

Henry Ow  
HCC: Short and Sweet  
3 John

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Image: J.O. Fraser realized that he needed help from believers at home to share the gospel with the Lisu
2. Need: We think our work ends when a missionary arrives in the field
3. Subject: How do we continue the work of sending even when missionaries are on the field?
4. Text: 3 John
5. Preview: We'll look at the text, principle, and application.

#### BODY

- I. John instructs Gaius to continue sending missionaries well rather than follow the poor example of Diotrephes (3 John) [Text]
  - A. John congratulates Gaius for sending missionaries well (3 John 3-8)
    1. Gaius's actions correspond with his beliefs (3 John 3-4)
    2. Gaius received traveling missionaries he had never met (3 John 5)
    3. John instructs Gaius to send these brothers off with their needs met (3 John 6)
    4. Missionaries should find their needs met by believers and not non-believers (3 John 7)
      - a. The word for Gentile is not "ethnos"
      - b. The word here is "ethnikon" referring to non-believers.
    5. John says that when Gaius supports the works of missionaries he also partakes in their work (3 John 8)
  - B. John condemns Diotrephes for not sending missionaries (3 John 9-10)
    1. Diotrephes fails to submit to the authority of John (3 John 9)
    2. Diotrephes speaks untruths about church leaders (3 John 10a)
    3. Diotrephes refuses to send missionaries well (3 John 10b)
    4. Diotrephes prevents other church members from sending missionaries well (3 John 10c)
    5. Diotrephes should be condemned (3 John 11)
  - C. John commends Demetrius to Gaius (3 John 12)
- II. The church has the responsibility of sending missionaries well [Principle]
  - A. A church has the responsibility to send missionaries to preach the gospel (3 John 7a)
    1. Peter and John suffered for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41)
    2. God foretold what Paul would suffer for the name of Christ (Acts 9:16)
    3. Paul and Barnabas suffered for the name of Christ (Acts 15:26)
  - B. A church has the responsibility to provide for the needs of missionaries (3 John 6, 7b)
    1. Paul expects the Roman church to provide for his needs (Rom 15:24)

2. Paul expects the Corinthian church to provide for his needs (1 Cor 16:6)
3. Paul expects the church at Crete to help Zenas and Apollos (Titus 3:13)
- C. A church has the responsibility to send missionaries with partners not sponsors (3 John 8; Matthew 10:41)

- III. Send missionaries with needs met [Application]
  - A. Meet their financial needs
  - B. Meet their spiritual needs
  - C. Meet their relational needs

#### CONCLUSION

1. Review: 3 John highlights the importance of sending missionaries. The principle is a gospel shaped community send missionaries well. A gospel shaped community send missionaries well.
2. Closing Image: After the death of J.O. Fraser, the Lisu church would continue to grow and flourish the midst of persecution.

## MANUSCRIPT

When James O Fraser completed his degree in engineering at Imperial college in London, he didn't begin work at a company. Instead he prepared to go to China as a missionary by attending the China Inland Mission training school. Then the day came. Sufficient support had been raised. Training had been completed. He left for China. He worked specifically with the Lisu people in Yunnan. After many difficult years of sharing the gospel with them, the Lisu began to come to faith. But these young converts had a hard time grasping fundamentals of the faith. **J.O. Fraser realized that he needed to help from believers at home for these Lisu believers to grow in their faith.** He couldn't do it on his own. His solo prayers were insufficient. He needed the help of other believers. He wrote this to his supporters at home: **"I am trying to roll the main responsibility of this prayer-warfare on you. I want you to take the burden of these people upon your shoulders, I want you to wrestle with God for them."** He needed believers not only to send him with financial means but also with spiritual support in prayer.

**Many of us think that our responsibility as senders ends when we drop a missionary off at the airport.** The house has been sold. Everything is packed into the maximum number of carry-on luggage's. Financial needs have been met. We have sent them off. The missionaries are on their way. We'll hear from them in their quarterly updates. Maybe we'll see them on they return for home assignment. But our responsibility to send doesn't end when we drop off a missionary at the airport curb.

**Missionaries still require our support.** There will be spiritual struggles ahead. It will be a struggle to learn the language. It's not just wrestling to decipher these foreign sounds that make up a language or reading new script, but wrestling with the question: "Will I ever get this

language? I can barely speak at a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level. How can I possibly share the gospel with people here?" It might be struggle with loneliness. To go to an unreached people group is to be cut off from Christian community. No one else knows the lyrics to Amazing Grace or Christ alone. No one else has heard the name of John Piper or Tim Keller. It might be the struggle with doubt: "Did I make the right decision to pack up my family and move them to this foreign place where they may be more susceptible to disease?" The struggle continues and as senders we have a responsibility to support our missionaries.

#### **How do we continue the work of sending even when missionaries are on the field?**

When the missionaries reach their field destination, how do we continue to support them? How do we continue to send even where they're out of sight? How do we continue the work of sending?

To answer this question, we'll look at a letter written by the apostle John. It's a rather short letter. Some have called it a post card epistle. It is a letter written to a particular person and particular context. But it talks about the topic of sending. This letter is 3 John. The letter has already been read to us. Again, the text for this morning is 3 John.

This morning, to answer the question: "How do we continue the work of sending even when missionaries are on the field?", we'll look first at the text. What does the text say? What is John writing about? What is the text saying? Next, we'll look at a principle. What is the timeless principle that God wants to communicate to us through the apostle John. What is the principle? Lastly, we'll look at some application. Again, **we'll look at the text, then the principle, and the application.**

First, what does the text say? The letter of 3 John can be summarized as this: **John instructs Gaius to continue sending missionaries well rather than follow the poor example of Diotrephes.** John has word of exhortation for Gaius. He has a word of instruction. John wants Gaius to continue supporting Christian workers that come his way. John warns Gaius not to follow the practices of Diotrephes who serves as a bad example. **John instructs Gaius to continue sending missionaries well rather than follow the poor example of Diotrephes.**

The letter of 3 John can be broken down to three sections. First, John congratulates Gaius. Second, John condemns Diotrephes. Third, John commends Demetrius.

Let's look first at John congratulating Gaius. **John congratulates Gaius for sending missionaries well.** John applauds the practices of Gaius. He praises Gaius for doing well by helping those who are missionaries that pass through. **John congratulates Gaius for sending missionaries well.**

What does Gaius do to do well? First, **Gaius actions correspond with his beliefs.** His beliefs inform his actions. John uses the metaphor of walking to describe this. We see the phrase: "walking in truth" repeated twice. Look with me at verse 3 and 4: *"For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."* Another way of saying: "walking in the truth" is "living with integrity." Gaius not only taught: "Extend hospitality to others", but he also practiced hospitality.

Second, **he received traveling missionaries he had never met.** He provided hospitality to believers, whom he had no prior history. Verse 5 says: *"Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the*

*church."* Imagine this. These brothers on their way to preach the gospel in another town stop by Gaius's house. They knock on the door. Gaius opens up the door and he sees these guys and asks: "Who are you?" They may have responded: "We are sent by the apostle John." Or maybe they had some kind of code phrase: "I hear that the bread is fresh in your house today." And Gaius would have replied: "Ah... and so is the fish." The believers could have also said: "the Lord has risen." The Gaius would reply: "He has risen indeed." Somehow, Gaius examined these brothers to determine that they were believers and gave them shelter.

Third, **John instructs Gaius to send these brothers off with their needs met.** John writes this in the later half of verse 6: *"You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God."* What does the phrase: "manner worthy of God" mean? As someone once said: "Money. Money. Money." But I would go further and say provide for their needs. Maybe they need a coat. You have an extra. Give it to them. Do they need food for their travels? Give it to them. Refill their water skins. Give them whatever they need so that they would not be in want.

Why does Gaius need to provide for the needs of these missionaries? Missionaries should find their needs met by believers not non-believers. Read with me in verse 7: *"For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles."* The word: Gentiles here is not the usual word: "ethnos" referring to non-Jews. But it is the word: "ethnikon" often referring to non-believers. Hence, missionaries should have no need to ask non-believers for help. Why? If non-believers began giving money to missionaries, then they may misunderstand that the gospel can be bought rather than a free gift.

The phrase: “for the sake of the name” indicates that these believers are sharing the gospel with others in response to their belief in Jesus Christ.

Lastly, **John says that when Gaius supports the work of missionaries he also partakes in their work.** When these missionaries share the gospel with others, Gaius also has a part in that work as well. John writes in verse 8: *“Therefore, we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers.”* Note the word: fellow workers. The church serves as a partner to these missionaries. They are teammates.

For all these reasons, John congratulates Gaius for sending these missionaries well. Because they report to John that Gaius has done a great job in providing support for their ministry.

The letter then moves into the condemnation of another believer: Diotrephes. This part forms the second part of the letter. In this part, **John condemns Diotrephes for not sending missionaries well.** What does John condemn? There are four matters.

First, **Diotrephes fails to submit to the authority of John.** He refuses to listen to the apostle. John writes in verse 9: *“I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first does not acknowledge our authority.”* Note the phrase: *“likes to put himself first.”* Diotrephes preferred to be in charge. He wanted to be the man of influence. He needed to call the shots. Some called him Diotrephes the Dictator or domineering Diotrephes.

Second, **Diotrephes speaks untruths about other church leaders.** He spreads rumors and gossip that are simply untrue. Look at verse 10: *“So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us.”* He overinflates the truth for his advantage. He

knows how to spin things to present himself in a wonderful light and others in shades of grey. For John, this is a confrontable offense.

Third, **Diotrephes refuses to send missionaries well.** He refuses them housing or provisions. Instead of welcoming them, he says: “Why don’t you check out the local inn?” Look at the later half of verse 10. It says: *“And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers.”* Unlike Gaius, he turns away missionaries sent by John.

Lastly, **Diotrephes prevents other church members from sending missionaries well.** It’s not enough that Diotrephes doesn’t welcome these missionaries he prevents others from to so. Let’s look at the remainder of verse 10: *“and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.”* He goes so far as excommunicates church members who welcome missionaries.

From all that has been described here John never mentions that Diotrephes holds to any false doctrine. In fact, Diotrephes could have passed any doctrinal exam. He may have known his Bible and theology. But the issue is that these truths he knew didn’t translate into action. Diotrephes may have known the truth, but he certainly didn’t walk in truth.

I’m sure that there are many who may be able to recite passages of Scripture and write position papers, but they care little for people. Theology and Bible serves as a means of control rather than a means to care for people.

John cites that the behavior of Diotrephes should be condemned. It’s alluded to in verse 11: *“Beloved do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.”* In other words, John encourages Gaius to continue doing good by sending missionaries well and not follow the example of Diotrephes who hinders gospel work.

We'll move now into the last section of the letter. In this last section, **John commends Demetrius to Gaius**. Demetrius may have been the messenger carrying this letter to Gaius. But it's unsure whether or not it's true. Regardless, John thinks highly of Demetrius and hopes that Gaius will extend to him gracious hospitality. Why? Demetrius has proven himself to be faithful to the ministry of the gospel. Read with me in verse 12: *"Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true."* John and the church vouch for the faithfulness of Demetrius. He comes with glowing letters of recommendation. But this recommendation or good testimony can only come from a life that has been examined over years. You don't develop a good testimony in day, weeks, or months. But the church continued to watch Demetrius and saw that his life aligned with his theology. He walked in truth.

So we look at the contents of this letter written by John. We see that John instructs Gaius to continue sending missionaries well rather than follow the poor example of Diotrephes. We move onto the second part of the message. What is the principle? What is the timeless truth that John has for us that was true then and is true now?

**The church has the responsibility of sending missionaries well.** The church has a role to send those whom God has called out to share the gospel with the unreached. It has a job to support those deployed to mission work. The church has the responsibility of sending missionaries well.

We'll look at three different areas of responsibility. First, **a church has a responsibility to send missionaries to preach the gospel**. You're thinking to yourself: "Well... isn't that the definition of a missionary?" Yes! A missionary should be one who preaches the gospel in a

cross-cultural setting. But we have to remember that missions work is not solely creating social programs to help communities. Social programs can be a platform for sharing the gospel. But the gospel must be central in the ministry of missionaries. Look with me again at verse 6: *"For they have gone out for the sake of the name"* Why did these missionaries go out? It was to share about Jesus Christ had done. Whenever the phrase: "the sake of the name" is used elsewhere in the New Testament, it refers to people who were willing to suffer persecution for the gospel. For instance, if you turn with me to **Acts, chapter 5, verse 41**, you'll read: *"Then they (referring to Peter and John) left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worth to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name."* Turn with me also to Acts, chapter 9, verse 16. God says this in regards to Paul: "For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." Let's turn to one more passage in **Acts, chapter 15, verse 26**: "men (referring to Paul and Barnabas) who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Each of these instances indicate people will to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ.

Why? Why is it central for us to send missionaries to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ? If we believe in the gospel, then we actually believe we live in a broken world. Sin prevents people from responding to God and leads to people living apart from him. This led to God sending his son to die on a cross to reconcile us to him and give us new life through his resurrection. But the only way that people can be reconciled to God is through hearing the gospel preached to them. In order for them to hear, it requires a messenger to share with them.

Some of these nonbelievers live in faraway and hard to reach areas. If we believe in the gospel, then we believe that apart from faith in Christ their destiny is an eternity apart from

God. Unless they hear the gospel, people be forever lost. Before we even think about the logistics and material means of sending a person, we need to ask: “Do we believe in the gospel? Do we believe that the name of Jesus is the only name that can save? Do we have God’s compassion for the lost?”

It is the church’s responsibility to get the gospel to the lost. It may be our neighbors, but even our international neighbors. And to reach these international neighbors, we have a responsibility to send those who preach the gospel.

Second, **a church has the responsibility to provide for the needs of missionaries.** The church has the burden that missionaries has the necessary supplies to carry out their work. Look with me back at **3 John verse 6**: “*You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of the Lord.*” The word: “send” has the idea of helping a person in their journey in other parts of the New Testament. Let’s look at the book of **Romans, chapter 15, verse 24.** Paul writes: “*I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company in a while.*” Paul expects the church and Rome to provide material help for him to go to minister in Spain. We also see this request in 1 Corinthians. Look with me at **1 Corinthians, chapter 16, verse 6.** Paul writes: “*And perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey wherever I go.*” Again, Paul requests help from the Corinthian church for his ongoing missionary journey. We’ll look at one more passage. Turn with me to **Titus, chapter 3, verse 13.** Paul writes to Titus: “*Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing.*” The word: “speed” is the same word used in 3 John to send. Paul encourages Titus to help Zenas and Apollos on their way to ministry. The early church has the practice of helping

their missionaries in their work. Likewise, the church in the present age has a similar responsibility to help others as well. We’ll talk about more practical means of supporting missionaries in a few minutes.

I’d like to turn to our third responsibility as a church. **The church has a responsibility to send missionaries with partners not sponsors.** The church needs to see itself as partners with missionaries and not just a funding entity. The church is not just a place to give out grants for missionaries. The church has a responsibility to send missionaries with partners not sponsors.

Look with me again at **3 John verse 8**: “*Therefore, we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*” See how John calls those who provide support for missionaries as fellow workers. Where does John get this idea from? He may get it from Jesus himself. Look with me at **Matthew, chapter 10, verse 41.** Jesus says this: “*The one who receives a prophet will receives a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward.*” In other words, whoever helps out a prophet will partake in receiving a part of the same reward.

Let me see if I can illustrate this a little further. Think of the film Mission Impossible. We know that in the Mission Impossible films, Tom Cruises’ character Ethan Hunt is the main hero. Often times, he is tasked with stealing some kind of top-secret file or weapon. But he can’t do it on his own. In order to break into the top-secret vault, he needs the computer guy who can crack into the computer system to turn off the security cameras. He needs another person to serve as a decoy and distract the guard. Another guy needs to man the getaway car, so that when Ethan Hunt grabs the file he can get away. An entire team is required to pull off this one mission. Ethan Hunt can’t do it alone. Although Ethan Hunt may have grabbed the file,

he needed an entire team to support him. As missionaries go into the field, they need partners and teammates to hold the line as they serve. We should see ourselves as partners and not just merely those who write a check.

So we know that the church has a responsibility to send missionaries well. How do we do it? What are practical steps to do this?

**Send missionaries with their needs met.** Know the needs of missionaries and meet them. Figure out what needs exist and provide for them. **Send missionaries with their needs met.**

I'll offer three areas of needs. These are by no means exhaustive. First, **meet their financial needs.** Meet their financial needs. Consider being financial partners with missionaries by sending them financial support either monthly one time. One of the things that aspiring missionaries dread is raising financial support. They hate asking for your financial aid because they feel like a telemarketer or salesperson. Instead of waiting for them to schedule a time to meet with you, why don't you take the first step. If you know a brother or sister is planning on going to the mission field, then ask them out for a cup of coffee. Ask them about their ministry and how they are doing. Instead of waiting for them to bring up the finance question, ask them: "How can I financially support you as you serve the Lord? Where are you in terms of raising finances?" Take the initiative to meet their financial needs.

Second, **meet their spiritual needs.** How do you do that? Set aside time to pray for the missionaries that you support. Let's say you support five missionaries. Set aside one day each week to pray for them and their ministry. Or you can set aside time in your small group each week for one of your members to share about a missionary that they support and pray for

them. Not only can you pray for the missionaries you know, but you can also send them spiritual books. If a missionary is serving among an unreached people group, they don't have access to Lifeway or Christianbook.com. Maybe you can send them a Christian book that encouraged you.

Third, **meet their relational needs.** Serving on the field can get lonely. There are not many other believers around to encourage and pray for you. Yes... You may have a team. But your teammate could be in the next town or city over. What can you do to meet their relational needs? When you receive an update letter, write them a reply. A lot of updates I receive end with something like: "Please let us know how you are doing" or "Let us know how we can be praying for you". Instead of just hitting archive, delete, or move onto another email, take some time to write back. Of course, if the missionary is serving in a creative access nation, then be careful in what you write. But think about writing them an update about yourself. Some of you may want to go the extra mile. With the advent of many options of video conference, you could consider taking time to video chat a missionary. Yes... this might mean that you have to get up early or stay up late. But many of you already stay up late watching a Netflix show or updating your Instagram account. Maybe you can think about how to maintain these friendships even as they are overseas, rather than just catching up when they return.

Again, to recap this morning's message. We first talked about the message of 3 John. **John instructs Gaius to continue sending missionaries well rather than follow the poor example of Diotrephes.** Next, we talked about the principle from this book. **The church has the responsibility of sending missionaries well.** We concluded with an application. **Send missionaries with needs met.**

I wanted to conclude with the story of J.O. Fraser. What happened after J.O. Fraser requested the prayers of supporters for these Lisu believers. More workers came to work amongst the Lisu. Moreover, the Lisu church began to flourish. Not only did more Lisu come to faith in Christ, but the Lisu church began sending its own missionaries to nearby villages. This work could not have come about without the partnership between missionaries like J.O. Fraser and senders at home.