

[3 John 1-4](#)

Walking in Truth and Love

Introduction

In the 1830's, a young store clerk in a small town in Illinois was well-known for his honesty. For example, whenever he realized he had shortchanged a customer, he would close the store, walk as far as needed, and personally deliver the correct change. I believe we could say that his actions exemplified walking in truth and love. By the way, this man became the 16th President of the United States. His name - Abraham Lincoln.

Near the end of the first century, probably between 85 and 95 AD, the apostle John wrote specifically to a man in a church in Asia Minor, which is the present-day country of Turkey. This man's name was Gaius (pronounced either gay-us or guy-us). John commended him for walking in truth and love. By the way, the name Gaius means "happy" or "one who rejoices".

John also specifically named two other men in the church. One man, Diotrephes, was arrogant, inhospitable, and stirred up discord ([3 John 9-10](#)). The other man, Demetrius, was stirring up good, and much like Gaius, was also a testimony to walking in truth and love ([3 John 11-12](#)).

So, here's the main points of this message. Walking in truth and love does the following:

- Brings about joy
- Spreads the gospel
- Reveals good and evil

Outline for 3 John

- Greeting to Gaius - vs 1-4
- Gaius' love for those spreading the gospel - vs 5-8
- Diotrephes doing evil - vs 9-10
- Demetrius doing good - vs 11-12
- Final remarks - vs 13-15

Background on 1, 2 and 3 John

Interestingly, scholars believe that 1, 2 and 3 John are all part of a package of letters that were sent by the apostle John to a specific church at the same time. 1 John, which Pastor Dan Cravillion preached on two weeks ago, was a letter sent to the entire church body. 2 John, which John Young preached on last week, was a more personal letter. It was also sent to the same church, but was intended for specific encouragement and instruction. Finally, 3 John, which we'll hear about today, was a very personal note to a specific individual within that same church.

1. Walking in truth and love brings about joy

The apostle John was writing specifically to a beloved brother in the Lord, who he rejoiced in greatly. He prayed for Gaius and wished him well. John was probably an older man, as he called Gaius one of his "children". Here's [3 John 3-4](#).

³ For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

[3 John 3-4](#) (ESV)

Obviously, it brought John great joy when he heard other brothers and sisters in Christ testify to Gaius' walking in truth and love. So, what does walking in truth and love look like? John Young said it well last week in his sermon: "Grasping the truth of the gospel. Understanding that our faith in Christ requires us to see the world differently. Showing compassion for those who are different than us. Extending forgiveness to those who have wronged us. And grasping that love often requires sacrifice."

Indeed there is a sacrifice when walking in truth and love. It means loving God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength, and loving your neighbor as yourself ([Luke 10:27](#)). It means exemplifying the One who is the Truth and Love. Jesus is the Truth ([John 14:6](#)). God is love ([1 John 4:16](#)). In fact, John wrote the following with regard to Jesus as the Truth in his gospel. Here's [John 14:6](#).

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

[John 14:6](#) (ESV)

Since the Lord Jesus is the Truth, He is the only way to God. Truth and love is the foundation of who God is. God's Word, the Bible, is Truth. Scripture states the following about God's Word being truth. Here's [Psalm 119:160](#).

The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.
[Psalms 119:160](#) (ESV)

You can never go wrong walking in truth and love; it's always the good and right thing to do. Gaius and Abraham Lincoln knew that. It may not be easy to accomplish, but it always brings about joy. And that joy is always based in abiding in Christ alone. Joy in Christ results in freedom. Here's [John 8:31-32](#).

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

[John 8:31-32](#) (ESV)

As a young man, I definitely didn't walk in truth and love. I had no freedom in Christ. I didn't abide in Him. I was walking on a path of destruction. I was dead in my sins. Sins such as an addiction to pornography and habitually lying weighed me down. For example, at age 18, I told my grandmother that I was going to see a movie that was a western. Actually, I went to see an X-rated movie. My joy was carnal and brought about

by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ([1 John 2:16](#)). But God changed everything in 1986. Here's what God did for me then. He'll do it for you now. Take a look at [Ephesians 2:4-5](#).

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—
[Eph 2:4-5](#) (ESV)

Ever since God saved me from sin and death, He has brought about joy in Christ. Even though I still wrestle with lust and pride, the Holy Spirit walks with me each day. He is my Counselor and Intercessor. I'm a new creation in Christ. Today could be your "day of joy" as a new creation in Christ. Trust Jesus. Start walking in truth and love. Come and see what God will do to bring about joy in your life. That's how the gospel spreads.

2. Walking in truth and love spreads the gospel

Walking in truth and love spreads the gospel, which is the good news. It's the good news that the Lord Jesus Christ came to rescue sinners, like you and me, from sin and death and make us right with God. After Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and ascension, the gospel spread to the ends of the earth, just as Jesus said it would. Here's [Acts 1:8](#).

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
[Acts 1:8](#) (ESV)

Interestingly, God chose several men in the first century named Gaius to be a part of spreading the gospel. There was Gaius of Corinth ([Romans 16:23](#)), Macedonia ([Acts 19:29](#)), and Derbe ([Acts 20:4-5](#)), who were all associated with the apostle Paul. And then there was the Gaius we're referencing today, who belonged to the church where the apostle John was an elder.

John commended his beloved brother in Christ for his faithfulness in serving the brothers who were preaching the gospel, even though they were strangers. Here's something important to remember: These men who were strangers and who were spreading the gospel testified to the church of the love that Gaius showed them. Here's [3 John 5-8](#).

⁵ Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, ⁶ who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.
[3 John 1:5-8](#) (ESV)

This is a testimony that when people walk in truth and love, the gospel spreads. In fact, John exhorts Gaius to send these men on their journey "in a manner worthy of God." What's a manner worthy of God? Robert Yarborough, New Testament professor at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, says it well: "When we unite with servants of the

gospel, it elevates our lives. It refines us, delivers us from self-fixation, and focuses our gaze on God's amazing work all around the world. It brings deep fellowship and fruitful collaboration for the sake of the truth."

Do we hear that? Walking in truth and love is for the sake of truth - that the gospel would spread to the ends of the earth. The gospel is to go out for the sake of the Name ([3 John 7](#)), Jesus Christ who is the Truth and Love. And John adds that we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth ([3 John 8](#)).

Consider the missionaries that La Crescent Evangelical Free Church (LEFC) supports currently. There's Prince Paul in Ghana Africa, Ray and Paula Yoder in France, the Klockenga and Keres families in Ontario, Canada, Yohan Mamidi in India, Jeanene Thicke in Colombia, South America and Ben and Brittany Hershey, who plan to minister to Muslims in North Africa. Also, serving as short-term missionaries during this summer of 2024 are Cody Kowalski who will be in Germany, Jack Wieser in Alaska, and Andrew Wieser in Italy.

All of those people are going out in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They're walking in truth and love to spread the gospel. That's what Jesus told us to do, whether it be next door or on the other side of the globe ([Acts 1:8](#)). Even so, wherever the gospel spreads, whether at home or abroad, there's going to be a struggle between those opposing the truth and those receiving it with joy. And that opposition versus embracing truth - evil versus good - occurs in the church, which John addressed in his letter.

3. Walking in truth and love reveals evil and good

Walking in truth and love is always the good and right thing to do because it's biblical. Truth and love are the essence of God's Word. In fact, did you know that God's Word is a mirror ([James 1:22-24](#)), a lamp ([Psalm 119:105](#)), and a sword ([Hebrews 4:12](#))?

God's Word is a mirror because when we look at ourselves, our true character is revealed by Scripture. A mirror helps you shave, but also shows you that you need a haircut. The Word of God shows us how we are to live day to day, but also shows us the rough edges in our own lives.

God's Word is a lamp because the more we know Scripture and allow it to affect and direct us, we avoid the deception of the world. The presence of cancer in the human body can be deceiving. Much like sin, there can be more there than meets the eye. But the Bible is like a surgical light. The intense brightness of truth exposes all things that are deadly and need to be eradicated.

God's Word is a sword because it cuts to the core of who we are, and reveals the true intentions of our heart, whether evil or good. Since a sword is a weapon, the Sword of the Spirit is a weapon of truth. Evil is defeated; good is victorious.

John addressed a situation in the church that revealed evil and good. The evil involved a man named Diotrephes who opposed the truth by not acknowledging the authority of the apostles. Not only that, the arrogance of Diotrephes and his

inhospitable character resulted in his refusal to welcome brothers and sisters in Christ. He wanted to stop those who were welcoming of others and even put them out of the church. Here's [3 John 9-10](#).

⁹ I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. ¹⁰ 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.
[3 John 1:9-10](#) (ESV)

Note that John emphasized the evil done by Diotrephes as "wicked nonsense." In fact, a sure way to discern a false teacher undermining truth is to ask the following question: Is there submission to the authority and teaching of the apostles? Here's what John says about that in his first letter to the church in [1 John 4:6](#).

We (the apostles) are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
[1 John 4:6](#) (ESV)

At LEFC, as in any of the churches where God's Word is preeminent in preaching, teaching and counseling, there has to be a discerning eye for those opposing the authority of church leadership, i.e. the elders. That's because elders are to shepherd God's flock. This involves guarding the sheep against false teaching. In fact, here's Jesus' own words of warning about recognizing false teachers who bring discord in the church. Here's [Matthew 7:15-16](#).

¹⁵ “**Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.** ¹⁶ **You will recognize them by their fruits.**
[Matt 7:15-16](#) (ESV)

Indeed Diotrephes was bearing bad fruit. He had the spirit of error because he wasn't walking in truth and love. Truth and love are who God is and He is very good. John wanted the church to imitate good and not evil. So, in this third letter, he commended a man named Demetrius, who was doing good. Here's [3 John 11-12](#).

¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. ¹² 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.
[3 John 1:11-12](#) (ESV)

Yes, much like Gaius, Demetrius received a good testimony from the church. The fact is that walking in truth and love testifies to itself as being the true and right thing to do. Even John added that the integrity of Demetrius' witness to the truth was confirmed by the elders, whose testimony was also true.

Question: Why were Diotrephes and Demetrius so different with regards to their testimony of evil and good respectively? The Holy Spirit was the difference. He still is and always will be the difference. Scripture states that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth ([John 16:13](#)). The person who is in Christ has the Spirit of truth indwelling him or her ([1 Corinthians 6:19](#)). If we live by the Spirit of truth, let us also keep in step with the Spirit of truth ([Galatians 5:25](#)).

Walking in truth and love is a testimony to who we really are. When you're living it, others can't help but notice, just as others noticed Abraham Lincoln's honesty. Demetrius walked in truth and love, Diotrephes did not. When others look at you and me in the mirror of Scripture, what testimony do they see? When the lamp of Scripture shines brightly upon our character, would it reveal good fruit or bad fruit? When the sword of the Spirit cuts to the very core of who we are, would the intentions of our heart be revealed as primarily evil or good?

Conclusion

So as we close this message, we need to ask ourselves a final question: In a world full of dishonesty and deception, what encouragement and exhortation can we, as a church in the 21st century, find in this little letter written to a church in the 1st century?

I believe the answer is right here in the letter itself. We are to walk in truth and love because: 1) it brings great joy for all those who abide in the love of Christ ([3 John 3-4](#)), 2) as the gospel spreads through fellow workers in the truth, there is a faithful testimony for the sake of Jesus' Name to every tribe, tongue, people, and nation ([3 John 5-8](#)), and 3) as good and evil are revealed, we are to keep in step with the Holy Spirit, as He leads us to strive not to imitate evil, but imitate good ([3 John 11](#)). All of this is a testimony of the church; all of this is what is good and right; and most importantly, all of this makes much of Jesus' Name. Amen.