

D. v. D. - Demetrius versus Diotrophes

A Contrast In Leadership

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The Short Book Of 3 John

[3Jn 1] **The elder** unto the wellbeloved **Gaius**, whom I love in the truth. [2] Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

[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. [4] I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. [5] Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; [6] Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: [7] Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. [8] We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

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

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

There are four named individuals in this epistle:

- 1) The Apostle John who is the author.
- 2) Gaius, who is the recipient of John's letter and has a ministry of helping missionaries.
- 3) Diotrophes, who is a false leader, or at best, a bad senior leader.
- 4) Demetrius who is a good leader, a true leader.

Diotrophes

Lets look at Diotrophes first. The Dakes Study Bible says this about Diotrophes: "Who this man was is unknown. Regarding character he is known as being proud, ambitious, exclusive, malicious, inhospitable, despotic, and rebellious against apostolic authority."

Here are several translations of verses 9-10:

New Living Translation:

[9] I sent a brief letter to the church about this, but Diotrophes, who **loves to be the leader, does not acknowledge our authority**. [10] When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and the

wicked **things he is saying about us**. He not only refuses to welcome the traveling teachers, he also tells others not to help them. And when they do help, he puts them out of the church.

New International Version:

[9] I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. [10] So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, **gossiping maliciously about us**. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

The Message:

[9] Earlier I wrote something along this line to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves being in charge, **denigrates my counsel**. [10] If I come, you can be sure I'll hold him to account for **spreading vicious rumors about us**. As if that weren't bad enough, he not only **refuses hospitality to traveling Christians** but **tries to stop others** from welcoming them. Worse yet, instead of inviting them in **he throws them out**.

Amplified Bible:

[9] I have written briefly to the church; but Diotrephes, who **likes to take the lead** among them and **put himself first, does not acknowledge my authority and refuses to accept my suggestions** or to listen to me. [10] So when I arrive, I will call attention to what he is doing, **his boiling over and casting malicious reflections upon us with insinuating language**. And not satisfied with that, he **refuses to receive and welcome the [missionary] brethren himself, and also interferes with and forbids those who would welcome them, and tries to expel (excommunicate) them from the church**.

The Apostle John is warning Gaius about the loose-cannon leadership style of Diotrephes. Apparently Gaius was trying to help missionaries on their journeys to win lost souls in regions beyond them, but Diotrephes, being very self-centered and controlling, was trying to hinder him and others from doing just that. Diotrephes was a self-appointed leader who was trying to control everyone by manipulation, exploitation and intimidation. Some leaders are like this – very insecure. Because of their insecurity they must resort to these kinds of political tactics to stay in leadership. They placed themselves in leadership and so now they must keep themselves in leadership. Whatever one must politic to obtain, he must politic to maintain. And THIS life of politicking is a hard life to live once it is set in motion. Diotrephes was so insecure he HAD to be in charge. If he was not in charge then he could not feel good about himself. He was immature spiritually because his identity was totally wrapped up in what he did, rather than in who he was. He was WRESTLING instead of RESTING! His self-worth was defined by his achievements rather than by His identity in Christ. Deep inside, Diotrephes DID NOT know who he was in Christ, and others were suffering because of his insecurity. Diotrephes had not willingly fallen on The Rock, so The Rock was falling on him. He wasn't a mature broken man, but more like an immature proud "boy" on the inside. He did not understand that "brokenness prevents breakdown." He didn't understand that "humility prevents humiliation." Diotrephes wasn't taking up his cross and dying daily, submitting his own will to God's will. Outwardly and to casual observers, he must have appeared a natural leader. But inwardly he was a coward. When a person must stoop to manipulation, exploitation and intimidation to protect his leadership position, he has already LOST his position. He lost his position long ago, but just doesn't know it yet. Jesus defined leadership as exemplary servanthood, not domination and control over others.

Diotrephes had a controlling spirit, a spirit of witchcraft deeply ingrained into his character. He ruled by natural force like so many despots: Cesar, Hitler, Hussein, Chavez, and so many others throughout history. Yet for a season he was able to mask his real self and continue to lead. He tried to control people's relationships between one another, keeping them loyal only to himself. If someone rebelled against his authority and did not submit to

his insinuated threats, they were automatically expelled from the church in shame and disgrace. “Submit to me or you will be punished.” He alone had to be the center of everything and everyone. Diotrephes dethroned Christ from His Centrality in the church. Now it was no longer about Christ, but actually all about Diotrephes. The trinity of me, myself and I had replaced the Trinity of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

He must have been a clever person and a brilliant speaker to have climbed his way this far up the leadership ladder and gained so much prominence in the process. But Diotrephes did not receive or recognize any apostolic authority over himself. Neither did he receive the authority God vested in his peers. He was not into ministry; he was into himself. His heart had not met authority. His heart had never been smitten by Divine Authority. Perhaps he was saved. And perhaps he had even been filled with the Spirit at one time, but he never really MET AUTHORITY in his heart. To the degree we have MET AUTHORITY may we BE IN AUTHORITY. The Lord only measures out authority as it is submitted to in practice. God can only trust leadership to someone who is a follower too. But Diotrephes did not spend the quality time in God’s presence and in God’s Word to become a broken man. His ambitions had not been bridled. His aspirations had not been tempered. He was still operating his own agendas, not the Lord’s. He began to do more damage than good because of His selfish ambitions.

Unlike Diotrephes, if God truly gives you authority, you don’t have to prove it. When someone is trying to PROVE themselves to others, they’re actually trying to prove themselves to their own self. They are insecure. THERE IS NOTHING TO PROVE! Either God proves you to others or He doesn’t. It’s that simple. The Anointing IS your badge of authority; nothing more, nothing less. Your measure of anointing determines your sphere of authority and your level of influence. (This fact is actually liberating if you’ll not fight it!) It is the responsibility of others to discern your worth to them. It is the responsibility of others to discern your anointing. THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO BE PROVEN! Not to yourself. And not to others.

Gaius

Now let’s look at Gaius for a brief moment. Gaius is evidently, though innocently, caught in the middle of this leader named Diotrephes and his own ministry to missionaries. Gaius is the victim that John wants to de-victimize! The Apostle John tells Gaius that HE IS RESPONSIBLE for the leadership he follows. He tells him in verse 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.”* John is telling Gaius that HE IS RESPONSIBLE for choosing to whom he will submit his life and ministry. Apparently Gaius was a local underleader, not the senior leader like Diotrephes. John was telling Gaius that Diotrephes was not under apostolic authority and was thus disqualified to be in authority over Gaius and the others being manipulated. John effectively told Gaius that God had already dethroned Diotrephes and replaced him by another who was heretofore yet unrecognized. Like God dethroning Saul and replacing him with David, God had kept David in hiding until he was ready to exalt him before His people. First God called David, then God hid David until his day of coronation. God anointed David, then hid him away into obscurity. For years David had to endure “Cave Ministry” until his time for leadership was ripe.

God told Gaius and is telling us that WE ALL ARE INDIVIDUALLY RESPONSIBLE for the quality of leadership to whom we submit. Indeed God commands us to submit and obey His human delegates. But He also expects us to choose wisely and not to submit ourselves to abusive leadership. No doubt, what is often mislabeled as “abusive leadership” is not abusive at all, but is simply rebellion on the part of followers. But this still does not relegate us from the responsibility for aligning ourselves with leadership that emanates the spirit and character of Christ. No doubt there has been more abuse from the pew than from the pulpit, but God still holds His leaders to the highest standards. And here we are comparing the spirits of two leaders on opposite ends of the spectrum.

Demetrius

Like David, God had been preparing a man named Demetrius behind the scenes. God broke Demetrius in his heart over and over again. Demetrius willingly submitted to these processes of ministry preparation. He was a broken man thus he was qualified to lead God's people. God had dealt with Demetrius' flesh and ambitions. On many occasions and in different situations, Demetrius had yielded and surrendered his own will to God's will. Demetrius was steeped in the art of "sweet surrender before sweet release." He knew how to yield himself to the Lord and let God cut deeply into the depths of his character. He evidently understood that leadership development was an "internal process" more than a title or position. Demetrius was submissive, obedient, soft, tender, and broken before God. He didn't have to have some title or powerful position to be happy with himself. Demetrius KNEW who he was, deep inside where it really matters.

Demetrius was also in Apostolic Alignment! Unlike Diotrephes who desperately needed a Holy Ghost chiropractic adjustment, Demetrius was already in alignment! I highly recommend you pause here or come back and read my book, [Apostolic Alignment](#).

Let's reread verse 12 again in several translations:

King James Version:

*[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.*

Amplified Bible:

*[12] Demetrius has **warm commendation from everyone** — and from the Truth itself; we add our **testimony also**, and you know that our testimony is true.*

New Living Translations:

*[12] But **everyone speaks highly of Demetrius, even truth itself**. We ourselves can say the same for **him**, and you know we speak the truth.*

New International Version:

*[12] Demetrius is **well spoken of by everyone**—and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.*

The Message:

*[12] Everyone has a good word for Demetrius—the Truth itself stands up for Demetrius! **We concur**, and you know we don't hand out **endorsements** lightly.*

Three things to notice here:

First, true leadership is always validated by **Apostolic Endorsement**. John said, "we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true." In the Message this is translated, "We concur, and you know we don't hand out endorsements lightly." The apostles are the ones who authenticate and validate God's messengers. True

leaders have a natural feeling of accountability to an apostle, a spiritual father figure. You're not a pastor until the pastors say you are. You're not a prophet until the prophets say you are. You're not an evangelist until the evangelists say so. You're not an apostle until the apostles say you are. Without apostolic endorsement there is neither safety nor success in the body of Christ. Every leader needs to be ordained by another older, more seasoned, and more longstanding leader or leaders. This is God's safety net. This prevents the people of God from being exposed to unprepared leaders, immature leaders, bad leaders or even false leaders. This also keeps the leader from being out there alone should he get wounded himself. Every flock of people should know that their leader is himself accountable and that he or they have someone they can contact should a situation warrant.

Apostolic alignment, accountability and endorsement is what denominations really had in mind when they established denominations and boards, but they didn't have these revelations back in those days. What God really wanted was to birth apostolic relationships. But there has been very little understanding of apostolic revelation until recent years. So you really cannot fault any organization for trying to put into place a structure they really couldn't define properly because of lack of revelation. Their intentions were good; they simply fell short of God's highest because of a lack of revelation.

Secondly, leadership is also validated by **Followership**. John said that Demetrius had a "*good report of all men.*" God's people are not dumb! People cannot help but gravitate towards God's anointing on a leader. If God has crowned someone for leadership in His body, he will cause His people to receive that leader. God works on both sides of the equation; not just in the heart of the leader, but in the heart of the followers too. The Bible teaches that after Saul was first anointed king, God "touched the hearts" of a band of men to be his loyal followers and helpers. Someone has wisely noted that many who feel they are called to leadership would benefit by noticing whether or not anyone is following! So this phenomenon of followers' recognition of a leader is also part of the safety net. However, without apostolic endorsement first, God's people might fail to discern a missing character flaw in an anointed leader that only a more seasoned apostolic figure might catch or be able to handle before it became a crisis.

Thirdly, leadership is also validated by The Word, "*the truth itself.*" A true leader will stay full of the truth, the Word of God. And a true leader's mouth is "touched" to expound God's Word more powerfully than the average saint. A touched mouth is still the acid test between someone who is a true CALLED-TO-BE versus someone who is just a WANNA-BE! See Isaiah 6:7. A true leader's attitudes and actions will also line up with God's standards and models of leadership as written in The Word.

So Demetrius met:

- 1) **The Apostolic Endorsement Test,**
- 2) **The Followership Test, and finally,**
- 3) **The Word (Truth) Test.**

Demetrius' rise to leadership is reminiscent of King David. David was anointed by Samuel the prophet - The Apostolic Endorsement Test. Then David was crowned by a band of followers at Hebron, and finally by all of Israel - The Followership Test. And of course David fulfilled The Word Test as he authored many Psalms from submitting to the processes of God while serving as a lowly shepherd, and later as a fugitive running from King Saul.

Final Remarks

Joshua was validated by Moses. Timothy was in a strong spiritual father-spiritual son relationship with Paul who later validated him. The Twelve were aligned with and validated by Jesus. Even Jesus had to be ordained (validated and endorsed) by John The Baptist. And John The Baptist was authenticated by his father Zachariah,

the priest. Samuel was mentored by Eli. Moses was a protégé of Jethro his father in law. God made David mentor under Saul, albeit God must have wanted David to learn mostly of “how NOT to lead.” Ha! Over and over we see a principle of apostolic alignment and accountability throughout the scriptures.

Sorry to say, many today have no apostolic relationships. Many leaders today are “lone rangers” who fail to submit to God’s tests and processes before being promoted (or promoting themselves) into positions of leadership. This causes great offences to occur in the Body of Christ, and that needlessly so. Leaders get hurt. Followers get wounded. Why? - all because there is no Apostolic Alignment and Accountability. You cannot substitute denominational affiliations for true God-birthed apostolic relationships. An official organizational structure or a chain of command can never replace a relationship. God fosters supernatural relationships in a natural organic way. The whole thing must be Spirit-orchestrated. God wants the mentors to model leadership to their protégés. The Father longs for the body of Christ to be a safe place where saints can grow and become fruitful. God is tired of leaders peaking too quickly in their ministries only to fall into immorality, disgrace, or disappointment and burnout. God wants His processes to be submitted to! God wants supernaturally natural apostolic relationships in His body.

As we enter the last phase of God’s era of grace, the last of the last days, we must clearly delineate between the spirit of Diotrophes and the spirit of Demetrius. D. v. D. This is why God gave us the little book of 3 John! D. v. D. Like Jacob who wrestled with God until God changed his character to one of a prince, Demetrius won his wrestling match. But Diotrophes lost his match altogether, failing to possess the spirit of Christ.

D. v. D. And the winner is... Demetrius!

D. v. D. And the winners are Gaius and the local church!