

NG Study Guide: 3Jn. 1: 1-14 “Promote Truth” [7.8.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: There is truth about God as revealed by the words, works and gospel of Jesus. Leaders, and people in general, can hinder or help advance the truth. All of Jesus’ followers recognize the privilege and responsibility to promote the truth. Although 3rd John is the shortest book in the Bible, as you study it you’ll discover how to promote truth.

1. Live truth [1-4]

The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: ² Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. ³ For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

John refers to himself as *The Elder*, and is presumable referring to his advanced age of 90+ and the fact that he was the last of the apostles rather than an office or position. The recipient is Gaius [1] a common name in the Roman Empire [Rom. 16:23, Ac. 19-20]. John prays for Gaius to prosper in health and all things as does Gaius’ soul [2]. This would be a typical greeting of the time and is not an endorsement of heretical prosperity teaching that suggests the aim of Christian life is material prosperity. Rather than prosperity, our aim as **Jesus’ followers are to learn, love, and live truth**. The word “truth” appears six times in this passage, and refers to the words and works of Jesus and His gospel [Jn. 14:6]. C.S. Lewis observed, “We proclaim the gospel not simply because we believe it will benefit society or people but because it is truth.”

Three times Gaius is referred to as *beloved* [1,2,5]. Why was Gaius so loved? First, he had received the truth, it was in him [3]. Second, he walked in the truth or lived it [3]. His life was characterized by love for God and consistent with truth about God. The term walk implies steady, consistent progress. Third, Gaius’ brought joy to God, others, and himself because he was living the truth about God [3-4]. John rejoiced greatly [3] and had no greater joy [4] than seeing Jesus’ followers living lives consistent with the truth about God. As I have pastored for more than a quarter century I can affirm that there is no greater joy, and similarly no greater sorrow than seeing people not living lives consistent with the truth.

We are called to become spiritually mature followers or disciples of Jesus. This requires us to learn the truth (biblical doctrine) [Rom. 12:1-2]. Regular participation at worship gatherings where the Bible is taught, participation in a Neighborhood group (NG), mentor relationships, participation in our School of Ministry (SoM), and personal Bible study are systems to help us learn, love, and live truth.

2. Support truth [5-8]

⁵ Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, ⁶ who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, ⁷ because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

Jesus' followers were commended for their faithful support of God's workers. Traveling Bible teachers had come to teach the truth about God and to help people understand and apply the Bible to their lives [5]. They would often be sent with a letter of recommendation from their home church [Rom. 16:1]. Believers opened their homes, fed them, and provided for their travels; and when they came to their home church they spoke of the support they received or *bore witness of their love before the church* [6].

Honor God with your financial support. The church was encouraged to *send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God* [6]. They were to provide resources and supplies for the journey. Jesus' followers are called to share their material wealth to support the advance of the gospel which honors or pleases God. The motive for supporting the promotion of the gospel is love of God and others.

God's people are responsible to support God's work. The teachers *went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles* [7]. The *Gentiles* in this instance refers to unbelievers rather than non-Jews. The truth about God is not going to be promoted by non-believers. Jesus' followers have the privilege and responsibility to share from the resources that God has provided to them so the truth about God can be advanced. We are to *become fellow workers for the truth* [8]. All of Jesus' followers work together or become partners in advancing the truth about God.

In the Old and New Testaments, God has provided for His people so that they can provide a portion of their resources to support the house of God, the servants of God (e.g. pastors-teachers, missionaries), and promote the advance of the truth of God. Those who love the truth support the truth financially. How are you supporting the truth with your resources?

3. Overcome opposition to truth [9-14]

⁹ I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. ¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church. ¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. ¹² Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true. ¹³ I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; ¹⁴ but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

Reject opponents of the truth [9-14]:

John wrote to the church [9] an earlier and similar letter that was intercepted by *Diotrephes who loved preeminence* [9]. In his desire for power, and pride he had elevated himself above the apostle, and the teaching of the apostles. Opponents of the truth refuse to receive the truth, slander the truth, and seek to put out those who receive and stand for the truth.

There are generally accepted essentials of the Christian faith that are primary issues, and include: the deity of Christ, salvation by grace, salvation through Christ alone, the resurrection, the gospel, the Trinity, monotheism, and the Bible as the primary revelation of God. Those who deny or oppose the primary essentials are opponents of the truth.

On the other hand, there are secondary issues that are non-essentials that include: church government, the work of the Holy Spirit, and end-times events. The secondary issues can be disagreed upon with respect, and humility by proponents of the truth without opposing truth.

Follow proponents of truth [11-14]:

Imitate teachers of the truth, *imitate good, not evil, he who does good is of God* [11]. Follow those who learn, love, and live the truth. Gaius and *Demetrius had a good testimony* [1, 12] or were good examples. Demetrius was likely the deliverer of the letter. John affirms that Demetrius' life aligned with the truth. Similarly, Paul was able to say, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ" [1Cor. 11:1, Ph. 3:17]. We must develop a reputation as people who learn, love and live truth so others can be positively influenced to receive and grow in truth and overcome the opposition to truth.

Mentoring relationships, that naturally arise from small group [NG] participation, are a great way to grow as disciples, and grow in the truth. John had many things he wanted to share with them, but rather than write them he hoped to soon share them face to face [13-14, 2Jn. 1:12]. The best mentoring relationships are often face to face, sharing life, growing in Christ and His truth. Who is mentoring you and who are you mentoring?

Study Guide Qs

1. How does it make you feel when people that you love and care about are living consistent with the truth about God? What feelings do you have when people that you love are living contrary to God's truth? What insight might you have about how God feels?

2. What do you suspect are some of the reasons why some of Jesus' followers honor God with their financial support? What do you believe are some of the reasons why others fail to do so?

3. What are some doctrines, philosophies, or religions that are opponents of truth? What should someone who desires to follow Jesus do if they are influenced by obstacles to the truth?

4. How might a mentoring relationship help believers to grow in Christ? Who is mentoring you? Who are you mentoring?

"Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Review this article about essentials of the Christian faith <https://www.gotquestions.org/essentials-Christian-faith.html>. What did you learn, and how can you apply it to your life?

2. Review this article regarding whether Roman Catholicism is a false religion <https://www.gotquestions.org/catholicism.html>. What did you learn, and how can you apply it to your life?

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

As your family gathers, regularly ask “Who would like to share how they loved their/our neighbors this week?”

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.

3. The “Digging Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Digging Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. Every time you meet consider asking:

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don’t hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.