

# The Third Letter of John

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Third John is a letter of recommendation. John the Apostle, who calls himself the elder, writes to a man named Gaius (1). John is writing to recommend a missionary named Demetrius (12) and to ask Gaius to offer hospitality to him. Unfortunately, this simple request has become complicated because of another leader in a nearby church trying to stop anyone from welcoming and providing hospitality to people like Demetrius.

**Writer:** John, the disciple of Jesus. Also called John the Apostle.

**Date of writing:** Sometime in the first century AD. Possibly between 80-85 AD.

**Original Audience:** Gaius, a friend of the Apostle John.

**The Reason for the Letter:** John is writing to Gaius to praise him for his faithfulness to the truth and thank him for the way he has offered hospitality and helped the brothers. He also is writing to recommend a brother named Demetrius and asking Gaius to help him along his way.

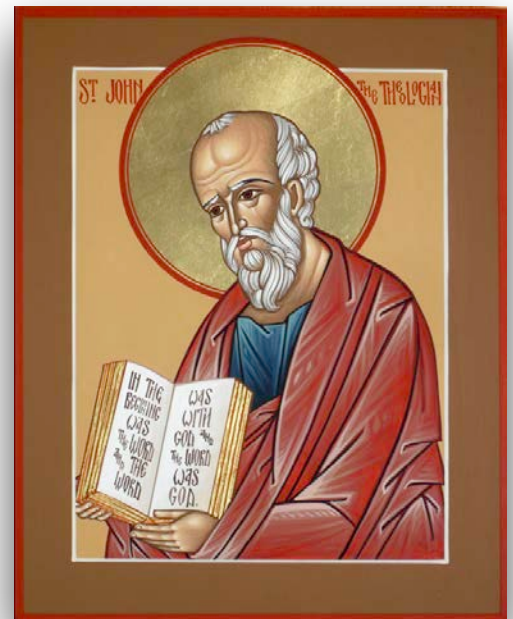
**Main Message of the Letter:**

John begins by greeting a man named “Gaius,” who he loves in the truth (1). John prays for Gaius’s health (2) and praises him for providing hospitality for the “the brothers and sisters” who are probably missionaries and traveling teachers (3–8). He then speaks against a church leader named Diotrephes, who has opposed support for these missionaries (9–10). Finally, John urges Gaius to avoid evil and do good, then recommends a man named “Demetrius,” saying, “Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.” (12). John concludes by saying, “I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink” (13) and that he plans to visit soon.

## Offering Hospitality

John thanks Gaius for the way he has offered hospitality to the brothers and sisters. He also condemns a man named Diotrephes for not offering hospitality and stopping others from doing so. Offering hospitality is the main topic of Third John. What can we learn from Gaius’ example? Looking at verses 5-8 carefully, we can learn many things Gaius did well. He welcomed some people to his home even though they were strangers (5). He showed them love (6). To “send them on their way in a manner worthy of God” meant providing for their financial needs. So, he provided money for their travels. We also learn that these brothers and sisters were traveling for “the sake of the Name,” which means they traveled for Jesus as missionaries or traveling teachers (7). Demetrius seems to be one of these missionaries or traveling teachers, and John asks Gaius to show hospitality and provide for him. Gaius is an excellent example for us. After learning about Gaius’ example, how can you give hospitality and love to others?

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### Similarities Between John's Gospel and Letters

Topic	Gospel of John	Letters of John
Light and darkness	John 1:4-5; 8:12; 12:46	1 John 1:5-7; 2:9-11
The unity of the Father and Son	John 5:20; 10:30, 38; 14:10	1 John 1:3; 2:22-24; 2 John 9
The truth	John 8:32; 14:6; 18:37	1 John 2:21; 3:19; 2 John 1; 3 John 3; 8
Being hated by the world	John 15:18-19; 17:13-16	1 John 3:13
God sent Jesus because of love	John 3:16	1 John 4:9
Jesus came in the flesh	John 1:14	1 John 4:2; 2 John 7
Jesus Christ lays down his life for others	John 10:11-18; 15:12-13	1 John 3:16
Being born of God	John 1:13; 3:3-8	1 John 2:29; 3:9
Knowing God	John 1:10; 8:55; 14:7; 16:3	1 John 2:3-5, 13-14; 3:1-6; 4:6-8
Abiding in God and Jesus Christ	John 6:56; 15:4-10	1 John 2:6, 27-28; 3:6, 24; 4:13-16
New and old commandments	John 13:34	1 John 2:7; 2 John 5
Loving one another	John 13:34; 15:12	1 John 2:27-28; 3:11, 23; 2 John 5
Water and blood	John 19:34-35	1 John 5:6-8
That joy may be complete	John 15:11; 16:24; 17:13	1 John 1:4; 2 John 12

Read Third John two or three times. Imagine the Apostle John is speaking directly to your group. Discuss the following questions together:

1. What do we learn about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?
2. What do we learn about people?
3. What do we need to obey?
4. Who else can we share this story with?