

BIBLICAL REFLECTION AND APPLICATION COMMENTARY SERIES

3 John

IMITATION MATTERS

EDWARD PAZ

What is the Biblical Reflection and Application Commentary Series?

The *Biblical Reflection and Application Commentary Series* is a collection of verse-by-verse, devotional commentaries through individual books of the Bible.

Using the English Standard Version of the Bible (ESV), these commentaries have one purpose—to **help Christians, more easily, reflect upon and apply the truths of God’s Word to their lives.**

This collection of commentaries is not technical nor is it academic. There are many other biblical commentaries written in that way. **This collection of commentaries is intentionally accessible and insanely practical.**

Who is this commentary series for?

The “Everyday Christian” who desires that their Bible reading be more life-giving and life-transforming. If you leave your time spent in God’s Word frustrated, confused, uninterested, or unchanged, this series of commentaries is for you. After every verse, there are two questions that will cause you to reflect and act on the text in a way that is both clarifying for how the Scripture applies to your life and challenging for your spiritual growth.

The Bible Teacher/Preacher who desires that their messages more effectively impact not just people heads, but their hearts and hands as well. If you find yourself questioning whether or not your preaching is playing a role in transforming your listeners more into the image of Jesus Christ, this series of commentaries is for you. The two questions that are asked after every verse are questions you can ask, within your sermons, to help move your listeners from merely knowing to also *obeying*.

How should this commentary be used?

There is no singular, right way for a commentary to be used to aid in your Bible study/application. But if you don't know where/how to start, here is one way you can approach using this resource:

1. Pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit of God to open up your natural eyes and ears to the spiritual things He wants you to see and hear as you read.

3. Read and re-read.

Whether it be the entire book or a specific portion of the book, before reading the commentary, read and re-read the words of the book of the Bible for yourself.

4. Interact.

Before consulting the commentary, interact with the text. Underline poignant sentences. Box important words. Write question marks where you have questions.

5. Consult.

After reading, re-reading, and interacting with the text for yourself, then, consult the commentary for help with clarification and application.

6. Pray again.

Before concluding your time reading/studying the Bible, pray for the Holy Spirit of God to give you the *faith* to believe what you've just read, the *wisdom* to know what to do, and the *courage* to do it!

One Last Thing...

Look for the one verse boxed in black and written in gold. Though there are many great verses in each book of the Bible, the one boxed in black and written in gold is the one that must not be missed!

3 John — A Very Simple Overview

The book of 3rd John is a book written by one of Jesus' 12 original disciples—John.

The book of 3rd John is a letter from John to a man named Gaius.

In this letter to Gaius, John does three things:

- Commends Gaius.
- Condemns Diotrephes.
- Commends Demetrius.

Who he commends we are to imitate. Who he condemns we are not to imitate.

Read the book of 3rd John to find out what we *should* and *shouldn't* be imitating!

3 John

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

² Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. ³ For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Support and Opposition

⁵ Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, ⁶ who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

⁹ I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. ¹⁰ So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. 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.

Final Greetings

¹³ I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. ¹⁴ I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

¹⁵ Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name.

“

The elder to the beloved Gaius...

3 John 1a

The apostle John, on multiple occasions, referred to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” (John 21:20) For some, there is a disconnect between God’s love for them and their love for others. This was not the case with John. Very likely, the source of his great love for Gaius was his knowing of and believing in Jesus Christ’s great love for him. (1 John 4:7-8) **Deep love from God. Dear love for others.**

- How does the love that God has for you inform, impact, and inspire your love for others?
- Who is the person/people group that you have the most difficult time loving? How should God’s deep love for you cause you to be more loving towards them?

“

...whom I love in truth.

3 John 1b

We don’t love everyone we say we love...truly. It is possible to say we love people for whom we have very minimal affection, care or concern. Our greatest bonds will not only be with those we love truly, but also with those whom are relationship is rooted in the love and truth of Jesus Christ. (1 John 4:9-10) **Truth strengthens love.**

- Who do you *say* you love, but, in reality, don’t truly love them? How does this need to change?
- How do you see the presence or non-presence of the truth of Jesus Christ strengthening or weakening the relationships you have with others?

“

Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.

3 John 2

If you truly love someone, you will pray for them—for both their spiritual health and their physical health. Both the eternal and the temporal are important to God. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) You cannot truly have a healthy soul if you are neglecting the health of your body. But, attaining physical health apart from pursuing spiritual health is missing the mark as well. **A healthy body without a healthy soul is unhealthy.**

- Who are your loved ones whom you need to be praying for both their spiritual and physical health more consistently?
- How can you more intentionally pursue both a healthy body and a healthy soul?

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For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.

3 John 3

The truths of God aren't to be merely known, but they are precepts and principles to be *walked* in. (Psalm 86:11) When you hear of fellow believers walking in truth, you should rejoice. **Truth produces joy.**

- Whose testimony of walking in truth should be bringing you joy?
- Whose testimony of walking in truth should you be testifying about so that others can have joy?

“

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

3 John 4

Very few things bring a pastor or ministry leader joy like hearing that the people they are shepherding are walking in the truths of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:21-25) You should make every effort to let the people who lead you know how you are becoming more like Christ. **Shepherds rejoice in sanctification.**

- How can and when will you share a testimony of your spiritual growth with the people who lead you spiritually?
- How can you more intentionally pursue hearing the testimonies of others so that you can be brought joy?

“

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.

3 John 5-6a

John commends and affirms Gaius for his faithful support of missionaries that he did not even know personally. The missionaries then testified to the church of Gaius' love for them. Good deeds should not go unnoticed in the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:4-6) **Testify of love.**

- Who has loved you so well that you should be testifying of it?
- Who can you affirm and encourage for their faithfulness in loving others well?

“

You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.

3 John 6b

Prayerfully. Lovingly. Generously. These are just some of the ways in which missionaries should be sent out from the local church.

(Philippians 4:15-18) **The manner in which you send missionaries is just as important as the mission for which they are being sent—both are acts of worship unto God.**

- How are you participating in sending out missionaries from the local church in God-glorifying ways?
- Who is a missionary you can/should reach out to and encourage?

“

For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.

3 John 7

Not everything done *in* the name of Jesus is *for* the name of Jesus. It is entirely possible to use the name of Jesus Christ to further the name of your family, church, or business. (Acts 8:18-23) One of the tell-tale signs of who you are doing your ministry for is shown by who you depend on for the funding of the ministry. When you are truly doing ministry for Christ, there is a level of confidence that He will provide that is not present when you have ulterior motives. **Jesus provides for purposes that exalt and magnify His name not your own.**

- What other “names” might you be doing ministry for the sake of?
- How do you feel when you do ministry for Jesus, but your name is not acknowledged, appreciated, or recognized?

“

*Therefore we ought to support people like these,
that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*

3 John 8

Ministers who proclaim the gospel in the name and for the name of Jesus Christ should be supported financially. (1 Corinthians 9:7-11) Not everyone can be sent, but everyone can participate in sending. This results not only in the physical needs of missionaries/ministers being provided for, but it also involves the supporter in the work of the ministry. **When you give financial provision to the work you experience fellow partnership in the work.**

- How are you financially supporting those on the front-lines of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ?
- How can you more deeply reflect on how your financial generosity to the Church partners you with the work of the church?

“

*I have written something to the church,
but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first,
does not acknowledge our authority.*

3 John 9

Diotrephes, unlike Gaius, is a burden to the church and not a blessing. Unlike Gaius, we should *not* imitate Diotrephes. Instead of preferring others to himself, he preferred himself over others. (Romans 12:10) Unfortunately, this lack of consideration for others did not stop there—it led him to also disregard the spiritual leadership within the church. **Selfishness precedes a lack of submission.**

- How are you preferring your needs (acting selfishly) over the needs of others in the church?
- Whose spiritual authority should you be submitting to, but aren't?

“

*So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing,
talking wicked nonsense against us.*

3 John 10a

Beware, lack of submission is typically followed by slander. Most Christians who lack submission, also lack the self-control to not disparage the name of those they refuse to submit to. For the health of the church as a whole, this must be confronted. (1 Peter 2:1) **Slander is not necessarily something to remain silent about.**

- How are you speaking ill of the spiritual leadership of your church?
- How are you speaking up against the people who are speaking ill of the spiritual leadership of your church?

“

*And not content with that, he refuses to welcome
the brothers, and also stops those who want to
and puts them out of the church.*

3 John 10b

As if lack of submission and slander wasn't rebellious enough, Diotrephes also stopped believers from supporting other believers—even to the extent of kicking them out of the church. His selfishness led to unbiblically excommunicating other saints from the body of Christ. (Matthew 18:15-17) **Putting yourself first inevitably leads to putting others out.**

- Who are you being unwelcoming to in your local church?
- How do you see your selfishness progressively leading to excluding others in ways they shouldn't be excluded?

Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good.

*Whoever does good is from God;
whoever does evil has not seen God.*

3 John 11

With both the good of Gaius and the evil of Diotrephes in clear view, John makes a very clear point: imitate good. Those who do good are of God, and those who do evil are blind to God. You cannot clearly see God and continue to do evil. (James 2:14-17) **Godly people imitate godly behavior.**

- Who is the one person whose life you imitate the most? Is imitating this person leading to you becoming more like Jesus Christ?
- Who are the godly people you need to continue imitating? Who are the evil people you need to stop imitating?

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.

3 John 12

One of the strongest indicators of whether or not you are living a godly life, a life worth imitating, is the affirmation and commendation of other brothers and sisters in Christ. (Romans 14:18) Your life is a living testimony when others testify to the life you are living. **A life approved by God will be approved by others whose lives are approved by God.**

- What would the people in your church say if they were asked to testify about your life and faith?
- What current pattern of living is most detrimental to your testimony?

“

I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

3 John 13-14

Some things are best said in person rather than by writing, email, social media, or through somebody else. God speaking face to face with Moses (Exodus 33:11) was a reflection of the intimate nature of their relationship. When we initiate and pursue face to face conversations with people we . **Communication up close keeps a relationship close.**

- What is something that you need to communicate to someone that should be done face to face rather than any other way?
- What relationships in your life should you be initiating more face to face interactions with?

“

*Peace be to you. The friends greet you.
Greet the friends, each by name.*

3 John 15

If our names are important to God (Isaiah 43:1), other people's names should be important to us. Dale Carnegie famously wrote, “a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.” To learn, remember, and greet people by their names is one way we can love others in the same way that God loves us. **Names matter.**

- How does it make you feel when people you wouldn't expect to remember and refer to you by your name?
- Whose names need to matter to you more?

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