

"Walk in the Truth"

3 John

What's a blink town?

It's a town so small that if you 'blink' while driving through or sneeze, you'll miss it. I grew up in Southern Ontario and there are all kinds of blink towns. My favourite name is Punky Doodles Corners. Anyone ever heard of that? Where is it? Not far from Shakespeare or Baden. That help you? No.

This morning we're in a blink book of the Bible. Sometimes we miss it because the pages are so thin they stick together. Today we are in 3 John. It's probably a book we need to undustify for you. I hope you had a chance to read it last night. It's a good Father's Day message because it deals with the testimony of three men (four really, because we could count the apostle John in here as well).

Our 2026 theme is 'Walking with God' and this morning we want to talk about walking in the truth. 3 of these 4 men were walking in the truth and it was evident by how they lives their life. One clearly did not and his life showed it. Even though he was a leader in the church. The word testify or testimony appears numerous times here. The question for us this morning is what's our testimony? What do people see in us and say about us based on our life? Are we walking in the truth of God's Word, which is visibly evident? Or are we living by our own agenda and people testify that we do more harm than good or are more negative than positive?

3 John was written to a man named Gaius – probably an elder in his church – thanking him for hosting travelling Christian teachers by opening his home to them and meeting their needs. In 2 John, a letter written to probably another church that John calls an unnamed lady, John also wrote about hosting travelling teachers, except that they weren't careful enough and inadvertently hosted false teacher. Gaius was commended because he walked in the truth and used the truth of God's Words and wisdom to discern between the true and the false. Gaius was walking in the truth and as a result was building up the body of Christ. But here was another person who was not. His name was Diotrephes. We'll get to him. But let's start with Gaius. Gaius was commended by John for walking in the truth. I would think most of us would like to be commended for walking in the truth, for that being our testimony. John commends him because he has personally seen Gaius and hears from others how Gaius is walking in the truth. How about us?

Are People Seeing the Truth in You (and Me) (vv.1-8)

John begins this letter to Gaius that he **"loved him in the truth"** referring to their mutual relationship in the truth of the Word of God through faith in Jesus Christ. John is greatly encouraged by Gaius because he is **"faithful to the truth"** and **"continues to walk in the truth."**

This thrills John as writes that he has

"no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

When you and I are obeying God's Word and applying it to our life, the truth

Is noticeable daily in our lives (vv.1-3)

There's nothing that brings a pastor more joy than to see the people of the church walking in the truth. There's nothing that brings a Christian parent more joy than to hear that their children are walking in the truth. John heard about Gaius from some brothers who came to John and told him of Gaius faithfulness to the truth. They saw it lived out in the way he conducted himself with believer and unbeliever. When we live by the truth people notice.

John prayed that Gaius would be as physically healthy as he was spiritually. What an interesting way to pray, but also what a convicting way to pray. Which one do we spend more time on? Both are important but Paul did tell Timothy in 1 Tim. 4

7 ... train yourself to be godly. 8 For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

In vv.5-8 we read about some specific reasons why John was overjoyed with Gaius walking in the truth. When we walk in the truth it's noticeable because

It even stands out occasionally (vv.4-6)

Gaius was faithful to Christian brothers even though they were strangers to him. He opened his home to travelling bible teachers. That meant feeding them and giving them a place to stay, showed he supported what God was doing through them. Hospitality is a great thing to do, but it's even harder when you do it for people you don't know

We give financially to our church which supports a number of missionaries and ministries. Have we ever invited these people into our homes for a meal or let them stay with us for a night or two, without charge? Is it work? Yes. Does it put us out sometimes? Yes. Will it cost us some money? Yes. But there's a tremendous blessing in having people who love God spend some time with you and share what God is doing.

Gaius hosted these people and "sent them on their way in a manner worthy of God. How do we treat Christians we invite into our homes in a manner worthy of God? You treat them as if Jesus came for dinner. That means that everything has to be just right before Jesus comes, correct? No, of course not. To do something in a manner worthy of the Lord means to serve in a way that God is made known. To encourage people in their walk with God. We serve by faith believing that our time spent together in fellowship or prayer or talking about God's Word is more important than what to eat or how our house looks.

Gaius walked consistently in the truth and it was noticeable daily and even occasionally he stood out because

He was willing to make sacrifices (vv.7-8)

When we take the time and use our homes to invite each other, missionaries and people in ministry into our homes we encourage them in their work. When we give towards ministry and missions we partner with them and God in reaching people for Christ and helping grow churches in Christ. Yes, it means making sacrifices sometimes. But I'm not even talking about financial sacrifices but more so about time. For whatever reason, we all feel the time crunch and use it as an excuse not to show hospitality as we should.

We don't have to be spiritually gifted to be hospitable. We are commanded to be hospitable in 1 Pet. 4:7,

⁷ *The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*

The end of all things is near, so pray, love others and show hospitality without grumbling? Why? Because opportunities to serve with the gifts God gave you are running out every day we get closer to Jesus' coming or our own deaths. Don't grumble because it may cost you [in time or resources] to have someone over, just do it so that when you are older and unable to do these things, you'll have regrets that you grumbled about these simple ways of serving God and others.

Are people seeing the truth in you and I, that our faith in Jesus is real. It changes the way we talk, act and use the resources and gifts God has given us? Is it noticeable that we stand out – not because we're trying to stand out – but because we stand out from the selfish world around us, as we're all supposed to?

But John has someone else he wants to talk about, and he condemns him, not commends him. Diotrephes:

⁸ *We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth. ⁹ I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. ¹⁰ So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.*

¹¹ *Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.*

Here's a question we all ask of ourselves on occasion:

Are People Seeing Negative Qualities in Us? **(1:9-11)**

None of us are perfect and we all display negative qualities at times, but is this our testimony? Being a negative critic or a one who tears down people and churches consistently instead of building us up and encouraging us because we're walking in the truth? John warns Gaius and the church about a man called Diotrephes who was not walking by the truth, he was making himself the focus. So if we want to avoid leaving behind a testimony of negativity,

Don't make yourself the center (vv.9-10)

John showed his love for God and his love for the people of God and love for the truth by warning the church about false teachers and destroyers of the church. John had already written to the church where Diotrephes had risen to leadership but the church never got them. Diotrephes must have destroyed them.

The phrase "loves to be first" is a clear sign of a church destroyer. Diotrephes wanted the attention. He had to be the one who controlled everything. I remind myself quite often of Ps. 115:1

'Not to us O Lord, not to us but to Your Name be the glory because of Your love and faithfulness.'

Sometimes people get involved in a ministry and take it so seriously that it becomes their only focus. And they only concern themselves with their ministry and only associate with the people in the church who are involved in their ministry. They don't pay attention to other things going on in the church; all they care about is their ministry because they are the focus of it.

We need to be careful to make sure God is the focus of all our ministries. The litmus test for all ministries is 1 Cor. 10:31, "*Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, do it all for the glory of God.*" John tried to rebuke him and show him the error of his ways but Diotrephes would have "*nothing to do with us*". 'Us' as in the spiritual leadership of the church. He refused to submit to John's authority. He wouldn't let go of control. John was going to come and personally confront Diotrephes for his malicious slander of the church leadership. John was willing to do a hard but necessary thing: confront spiritual abuse. 2 Tim. 3:16-17 does say

All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

While we may not want to hear or practise the correction and reproof part because it is not pleasant, yet it is necessary for our maturing in Christ.

One wonders how Diotrephes got into a leadership position. Maybe he started out well but over time got careless with his walk with Christ. Might have been a smooth talker, was friendly and very persuasive. Perhaps over time got hard and self-righteous, manipulating people and plans. But most people did and said nothing to stop him. How many churches have been destroyed because people were too afraid to confront?

Diotrephes would not allow travelling teachers to come and teach. He refused hospitality to them and even put some out of the church. Why? He didn't want people to hear the truth and thus show him for what he was. He wanted to continue his little charade so he could stay in control.

While the Diotrephes' are rare, we still need to be careful that our own desire to have things done our way doesn't destroy God's work. How can we avoid going down that path?

Seek to do good for others (v.11)

¹¹ *Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.*

What needs have you noticed in the people around you? Are we noticing these things? Are we listening when people are talking to us? We don't like to advertise our own needs – understandable – but we will have them. We're all guilty of not wanting help from others yet we're always willing to help others. When we refuse help or won't acknowledge our needs, we rob each other of our desire to do good.

I doubt Diotrephes woke up one morning and said to himself, 'I'm not going to do good anymore, I'm going to do evil.' Perhaps some one hurt him and he never forgave. He held a grudge and stopped doing good for others because when he did it before it was ignored or didn't go well.

James 4:17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

And sin is evil in God's eyes.

So are people seeing the truth in us or are they noticing more negative than positive qualities in us? If we need some improvement here's some hope:

Your Testimony Isn't Finished Yet **(1:12-15)**

We don't know if Diotrephes repented or not. But we don't have to end up like him. Now John commends Demetrius. Demetrius is well-spoken by everyone and the truth confirms his integrity. John says we vouch for him and because he was a man of integrity his testimony was valid.

The way John wraps up the letter the reader is faced with the challenge: We can all have a good testimony

The people like Gaius and Demetrius are those who regularly showed they were walking in the truth. They served people. They weren't there to promote themselves but to glorify God. But then there are the Diotrephes who are there to promote themselves who tear down the church.

So what's our testimony so far? Are we walking in the truth? Or are we known more for our selfish attitudes more than our encouragement?

John says we can either do good or evil. No in-between. We all have a current testimony and we will leave a future testimony behind. Do people speak of how we're walking with God now and will they speak about our walking in the truth when our testimony is finished?

This letter was written about three men (four counting John). While it applies to all of us I do want to challenge all men especially, think about your current testimony. Are you known as a man who is walking in the truth?

John had no greater joy than to hear that God's people were walking in the truth. I pray that we are rejoicing in one another because we are walking in the truth. May all speak well of us because the truth of God's Word is the foundation of our life.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please
contact us at olivet@rideau.net