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## Welcoming the Truth by Lucas

### 3 John

Some people really like reading biographies to find out how some men and women become successful at things like business, athletics or politics. The reality is that not many of us will have a biography written about us. We are just regular folk with regular lives. The Lord, in his wisdom gave us this letter (3John) so we could see an example of an ordinary Christian doing ordinary things in Gaius and imitate him. John says in verse 11 "Dear friend do not imitate what is evil but what is good." John says that Gaius' soul was well. (v2) Gaius found himself in a bit of a deadlock. He was in the middle of an altercation between the apostle John and a false leader in the church. Gaius had to make a decision. Would he side with the truth despite the consequences or not? Thankfully he decided to side with the truth. As we look at 3 John I'd like us to meditate on two questions: How can we advance God's kingdom? and What do we do when siding with the truth is costly? Remember Gaius was just a normal Christian who decided to do the normal Christian thing even when it was difficult.

**Becoming a co-worker with the truth through hospitality:** One thing we notice about Gaius is that despite being a normal Christian he was no wobbly Christian. The first characteristic we see about Gaius is that his "...soul is getting along well." (v2) John knew this because "...some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it" and "They have told the church about your love." (v3& 6) So what was Gaius actually doing that others noticed? He didn't go as a missionary to a jungle in the Amazon or to North Korea or Africa and set up a hospital where he preached that Jesus is Lord. In verses 5 and 8 we see that Gaius' great work was being hospitable to strangers. John discourages a beloved lady from being hospitable to people she knew were false teachers. (2 John) In 3 John we have the opposite situation. John is encouraging Gaius to receive strangers. John is highlighting the fact that in Christian circles hospitality is not about the number of years that you know someone but it's about demonstrating God's love for God's children sharing one common goal. Here we see the importance of the incarnation. Jesus became a real man. Hospitality is about reincarnating the generous love of God. It's about serving our brothers and sisters with real physical needs in a way that honours God. (v6)

This is not in the text but I believe we should not give hospitality if it is a burden or with an unhappy attitude. Proverbs warn us about the person who invites you into their house and says eat and drink then in his heart thinks, 'this is too expensive!' In 2 Corinthians 9:7 Paul tells us, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver". It honours God when we receive people into our homes cheerfully. It is about giving cheerfully according to our capacity. When I was a child we would go to my Aunt and Uncle's. They were particularly poor. But they would serve sacrificially and generously. Sometimes dinner would be bread and butter. But the joy in the house made that bread and butter taste so good. We should serve along those lines. Serving brothers and sisters in Christ has something special about it.

The people who came to Gaius' house were striving to preach about Jesus without pay. So we ought to show hospitality to our missionaries. By doing this we are working together for the truth. It is a blessing to be able to be a co-worker with the truth. "And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is

my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward." (Matt 10:42) In broader terms as covid restrictions are being lifted so we are now in a position to show hospitality again. We should receive all kinds of people: young, old, single, married, even messy children. By encouraging one another in this way we are becoming co-workers with the truth.

**Facing opposition while working with the truth:** "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us. So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing: spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church. 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." (v9-11) Gaius' hospitality was not as straight forward as we would expect. There was a man called Diotrephes (sounds like a disease) who was an enemy of the gospel, and rejected John who was 'the elder'. He was an opponent to the truth. The worst part is that he was not a foreign enemy but he was fighting the truth from inside the church. He loved to be first. He didn't want to make the name of Jesus great. He spread lies, he did not receive Christians into his house and he would kick out of the church anyone who came from John. If Gaius wanted to receive the brothers he would be in direct opposition to Diotrephes. He was in a battle between truth and lies.

What about us? How do we react when being hospitable is difficult? Will we imitate good or only seek our personal benefit like Diotrephes who liked to be first? Also, how would we react if a leader in the church decided to abandon the truth of the gospel? Would we side with the truth or pretend nothing was wrong? May the Lord protect us and our leaders from abandoning the gospel. Will we stand for the truth? John (v12) gives Gaius another opportunity to be a co-worker with the truth. Will he receive Demetrius in the face of opposition?

What a privilege we have to be co-workers with the truth. It can be as simple as hospitality which may be overlooked by many. It may not be a glamorous thing in the eyes of men but it is a precious thing in the eyes of God especially if it requires courage and self-denial. In light of the fact that, like Gaius, you could be thrown out of the church would you still receive this man? John seems confident that Gaius would do that. Gaius was not the most famous preacher in Asia or an eminent missionary in Europe but he was a co-worker with the truth. He was a normal Christian doing normal Christian things. May we imitate Gaius as he imitated Jesus who, being the Son of God chose to come down in the form of a servant. He was born of a virgin, he worked as a carpenter. He washed the feet of his disciples. He suffered and was crucified and died. May we imitate our saviour, Jesus. Let us not back out even in the face of opposition.