

One Chapter Wonders: 3rd John

Introduction to this Bible study (Pathways course description):

Singers or musical groups who have recorded only one recognizable song in their career are sometimes referred to as “one hit wonders.” In the Bible we might adjust and apply that phrase to those books of Scripture that consist of only a single chapter. There are five of them: Obadiah in the Old Testament, and Philemon, 2nd John, 3rd John, and Jude in the New Testament. While they may be short in length, like all of God’s Word, they are long in truth, and there is much we can learn from them. In this 6-week Bible study we will examine what God has to teach us through each of these “One Chapter Wonders.”

General Overview

- The letters of John: Who? What? When? Where? – covered last week
- *The Bible Project* – viewed last week

The Backstory

- Review of life in the early church: house churches and itinerant missionaries
- Similarities and differences between 2nd and 3rd John – approaching the same issue from different perspectives
- Review of the most prominent anti-Scriptural teachings early believers contended with and troubled the church (and against which the apostles strenuously warned):
 - Judaizers (later iterations – Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism)
 - Gnosticism (Cerinthus)
 - Arianism (anti-Trinitarian)

A Closer Look: Verse by Verse Exposition

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.

Romans 15:4: What is God Teaching Us Through This One Chapter Wonder?
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1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Related Issues, Applications and Discussion Items

1. *What is your first and/or general impression of 3rd John? When and under what personal conditions could you see yourself turning to it?*

2. *What picture of the early Christian church emerges from this little letter? What similarities or differences do you see in the church today?*

3. *What type of character sketch would you draw up for Gaius? Diotrephes? Demetrius?*

4. *What are the modern-day counterparts to the heresies and false teachings discussed earlier in this lesson?*