

## The Gospel Gets Personal: Follow Good Examples

**Watch:** <https://youtu.be/d8UqWTiGS7E>

**Read:** 3 John 9-15

**Consider:** What would you do if an apostle sent a letter to be read in your church and it was delivered to you? You would certainly read it in advance. But what would you do if you didn't agree with what the apostle said in that letter? Would you still do as instructed and read it to the church?

God's word in the New Testament is just as much "for us" today, as it was to those who first received the letters that form it. Like some of them, we may not always like what we find in what God has to say to us, but we have to decide what we will do with it. Will we trust and obey, or will we throw it away?

The Elder who wrote this letter, John, had previously sent a letter to the church in Derbe, but it was given to Diotrephes. He was another leader in the church, but he was not like Gaius at all. Diotrephes liked to be "first among them." He was a "my way or the highway" sort of guy. He didn't like what John had to say in that letter, so, it was not delivered to the church as instructed. Instead, Diotrephes gathered the church and slandered John, saying things about him that were not true. He also refused to welcome the brethren sent out by John when they arrived. And he threw people who did welcome them out of the church. John assured Gaius in this personal letter that he would deal with Diotrephes when, God willing, he came for a visit.

Since Gaius had welcomed the brethren, he might be one of those that Diotrephes was trying to run off. But, evidently, he wasn't running. It would have been tempting for Gaius to "fight fire with fire," but John encouraged him "not to imitate what is evil, but what is good." In other words, Gaius should not act like Diotrephes in any form or fashion. To emphasize this request, John reminded Gaius that "the one who does good is of God; and the one who does evil has not seen God." Those are pretty strong words, implying that Diotrephes, even though he was a leader in the church, didn't have a right relationship with God.

It is vital that we do what is good, and that we follow the example of those leaders in the church who are also doing what is good. And John directed Gaius to consider one: Demetrius. He was another leader at this ancient church, but he was a good guy. Everyone said so, and the truth backed it up. John, and those at the church where he was at, shared the same opinion about him. And Gaius could trust John's recommendation. Gaius was probably wondering who he could trust. John said that Demetrius was someone that Gaius could partner with and draw strength from. He was the sort of man whose example Gaius could follow.

I'm glad that we are not in the same situation as this ancient church; but, it is still good advice to follow the example of someone who is doing good. We have quite a few exemplarily people in our church. If you are looking for an example to follow, someone who is on the side of good, but don't know who to pick or trust, give me a call, and I'll point one out for you.

John, the Elder, concluded his letter to Gaius by saying that he had a lot more things he wanted to talk to Gaius about, but he didn't want to do it with pen and ink. Instead, John wanted to come in person and speak with Gaius face to face. We don't know if John ever made

that trip, but I hope that he was able to go, and that he was able to take Gaius under his wing, and settle things down in this ancient church, getting it back on track.

Given the tension and division in this ancient church, it was a good choice for John to hope for their peace. Gaius, not to mention everyone else, need it.

John added a final word of encouragement to Gaius by reminding him that he was not alone. The “the friends” sent their greetings. These may have been some of the brethren who had returned with the news about how they had been greeted by Gaius while there. Or those Gaius had met while traveling with Paul. Whoever they were, they were on his side. It is important to recognize, especially in such situations, that we have friends who are also walking in truth. John’s final request in this regard was that Gaius greet those brethren there, who were also his friends, by name. Don’t we all like to be greeted by name?

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, help us follow good examples rather than evil ones. And may we be blessed with many friends. Amen.