

11. Learning to Walk in the Truth

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand what John wrote about deceivers. That will help our children understand how to be obedient to God when they recognize by what a person says that the person is a false teacher. In this topic, we want to help our children understand more about learning to walk in the truth.

In 3 John 1:1-2, we read, “The Elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” John began this letter just as he began 2 John by calling himself the elder. Since John was close to 90 years old at this time, this may have been to describe his age or it could have been a way of saying that he was just one of the leaders of the church. In the New Testament, the word is used both as a title for those who are older and also as a title for those who are leaders in the local church.

John wrote the book of 2 John to a lady and her children to help her know when to avoid showing hospitality to those who were false teachers. This book is written to Gaius (a very common name in that culture) who was one of the leaders in a local church where John had ministered. As a result, John wrote to him as the beloved Gaius. Since John uses this word four times in this short book, we see that he had a great love and respect for Gaius. This is a good example for every Christian. We also need to develop a great love and respect for other Christian leaders and their ministries. John said that he loved Gaius in truth. 1 John 3:18-19 says, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.” Here, we see that we are not just to talk about love. Instead, we are to show that love by our actions and according to the truth of the Word of God.

We see that John prayed that Gaius would prosper in all things. The word translated “prosper” is used two times in this verse and means *to be successful or to prosper*. Here, we see that the spiritual life of Gaius was really blessed by the Lord and that the prayer of John was that the Lord would cause him to be blessed in all areas of his life. The word that is translated “health” can refer either to physical health or spiritual health. The word is translated “sound” in Titus 1:9 where we read, “Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” Gaius was prospering in his soul so John is saying that he is praying that the physical health of Gaius will match the spiritual health of Gaius. This gives us a good example as we seek to help our children develop strong spiritual health by growing to spiritual maturity.

3 John 1:3-4 says, “For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” Here, we see why John could write that Gaius had strong spiritual health. Some of the other Christians had visited John. While they were talking with John, these other Christians spoke about Gaius and mentioned that He was a man that spoke the truth. In addition, they said that he also walked in the truth.

Here, we see a key characteristic that we want to develop in our physical and spiritual children.

We want to help them grow to spiritual maturity so that what they say and what they do are in full agreement with the truth of the Word of God. 1 John 1:6-7 says, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” As we show our children how to walk in the light, by our example, they are learning to walk in the light so that their actions and words agree.

John expressed his personal joy to know that Gaius was walking in the truth. In fact, he said that he could have no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in the truth. Gaius was not a physical child of John. However, John had helped him to grow in his faith and his understanding and application of the truth. As a result, this verse has a very similar thought to the thought expressed by Paul about Timothy, in 1 Corinthians 4:16-17, where we read, “Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” In the same way that Paul considered Timothy his faithful and beloved son in the Lord, John had the same attitude toward Gaius. The life of Gaius brought great joy to John in his life.

In 3 John 1:5-8. we read, “Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, 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, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.” In these verses, we learn a little about the ministry of Gaius to other Christians.

The word translated “faithfully” means *one that is faithful and can be relied on*. 1 John 1:9 translates this word faithful when it says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We know that the Lord is faithful to forgive and cleanse us from all of our sins. The fact that John uses this word points out the fact that Gaius was a faithful servant of the Lord in whatever he did to serve other Christians. The faith that Gaius had in the Lord caused him to be faithful in his service to others. James 2:18 says, “But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” Here, we see that Gaius showed his faith by his works of service to other Christians including both the brethren and to Christians who were strangers.

The brethren would refer to other Christians that lived in his area. The word translated “strangers” were Christians who came from other areas or other ethnic groups. Both the brethren, and these Christians from other areas, had told John about the faithful ministry of Gaius. Hebrews 13:1-2 says, “Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels.” Here, we see that Gaius looked for opportunities to help traveling Christians as they came through the area where he lived. The one thing that was especially mentioned about Gaius was the love he showed to these traveling Christians.

Traveling Christians would be especially quick to recognize the love of a Christian like Gaius because in that day many areas had no public places to stay. The fact that he invited people that

were totally unknown to him and treated them with great love gives us an example for our own lives. When these traveling Christians left his home to continue their ministry in other places, we see that Gaius sent them on their way in a manner worthy of God. The word translated “worthy” means *in a manner worthy of or pleasing to*. 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 says, “As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” Paul had encouraged the Christians in Thessalonica to have that kind of a walk. Here, we see that whether from the encouragement of someone else, or because of his own godly life, Gaius had the same desire to send visitors on their way in a way that was pleasing to God.

We see from the next statement that many of those who Gaius entertained were probably Christians that were traveling from place to place to share the Gospel with others. These people went out to take the Gospel to other areas without asking for any help from those who were Gentiles. The word “Gentiles” referred to anyone who was not a Jew. In the early church, it came to include any person that was not a Christian. Here, we see that those who traveled to other areas to share the Gospel did not expect those who were not Christians to supply their needs. In 2 Corinthians 11:7, Paul asked the question, “Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge?” Paul worked to provide for his own needs so that he did not need to ask those who were either new Christians or not yet Christians in Corinth to supply his needs. Many of these Christians went with the same attitude.

John said that such Christians provide an opportunity to show the love of God to others who are faithful in their ministry and service for the Lord. Gaius gave an example to all of the other Christians by the hospitality that he showed to traveling Christians who were faithful in teaching the truth about Jesus Christ. In 2 John 1:10-11, John warned against such a ministry to those who deny the truth. That verse says, “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.” However, Gaius recognized those who were teaching the truth about Christ and John commended him for this ministry.

John pointed out that such a ministry to Christians who are faithful in serving the Lord makes us fellow workers with them for the truth. The word translated “fellow workers” means *those who are companions in ministry or partners in the work of the Lord*. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to apply 1 Corinthians 3:9 to their own lives as Paul and those with him did. That verse says, “For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building.” We want to show our children, by our example and ministry, how to be fellow workers with God. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to walk in the truth.