



THRU the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McGee*

3 JOHN

BIBLE COMPANION



EPISTLES

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of 3 John heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/3John (or any book of the Bible). The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING...

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 1		WALK IN TRUTH AND LOVE	1
-----------------	--	------------------------------	---

LESSON 1

WALK IN TRUTH AND LOVE



Begin with prayer



Read **3 John 1–14**



Listen at [TTB.org/3John](https://www.TTB.org/3John) to **3 John 1–3**, **3 John 3–7**, **3 John 7–10**,
and **3 John 10–14**

Somewhere close to the end of the first century, John, who once walked with Jesus, wrote three letters to the young church.

In his first letter, he stressed how the family of God is held together by love and how we, as little children, are to love one another. He makes it clear that love is the defining characteristic of God's children. Children have a love for those who are in their family—that's normal even in natural relationships today.

In the second letter, however, John warns that there are apostates and deceivers in the world. We aren't to love them nor be concerned about them or host them in our homes. The child of God needs to make sure those he supports are true to the Word of God. They must believe in the deity of Christ, that He is God alive in the flesh (just as the apostle John wrote earlier in his Gospel, "and the Word became flesh ..." John 1:14).

Jesus is God dwelling, tabernacling, in human flesh. Until a person believes that, he doesn't have a Savior. If Jesus Christ is only just a man, we don't have a Savior; there's no reason to remember His birth or His death or resurrection. It's all-important to recognize Jesus as God seen in the flesh and that His work on the cross has the power to save us. There's power in the blood because of who He is and because He died and rose again in His

body. Those who deny these truths are not to be extended the fellowship or the support of the church. John goes so far in the second letter as to say not even to help him on his way or give him support or even bid them “God speed.” If you do, you are partner with him in his evil deeds. The lesson here is to know well those you support, both financially and in deed.

Like John’s second letter, this third one is very personal and carries the same theme of truth. When truth and love conflict, truth must be the priority. This means you are not to love any false teachers. What’s most essential is walking in truth.

However, this third letter differs from the second letter in an important way. In the second letter, John says the truth is worth standing for, but now, John adds that the truth is worth working for. Someone has put it like this: “My life in God—that’s salvation. My life with God—that’s communion and fellowship. But my life for God—that’s service.” This epistle deals with your life for God, and it has to do with walking and working in the truth. Love can become sloppy. It can be misdirected, and it certainly can be misunderstood if it’s not expressed within the boundary of truth.

This third letter from John also answers the question, how were believers holding out at the close of the first century? Did they all become martyrs? Were they all models of virtue? Were they all worthy followers of Christ and the faith? Among the millions who turned to Christ in the first three centuries, how did the average believer turn out?

In this little letter we find two people who were standing for God—Gaius and Demetrius. Another man, Diotrephes, had deserted the faith.

Gaius was a delightful brother. John calls him, “the elder,” perhaps because of his age but also because he was an officer in the early church. John calls him “beloved” four times. John knows and loves him in the Lord, and he now writes a letter to this brother who apparently is in some local church.

Not only does John love him as a friend, he loves him “in truth.” Gaius is sound in his doctrine. Gaius stood for the truth and worked for the truth. He walked and worked in love. He accepted the deity of Christ and demonstrated God’s love to others. You have to think right if you are going to act right—that is true in any sphere of life today.

In his greeting, John wishes Gaius to prosper not only financially but also in his health. Gaius may not have been a well man. He also wants him to prosper in his soul, to grow spiritually. Even today, you can know the Lord,

but be sick spiritually. You may have good health physically but have pretty bad health spiritually. As a child of God, you hope to have both. What physical health is to the body, holiness is to the spiritual life of the believer. To be healthy spiritually is holiness; it is to be growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

In John's day, many ministers traveled around, teaching the Word of God and doing missionary work. Gaius opened his home to them (in spite of his poor health, he actively showed hospitality). The hotels in the Roman Empire in that day were filthy places and sometimes very sinful. The church's custom was to entertain these itinerant ministers in private homes.

Gaius tested these teachers. Many of these traveling evangelists and missionaries reportedly told John about Gaius' kindness to open his home to true brethren and also his commitment to the truth. Gaius could tell who were the genuine believers and who weren't. With real spiritual discernment, he made sure a minister's relationship to Jesus Christ was real.

You must think rightly of Jesus Christ in order to be right in everything else. These brethren testified, *"He walks in the truth,"* they said. *"He teaches the same thing the apostles teach, and he acts accordingly."*

The mark of the believer is to walk in truth, and Gaius had a great testimony. The ultimate goal for every Christian is to walk in the truth and walk in the light. Walking in the truth also means walking in the right conduct and walking in love of the brethren.

John was thrilled and encouraged by this report that his spiritual children were walking with the Lord. For decades, he had been pastor of the church in Ephesus and had led many to the Lord. It's a great joy to him, now that he is an old man, to hear that his converts, including Gaius and others scattered across Asia, are still walking in truth and loving the brethren.

Certainly, the church still needs to guard against false teachers (like John wrote about in his second letter), but we should also receive the true brethren. You may have been disappointed or deceived by false brethren in the past, but don't let that stop you from supporting those who we believe are from the Lord. Ask the Lord for spiritual discernment before you support them. Be sure God's Word is being given out, and then love them. This is such practical counsel!

Gaius' spiritual discernment and great, godly love for the church pleased John. *"These brethren took to the road, trusting the Lord, and you opened up your home to them. They are genuine, they are real, and you received them."* These ministers went out at great personal sacrifice. They didn't receive a salary. Instead, they trusted the Lord to provide for them, and God provided Gaius. They were not to take any help from people outside the faith as a way of testing whether they were genuinely from the Lord. This work depended on the support of the Lord's people. And in so doing, these people were their ministry partners. In the second letter, John told "the elect lady" not to receive apostates into her home because if she does, she is a partner with them in their evil deeds. But now John says, *"Don't be afraid to show hospitality to true ministers. If they walk in the light, if they walk in love, and if they have the life of God within them, you should receive them."*

The early church depended on God's Spirit to give them spiritual discernment to tell when a person was teaching the truth. We may know more Bible today than they did in the early church, but they survived by their spiritual discernment. When Gaius helped them along, he became a partner with them in getting out the Word of God, and John was writing to thank and praise him for his testimony.

Were all men in the early church outstanding men of God like Gaius? We could only wish. John writes of another man, Diotrephes, who needed someone to call him out.

Diotrephes loved the spotlight. And he loved his own way. His motto was "to rule or ruin." John wrote this church to ask them to care for a traveling missionary, Demetrius, an outstanding preacher of the gospel, but Diotrephes wouldn't comply.

Diotrephes couldn't look out for others because he was too busy overweening his own ambition. He was pretentious and puffed up, inflated like a balloon. John brings five charges against him: (1) Diotrephes must occupy the leading place in the church; (2) he actually refused to receive John; (3) he made malicious statements against the apostles; (4) he refused to entertain the missionaries, the ones who were traveling through the country; and (5) he excommunicated those who did entertain the missionaries.

Diotrephes wanted to be the first exalted ruler of the church. Woe to you if you tried to oppose him. He was self-opinionated, self-exalting, and a self-made man. He was self-sufficient and guilty of self-admiration. He was

self-willed, self-satisfied, and self-confident. He felt that he could do all the teaching and preaching and that he didn't need these other men to come and minister. The key word that describes him is "self."

Do you recognize this guy? Perhaps he's vying to run your church. He may put up a pious front, but if given ground, he will wreck church after church.

All of us need to search our hearts—even the ministers. Ask yourself, why are you leading? Why do you sing? Do you love to have the spotlight? Are you doing this for the glory of God? Certainly we need people to lead and teach the Word. Many are needed, but search your heart before you do anything, because you can wreck a church if you are one like Diotrephes who loves to have first place.

John urged them to be "fellow workers for the truth." Like today, John tells us to support those who are giving out the Word of God. If you have a preacher who is doing that, you should support him, as was the practice in the early church.

Now John is going to deal with this problem when he visits them. How Diotrephes lived was not the mark of a believer. He apparently did not have the truth. In Christianity, the important word is truth, and truth manifests itself in love—it's as simple and as important as that.

It is too bad there weren't those in the church who spoke out against Diotrephes. Moses was considered a meek man, but when he got up and talked to the children of Israel, he spoke with the authority God had given him. The Lord Jesus was meek and lowly, but He cleansed the temple. When something is hurting our churches, somebody should courageously and wisely address the issue.

Diotrephes was trying to destroy the apostle John with malicious, destructive words. If you want to wreck a church, just let people run their mouths without holding them accountable for what they say.

You can call John an apostle of love if you want to, but the Lord Jesus called him a son of thunder. When John arrived at this church, they probably had a regular summer storm as he dealt with Diotrephes. John preferred to deal with things in person, "face to face," rather than put it down "with pen and ink."

John closes his final letter encouraging us all to continue to do what is good, emphasizing that the one who practices righteousness is a child of God, but the one who permits or tolerates evil has no personal experience with the Lord and likely doesn't even know Him.

Then, as he signs off, John wishes them God's peace and sends greetings from their mutual friends.

7. Imagine being able to go back in time to meet both Gaius and Diotrephes. What kind of first impression do you think each would make, and in what ways would that impression be false? What can your answer teach us about discernment?

TO BE HEALTHY
SPIRITUALLY IS HOLINESS;
IT IS TO BE
growing in grace and
IN THE KNOWLEDGE
OF CHRIST.



A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are both gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

**LEARN HOW TO SHARE
THE MOST
IMPORTANT
MESSAGE OF
YOUR LIFE.**

TTB.org/HowCanIKnowGod

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a list of booklets from the TTB.org website. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden table.

**GET ANSWERS TO YOUR
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
BIBLE AND LIVING THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE.**

TTB.org/booklets

**KEEP YOUR BIBLE BUS JOURNEY
GOING ANYWHERE AND ANYTIME.**



[TTB.org/listen](https://www.ttb.org/listen)

**GET THE GOSPEL TO THE
ENDS OF THE WORLD
WITHOUT LEAVING
YOUR HOME.**



[TTB.org/give](https://www.ttb.org/give)



THRUthe**BIBLE**
with *J. Vernon McGee*

CONNECT WITH THRU THE BIBLE



Box 7100, Pasadena, California 91109-7100
P.O. Box 25325, London, Ontario, Canada N6C 6B1



1-800 65-BIBLE (24253)



TTB.org



BibleBus@ttb.org



/ThruTheBibleNet

YouTube

/TTBRadio