

A few years back there was a popular movie out called *Three men and a baby*. It was all about three eligible bachelors who lived together in their up market bachelor pad. Life was good, very good. But one day, one of the guys ex-girl friends, leaves a baby on their door step, and their perfect life turns to chaos, absolute chaos, as they try and work out how best to raise this little child.

Well this evening we are looking at another three men and a baby. Because when we turn to the book of 3 John we see depicted in front of us three men - Gaius, Diotrephes and Demetrius. And we see a baby, a baby Church. You see the Church is still in its infancy. The Church was only started a few short years ago by the Lord Jesus and it is desperately in need of leadership, of being looked after. And as we look at these three men and how they seek to look after the Church, we see conflict occurring as they try and work out in which direction the Church should go.

You see sometimes we think that our modern day Churches have a mortgage on conflict. Often we look around at the Church and we see bitter in fighting, arguments, and gossip and we pine for the good old days, you know when they had dynamic apostles who knew how to take charge; Back when they had fiery prophets, speaking God's truth from Church to Church; Back when they had men and women who'd seen Jesus and could speak from firsthand knowledge; Back when the church was free from disagreement, division, error and conflict.

Well, guess what? The Church was never like that! I'm sorry to disappoint you, but there is no such thing as the good old days when Churches had no conflict. We will find conflict in governments, in schools, in homes, even in churches. Conflict will occur. But that's no reason to pack up and go home. For the Church is still God's appointed way to deliver the good news to a lost world.

The question is are we going to be part of the problem or part of the solution? Are we going to build in this place an atmosphere where disputes are dealt with in a godly way, or just left to linger and get bigger and bigger. 3 John then will present to us three men and how they deal with the baby that is called the Church.

1. Gaius - a Christian friend And it starts off with a guy called Gaius. He's the one that the Apostle John, now an elderly man, has written to. He's the one who lives somewhere in the province of Asia and who is trying to help look after a Church that has some major problems. Well lets have a good look at Gaius. Look with me at verses 2 to 8.

Well John writes to Gaius and firstly prays that his body might be as healthy as his soul. Now that's an interesting thing to say isn't it? Today there are multi billion dollar industries helping us to lose weight, to be fit, to look good, to feel younger - but so little that will help us with the part of our being that will last for eternity.

But Gaius was obviously a man who spent time on developing his spiritual life. Who was healthy on the inside. Now how do you do that? By spending time alone with God, in prayer, in Bible reading, in worship. Spending time with others in fellowship and encouragement. And these things came first, before he worried about his diet, his physical fitness, his healthy lifestyle.

Now John is not advocating doing one, without the other. For as the apostle Paul says "*For physical training is of some value but godliness has value for all things holding promise for both*

the present life & the life to come.” John prays that for Gaius, both parts of his life are well.

John is also thankful that Gaius is faithful to the truth and walking in the truth. Now we looked at this 2 weeks ago in 2 John. Truth needs to be the foundation of our lives. We can't live for a lie. Truth, God's truth, about God's Son needs to be the rock on which our lives are built. Gaius hadn't built his life on the sands of materialism or feminism, or workaholicism but on the rock of God's truth.

In v.7 we see that Gaius supported Christian missionaries. You see when visiting preachers or teachers or evangelists came visiting to Gaius' Church, he opened up his heart to their message. He opened up his home while they were in town. He opened up his hand and helped them with physical resources to get to the next place they were going.

Remember in 2 John, the Church was warned not to help those false prophets doing the rounds of the area. Well here in 3 John Gaius is commended for helping the true workers of God in their ministry. And friends that's really important still today. When we employ our second worker we need to be the first in the queue supporting their work and helping them to give themselves to the work of our people. We need to support our missionaries and pray for them fervently.

But it is not just to our full time workers, Christian hospitality is an important way that we encourage both Christians and non Christians. So when was the last time you invited someone home with you after Church? Or met up with someone who hasn't come for a while over coffee? Christian hospitality can have a powerful influence on a person's life. For you share yourself with them.

I read a true story recently about a Bible college student who every Sunday morning would drive about 50 kms to Church and would frequently pick up hitchhikers. One day he picked up a young man at the side of the road who asked him where he was going? To church, he replied. Well can I come too? Sure.

The stranger went to Church and was invited back to lunch by a member of the congregation - there he had a great meal, as well as a hot bath and some clean clothes. This family found out that this stranger was a Christian but had wandered away from the Lord and the Church in recent times. He was currently on his way back home.

Well they put him on the bus and the next week were surprised to get a letter from this stranger. Along with a newspaper clipping with the heading “*Man turns himself in for murder*” Apparently this man had killed a teenage boy in an attempted armed hold up & had been running away from the law ever since. But the kindness & hospitality of Christians had convicted him. He wanted to be in fellowship with God again and to do this he knew he needed to own up to his crime.

Friends, Christian hospitality is a powerful reminder of the grace of God. If God has given us homes and material possessions they are not ours, they are to be shared; used for God's work. Gaius was a person who was known for his hospitality and for his love.

In fact if you wanted to summarise Gaius' life in one word, it would be *friend*. John, in fact uses this word about him three times. He was a good friend. Oh if we had more people like that in our Church. Friendly, hospitable, loving, truthful. I'm sure there would be less conflict in the Church as a whole, and more spiritual growth.

2. Diotrophes - a Christian fraud But not everyone in the Church is like Gaius. For we are soon

introduced to a guy called Diotrephes who seems to be behind most of the conflict and disharmony in this Church. What is he like? Well lets look together at v 8-10.

- * v.9 Loves to be first
- * v.10 Gossiping Maliciously
- * v.10 Vindictive
- * v.9 Defiant
- * v.10 No hospitality

Now you can't look after another, if you are always concerned about yourself. You wont be able to help others grow in the faith, if you have to always have your own way. And if someone in leadership is always pushing their own barrow, either the Church will die, or conflict will ensue.

Diotrephes has pushed the Church to the edge and is labelled by John as someone who loves to be first. Whereas true leadership is about servant leadership. It is modelled on Jesus who loved God first, others second, and himself last.

Now we have to be careful here, because the Church should want to do things God's way, not our own way. We don't come to Church to sing the sort of music I like, or to be around people whose company I enjoy. We don't come just to enjoy ourselves, we come to grow in our faith and to encourage others to walk in the truth. So just as there is no I in the word team, here is no I in the word Church.

But when people draw attention to themselves, when people are in so deep with their own troubles that they never hear what anyone else says, especially God's word, when people want the attention, the glory, the limelight, when people love to be first, the spiritual life of the whole Church is affected. And it seems this Church was affected because Diotrephes was like that.

He was also defiant. The Apostle John has authority over this church, as he was one of the 12 apostles of Jesus, but Diotrephes didn't want to have anything to do with him, he was too busy building his own little empire in the Church, than to submit to those over him. But he did more than not listen, he slandered John, He gossiped maliciously about him. Telling untruths about him. Talking behind his back.

Gossip is one of the most destructive things that can happen in a Church. We are meant to build up people in the faith, but gossip only brings people down. We are meant to encourage -- gossip, only demolishes. In fact Thomas a' Kempis once said "*Thou wilt never be spiritual minded and godly unless thou art silent concerning other men's matters and take full heed to thyself.*"

The story is told of a young man during the Middle Ages who went to a monk and said "I've sinned by telling slanderous statements about someone, what should I do now?" The monk replied, put a feather on every door step in town." The young man did that. He then returned to the monk, wondering if there was anything else he should do. The monk said, "Now go back and pick up all the feathers."

The young man replied "That's impossible. By now the wind will have blown them over town." Said the monk, "So has your slanderous word become impossible to retrieve."

Diotrephes was a malicious gossip. And the funny thing about gossiping is we're ready to expound on the latest troubles or failures about someone but we're not willing to do the slightest thing to help them.... Diotrephes was that sort of a person. So if Gaius was a Christian *friend*, then Diotrephes was a Christian *fraud*.

Now if that Church is anything like the Churches I have been in, then most people would have just closed their eyes and pretended nothing was going on. Or did what their friends were doing. Or listened to the one with the loudest voice. But John is saying in verse 11, then we should imitate what is good and not what is evil. It means making a judgement on whether people are following God's word or not. And ensuring we do the right thing, no matter what others are doing.

Friends when there is division in our Church, you shouldn't just listen to what the minister says, or what your friends say, you should do what is right. Don't avoid the situation, for the longer there is conflict in the Church, the more damage it does. Find out who is acting like Gaius and support them.

3. Demetrius a Christian follower. This is what our 3rd man seemed to do. Demetrius in verse 11 and 12 is described as

* v.11 Someone who did good * v.12 Someone who is praise worthy. * For the truth praised him * He was also approved by John

Demetrius had a good reputation. He did the right thing. And avoided the wrong thing. It was evident from what he did and what he said that the truth was with him - a great example of a Christian *follower*

So here we have it, three men and their baby, the Church. There's a friend, a fraud and a follower. Which are you most like? Which do you want to become? Then listen to the book of 3 John & see what areas of your life the Spirit of God is speaking about this evening..... So ultimately from the three men in 3 John we learn three things:

A. Christians are not always what they should be. We need to be godly, forgiving, gracious people. But we often aren't. I look at myself in the mirror each day, and I'm not the sort of person I want to be. I'm not the sort of leader, you need me to be.

But don't forget the Church is made up of people like me and you. So we will face opposition and division in the Church but will we let that affect our service? Many allow it to and walk away from the Church and their faith slips. Will we let others stop us from doing the things that God wants us to do? So often we throw our hands up and complain about what is going on in the Church, instead it should drive us to serve God and others more thoroughly.

2. Christians often allow those with Diotrephes' Disease to reign. Its easier to let the guy with the loudest voice to have their way. But the people in our Church who have positions of influence should be those who put self last, who control their tongues and who are filled with hospitality and love..

3. Lastly, Christians will often imitate other Christians. So whom are we are going to imitate - the one doing good or the one doing evil. The one who will put themselves first or the one who will serve others? The one who is faithful to the truth or who is malicious with their gossip?

The Church in 3 John had three examples to follow. But whose example in this Church are you following? And do you think anyone will follow your example? You see there are still disputes in Churches today, even ours. There are still those who love themselves more than others. There are still faithful servants of God here. Are we following them & building a Church that is powerful in word & deed. Or are we imitating the wrong example and building a Church full of hypocrites that

others will reject along with the gospel message we preach?

Well that's up to us today isn't? And how we respond to God's word. The truth is people are looking to us, right now and seeing whether the babies we hold in our hands are growing or dying. Lets ensure that those who are imitating us are just "*following us as we follow the Lord Jesus.*"

midweekchurch service
Wednesday 11th July, 2007

Welcome & Prayer

Singing "This, this is the day"
"He died upon the cross"

Kids Talk

Kid's Song "I met Jesus at the crossroads"

Announcements

Prayer Points & Prayer Time

midservice break

Song "Brother let me be your servant"

Bible Reading - 3 John

Sermon: "Three men and a baby (Church)"

1. Gaius - a Christian friend
2. Diotrephes - a Christian fraud
3. Demetrius - a Christian follower

Question & Answers?!?!

Song "In Christ Alone"
Closing Prayer

Notes and Questions