

The Diotrephes Problem

Description

3 John 1:1-8.

It all comes down to people, specific people. Three men are cited by name in John's third letter: Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius. The apostle John is believed to have spent many decades leading the churches in and around Ephesus. The church at this time was suppressed and needed to operate quietly. Typically, they met in private homes. John kept in contact with these churches with letters and occasional visits.

This letter is addressed to Gaius, who demonstrated hospitality by welcoming fellow Christians on a mission through his area. They were refused welcome by Diotrephes, a proud leader who "loved to be first" (v. 9). He also spread "malicious nonsense" (v. 10) about others and put out of the church anyone who disagreed with him. The time had come for John to deal with the "Diotrephes problem."

John mentions Demetrius, a leader "well-spoken of by everyone" (v. 12). Even struggling churches often have potential leaders who need to be encouraged, trained, and brought forward.

Such conflicts must be dealt with humbly, prayerfully, and redemptively, always working "together for the truth" (v. 8). After all our name, "Christian," is on the line.

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