



## “Following the Right Person”

*3 John 11-15*

**Theme:** Believers are expected to imitate godliness they see in others who are deliberately following Christ.

**Introduction:** We all know that the ultimate destination of our lives is to be conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is to what we have been predestined. In the process of being transformed into His image, God uses a variety of means to do the work. All of these means involve the ability to gain glimpses of Jesus Christ – causing transformation with each view of Him. Obviously foremost in the exposing of Christ is the Scriptures – God’s written Word designed to reveal the Living Word. Another means that God uses is the view of Christ that we gain as Christ is formed in other believers around us. As we see the grace of God operating in others’ lives, we ought to seek to imitate what God is accomplishing in them. In our text we see an example held up by the Apostle John for Gaius to examine and imitate – the example of Demetrius.

### I. Seek Those Who Have a Godly Testimony – *1:11-12*

#### A. THE IMITATION OF A GODLY TESTIMONY – *v. 11a*

1. John begins this section by means of a pivot from the negative, evil influences blatantly viewed in the life of Diotrephes to the positive, righteous influences seen in the life of Demetrius.
2. The principle that John uses is first stated clearly: *“Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.”*
3. Gaius is being urged here to be discerning in the midst of the obvious schism that exists in their church to be sure to side with righteousness and not with Diotrephes in his refusal to “receive the brethren,” namely Diotrephes.

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4. We have the choice of “*imitating*” [μιμέομαι] (Pres. Mid. Imperative) – an exhortation to a consistent practice of using something as a model for one’s own behavior:

- a) “*Evil*” [κακός] – indicates the lack in a person of those qualities which should be possessed – either morally corrupt or injurious – a description of Diotrephes’ character and conduct.
- b) “*Good*” [ἀγαθός] – indicates that which is good in its character, beneficial in the effect, or what is consistent with God’s own nature – everything that it ought to be.

5. We ought to be seeking to identify those whose character and conduct is godly – able to lead us in a God-ward direction through their influence.

### B. THE INSTIGATION OF A GODLY TESTIMONY – v. 11b

1. Where does such a testimony find its origin? – John declares: “*The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.*”

2. His point here is simple – in order to have a good testimony, one must possess a vibrant relationship with God – cp. [1 John 2:3-6](#)

3. Of course, those who have a relationship with God enter such a relationship through the grace of God in justification by faith and are actively engaged in being sanctified through obedience to Him.

4. “Obedience is, however, the external, visible proof of salvation ([John 14:15, 21](#)).”<sup>1</sup>

- a) Diotrephes’ rebellion against God demonstrates that he was not walking in the Light.
- b) Demetrius’ obedience proves that he is walking in the Light – cp. [1 John 1:7](#).

### C. THE INDICATION OF A GODLY TESTIMONY – v. 12a

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, p. 259

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1. When one's testimony is the result of fellowship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, one's testimony is evident to those around you.
2. John states: "*Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone ...*"
3. This is an essential quality of anyone who will be a spiritual leader – cp. *1 Timothy 3:7*.

## II. Seek Those Who Have Regard for Scripture – *1:12b*

### A. THE RECOGNITION OF AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

1. John continues to describe the kind of person that we ought to follow – "*Demetrius has received a good testimony from ... the truth itself ...*"
2. There is the suggestion of bi-directional activity ongoing through this statement.
3. First, one must purposefully submit themselves to the Word of God in order for it to have its sanctifying affect upon one's life – cp. *2 Timothy 2:15*.

### B. THE RECOGNITION OF AUTHENTICITY BY SCRIPTURE

1. The result of yielding to the influence of Scripture is the transformation that it produces in conforming one to the image of Christ Jesus.
2. We are told that the product of God's Word is a disciple becomes "adequate, equipped for every good work." – *2 Timothy 3:17*
3. Throughout Scripture, we are told that the progress in Christlikeness comes from the influence of God's Word – cp. *John 17:17*.

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4. Only those whose lives are demonstrating the consistent influence of God's Word ought to be identified as examples to be followed – *1 Timothy 4:11-16*.

### **III. Seek Those Who Have the Confidence of Leadership** – *1:12c-15*

#### **A. THE AFFIRMATION BY THE LEADERSHIP – v. 12c**

1. Finally, a person who is a good example will also be one in whom the leadership has confidence – *“... and we add our testimony, and you know our testimony is true.”*
2. John is declaring here that Demetrius is a man affirmed by the spiritual leadership – including the Apostle John.
3. The endorsement of the leadership is an essential element in others' having confidence in the authenticity of a person's spiritual condition.
4. This is behind the practice of ordination.

#### **B. THE ASSOCIATION IN MINISTRY – vv. 13-15**

1. John closes this short letter in a similar way as he did 2 John.
2. He describes the collegial relationship that exists between spiritual leaders – *“I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face.”*
3. There is a desire to fellowship together as they share in the truth – and not merely write to one another.
4. In addition, the aspiration of John is for Gaius to know God's peace – *“Peace be to you.”*
5. He finally reveals in the mutual friendships that exist between these leaders – *“The friends greet you. Greet the friends by*

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*name.”*

6. This demonstrates that some of Gaius' friends are with John and John's friend are with Gaius.
7. The intimacy of friendship within spiritual leadership is one of the sweet, affirming features of truly godly leadership.