

The Books of 1, 2, and 3 John

Lesson 12: Hospitality and Faithfulness -- 3 John 1-8

If the second letter warned a church to shut its door against those who would destroy the faith, the third letter praises a man for throwing his door wide open to those who would advance it. The two belong together. Discernment without hospitality grows cold and suspicious; hospitality without discernment grows naive and dangerous. John, who knew both, now writes a warm personal note to a friend named Gaius, and the whole letter glows with affection.

“Beloved,” John calls him, and you can feel that he means it. He prays for Gaius to prosper and be in good health, “as it goes well with your soul.” There is a quiet challenge tucked into that blessing. John can pray with confidence that Gaius would do as well in body and circumstance as he is doing in soul, because Gaius’s soul is flourishing. How many of us could receive that prayer? For most of us it might be a downgrade. John’s friend is a man whose inner life is healthy, and it shows.

And how does it show? In faithfulness, especially toward people Gaius had never even met. Traveling teachers and missionaries, sent out for the sake of the Name, had passed through, and Gaius had taken them in, cared for them, and sent them on their way in a manner worthy of God. John had heard the reports. The brothers had come back testifying to Gaius’s love before the whole church. His private faithfulness had become a public testimony, not because he sought applause, but because real goodness cannot stay hidden.

So John lifts up an ordinary, unglamorous virtue and shows how weighty it is. By supporting these workers, Gaius had become a “fellow worker for the truth.” He may never have preached a sermon or crossed a sea, but in opening his home and his resources, he shared in the very mission of the gospel. This little letter quietly insists that the kingdom advances not only through those who go but through those who give, host, and support. Faithfulness in the small, hidden things turns out to be partnership in the greatest thing of all.

Group Discussion: John praises Gaius for supporting traveling workers he had never met, and says this made him a fellow worker for the truth. How does this challenge the idea that gospel work is only for preachers and missionaries, and not for ordinary believers who host, give, and support?

Personal Reflection: John prays that Gaius would prosper “as it goes well with your soul.” If your outward life prospered only as much as your soul is flourishing right now, would that be good news or a warning, and what does that tell you?

Read 3 John 1-8

Study Questions

1. John writes, “Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul” (v. 2). What does this teach about the priority of the soul’s health over outward circumstances, and how does it reorder the way we often pray and think about prosperity?
2. John can pray for Gaius’s outward life to match his flourishing soul. If God answered that prayer for you, would your circumstances rise or fall to meet your soul, and what is that revealing about where you have invested your attention?
3. John says he has “no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth” (v. 4). What does this teach about what should bring God’s people the deepest joy, and why does walking in the truth, more than any other report, gladden a faithful heart?
4. John’s greatest joy was the faithfulness of those he had taught. Whose walking in the truth would bring you the deepest joy, and are you investing in anyone’s faith the way John invested in his children?
5. John commends Gaius because “you do a faithful work in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are” (v. 5). What does it teach that Gaius extended hospitality and care to fellow believers he did not even know, and what does this reveal about the bond Christians share?
6. John praises a hospitality that reached even to strangers. How open is your home, your table, and your life to fellow believers, including those you do not yet know well, and what holds you back from greater hospitality?
7. John says these workers “have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles” (v. 7). What does this teach about the motive and integrity of gospel work, and about the responsibility of believers to support those who labor for the Name?
8. John commends Gaius for sending the workers on “in a manner worthy of God” (v. 6). Where in your life are you tempted to do good things in a half-hearted or minimal way, rather than in a manner worthy of the God you serve?
9. John concludes that by supporting these workers, “we may be fellow workers for the truth” (v. 8). How does this passage teach that ordinary believers share in the advance of the gospel through faithful support, and why is this partnership in the truth so significant in God’s eyes?
10. Look back across this passage, from a flourishing soul, to faithful hospitality, to partnership in the truth. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you, through this passage, into a faithful fellow worker for the truth in the ordinary place where He has put you.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Romans 12:13, contributing to the needs of the saints and pursuing hospitality; Hebrews 13:1–2, showing hospitality to strangers, entertaining angels unawares; Matthew 10:40–42, receiving and giving even a cup of water to Christ’s workers; 1 Corinthians

3:5–9, laborers together as God's fellow workers; Philippians 4:14–19, the church's partnership in supporting gospel work.