13:4), and so brings His active opposition (James 4:6). That is not a place you want to be in. Don't be Diotrephes. It won't end well.

Let's make a list, shall we?

What does the text say about Diotrephes?

- He likes to put himself first
- Does not acknowledge the apostles' authority
- Talks "wicked nonsense" about John
- Does not welcome traveling missionary/teachers
- Puts out of the church those who support them
- Had some significant authority in the church

He was self-obsessed, arrogant, slanderous, self-exalting, inhospitable, and power-hungry.

Oh yeah—and this: he was a professing believer.

He was among the saints, in the church.

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

What else do we now about him?

- Nothing.
- This is the only glimpse we see of him in the NT, and it's just a little snapshot.
- Was he always like this? We don't know.
- Did John ever go talk to him? We don't know.
- Did he respond and change? We don't know.

We just see this: an apparent brother in Christ who was actively working *against* the kingdom of God, rejecting the apostles' teaching, who did not love other believers, and whose selfish personal ambition was growing ("And not content with that..." ~ v. 10).

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

Well. What do you do with *that*? Hold that thought for a bit. We'll come back to it.

Before we take a closer look at these two verses, think about this: what lay at the root of the issue John had with Diotrephes?

- Was it theological? Teaching a false gospel?
- Was it a church leadership issue?
- Was it a social issue—not being hospitable?

No—it was none of those. Those may have been issues, but none were *the* issue.

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

What was *the* issue? Take a look at Col. 1:15-18.

What is the goal of all that Christ is and does?

“...that in everything He might be preeminent.” ~ v. 18

- *Christ* preeminent, not Diotrephes.
- The problem—again, as always—is in the heart.
- Diotrephes “likes to put himself first,” and that was the root of everything else John points out.

And *that*—the desire to be first, to win, to have preeminence—is a relationship killer. Whether marriage or relationships in the church, “personal vanity still lies at the root of most dissensions in every local church today.” ~ John Stott

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

So Diotrephes “likes to put himself first.”

MacArthur: this is “a compound word from *philos* (love) and *protos* (first). It describes a person who is selfish, self-centered, and self-seeking.”

- Diotrephes loved himself first. Interestingly, what was the concern Jesus raised with the church at Ephesus in His letter to them in Rev. 2:4?
- This: “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.” Something else had taken the spot of preeminence. In Diotrephes' case, it was himself, love of power and position.

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

Article 26 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1801) states that “in the visible church the evil be ever mingled with the good.”

Article 26 closes by saying this: “Nevertheless, it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil Ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally, being found guilty, by just judgment be deposed.”

Notice that in v. 9 John mentions that he has “written something to the church.” Nearly all commentators think that Diotrephes probably wadded it up and threw it away—it is likely a lost letter.

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

And then John notes that Diotrephes “does not acknowledge our authority.”

Was John getting a little full of himself here? Why does he think *he* has authority, and not Diotrephes?

- John was an apostle—and he knew it. He had the personal commission of Christ, and he was an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ.
- The apostles had a unique, one-of-a-kind authority, not held by man since. The Scripture retains both their words and their authority, but no person currently does.
- See 2 Thess. 3:6, 10, 12—the apostles' authority

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

In v. 10 John says Diotrephes is “talking wicked nonsense” against John, primarily, and those who stood with him who held that Christ should be preeminent in His church, not a leader.

- He would have seen John as a rival to his position, and wanted to undermine him.
- His first concern was not with the spread of the kingdom of God through the gospel of Christ.

But Diotrephes wasn't content with that—that was not enough. He deliberately defied John by refusing to welcome traveling brothers.

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

These brothers—they are the ones who “have gone out for the sake of the Name” – v. 7

- Diotrephes was concerned for the glory of the name too...but a different name: his own.

Back to John Stott's words: “Diotrephes slandered John, cold-shouldered the missionaries and excommunicated the loyal believers because he loved himself and wanted to have the pre-eminence. Personal vanity still lies at the root of most dissensions in every local church today.”

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

Take a look at 2 Tim. 3:1-5...notice what Paul mentions first in his list in v. 2: "lovers of self."

But why is that an issue? I mean, doesn't our culture teach that we're supposed to love ourselves?

- Look at the last phrase in 2 Tim. 3:4—what does love of self usurp, or replace? Paul's list begins and ends with wrong loves—issues of the heart.
- Real self love begins here: "May you never doubt the twin truths of Scripture: that you truly are as sinful as God says you are, and that He truly is as gracious as He says He is." – Todd Murray

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

One writer puts it like this: “True self-love is acceptance of ourselves as *redeemed* people. Yes, we are loved and accepted, but it is precisely not because we are worthy in ourselves, but because *Christ* is worthy. Only when we accept the reality of redemption can we find freedom to look outwards. When our gaze is bent inward on ourselves, we fail to love God and cannot hope to love others.”

Well...what's to be done about Diotrephes?

- What would you do if a pastor started exhibiting this kind of behavior...even if his preaching was still good, solid biblical doctrine?

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

Here's what John proposes to do: "So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing..."

John is going to confront him personally...not write a letter, not have someone else go in his place, not going to just hope the problem goes away.

This is, really, Matthew 18:10-15. When John does that, what will he know?

- If Diotrephes repents, John will assume he is a true brother in Christ.
- If he persists in refusal to repent, John will have to assume that Diotrephes is not a believer—see Matt. 18:17.

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

Question: let's say John confronts Diotrephes, and he persists in his refusal to repent. So John tells him that he is demonstrating the heart of an unbeliever, therefore John, in unity with the elders, is removing him from his leadership position and putting him out of the church. He will be seen as an unbeliever—they will share the gospel with him, but he will not have fellowship with the church. And Diotrephes says, "Forget you! Get out of my church; you have no authority here, old man. The church is moving on from the past, without you."

Well! Now what?

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

MacArthur: “Sadly, there have always been people like Diotrephes in churches. Even more tragically, many churches, either because they are fearful of them, or in the name of tolerance, refuse to deal with their own Diotrephes types. The apostle John, however, had no hesitation in confronting such a sinner for the good of the church and the honor of Christ.”

For the good of the church, for the honor of Christ, for the sake of the gospel, for the glory of God we need to deal with Diotrephes, “who likes to put himself first...” Which means that we will have to deal with the self love in own hearts.