

GO TO THE NATIONS: OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN MISSIONS
3 JOHN

It has been suggested that Acts is the best manual for missions that the church has. We learn a tremendous amount about missions by reading Acts. But many of the principles of missions we glean in Acts are also present in 3 John, but in shortened form. If Acts is the missions manual, then 3 John is the synopsis of that manual. If Acts is the novel, then 3 John is the short story.

How will we summarize our commitment to missions?

THE GOAL OF GBC MISSIONS IS TO CULTIVATE A NETWORK OF MISSIONARIES THAT WILL EXPAND OUR GLOBAL INVOLVEMENT AND SEE PEOPLE FROM ALL THE NATIONS TRUST CHRIST, LOVE CHRIST, AND LIVE FOR CHRIST'S GLORY.

To say it more simply, *our goal is to be involved in taking the gospel to other parts of the world so those who don't know Christ will come to know Christ.*

We have previously asked and answered four questions about missions —

- ✓ What is missions?
- ✓ Why is missions important?
- ✓ What are GBC's priorities in missions?
- ✓ What are the responsibilities of missionaries?

This morning we want to address one final question about missions: what are *our* responsibilities in the missionary endeavor? What are our commitments to missions and missionaries?

1. We Commit to **SENDING** Purposefully (v. 6a)
2. We Commit to **ACTING** Worthily (v. 6b)
3. We Commit to **GIVING** Generously (vv. 7-8)
4. We Commit to **DEFENDING** Truthfully (vv. 9-12)
5. We Commit to **COMMUNICATING** Regularly (vv. 13-14)
6. We Commit to **PRAYING** Consistently (vv. 1-2)

Context: Because the name Gaius was as common in the Roman world as John is in ours, we don't know who **Gaius** is — the name is used four more times in the NT and we don't know if any of those men are the Gaius mentioned here (or if those references refer to one man or several).

We do know that John had high regard for this Gaius, and we know he evidently held a position of influence in one of the churches in Asia Minor; perhaps he was converted through John's ministry or was even an elder working under John's authority in some way. And given his generosity to the unnamed missionaries, it appears he was a wealthy and influential member of the church. John's letter affirming his relationship to this group of missionaries gives us great insight about how we are to relate to our missionaries.

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1. We Commit to **SENDING Purposefully (v. 6a)**

- In vv. 5-6a, John says that Gaius has already accomplished something for these individuals. But whatever he did for them was not the end of his responsibility. So John says, ***you will do well to send...*** In other words, there is something more to do for them.
 - ✓ This word ***send*** appears 9x in the NT, several times with emphasis on giving in relation to the sending (Acts 15:3; 1 Cor. 16:6, 11; 2 Cor. 1:16; Tt. 3:13).
 - ✓ This phrase is a reminder that there is an imperative to send believers on mission ventures. Sending is our responsibility. And sending so they are ready to go is our responsibility.
 - ✓ Missions is not optional. Missions is a necessity and it is necessary for *us* to be involved in sending missionaries to their task.
 - Everyone is a go-er or a sender; there are no other options.
 - Everyone who goes or sends is obedient; everyone who does not go or send is disobedient. There are no other options.
 - ✓ Our task is not just to send missionaries; it is to send them so they are *helped*. It is to send them so they are prepared. We don't send soldiers to battle with squirt guns. We don't send the high school freshman football team to play the Dallas Cowboys. We don't give the chef of a 5-star restaurant Tuna Helper as his only ingredient. And we don't send missionaries who are ill equipped.
 - ✓ It is our job as a church body to identify missionaries, equip and train missionaries, provide for missionaries, and send missionaries.
- **We have a responsibility to identify and train missionaries.** We are committed to being intentional in cultivating members who will give themselves to cross-cultural, foreign missionary labors. Part of cultivating missionaries will be through activities like:
 - ✓ short-term missionary opportunities. Through short trips (one week to three months), we desire to expose members to the different kinds of opportunities that exist in missions and to begin to evaluate their readiness for missions work.
 - ✓ theological training
 - ✓ evangelism training and observation
 - ✓ cross-cultural exposure in our local setting
 - ✓ biblical character development (purposeful discipleship)
 - ✓ various church ministry opportunities
- **As with any ministry task, training doesn't end when ministry begins.** The NT authors wrote to established churches and elders to further equip them for the work of the ministry (see especially books like 1-2 Corinthians, 1-2 Timothy, and Titus).

- We also understand the ongoing privilege of helping missionaries to evaluate their ministries and their fitness for those ministries.
 - ✓ This may include things like periodic evaluations of their ministry work (what they do) and ministry effectiveness (how well they do what they do)
 - ✓ And it may include providing them with additional ministry resources (books, training, education) and personal relationships (connecting them with other like-minded ministry partners)

2. We Commit to **ACTING** Worthily (v. 6b)

- When Gaius sent these missionaries on, he was to do so **in a manner worthy of God**. By that John meant, that the way he provided for these missionary evangelists should be consistent with the name and character of God.
- The sense is, “these men are servants of God and represent Him; we must care for them in a way that is consistent with the way God cares for them.”
 - ✓ We aren’t just sending missionaries; we are doing what God does when we send missionaries.
 - ✓ What does it mean to be Christlike? It means we send missionaries.
 - ✓ There is no being more consumed with God than God. God is the most God-exalting being in the universe; no one cares more for the spread of God’s fame and name than God. And when we send missionaries, we demonstrate that we are like God, caring for the fame of His name among the nations. Note what God says about the spread of His name [*Let the Nations Be Glad*, 193ff]...
 - God’s people are called to declare His name to the nations:

- **Ps. 9:11** *Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion; Declare among the peoples His deeds.*
- **Ps. 66:8** *Bless our God, O peoples, And sound His praise abroad,*
- **Ps. 96:3** *Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.*
- **Ps. 117:1** *Praise the LORD, all nations; Laud Him, all peoples!*
- **Is. 12:4** *And in that day you will say, “Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples; Make them remember that His name is exalted.”*
- **Acts 1:8** *“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

- God’s followers should pray for God’s name to be exalted among the nations:

- **Ps. 67:1-5** *God be gracious to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us — Selah.
That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations.
Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.
Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; For You will judge the peoples with uprightness And guide the nations on the earth.
Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You.*

- **Eph. 6:19-20** and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

➤ God promises that the nations will one day worship Him:

- **Ps. 45:17** I will cause Your name to be remembered in all generations; Therefore the peoples will give You thanks forever and ever.
- **Ps. 86:9** All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name.
- **Ps. 102:22** When the peoples are gathered together, And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.
- **Ps. 111:6** He has made known to His people the power of His works, In giving them the heritage of the nations.
- **Is. 11:10** Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.
- **Is. 49:6** He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also make You a light of the nations
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
- **Is. 66:18-19** "For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory. I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations."
- **Rev. 5:9-10** And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

- ✓ When we send missionaries, we value what God values; when we send missionaries, we live for God's glory; when we send missionaries, we demonstrate we are worthy of the name He has given us.
- When Gaius sent and gave, it reflected the manner of God's gifts to His people — sufficient, generous, repeated, and joyful (can you imagine God giving us anything begrudgingly?). And that should also be our pattern — we send and give as an expression of our love for Christ and to emulate Him.

3. We Commit to **GIVING Generously (vv. 7-8)** — notice the pattern of Gaius' giving

- His giving was an outgrowth of his faith (v. 5a)

- ✓ When Gaius did what he did for these missionary evangelists, he was **acting faithfully**. Exactly what he did is unnamed, but he was probably offering them lodging and food and perhaps some financial support. **Whatever** he did, it was evidence and outgrowth of his faithfulness to Christ.

- ✓ And John did this not only for his family members and church members, but even those who came to the church and his attention who were **strangers**. It is loving to care for your own children or friends; but it is an even greater demonstration of love to care for strangers (Js. 1:27).

- His giving was genuine and affirmed (vv. 5b-6a)

- ✓ Those missionaries who were cared for by Gaius returned to John's church (Ephesus) and they **testified** about Gaius' **love before the church**. In some kind of public worship service, they told of Gaius' actions for them.
- ✓ What he did for them was loving, but what these said men said was, "he really loved us!" It was not an act; it wasn't just the fulfillment of a duty, but it involved an emotional and heartfelt involvement in caring for them and their needs.

- His giving was not finished (v. 6b)

- ✓ In the middle of verse 6, John moves from commendation to a mild exhortation/encouragement.
- ✓ **You will do well** was a form that Gk writers used to make a request in a gentle way. It's like you might say to your teenager who is thinking about upcoming financial obligations to see whether or not he can afford an automobile, "*You might oughta* also think about repair costs,..."
- ✓ John was anticipating a time not only when these missionaries would come to Gaius and his church, but that they would be going out from there to other places for ministry. And Gaius was to **send them on their way** — that is, he was to provide everything for them so that they could make it to their next stopping place, providing all their needs for the journey: washing clothes before leaving, providing food and transportation, etc.
 - The one-time provision from Gaius for these men (vv. 5-6a) was not the complete task. There would be more giving needed. These workers were investing in gospel ministry and were worthy of ongoing wages. And Gaius and the church needed to be willing to continue to support them so that they could be undistracted by their physical needs and give full attention to the ministry demands.
 - If we will follow this pattern, it will require that we change the way we think about our resources. We need to recognize that God gives what we have for two reasons: 1) to meet our needs, and 2) to enable us to be generous givers (e.g., Eph. 4:28).
- Why do we support our missionaries generously? Because they can't (and won't) take support from the unbelieving world — **from the Gentiles** (v. 7b). So if we don't support them, who will? They are dependent on our gifts. *We* are the mechanism God has created to care for them.
 - ✓ Itinerant teachers were not unusual even in secular circles in the ancient world. But what was different between secular teachers and John's missionaries was their desire for remuneration.
 - ✓ It seems the false teachers of 2-3 John, however, were very willing to accept remuneration from **Gentiles** — unbelievers. The problem is not in receiving some gifts from unbelievers who are

sympathetic to a church. The problem was that these men were “selling their ministry” and seeking and pursuing their support from non-believers.

- ✓ Because of the fact that these teachers and missionaries did not have outside sources of income, John makes the conclusion, ***therefore, we ought to support such men.***
 - Notice that John includes himself in this obligation — ***we***. This is the responsibility of all believers, from the apostles to every member of the church body.
 - This is not new with John’s letter; this was and is the standing obligation of all believers — to care for those who preach and teach the gospel faithfully (e.g., Epaphroditus, who had worked hard and almost died for the Philippians, Phil. 2:29-30).
- So, like Gaius, we commit to financially supporting our missionaries as substantially as possible. We are committed to giving both intensively (significantly and generously) and extensively (to as many missionaries and ministries as we can give at an intensive level).
- We heartily affirm that because they are going out “for the sake of the name,” it is *our* joyful obligation (not the world’s responsibility) to care for them through helpful financial support in 3 particular ways:
 - ✓ Consideration for increased support will always be given to current missionary endeavors before adding new missionaries or opportunities. We want to make sure those we already are partnering with are receiving good care.
 - ✓ Our inclination will always be too fewer missionaries with greater support rather than more missionaries with lesser support.
 - ✓ Our desire is always to increase our missions giving proportionate to or greater than the expansion of our growing annual budget. And our intention is that the missions budget will be as close to or beyond 25% of the total church operating budget. Further, decreasing missions giving will always be a last resort to reducing the budget, just as reducing local staffing would be a last resort to reduce the budget.

4. We Commit to DEFENDING Truthfully (vv. 9-12)

- Gaius gave graciously (vv. 1-6); but not all those who should have given honored the Lord. That was the example of Diotrephes (vv. 9-10).
 - ✓ There is much conjecture about Diotrephes, based primarily on the meaning of his name and some supposed implications of what his background might have been.
 - ✓ Since this is the only reference to him in the NT, we just don’t know. But it might also be added, since this is his only mention in the NT, what a tragic legacy he left.
 - ✓ In Diotrephes, pride, selfishness, greed, and anger are all comingled into one tragic picture...

- He “served” so he could be preeminent (v. 9)
 - ✓ **He loves to be first...** Lit., “the one who loves to be first among you — Diotrephes...” He was prideful, ambitious, and self-serving — and John emphasized that fact, by mentioning his lack of character and morality even before he mentioned his name. It has been said Diotrephes was an “ambitious, self-seeking, power-hungry individual...”
 - ✓ The problem with pride and a desire for pre-eminence is that it denies the first place to the only One who has a right to be first — Jesus Christ (**Col. 1:18; Rom. 8:29**).
 - Because Diotrephes wanted to be first, it meant Christ would not be first.
 - Because Diotrephes had to be served, others would be left unserved.
 - Because Diotrephes was made known, Christ would not be made known.
 - Because Diotrephes was selfish in the name of Christ, the nations would assume Christ was selfish and unserving and ungracious.
 - ✓ Diotrephes was the opposite of the faithful teachers who **went out for the sake of the name** (v. 7). Diotrephes always went out for the sake of himself. And no one else.
 - ✓ Because Diotrephes wanted to be first, he also did **not accept what we say**. There was some kind of hierarchy between John and the other elders and Diotrephes and he should have submitted to their position, and he rejected it, operating as a rebellious “Lone Ranger.” He was not a servant leader and he was not repentant, since the term **does not accept** indicates that John and others had attempted to get him to change. He was entrenched in his pride.
- He spread untrue gossip (v. 10a)
 - ✓ Because Diotrephes was so rebellious, John said he was going to come to the church and address the situation. The word **if** doesn’t mean “maybe I’ll come and maybe I won’t,” but suggests the idea, “I’m not certain *when*, but I’m coming...” And John was unafraid to address all the issues of Diotrephes’ sin — **I will call attention** (“bring to remembrance”) to what he has done.
 - ✓ Specifically, Diotrephes was **unjustly accusing us with wicked words**. He was “talking nonsense” and bringing unjustified, inane, ridiculous charges against John and the other elders. It was foolish chatter and gossip except it was also untrue and malicious. Diotrephes was attempting to destroy reputations with his words. Instead of talking truthfully, he was spreading lies.
 - ✓ Notice that John says that all that kind of talk is **wicked**. John uses the word **wicked** in his first letter several times, and he generally uses it in relation to Satan (2:13-14; 3:12; 5:18-19). So we might say Diotrephes’ words were “devilish.” That’s the way it is with gossip and character assassination — it’s from the devil and it does his destructive work.
 - ✓ But even that slanderous talk wasn’t enough — Diotrephes **wasn’t satisfied** with that...
- He denied fellowship for true servants (v. 10b)
 - ✓ Diotrephes had no intention of helping the faithful teachers, but he was even more malicious in that **he does not receive the brethren** — He refused to offer assistance to the missionaries.

- ✓ And even more, **he forbids those who desire to do so**: that is, there were some in the church body who wanted to care for these faithful teachers and Diotrephes refused to let them be hospitable.
- ✓ In 2 John the woman was hospitable when she shouldn't have been; here the people in the church body were trying to be hospitable when they should have been and Diotrephes refused to allow them to practice hospitality and care. We don't know exactly how he refused them, except that perhaps it was with the threats of what he eventually did...
- He excommunicated faithful givers (v. 10c). He **put them out of the church**. So he must have had some kind of authority (was he an elder?). And he used that authority illegitimately. In a church that was largely faithful, doing the work of the ministry rightly and faithfully, this immoral man gained prominence and used all his position for ungodly ends.
- When we say we are committed to defending the gospel truthfully, we mean we want to act similarly to John as he rebuked Diotrephes. We have as a goal to protect the truth of the gospel.
 - ✓ Because the church is the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15; Jude 3-4), we have a responsibility to protect the integrity of the gospel preached.
 - ✓ We expose and disassociate from false teachers (2 Jn. 7-11; 3 Jn. 9-10)
 - ✓ We affirm those who teach the true gospel well (3 Jn. 5-8, 12).

5. We Commit to **COMMUNICATING** Regularly (vv. 13-14)

- John again (like 2 John) cuts short his letter (v. 13) and then gives final greetings (v. 14).
- He mentions that he wants to see Gaius **face to face** (desires a verbal conversation about the remaining issues) and then mentions the exchange of **greetings** between **friends**.
- When people are joined together in a church fellowship, we are brothers and sisters, but we are also **friends**. By this John infers that we enjoy one another and we love to love each other.
- Second and Third John were brief letters that were evidently written on a single sheet of parchment (not a scroll) and as he reached the bottom of the page, John said, he had many more things to write but wanted to do so in person (**face to face**) and not by **pen and paper**.
 - ✓ Both letters warranted more conversation (one to correct and the other to affirm). In both instances, some things were better left unsaid until they can be said in person. They need the warmth of an embrace and the affirmation of a smile to reflect that both the difficult and gracious messages are being said in love.
 - ✓ We are similarly committed to missionary communication:
 - We are committed to communication with the GBC body about our missionaries and needs.
 - We are committed to communication with our missionaries — including taking trips when face-to-face fellowship and ministry are beneficial and necessary.
 - The goal of this communication is to foster an attitude of “team ministry” with them.

6. We Commit to **PRAYING** Consistently (vv. 1-2)

- We commit to praying regularly for each of the missionaries, and communicating prayer needs to the church body regularly.
- John gives us a brief picture of how he prayed for Gaius. He prayed for two things:
 - ✓ He prayed for John's general **prosperity**. This can refer to material gain (1 Cor. 16:2); more likely John just means, "I am praying for your life to be fruitful as you pursue your labors." Given what he says at the end of this verse, the emphasis is almost certainly more spiritual than physical.
 - ✓ He also prayed for Gaius' **health**. That was not insignificant in a time without antibiotics and the modern medical tools we have. Perhaps Gaius already had experienced health problems. So John is quick to ask the Lord to sustain John's health. Two observations:
 - There are few examples of praying for the health of others in Scripture, but here is a clear example of that; it's obviously appropriate to pray when people are ill.
 - But what was of greater concern (and joy) for John was Gaius' spiritual health — so he asks that Gaius' physical health will match the **prosperity of your soul**. Gaius was thriving spiritually and that was what John particularly prayed for him.
- A healthy church is a church where the members pray for each other. A healthy missions ministry is a ministry that is covered in prayer. So we are committed to missionary praying.
- How can you pray for our missionaries?
 - ✓ Read their prayer letters and listen when they speak in our services; they will tell you.
 - ✓ Pray the way John prayed for Gaius (vv. 1-2).
 - ✓ Pray the way Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him (Eph. 6:19-20)
 - ✓ Pray the way you might for any other believer (**Rom. 12:12**; 15:30; **Phil. 1:3-11**; **Col. 1:9-12**).

CONCLUSION: What should we do with these messages?

1. Recognize that if I am obedient to God, I will either go or send. I cannot do nothing. I must do something to spread the fame of God's name among the nations. I must either start packing or give so others can go.
2. Pray for God to send people from GBC. And pray for those He has already sent.
3. Purposefully look for people in our body who exhibit gifts that correspond to going. And then ask questions and give encouragement and build into them so they can go.

"Not every Christian is called to be a missionary, but every follower of Christ is called to be a world Christian. A world Christian is someone who is so gripped by the glory of God and the glory of his global purpose that he chooses to align himself with God's mission to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). Everything a world Christian does is with a view of the hallowing of God's name and the coming of God's kingdom among all the peoples of the earth. The burning prayer of the world Christian is, 'Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!' So whether we are those who send or those who go, let us glory in the supremacy of God in missions, and let us link arms together as we join the refrain of old, 'Let the nations be glad!'" [Tom Stellar, in *Let the Nations Be Glad!* 264.]

BENEDICTION: **1 Thess. 5:23-24**