

SIMPLE STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

LEADER'S STUDY GUIDE



Cliff Walk at Pourville
Claude Monet

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk [live] in truth”.

1 John 1:4

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The Third Epistle of John

Human Author: The Apostle John
Divine Author: God the Holy Spirit
Date of Writing: c. 60-95 AD
Key Thought: Do not fellowship with evil

Key Verse 3 John 1:11

“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”

Introduction

As the *Second Epistle of John* dealt with a specific problem common to Christians in every generation in the form of false doctrine, so does the *Third Epistle of John*. The issue was the problem of authority in the local assembly. Since no sin ever exists alone, a number of concerns had to be addressed.

3 John 1

1 The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

1:1 The epistle begins on a very positive note as John refers to himself as *“the Elder”*. He is writing to the well beloved Gaius. Four times John will call Gaius beloved (1, 2, 5, and 11) demonstrating great affection for his Christian brother. By using this word John reflects a capacity to love and to be loved. Not all people are lovely. Not all people are capable of loving.

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

1:2 In 3 John 2, John expresses a common ancient form of greeting with this exception. He desires that the physical health of Gaius might be equal to the spiritual health of his soul. The focus of attention is played upon the soul’s prosperity. It may have been that Gaius had suffered either a financial or a physical decline. John would have his friend to be spiritually healthy, economically sound and physically fit. When the saints enjoy all three facets of prosperity there is balance to life. The word for prosper is made up of two words which literally means *“a good road”*. The good road is strength, spirituality, and financial soundness. May God grant such prosperity to all of His children.

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

1:3 The apostle had heard many good reports about his beloved Gaius. It was the testimony of the saints that Gaius continued to walk in the sphere of truth. The apostles saw far too large a number of men and women embrace Christianity only to turn away. Gaius did not turn. He heard the gospel. He believed it and he gave heart, soul and mind to live up to the truth as he understood the gospel.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk [live] in truth.

1:4 So delighted was John to hear of the steadfastness of Gaius that he writes of the personal joy he received. For John, Gaius was one of his own spiritual children or converts.

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

1:5 One form of evidence that Gaius was walking in the sphere of truth was based upon how he treated the saints (3 John 5, 6). From this we learn that it does not matter if a person is the greatest theologian, the wisest businessman, the most efficient organizer in the church, if that person mistreats others in the body of Christ. When another abuses a Christian by conduct or by words, there can be no confidence of personal salvation for the individual who is deliberately hurting others. God's people are more cautious, more gracious, and more generous than all others (Gal. 5:19-21). Beyond doubt, Gaius was a man of grace, for he was faithful to constantly make welcome in his home the people of God and strangers. For a variety of reasons the gift of hospitality is not spoken of much today and yet it is a priceless gift. It is priceless because it is rare. It is rare because it is possible to enjoy our homes, our privacy and possessions too much. Nevertheless, it seems that in every congregation there are those who enjoy entertaining guests. They do not mind the inconvenience or the short notice. Home is home and there is no need to unduly prepare things. *"Come in,"* such Great Hearts tell people, *"and make yourselves welcome."*

6 Which have borne witness of thy charity [love] before the church: whom if thou bring forward [help] on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

1: 6 Many a person had been blessed by the hospitality of Gaius and soon the word spread back to John (3 John 6). Besides providing personal hospitality, Gaius also provided financial assistance to the ministers of the gospel. In a day and age where individuals can make a mockery of the gospel by swindling God's people, it is forgotten that most ministers serve faithfully and help people more than they hurt them. The church at large has always taken its responsibility seriously to provide for the work of the gospel. In the *Old Testament* this was true illustrated by the provisions for the priesthood. And in the *New Testament* there are many passages which remind the saints of their responsibilities to ministers such as Galatians 6:6, *"Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacher in all good things."* Of course the Bible teaches that an Elder or a minister should not be *"greedy of filthy lucre"* (1 Tim. 3:3). So there is a balance. Ministers are to labor in the *Word*, both to study it and to present it. God's people are to take care of their needs under the guidance of 1 Corinthians 9:9-11.

“For it is written in the Law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn” (cf. 1 Tim. 5:8). God will honor those who honor Him. One way to honor the Lord is to take care of those who minister to the church.

7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

1:7 In this verse the apostle recognizes that since Gaius took care of the financial needs of the ministers, they did not have to take monies from the Gentiles or from the non-professing community. The principle is that God's people can find a way to take care of God's work. The result is the joy of being a fellow helper or co-worker in the Kingdom of God.

8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth.

Beginning in 3 John 9 the tone of this lovely letter takes a dramatic turn for the worse as John feels compelled to publicly write about a man named Diotrephes. To expose in public the misdeeds of someone is a very serious matter and yet church discipline is essential to Christian maturity. One good guiding rule is that private sins should be dealt with privately and public sins publicly. Since the sins of Diotrephes were before all, John will address the problem accordingly.

9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

1:9 The specific sin of Diotrephes was that he loved to have the pre-eminence among the believers in the local assembly. This was a very serious charge that John made against Diotrephes for several reasons.

- Self-promotion violates all the teachings of Christ to be humble in spirit and in actions. *Matt. 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*
- Self-promotion violates the example of Jesus who humbled Himself. *“No man,”* said Jesus, *“is above His Master.” Luke 6:40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.*
- Self-promotion puts the philosophy of the world inside the church. The world says to look out for self. The world says that greed is good. The world says to get all the gusto you can get out of life. The world is in conflict with Christ for the Lord would have His people co-operate and not compete with one another for position, power or prestige.

Diotrephes is not an innocent victim. He has a real problem that is spiritual in nature. The first sign of the sin of this professing saint might have been that Diotrephes kept his name *“Zeus-nourished”* even after his conversion. It was a common practice in the early churches that when a person came to faith they changed their name, especially if it represented the pagan world.

Be that as it may, Diotrephes is called an ambitious man in the worst sense of the word for, says John, he loved to have the preeminence which means he wanted to be the leader in the local assembly. This brings up the question of leadership in the local church. That the church needs leaders is obvious. That individuals desire to be leaders is very biblical (1 Tim. 3:1). *"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."* However, it must always be kept in mind that church leadership is ultimately based upon a divine appointment confirmed by specific qualifications being met. If individuals arise in the assembly such as Diotrephes, it is because the church does not hold the leadership to strict biblical accountability. What happens then? Unholy ambitions take hold of the heart. Unchecked attitudes and actions begin to take place, which always hurts someone else. Spiritual leadership becomes a test of friendship not faithfulness to biblical principles.

Power is subtle. There are situations where the real power lies not in the ordained leadership of God, but abides in well meaning but unauthorized souls who have gained authority through time, money, or force of personality in the use of fear and intimidation. There is trouble when the feet want to be hands or one part of the body wants to be another.

Power is addictive. The more a person feels in control of others, the more complete control the individual desires. The biblical antidote for this is to have a plurality of leadership, to have accountability, and to teach openly against this addiction.

Power is possessive. It wants to make all the decisions while avoiding responsibility for any negative consequences.

Diotrephes was a man consumed by the lust for power. The subtle influence of power had come to dominate him so that he was addicted to it. He was possessive of his position of power. The evidence for John's charge was that Diotrephes dared to reject the apostle John's authority. Nor would Diotrephes receive into the church fellowship anyone whom John sent. Such was the height of the sin of Diotrephes that the chosen leadership of the Lord was ignored. John was shown no respect and he was resisted in every way.

10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.

1:10 John warns Diotrephes and the church at large, what his course of action was to be. It was wise for John to do that for three good reasons.

- There is time for Diotrephes to repent.
- There is a word of warning to all the rest.
- A surprise form of discipline is not fair or just. A child who has never been spanked for bad behavior is often stunned when harsh discipline is given for the first time. The same mental and emotional reaction takes place in the soul of a church member.

When John comes to the church he promises to expose in public the words and actions of Diotrephes. He does not try to excommunicate him, which is a more normal attempt of a fleshly heart. John's heart is different. Still, it is well within human nature to resent correction and to hurt any and all that administer it. Diotrephes had a will that defied even apostolic authority. He was fluent in defending his way. He was eloquent in denouncing all others who disagreed with his policies. He was totally wrong. And in his wrongness, Diotrephes hurt others with deliberate intent (3 John 10).

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good [practices] is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

1:11 In tenderness of heart, John pleads with the saints not to imitate the evil of Diotrephes in hurting the ministers of God and casting them out of the assembly. To imitate a Diotrephes in attitude and in action is to reveal a heart not born of God. Those who have seen God in Christ Jesus have seen a more humble spirit, a more gracious attitude, a more disciplined life and a wonderful submission to authority.

12 Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

1:12 The contrast to Diotrephes is Demetrius. He has a good reputation among the saints as to his character. He has knowledge of the truth that is recognized by others. He bears the personal confidence of the apostle John who places his own reputation on the line in honor of Demetrius.

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:

1:13 The apostle closes his epistle with more gentle words. The flash of righteous anger, the warning of apostolic confrontation passes into tender words of pastoral care. We want to conclude with several observations. No person in a local assembly need fear godly led leadership discipline that walks righteously before the Lord. The Law is only a terror to those who do wrong. No church will long survive without accountability. It may exist but it will never have a moral impact on the lives of its members or the culture in which it exists. A missionary once wrote, "*I looked for the church and found it in the world. I looked for the world and found it in the church.*" The main weapons of discipline in the *Bible* are not physical but moral persuasion, excommunication, refusal of the ordinances, and shunning. In the final analysis, there is a harsh side to Church life. The Christian is called upon to be a good soldier of the cross for true soldiers respect discipline in themselves and in others.

14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace *be* to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

Because revolt against spiritual authority is still a tool of the Enemy to disrupt the fellowship of the local church some definite steps must be taken. First, the local church must pray that no Diotrephes will ever dominate the congregation. The local church must pray that all who are united together will love, honor, respect, and esteem the leaders that God raises up. Second, individuals in the local assembly must examine their heart and life so that any secret longing for pre-eminence and unauthorized control will be confessed as sin and forsaken. Only then will God's people know peace.

Leader's Study Guide

Questions and Answers on 3 John 1

1. What had John heard about his dear friend Gaius?

Answer.

The apostle had heard many good reports about his beloved Gaius. It was the testimony of the saints that Gaius continued to walk in the sphere of truth

2. Why is self-promotion not healthy?

Answer.

- Self-promotion violates all the teachings of Christ to be humble in spirit and in actions. *Matt. 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*
- Self-promotion violates the example of Jesus who humbled Himself. “No man,” said Jesus, “is above His Master.” *Luke 6:40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.*
- Self-promotion puts the philosophy of the world inside the church.

3. List three dangers to power or the place of authority.

Answer.

- Power is subtle
- Power is addictive
- Power is possessive

4. Why was it good to warn Diotrephes?

Answer.

- There is time for Diotrephes to repent.
- There is a word of warning to all the rest.
- A surprise form of discipline is not fair or just.

5. What are the differences between Demetrius and Diotrephes?

Answer.

The contrast to Diotrephes is Demetrius. He has a good reputation among the saints as to his character. He has knowledge of the truth that is recognized by others. He bears the personal confidence of the apostle John who places his own reputation on the line in honor of Demetrius.

Personal Application and Reflection

1. Based on 3 John 1:2 do you believe that God wants all Christians to be healthy and wealthy since they are children of the King of kings and Lord of lords?
2. Does the church you attend practice church discipline? Why or why not? Would you agree that church discipline is necessary in the local assembly? Explain.
3. Would you submit to church discipline if you knew you were guilty of a transgression and deserved pastoral correction? Why or why not?
4. Does the idea of a harsher side to Christendom make you feel uncomfortable? How does being harsh with the Diotrephes of the church relate to love?
5. Do you follow evil? Do you follow evil men and women who are willful and powerful but not godly? If you are doing that or have done that will you repent?

Hiding God's Word in My Heart

3 John 1:11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Leader's Supplemental Material

Doctrine of Elders

1. The concept of Elders ruling among the people of God can be traced in the *Bible* to Moses. The Elders of Israel are associated with Moses in his dealings with the people.
 - *Exodus 3:16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt:*
 - *Exodus 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:*
 - *Exodus 17:5 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.*
 - *Exodus 18:12 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father in law before God.*
 - *Numbers 11:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.*
2. With the passing of time the Elders in the OT administered local government (Judg. 8:14; Josh. 20:4; Ruth 4:2) and dealt with the concerns of national affairs (1 Sam. 3:17; 5:3; 1 Kings 21:8)
 - *Judges 8:14 And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and inquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men.*
 - *Joshua 20:4 And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.*
 - *Ruth 4:2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.*
 - *1 Samuel 3:17 And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.*

- *1 Samuel 5:3 And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.*
 - *1 Kings 21:8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth.*
3. The right to the title of Elder was based either on age or the esteem in which an individual was held. Age and experience often go together.
 4. The Elders of Israel were very zealous to convey the Word of God to the people (Ex. 3:14; 4:29; 19:17) as well as represent the people before God (Ex. 17:5; 24:1; Num. 11:16). On great occasions such as the Passover, the Elders would make the initial arrangements (Ex. 12:12).
 - *Exodus 3:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*
 - *Exodus 4:29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:*
 - *Exodus 19:17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.*
 - *Exodus 17:5 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.*
 - *Exodus 24:1 And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.*
 - *Numbers 11:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.*
 - *Exodus 12:12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.*
 5. In their zeal for God the Elders did not always act according to knowledge. They united with the scribes and the chief priests in putting Christ to death (Matt. 16:21; 27:1) and they also hurt the apostles (Acts 6:12).

- *Matthew 16:21* From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.
 - *Matthew 27:1* When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:
6. As the New Testament church emerged as an organization with leadership needs, Elders or presbyters emerged to take their place along with the apostles, prophets, and teachers. The importance of the Elders was soon recognized.
 7. At Jerusalem the bible represents the Elders in association with James in administering the government of the local church acting after the custom of the synagogue (Acts 11:30; 21:18).
 8. In association with the apostles the Elders also shared in the wider government of the whole church.
 - *Acts 15:2* When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.
 - *Acts 15:6* And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.
 - *Acts 15:23* And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:
 - *Acts 16:4* And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.
 9. God knew that after the apostles were dead, the church would still need strong leadership in the apostolic tradition. The close relationship between the office of Elder and the office of apostle is reflected in the fact that an apostle can be a presbyter (1 Pet. 5:1) though not all presbyters can be an apostle.
 - *1 Peter 5:1* The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:
 9. With the establishment of new churches Paul and Barnabas would appoint presbyters or Elders (Tit. 1:5; Acts 14:23). In each church the Elders were always plural in number.
 - *Titus 1:5* For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:
 - *Acts 14:23* And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

11. Those men who hold the title and office of Elder must meet specific biblical qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. A combined list of the spiritual qualifications can be made. An Elder must be:

Twenty Qualifications for an Elder
1 Timothy 3:1-7 * Titus 1:5-9

- Above reproach
- The husband of only one wife
- Temperate
- Prudent
- Respectable
- Hospitable
- Able to teach
- Not given to wine
- Not self willed
- Not quick tempered
- Not pugnacious
- Not contentious
- Gentle
- Not a lover of money
- One who manages his own household well
- One who has a good reputation outside the church
- One who loves what is good
- One who is just
- Devout
- One who is not a new convert

12. As the qualifications of an Elder are clearly defined by the *Scriptures* so are the duties. In summary form it is the duty of an Elder to do the following.

❖ **Labor diligently in the Word of God in order to teach the people of God.** This is the primary duty of the teaching Elder.

- *Acts 6:4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*
- *2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*
- *John 21:15-18 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou*

knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

What a privilege it is to try to impart information not only for time but also for eternity. Daniel Webster offered excellent advice, saying, *"If we work on marble it will perish. If we work on brass, time will efface it. If we rear temples, they will crumble to dust. But if we work on men's immortal minds, if we imbue them with high principles, with just fear of God and love of their fellow-men, we engrave on those tablets something which time cannot efface, and which will brighten and brighten to all eternity."*

❖ Pray

- *Acts 6:4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*
- *Acts 20:36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.*
- *Acts 21:5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.*
- *Acts 22:17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;*
- *Acts 28:8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.*

I had the privilege once of hearing the great English preacher, J. Sidlow Baxter. A tall-distinguished man, it was apparent he walked with God. Said Mr. Baxter once, *"...Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons -- but they are helpless against our prayers."* With prayer comes great testimonies to the power of God and His great grace. Dr. Helen Roseveare, missionary to Zaire, told the following story. A mother at our mission station died after giving birth to a premature baby. We tried to improvise an incubator to keep the infant alive, but the only hot water bottle we had was beyond repair. So we asked the children to pray for the baby and for her sister. One of the girls responded. *'Dear God, please send a hot water bottle today. Tomorrow will be too late because by then the baby will be dead. And dear Lord, send a doll for the sister so she won't feel so lonely.'* That afternoon a large package arrived from England. The children watched eagerly as we opened it. Much to their surprise, under some clothing was a hot water bottle!

Immediately the girl who had prayed so earnestly started to dig deeper, exclaiming, 'If God sent that, I'm sure He also sent a doll!' And she was right! The heavenly Father knew in advance of that child's sincere requests, and 5 months earlier He had led a ladies' group to include both of those specific articles.

A woman named Jean McMahon contributed an incident to Reader's Digest, in 1980. Attending church in Kentucky, we watched an especially verbal and boisterous child being hurried out, slung under his irate father's arm. No one in the congregation so much as raised an eyebrow -- until the child captured everyone's attention by crying out in a charming Southern accent, "*Ya'll pray for me now!*"

❖ **Reprove, rebuke, and advise**

- *2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*

This is the most difficult and the most dangerous part of the ministry, for very few people will listen to constructive criticism, let alone a formal rebuke or godly advice that is unsolicited. Experience has taught me that compliance of this passage should be limited to the pulpit and private counseling that is asked for. Apart from that, people resent any kind of pastoral interference in their lives. And even when confined to the pulpit, the Biblical messages are not always wanted or appreciated if the sermon strikes too close to the heart. Rare is the person who will pray as did Augustine, Lord, deliver me from the lust of vindicating myself.

❖ **Provide general oversight of the body of Christ. The word "*bishop*" which means "*overseer*" is used in the NT as another title for Elder.**

- *Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*
- *Titus 1:5-9 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: 6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; 8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

The pastor is not to do the work of everyone. He is to make sure everyone has the freedom and opportunity to do their own work with the resources they need.

❖ **Anoint the sick with oil**

- *James 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:*

There are some who would explain this verse away by suggesting that it teaches the church to send individuals to doctors for healing. It is proper to send people to receive proper medical care. It is also proper to pray for the sick and anoint them with oil in simple gospel obedience leaving the results to the Lord. There are times when the prayer of faith shall save the sick and they will be well. There are times when the prayer of faith shall save the soul though the body dies, so that eternal life may begin. But anoint the sick the church must. People should be taught to seek prayer, not as a last resort but as the first response to sickness.

❖ **Establish doctrinal and church policy in all matters including financial consideration**

- *Acts 15:2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.*
- *Acts 15:4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.*
- *Acts 15:6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.*
- *Acts 15:22-23 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: 23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:*
- *Acts 4:37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

Nothing is more sensitive than money matters. If it appears that money is being misused there is room for great concern. If it appears that too much pressure is being put on people to contribute, it is resented – though some people could do more to help the work of the Lord. Radio Bible Class puts out a devotional booklet called *Our Daily Bread*.

In one of the issues was this story of John G. Wendel and his sisters who were some of the most miserly people of all time. Although they had received a huge inheritance from their parents, they spent very little of it and did all they could to keep their wealth for themselves. John was able to influence five of his six sisters never to marry, and they lived in the same house in New York City for 50 years. When the last sister died in 1931, her estate was valued at more than \$100 million. Her only dress was one that she had made herself, and she had worn it for 25 years. The Wendels had such a compulsion to hold on to their possessions that they lived like paupers. Even worse, they were like the kind of person Jesus referred to "*who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God*" (Luke 12:21).

While there is an economic reality to keep a congregation going, sound financial principles must be recognize. To ease pressure points in a congregation, a church budget helps in allocating money. Open accountability also helps. In thirty years of ministry I have always advocated an open review of any check written by the church.

13. As elders or pastors have a responsibility to the people, so the people have a responsibility to the elders or pastor(s).

- **James instructs those who are sick to call for the elders of the church.** *James 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:*
- **Paul instructs the Ephesian church to financially support elders who labor “at preaching and teaching”.** *1 Timothy 5:17-18 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.*
- **Paul instructs the local church to protect elders from false accusations, to discipline elders who do sin, and to restore fallen elders.** *1 Timothy 5:19-22 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. 20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. 21 I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. 22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.*
- **Paul teaches the church it is an honor to want to be an elder or pastor. In other words encourage those who wish to move toward the ministry.** *1 Timothy 3:1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.*
- **Peter teaches the young men of the church to submit to church elders.** *1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

14. In the book of the *Revelation*, the twenty and four Elders who appear so frequently in the vision, represent all authority and how they should worship before God (Rev. 4:10; 5:8-10; 19:4).
15. Divine protection for Elders is found in 1 Timothy 5:1. The church is specifically warned not to believe an accusation against an Elder unless there are two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19).
16. Pastoral Elders are to receive adequate financial remuneration.
 - *Galatians 6:6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in good things.*
 - *1 Corinthians 9:9-11 For it is written in the Law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?*
 - *1 Timothy 5:17-18 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.*
17. Elders who rule well are worthy of double honor, for Elders shall receive the greater judgment.
 - *1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*
 - *James 3:1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.*