







When you were a kid, was there anyone you looked at and said, “Yeah—I want to be like (fill in the blank)?”

And the follow up question is Why? Why did you want to be like that person?

And one more follow up question: Did you do anything about it? Did you try to imitate him/her?

Let’s fast-forward a few years...how about now?

Anyone you look at now, and say, “Yeah—I want to be like (fill in the blank)?”

Are the qualities you want to emulate now any different than they were when you were a kid?

Well, this is our last lesson in the short letter of 3 John. Here's the way we've outlined the book –

- 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*

For this last lesson we're lumping the final two outline points together.

Here's what these last 5 verses look like; we'll walk through the passage with this as our roadmap:

- The exhortation to Gaius: imitate good – v. 11
- The example to Gaius: the testimony of Demetrius – v. 12
- John, the shepherd of the sheep: “we will talk face to face” – v. 13-14
- John, the shepherd of the sheep: “greet the friends, each by name” – v. 15

John was probably writing from Ephesus to churches in neighboring towns, and it is likely that all three letters were written and sent in one packet: 1 John for general distribution, 2 John to one specific church, and 3 John to John's good friend Gaius.

The exhortation to Gaius: imitate good – v. 11

We noticed earlier that John refers to Gaius four times as “beloved” (v. 1, 2, 5, 11). He uses it five times in 1 John. Remember what the word means?

First, it is a unique bond between the one who gives love, and the *agapetos*, the one who is loved.

- Matt. 3:17—a unique and intimate relationship, not merely that the Son is loved; Mark 12:6

The second idea in the NT word *Beloved* focuses specifically on the one receiving the love.

- Acts 15:25; Rom. 16:5

The word can also refer to love for an entire church –

- Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 4:14, 15:58; Eph. 5:1.

The exhortation to Gaius: imitate good – v. 11

John has a strong imperative here in v. 11: “do not imitate evil but imitate good.”

Does it strike you as odd that John uses the word *imitate*? What does the word mean?

Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words: “The Gk word *mimetes* means ‘imitator.’”

- “In the early church, many new believers needed models to show them how to live a redeemed lifestyle, since up to that time their lives were shaped by a pagan culture.” I’m not sure that need has ever gone away...

The exhortation to Gaius: imitate good – v. 11

The word shows up several other times in the NT –

- Hebrews 6:11-12—notice that the writer points to Abraham in v. 13-15 as his example.
- Hebrews 13:7—How do v. 8-9 fit with the context of v. 7? What is the writer saying here?
- 1 Thess. 1:6—See also 2:14.
- 2 Thess. 3:6-12—What is he saying here?
- 1 Cor. 4:14-17, 10:31-11:1; Phil 3:17—“God has designed the Christian life so that much of one’s progress comes through imitating other Christians, imperfect though they be.” – ESV Study Bible
- Eph. 5:1—The highest example of all.

The exhortation to Gaius: imitate good – v. 11

So—what is the context here in 3 John?

- Does the context give us any clues about why John might have written this?
- Or is this a stand-alone exhortation, not really connected to anything else in the letter, but just John changing topics?
- Or is John genuinely concerned about Gaius, and is prompted to write this?

I think that John was concerned that Gaius might be swayed by Diotrophes' strong personality and not oppose him, and thus allow his abuse and distortion of the gospel to continue.

The exhortation to Gaius: imitate good – v. 11

William Barclay writes this about Gaius: “...(Gaius) is a kindly soul, but very probably not so strong a character as the aggressive Diotrophes, and whom John is seeking to align with himself, for Gaius, left to himself, might well succumb to the forceful Diotrophes.”

Think about this: Demetrius was likely the bearer of John's letters to Gaius, and may well have been a traveling teacher himself, though there is no evidence of that. If Gaius refused to welcome him, he would be patterning his life after evil (Diotrophes), and not good (Christ, whom all believers should imitate).

The exhortation to Gaius: imitate good – v. 11

We have to remember what was going on in this church that John was writing to:

- Diotrophes had everything all stirred up, he was in danger of taking over the church—there would have been much strife, likely some hard feelings.
- There may have been factions within the church: some may have sided with Diotrophes, who appeared to have some power, and likely there was a group of believers who were holding on, under much pressure from Diotrophes.
- Think of what it would be like to gather with this group on Sundays and try to worship, have joyful fellowship, and give full attention to the Scriptures.

The exhortation to Gaius: imitate good – v. 11

What is the connection of the 2nd ½ of v. 11 with the first ½? And how does that fit with the context here, if John is concerned that Gaius might be swayed by Diotrephes' strong personality?

John, as he did so often in 1 John, gives a visible, objective test of genuine faith:

- The evil that Diotrephes is doing is evidence of the state of his heart—by saying this, John is implying that he is not a genuine believer.
- So Diotrephes “has not seen God,” a phrase parallel to saying that he has not genuinely believed.

The exhortation to Gaius: imitate good – v. 11

J. Howard Marshall: “By contrast, a person who does evil—such as Diotrephes—has not seen God. He has no real Christian experience, and his conversion must be judged to have been an illusion. It is clear that the lack of Christian character is to be regarded as a mark of the absence of true Christian experience. Evil, unloving conduct calls in question a person’s profession to be a Christian: ‘For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.’ (1 John 3:20).”

A brief interlude here...

John's objective tests of salvation, from 1 John –

- 1:6-7—walking in the light
- 1:8-10—confession of sin
- 2:3-6—obedience (2:29; 3:4-10, 24)
- 2:10-11—love for other believers (3:14-18; 4:7-12, 16, 20-21)
- 2:15-16—not loving the world
- 2:22-23—not denying the Son (i.e., there are not many paths to God; 4:1-6, 15)
- 3:19-21—inward conviction of sin
- 4:13—presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit
- 5:1—believing that Jesus is the Christ (5:12)

The exhortation to Gaius: imitate good – v. 11

A couple more things on this point...

To “not imitate evil but imitate good” requires what?

Whatever else we might say in response to that question, we’re always going to end up at this point: It will require making wise, and deliberate, choices.

- Why we can make wise, and deliberate, choices now: Ezekiel 36:22-27—a living, responsive heart toward God, not a dead heart of stone.

And one more quick, really obvious-sounding thing: if I’m going to imitate someone who is making wise decisions, I have to watch. I have to know them.

The exhortation to Gaius: imitate good – v. 11

A couple more things on this point...

To “not imitate evil but imitate good” requires what?

Well—one more quick thought: If I’m going to imitate someone else’s wise and godly life...

- I may well need to admit that I am wrong, or at least that some of my decisions have not been the best. In other words, I need to humble myself.
- If I am going to imitate the good and wise and godly in someone else, it may very well be hard for me to do. We’re not necessarily talking about easy decisions to make here...when Jesus said, “Follow Me,” (i.e., *imitate Me*), He expected it to be hard.

The example to Gaius: the testimony of Demetrius-v. 12

What stands out to you about Demetrius in v. 12?

And by the way, this is all we know about him. There are a couple of other “Demetrius” in the NT, but it’s a stretch to make either of them fit here.

Notice the repeated word, *testimony*.

- It’s the Gk word *martyria*, and is basically either “the act of testifying, or the content of a certain testimony.” – Mounce
- A few other examples of the word: John 1:19, 3:11, 3:32, 5:31; 1 John 5:9-10; Rev. 1:2, 12:11.
- Notice again that both Gaius and Demetrius have lives noticed by others, while Diotrophes “likes to put himself first.”

The example to Gaius: the testimony of Demetrius-v. 12

We could make a list here (btw, it is very helpful to notice when writers of Scripture do this) of those who bear witness to the character of Demetrius:

- “a good testimony *from everyone...*”
- “a good testimony...*from the truth itself.*”
- “*We also* add our testimony...”

Believers in general who knew of Demetrius always spoke well of him. Why?

His life was consistent with Scripture—people saw Scripture in his life. What did they see?

And John himself knew that Demetrius was a Psalm 15 kind of guy.

The example to Gaius: the testimony of Demetrius-v. 12

Robert Murray M'Cheyne was a pastor in Scotland in the mid-1800's. John could have said something like this about Demetrius: "It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus."

Pray to be like Demetrius.

- Pray to be someone whose godliness is not self-serving, but is simple, and clear to others.
- Pray to have a heart that is so convinced of the immeasurable love of Christ that a life of consistent obedience is a delightful thing.

John, the shepherd of the sheep: “we will talk face to face” (13-14); “greet the friends, each by name” (15)

John was thinking of—or maybe *like*—someone else when he wrote those words...

- The word *friends* is a very unusual way of describing fellow believers—see John 15:12-15.
- The ESV Study Bible note on John 15:15 says this: “*You are My friends* implies a stunning level of comfortable personal interaction with One who is also the eternal, omnipotent Creator of the universe.”
- The Gk word *philos* (dear, valuable) became the standard word for *friend* or *relative*.

John, the shepherd of the sheep: “we will talk face to face” (13-14); “greet the friends, each by name” (15)

John was thinking of—or maybe *like*—someone else when he wrote those words...

- A believer goes from being an enemy of God (Rom. 5:10) to friend (John 15:15).

Because of their standing in Christ, they have become very dear to John—Christ’s friends are John’s friends—and he wanted each one of them personally and warmly greeted, each by name.

- Want a ministry? Think like that on Sunday mornings: “greet the friends, each by name.”

John, the shepherd of the sheep: “we will talk face to face” (13-14); “greet the friends, each by name” (15)

“The apostle’s farewell wish (“Peace be to you”) was an appropriate one for that strife-torn congregation. Gaius and John evidently had mutual friends who asked John to greet Gaius for them. John also asked Gaius to greet some other mutual friends who were with him. The phrase “by name” adds a personal, intimate touch. Though well into his nineties, John still cherished those to whom he had ministered throughout his life.” ~ John MacArthur