

3 John

Faithfulness

Learning Objective

- Gain a clear understanding of what it means to be faithful to the truth of the Gospel and how that impacts our relationships with others.
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Pray for your time together in God's Word!

? What do you think it means to be faithful? Conversely, what does it mean to be unfaithful?

Possible Answers: To uphold and defend a position/person/etc.; Dictionary.com: 1. strict or thorough in the performance of duty; 2. true to one's word, promises, vows, etc.; 3. steady in allegiance or affection, loyal, constant; 4. reliable, trusted, or believed; 5. adhering or true to fact, a standard, or an original
Unfaithful--To cheat, to betray, duplicity, two-faced.

? What/who are you faithful to in your life? Why?

Possible Answers: Spouse, friend, TV show, pet, job, etc. Because I have a contract, it has my interest, we made a covenant.

Optional Transition: In this final letter, 3 John, we'll see faithfulness put into action.

Read Out Loud: 3 John (NIV)

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.

⁵ Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you. ⁶ They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God. ⁷ It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. ⁸ We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth.

⁹ I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us. ¹⁰ So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

¹¹ Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. ¹² Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.

¹³ I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. ¹⁴ I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

Peace to you. The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name.

Faithfulness To The Truth

? What do you think it means to be “faithful to the truth” (vs. 3)? How does this pair with “walking in the truth”?

Possible Answers: Upholding what they believe. Living in such a way that’s in line with what you believe--the truth of the Gospel. They’re almost synonymous. Being faithful means your actions should flow out of that belief.

Optional Transition: We find similar language in Galatians 5, as Paul calls people to walk in the Spirit.

Read Out Loud: Galatians 5:13-26 (NIV)

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

In the case of Gaius, adherence to the truth of Christ was practically expressed in terms of loving hospitality (vv. 5-6). The two spiritual characteristics of “truth” and “love” are complementary and together speak of the believer’s profession and practice. The implication of John’s insistence on “truth” in this verse, although not articulated, may well be that Gaius and encountered and overcome threats from heretical opponents of the truth Christian gospel. -Word Biblical Commentary, Smalley, Pg. 33

? What similarities or differences do you see in “walking in the truth” vs. “walking in the Spirit?”

Possible Answers: They both are getting after commitment to live out what you believe. Walking in the Spirit has more connotations of us not doing it alone--that the Spirit equips us to walk in the truth.

? What does vs. 11 of 3 John say about the fruit of a relationship with God in our lives? What does the Galatians passage add?

Possible Answers: We will be obedient and do what is “good”--as defined by God’s Word. We’ll grow fruit that we can’t make happen/fabricate on our strength. Our desires will change from things that are away from God to those that draw us closer to Him.

? Gaius demonstrates that he is walking in the truth by showing hospitality (vv.5-6). How else can we demonstrate that we are walking in the truth?

Possible Answers: Living in such a way that aligns with the Gospel message--caring for the downtrodden and showing Christ’s love. Being generous with our resources. Showing love, peace, patience, etc.

? Gaius is called faithful in vs. 3 and again in vs. 5. Based on what we see in 3 John, what does it mean to be faithful? How is this the same/different from how you defined faithfulness earlier in our study?

Possible Answers: Walking in the truth (vs. 3); providing help for fellow believers who are spreading the Gospel (vv.7-8).

? How does knowing God, and understanding Him, allow you to rely on His faithfulness?

Possible Answer: This is the only thing. If He is the only constant, then the only thing that we can have confidence in is Him. And when we see this, we trust/rely on Him.

Faithfulness In Community

? What does it mean to be in community with other believers?

Possible Answers: Representing/functioning as the Body of Christ. Knowing each other and being known. Supporting, encouraging, and pointing each other to Christ.

? Optional: In vs. 3 we see that John received joy from hearing about Gaius's faithfulness. In what ways do we celebrate others' works in the church?

Possible Answers: Acknowledging/thanking volunteers for serving. Sharing their story with others.

? How does 3 John demonstrate how faithfulness is enacted in community?

Possible Answers: Praying for each other (vs. 1); visiting and communicating (vs. 3); aiding each other (vv. 5 and 7); speaking truth [both when it is uncomfortable (vv. 9-10), and when affirming (vs. 11ff)].

? 3 John displays the joys and challenges of Gospel community. What are some of them? What are some of the joys and challenges you've experienced?

Possible Answers: Challenges--Sin! Lack of confidentiality. Misunderstanding or using truth. Jealousy. Pride. Joys--Pointing each other to Christ. Encouraging one another. Caring for one another. Showing hospitality.

? How can we as a community encourage each other to be more faithful?

For Discussion and Accountability

? In what ways can you walk in greater faithfulness this week?

? In what ways do you struggle to walk in the truth?