

## The Diagramming of 3 JOHN

# A verse-by-verse explanation of the diagram

### AN OVERVIEW OF THE DIAGRAM

In the 3 John "diagram," the first thing you should note is that I have tried to link, in one way or other, concepts or phrases that go together. These may be parallel, making similar statements about the same thing, or they may be opposites. For instance, in verse 1, "my dear friend" and "whom I truly love" tell us two things about Gaius. In verse 11, we see two phrases which express a *contrast* between doing good and doing evil.

Observing such parallels or contrasts can be quite important when we are studying and applying the Bible. Even though we might not immediately see the importance - and we definitely don't want to "invent" a reason when we don't see one - our awareness of it may be an important "building block" for a future discovery.

Certain words and phrases are repeated in this passage. I have marked some of them by using upper-case letters. Some examples include the phrase "dear friend" (in verses 1, 2, 5 and 11), and the words "joy," "truth" and "live," found in verses 3 and 4. I also used upper-case letters to emphasize the connection between the phrase "go well with you" and "going well with your soul" (verse 2), but in your analysis you might wish to use some other method to point this out. There are a few other repeated words and phrases that I have not marked, which you would probably want to identify. You could point out the contrast between Diotrephes (verses 9-10) and Demetrius (verse 12) - and their connection to verse 11.

Words which connect phrases together are very important, because they show the relationships between different parts of a sentence or paragraph. This would include words such as "and," "but," "so," "therefore," "also," and other similar words. Prepositional phrases will also show relationships between different parts of a sentence. These are a few of the things you could look for, and as you practice observing the way different parts of a verse connect together, you will learn to identify more. (A person who has studied the structure of language will benefit greatly from what he has learned and may find it very easy to use this technique. However, anybody who has a basic understanding of sentence structure can benefit, even if he does not understand some of the technical details that an advanced English student might have learned.)

Below are some observations about the relationships between parts of the sentences in 3 John. The main purpose here is to help you understand why I wrote this outline or diagram the way I did. If it already makes sense to you, then there is no need for you to read them.

## A VERSE-BY-VERSE LOOK AT THE DIAGRAM

Here we will examine the technical details which explain the various aspects of this diagram of 3 John. Words or phrases that are quoted from 3 John itself will be shown in underlined italics.

### Verse 1

- Two phrases are connected to the name Gaius: My dear friend, and whom I truly love. As you study this book you will discover that the phrase dear friend occurs three other times (v. 2, 5 and 11), and I have put the phrase in capital letters each time.
- The word love occurs in verse 6, though it is in a slightly different context. (Verse 1 mentions John's love for *Gaius*; verse 6 mentions Gaius' love for *others*.)
- In some "literal" translations, the word truly is translated as in the truth. You may decide that this fits well with the message of vs. 3-4.

### Verse 2

- Verses 2, 3 and 4 are connected, telling us about John's prayer, as well as the reason for his prayer. His two prayer requests both start with the word that and are connected with the word and.
- These requests have to do with health and circumstances, but they are *not* his primary desire for Gaius (which is described in verse 4). In a sense we could say that these prayer requests are his *secondary* desire for Gaius, because his *primary* desire (verse 4) *has already been fulfilled*.
- Both of these focuses can be observed when we compare the phrases go well with you (which expresses his secondary desire for Gaius) and going well with your soul (which reflects his ultimate and most important desire for him).

### Verses 3 and 4

- In this outline, I have put three "connector words" (for - v. 3; therefore - v. 8; and so - v. 10) in bold font. (I probably would have circled the words and used arrows, if I were writing it by hand.) These connector words show the relationship between what comes *before* and what comes *after* them.
- Also, I have added some words in brackets at the beginning of v. 3 ("Why this prayer") and v. 4 ("About this joy"), to show the relationship between verses 2 and 3, and verses 3 and 4, respectively. (If I were writing this by hand, I might have used arrows, instead.)
- These verses tell us the *reason* for John's prayer request. The connection to verse 2 can be seen in the word for. He prays the things mentioned in verse 2, for (or because of) the great joy he has - a joy that is wrapped up in the two words live and truth (seen in both verse 3 and verse 4). Also, the phrase it filled me with great joy (verse 3) is somewhat parallel to the phrase I have no greater joy (verse 4).

### Verse 3

- Within verse 3, two phrases are directly connected to it filled me. These are: with great joy (which explains *what* he was filled with) and when Christian brothers ... (which explains *when* this joy came about).

## There are two things we need to know about the phrase "Christian brothers."

- First, the word *Christian* is added for clarity. Quite often, when the Bible uses the word *brother*, it does not refer to a *biological* brother but to a *spiritual* brother. (Also, words such as *brother*, in such a context, are intended to include sisters, as well.)
- Second, two things are mentioned about these brothers, connected by the word and. These are: they came and they told. Now what did they tell? Two things about truth and its relationship to Gaius: the truth is in Gaius, and he continues to live in the truth. In other words Gaius not only *knows* the truth, but it affects *the way he lives*.

## Verse 4

- In verse 4, we learn that this knowledge about Gaius' relationship to the truth causes John to have the greatest joy that he could possibly have, when he is thinking about his spiritual children.
- We also learn that Gaius is not only John's dear friend but also one of his spiritual children - the word *spiritual* being added for clarification, to prevent any confusion with the concept of *biological* children.

## Verses 5 through 8

- Verses 5 and 6 tell us more about Gaius. Verses 7 and 8 tell us more about the Christian brothers (mentioned in verse 5) and our responsibility toward them. These four verses are connected - though in our analysis, we will separate them into two parts.

## Verses 5 and 6

- Again we come across the phrase dear friend.
- John mentions an encouragement and an exhortation: First, he encourages Gaius by telling him that he (Gaius) has been faithful (in the way he responded to the Christian brothers). Second, he exhorts Gaius to continue in being faithful in this matter.
- Between these two statements (the encouragement and the exhortation), John makes a brief comment about what the Christian brothers have said about Gaius - which is how John knew that Gaius was being faithful.
- We learn two things about Gaius faithfulness: 1) he was faithful in what he did for the brothers, and 2) he was faithful even though they were strangers. This faithfulness is one of the ways Gaius was *living* in the truth (v. 3).
- These people were traveling Christians, perhaps similar to a traveling evangelist today, and Gaius showed hospitality to them. When they came, he treated them as special, expressing love to them.
- John encouraged (or exhorted) Gaius to also treat them as special when it was time for them to leave. (This may have meant providing for some of the needs they would have while traveling - see v. 7-8.) So when Gaius sent them away, it would be just as much an expression of love as when he received them. Two prepositional phrases modify the phrase send them. These are on their way and in a manner worthy of God.

## Verses 7 and 8

- These verses tell us more about the traveling Christian brothers, as well as our responsibility or obligation toward them.

### Verse 7

- First, they are traveling for God. It was for his name's sake that they went out (they left the group of Christians they originally had fellowship with).
- Second, they went ... receiving no financial help. The rest of the verse (from those who do not know God) explains further who they did *not* get help from - namely from those they were going to proclaim the good news to.

### Verse 8

- The word therefore connects verses 7 and 8, and depending on what we believe the "therefore" connects to (in verse 7), we could outline verse 8 in one of two different ways:
- We could say they went out (beginning of verse 7)... and we, therefore, ought to help them (verse 8).
- Or we could say they received no financial help from people who do not know God (end of verse 7)... and so we - people who *do* know God - ought to help them (verse 8).
- The second alternative is probably the best (and the word help shows a connection between the two verses). But either way, we reach the same conclusion: We ... ought to help them!
- We also learn two things about the word help: *Who* we should help, namely them (the Christian brothers), and *why* we are to help them, so that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

### Verses 9

- This verse tells us about someone who not only was *unwilling* to help the Christian brothers, but who tried to punish those who did. It seems that John had already written to the people (the church) about this matter, but one of the leaders was trying to prevent this expression of love from occurring.
- So we see a contrast between John (who wrote to the church) and Diotrephes (who tried to hinder), connected by the word but.
- In the second half of v. 9, we learn two things about this man, Diotrephes: he loves to put himself first (which is the *opposite* of love for God and neighbor), and he will not a pay attention to what we (the apostle John and others) say.

### Verse 10

- This verse is connected to verse 9 by the word so.
- John will have to deal with this man's sin, and he tells us near the beginning of verse 10 how he plans to do it: He will point out what he (Diotrephes) is doing. But this is all dependent on the phrase if I visit - probably implying that he was planning to visit, but allowed for God to "overrule" his plans (in the sense of James 4:15).

### Alternate diagram variation

- I lined up the phrases *if I visit* and *I will point out* as both connected to the word so, but grammatically, the one phrase (*if I visit*) would modify the other (*I will point out*).

**So** I will point out if I visit,  
what he is doing,

- When I did this study, I had decided to *not* change the word order - even though it is perfectly acceptable for you to do so (if you don't change the meaning of the passage, when doing it). Either way we learn the same thing about this passage.
- If you wish, you could also place John's comments about visiting (the beginning of verse 10) as a parenthesis in the middle of a larger description about Diotrephes, since the verse continues by telling us more about Diotrephes. Either arrangement would be O.K.

### Verse 10 (continued)

- The rest of the verse tells us more about what he (Diotrephes) is doing - things that John will point out.
- First we find out that Diotrephes is verbally attacking John and those who were with John (spreading false rumors about us).
- Second we find out that he is not satisfied with just that, but he does two more things: As far as the Christian brothers are concerned, he refuses to welcome them. But then he goes even further: he tries to punish those who do welcome the Christian brothers, going even so far as expelling them out of the church - which meant that he would treat them as non-Christians. (The word "church" refers to *people* who belong to God, not to a building or to an institution.)
- No wonder John had to *encourage* Gaius to be faithful in his expression of love to those brothers (v. 5-6)! He wanted Gaius to be faithful regardless of what Diotrephes might do to him (such as expelling him out of the church).

## Verse 11

- Once again, this phrase dear friend occurs. As before, John has a wonderful, encouraging word for Gaius. No matter what Diotrephes may do to Gaius, he was still a dear friend to John.
- Here, John encourages Gaius to imitate (follow) a good example, rather than a bad one.
- The word imitate occurs only once in this passage but I added it a second time in brackets, because it is implied. Adding it makes the parallel nature of these two phrases more visibly obvious. You could arrange these phrases some other way if you wish to. You could even rearrange the words if desired, like this:

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Imitate...  not what is evil
            but what is good
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- We have already read about a bad example (Diotrephes), and we will read about a good example (Demetrius) in the next verse. But first we come to the second half of verse 11, which contains two

parallel phrases that explain *why* we should imitate the one and not the other: the one (the good example, implying Demetrius) is from God, and the other (the bad example, implying Diotrephes) has not seen God.

- This implies a lot about Diotrephes. Even though he seems to be a prominent leader in the church, he isn't even saved! (Obviously, Diotrephes would strongly disagree, as would similar people today. But as Jesus said, we will recognize them by their *fruit*.)

## Verses 12 through 14

- In the last three verses, my main reason for indenting some of the sentences is to make the diagram easier to read. But in most instances there is some type of connection between the indented sentence and that which comes before it.

## Verse 12

- Here we read about the good example, Demetrius. We do not know much about this person, but he is someone Gaius would have known quite well - at least well enough that he could be considered a good example (someone to imitate). By implication he was doing the things that John was encouraging Gaius to do.
- How good was his example? People ("everyone" - referring to those who knew him and who followed the truth) spoke well of him.
- The truth itself spoke well of him. (Perhaps you might want to see if there is a connection between the word truth in this verse and the word truth in verses 3 and 4.)
- John and his friends ("we") also spoke well of him. This testimony is connected (by the word and) to the fact that Gaius knew that their testimony was true.

## Comments

- John was an *apostle* who was sent to bear witness to the truth - the good news from God. It is quite likely that Gaius first learned from John (and John's friends) the very truth that spoke well of Demetrius! If it *did* happen this way, Gaius would have heard John explain the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit would have used those Scriptures to bring Gaius to salvation. Then as Gaius continued to examine the Scriptures (as he continued to live in the truth, mentioned in vs. 3-4), he would have recognized that John was a man characterized by truthfulness and integrity - a person who *lived* in the truth (compare to v. 3-4). Because of this, he would know that John's testimony could be trusted.)
- You might be interested in looking for verses that use the words *testimony*, *testify*, *witness*, etc. These words all come from the same basic group of New Testament Greek words, and John uses them quite often in his writings.

## Verses 13 and 14

- Verse 13 first tells us two things about John, connected by the word but. He: 1) has many things to say, but he 2) doesn't want to write them down with pen and ink.

- Verse 14 tells us what he would rather do: 1) He wants to see Gaius soon (you could connect this to the phrase if I visit at the beginning of verse 10), and 2) he wants to talk face to face with him.
- Verse 14 continues with a blessing of peace (or or an expression of John's desire that Gaius have peace). It ends with greetings. The greetings are from John and various friends who are with him. They are extended both to Gaius and to others with Gaius, who would be considered friends.

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### Final Comment

After I finished this study, I focused on the *application* of what it says. Some of my thoughts about how the message of this book can be applied to one's life can be seen in the Study Guide for 3 John, located here:

- A link to the Study Guide = <http://journal33.org/other/html/3johnstg.html>.