



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V26 N27

July 7, 2024

## TRUE NORTH

“Walking in the Truth”

3 John 1-4

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Faithfulness

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

*“Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.”*

**Proverbs 3:3-4**



To what are Christians to be faithful?

John refers to *faithfulness* twice in his fourteen-verse third epistle. Addressing Gaius, he writes: “It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your *faithfulness* to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it” (v. 3), and “Dear friend, you are *faithful* in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you” (v.5). John links faithfulness to *walking in the truth* and to *offering hospitality to strangers*. In fact, the link is so close as to imply that offering hospitality to Christian strangers is a defining trait of walking in the truth – perhaps because offering hospitality is an expression of Christian love (cf. v. 6), which amounts to obedience to Jesus’ command that believers are to “love one another” (Jn 13:34; cf. 15:12, 17). As one commentator writes: “Soundness in doctrine is no doubt included in the thought, but the basic point is that Gaius’s life of loving hospitality for other Christians (vv. 5-6) indicated his adherence to the truth” (I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, NICNT, 84).

Showing hospitality was essential in John’s day given the ministry of itinerant missionaries. One commentator describes the setting of the apostle’s remarks in 3 John. “It is clear from references that the elder makes in 3 John that itinerant Christians moved between the Christian communities to which he and Gaius respectively belonged [apparently, there were Christian communities closely link to John, as well as Christian communities closely linked to Paul]. The ‘brothers’ who had been recipients of Gaius’s hospitality were most likely members of the elder’s community and reported to it (vv. 5-6), and regarded his community as their base. They had gone out ‘for the sake of the Name’, most likely as itinerant preachers; and, following the pattern laid down by Jesus (Matt 10:10-11), they depended on the hospitality shown to them by people like Gaius in the places they visited (vv. 7-8). Demetrius, who is commended

by the elder and those associated with him (v. 12), was probably an itinerant preacher from the same community” (Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, 43).

The epistle contains an explicit *contrast* between Gaius, who *faithfully* extended hospitality to itinerant missionaries, and Diotrephes, who *unfaithfully* not only refused to welcome other believers, but also stopped those who wanted to do so and put them out of the church (v. 9). Clearly, in the letter’s terms, Gaius was walking in the truth and Diotrephes was not, which resulted in animosity between the two. Commentators speculate as to the exact nature of the animosity and precisely what motivated it – other than the general observation that Diotrephes loved “to be first” (v. 9) (see Kruse, 44-47; Glenn W. Barker, “3 John,” in *The Bible Expositor’s Commentary*, vol. 12, 374). About people like this, another commentor notes: “Such people may be born again and perfectly orthodox, but they have brought into the church the spirit of the world, specifically ‘the pride of life’ (cf. 1 John 2:16). They have completely missed the spirit of servanthood that the Lord Jesus enjoined on His disciples (Luke 22:24-27). To love to **have the preeminence** is exactly the opposite of our Lord’s model of humble service!” (Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 285). But all agree that Diotrephes rejected the elder’s authority by refusing his request to provide hospitality to traveling missionaries.

These observations lead to the conclusion that John wrote for three purposes: to (i) reinforce Gaius’s commitment to the noble work of providing hospitality to travelling missionaries, something he was already doing (vv. 5-8); (ii) draw attention to the intolerable behaviour of Diotrephes and to foreshadow the steps the elder intended to take in response to it (vv. 9-10); and (iii) commend Demetrius (v. 12)” (Kruse, 47).

# 1

## EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

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### Read 3 John 1-4

1 *The elder,*

*To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.*

2 *Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.* 3 *It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it.* 4 *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*

### Read in other translations

1 *From the elder, to Gaius my dear brother, whom I love in truth.* 2 *Dear friend, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.* 3 *For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, just as you are living according to the truth.*

4 *I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are living according to the truth.* (NET)

1 *This letter is from John, the elder.*

*I am writing to Gaius, my dear friend, whom I love in the truth.*

2 *Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit.* 3 *Some of the traveling teachers recently returned and made me very happy by telling me about your faithfulness and that you are living according to the truth.* 4 *I could have no greater joy than to hear that my children are following the truth.* (NLT)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "the elder" in v. 1.
- Circle "Gaius" in v. 1.
- Circle "truth" in vv. 1, 3, 4.
- Underline "Dear friend" in v. 2.
- Box "even as" indicating *comparison* in v. 2.
- Circle "walk/walking" in vv. 3, 4.
- Circle "children" in v. 4.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. The writer calls himself “The elder” (cf. 2Jn 1). Is this simply a reference to his age? Explain.
2. Read 3 John. What do you learn about Gaius from this letter addressed to him?
3. Paraphrase “whom I love *in the truth*.” Put differently, clarify what “in the truth” means.
4. Explain the *comparison* (“even as”) in verse 2.
5. The elder’s prayer for Gaius (v. 2)—how would you feel if it was directed at you?
6. The writer refers to “the truth” four times (if “it” in v. 3 refers to “the truth”). To what does “the truth” refer?
7. How is “faithfulness to the truth” recognized?
8. Gaius is apparently one of the elder’s “children.” What does that mean?
9. “Walking in the truth.” Put what that means in your own words.
10. **Discussion:** The elder emphasizes the importance of showing hospitality to itinerant evangelists and teachers (v. 8). Talk about what you think makes showing hospitality such a big deal and how we can still do it.

### Commentary On The Text

3 John, like 2 John, was written by “the elder.” The similarities between the two short letters suggest that they were written by the same person around the same time to readers in Christian communities with a close relationship to the writer. The similarities between 2 John and 1 John suggest that they were written by the same person. Since there is little doubt that the apostle John wrote 1 John, there can be little doubt that he wrote the three so-called “Johannine” epistles, as well as the Fourth Gospel.

In 3 John, the apostle makes much of showing hospitality to traveling evangelists and teachers. It was the thing Christians were to do, given the pattern of Jesus’ instructions to the twelve when he sent them out two by two to proclaim the kingdom of God (Mt 10:5-14; Mk 6:7-13; Lk 9:1-6) and given that inns were scarce and many of them were of low standard, both materially and morally. What’s more, offering hospitality to Christian strangers counted as obedience to Jesus’ command to his followers to *love one another*. John commends Gaius for doing this (v. 8) and condemns Diotrephes for not only refusing to do it, but also stopping others from doing it (v. 10). On the subject of hospitality, one commentator writes: “When one reads 3 John alongside 2 John, it becomes apparent that two groups of missionaries were moving around among the churches. There were those who were spreading heretical teaching, about whom the elder warns his readers lest they aid and abet their ‘wicked work’ by providing hospitality for them (2 John 7-11). There were also those who had gone out ‘for the sake of the Name’ and who deserved to be given hospitality (3 John 5-8)” (Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PNTC, 222).

3 John, unlike 2 John, which is a letter written to a church, is a letter written to an individual, Gaius, whom the writer refers to as “my dear friend, whom I love in the truth” (v. 1). His affection for Gaius is rooted in their shared commitment to the truth found in God’s revelation through Jesus Christ. The letter has little theological content, but it is nevertheless of significant interest not only because of the insight into life and theological tensions in the early Christian community it offers, but also because of what it commends and what it condemns. In a nutshell, it commends Gaius for being faithful to the truth by obeying Jesus’ command to love one another through offering hospitality to itinerant evangelists and teachers, and it condemns Diotrephes for refusing to do the same.

In the opening salutation (v. 1), the *writer* of the letter, “the elder,” namely, John and the *recipient* of the

letter, “Gaius,” are identified. The threefold repetition of “Dear friend” (vv. 2, 5, 11) that follows marks off three major sections of the body of the letter (vv. 2-4; vv. 5-10; vv. 11-12). In the first (vv. 2-4), the elder, namely, John, commends Gaius for walking in the truth. He begins with a prayer/wish: “I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.” John prays that Gaius’s *physical* health and well-being might match the *spiritual* health and well-being of his *soul*. Apparently, he is alluding to more than just the fact that Gaius is saved. In other words, his spiritual health reflects more than his *justification*; it reflects his *sanctification* as well. Gaius’s spiritual health is marked by the fact that he is saved *and* is walking in the truth, that is, he is walking in step with God’s revelation through Jesus Christ. Put differently, he is living a life consistent with and congruent with God’s revelation in Jesus, who is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6).

Following his prayer/wish, John goes on to explain that he had crossed paths with some believers, perhaps itinerant missionaries to whom Gaius previously extended hospitality, and that they had reported on Gaius’s “faithfulness to the truth,” evidenced by the fact that he continued to walk in “it.” On verse 3, one commentator writes: “The evidence that Gaius’s soul ‘is getting along well’ is that he remains faithful to the truth and continues to walk in the truth. The elder seems to be emphasizing here that Gaius’s faithfulness involves not only holding to correct doctrine [i.e., that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh], but also persisting in correct action. In the context of this letter that correct action is thought of primarily in terms of providing hospitality to those itinerant preachers who deserve support” (Kruse, 221).

In verse 4, John concludes the opening section of his brief letter by telling Gaius, one of his *metaphorical* children, that knowing he is walking in the truth brings him great joy. Another commentator writes: “We do not know if Gaius was John’s child physically, spiritually (his convert), or metaphorically. The metaphorical usage of this word is the most common one in the New Testament. In this case, Gaius could have been a disciple of John or simply a younger believer (cf. 2 John 4; 1 Tim. 1:2). John’s ‘children’ were probably those individuals who were under his personal spiritual care. John rejoiced that his ‘children,’ whoever they were, were ‘walking in the truth’” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 3 John,” 2024 ed., 8, [plano-biblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/3john.pdf](http://plano-biblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/3john.pdf)).

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## Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *the elder* Cf. 2Jn 1. “The author was evidently the Apostle John, who identified himself as ‘the elder’ here (v. 1), as he also did in 2 John. The striking similarity in content, style, and terminology in these two epistles confirms the ancient tradition that John wrote both of them” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 3 John,” 2024 ed., 1, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/3john.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/3john.pdf)). “In both the elder expresses his joy that the ‘children’ are ‘walking in the truth’ (2 John 4; 3 John 4); in both the addressees (the ‘chosen lady’ and Gaius respectively) are described as those whom the elder loves ‘in the truth’ (2 John 1; 3 John 1); and both conclude with virtually identical statements (2 John 12; ‘I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face’. 3 John 13-14a: ‘I have much to write to you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face’)” (Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PNTC, 42).

v. 1 *Gaius* Several men with this name appear in the New Testament: 1) the Macedonian traveling companion of Paul, who was involved in the riot at Ephesus (Ac 19:29); 2) the man from Derbe who waited to meet Paul at Troas for the trip to Jerusalem (Ac 20:4, 5) – perhaps the same as 1); 3) the Corinthian whom Paul baptized and who was his host when Paul wrote Romans from Corinth (1Co 1:14; Rom 16:23); and 4) the man addressed here. “Although the name Gaius occurs elsewhere in the NT (cf. Acts 19:29; 20:4; Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14) and is common enough in the literature of the time, his identity, aside from what is said of him in this letter, is unknown to us” (Glenn W. Barker, “3 John,” in *The Bible Expositor’s Commentary*, vol. 12, 371).

vv. 1, 3, 4 *truth* I.e., generally speaking, the revelation of God that comes through Jesus; more specifically, that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (2Jn 7). “The prepositional phrase [*en alētheia*] in 3 John 1 is similar to 2 John 1, although it is not qualified here as it is (see 2 John 1). This is not merely the equivalent of an adverb (‘truly’), but is a theological statement affirming the orthodoxy of Gaius, to whom the letter is addressed. ‘Truth’ is the author’s way of alluding to theological orthodoxy in the face of the challenge by opponents (see 1 John 3:19)” (*The NET Bible*, 4tn on 3Jn 3, 4).

v. 2 *Dear friend* The expression occurs in vv. 2, 5, 11. Gk. *agapēte* underscores the affectionate regard the elder has for Gaius. It also marks divisions in the body of the letter.

vv. 3, 4 *walk, walking* Cf. “living according to the truth” (NET); to live “in conformity to the truth” (Hodges, 280). “The elder seems to be emphasizing here that Gaius’s faithfulness involves not only holding to correct doctrine, but also persisting in correct action. In the context of this letter that correct action is thought of primarily in terms of providing hospitality to those itinerant preachers who deserve support” (Kruse, 221). “The use of the Greek verb [*peripateō*] to refer to conduct or lifestyle is common in the NT (see 1 John 1:6, 2 John 4, as well as numerous times in Paul. Here [v. 3] the phrase refers to conduct that results when a person has ‘truth’ residing within, and possibly alludes to the indwelling Spirit of Truth (see 2 John 2). In the specific context of 3 John the phrase refers to true Christian who are holding fast to an apostolic Christianity in the face of the secessionist opponents’ challenge to orthodoxy” (*The NET Bible*, 6sn on 3Jn 3).

v. 4 *children* “It is possible that by referring to Gaius as one of his ‘children,’ John meant that Gaius was a convert of his (cf. Paul’s use of this idea in 1 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 4:19; Phil. 2:22). On the other hand the elderly apostle may simply have thought of those to whom he ministered from a paternal perspective, with fatherly concern” (Zane C. Hodges, “3 John,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 912). “John’s ‘children’ were probably those individuals who were under his personal spiritual care [i.e., members of the Johannine community of believers] John rejoiced that his ‘children,’ whoever they were, were ‘walking in the truth’” (Constable, 8).

# 4

## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Remain faithful to the truth revealed in Jesus by living according to his commands, especially his command to *love one another*.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



### 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## FAMILY TALK

“I just ran into your son at Six Flags.” That’s a text that will make you smile and cringe all at the same time. My cousin noticed my 14-year-old son in line for a ride and took her granddaughter over to say hi. This wouldn’t be a big deal except the last time we saw this side of the family was before Covid. My son went from a little third grade boy to a gangly teenager who had no clue who this random woman was. I know I’ve got great kids and trust them to be well-behaved inside and outside of the home, but Six Flags with a group of friends could tempt boundaries for any teenager. Then there’s the added stranger danger of a random woman who knows his name. Things could’ve gone either way! My cousin was sure to text me how considerate, polite and well-mannered a young man he was. When other people speak positively about the behavior of our kids, it’s like a parenting paycheck. We feel an immense joy knowing all the things we’ve tried to instill in them – be kind to others, be friendly, look a person in the eye, make good choices – come into fruition. Not only did my son address an adult appropriately, but he was also polite to her, kind to her preschool granddaughter and caught obeying all the rules. It was fun to share this little story with him and I got an opportunity to encourage him to continue walking in the ways of the Lord. When do you catch your kids walking in the truth and faithfulness? How will you encourage them?

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read 3 John 1-4

1. To whom is John writing this letter?
2. What gave John joy?
3. What do you know about Gaius from this passage?

### What Do You Think?

Why would the news of Gaius’ faithfulness bring John joy?

### What Do You Do?

Play a fun game with your family this week. Whenever you see them acting or speaking in a way that is faithful to God’s commands, yell “Caught!” and tell them what you notice.

### CORE COMPETENCY: Faithfulness

I am loyal to God and others so they know they can count on me.

### MEMORY VERSE: Philippians 1:6

*“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

## KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week’s verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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