

BIBLICAL BRIEFS

Recently I ran across a tongue-in-cheek list... "The World's Shortest Books". The list includes the following pretend titles...

- "America's Most Popular Lawyers"
- "Different Ways to Spell the Name Bob"
- "French Hospitality"
- "Great Moments in Atlanta Falcons Football History"
- "The Loganville Travel Guide"
- "Everything Men Know About Women"
- "Everything Women Know About Men"
- "Barry Bond's Tips On Bunting"
- "The Engineer's Guide to Fashion"

"The Amish Phone Directory"
"Pastor Sandy's Jokes that are Actually Funny"

These would obviously be short books - as are the three books we want to study tonight. 2 John and 3 John are the shortest books in the Bible. Combined, both letters are a mere 27 verses and 500 words. Jude is also a short book.

You could even call tonight's letters... the "Fruit of the Loom Letters" - since all three books are definitely... *briefs*. Tonight we'll study three biblical briefs...

2 JOHN

THE ELDER TO THE LADY

John begins 2 John by introducing himself, "The Elder."

2 John and 3 John were probably the last New Testament books written. When John penned them he was near 100 years-old - the last of the apostles still alive. Needless to say, John's stature was unsurpassed in the Christian community. He was not just as *an* elder, but as *The* Elder. John was an elder with a capital "E".

He writes, "to the elect lady and her

children..." Some Bible teachers believe the "elect lady" is a "sister church". In the New Testament the Church is referred to as *the Bride of Christ*, so it's *possible* the lady and her children are titles for a church. It's *more probable* John had a specific person in mind.

Perhaps both ideas are true. It could be that he's writing to a devout Christian lady whose vibrant witness had birthed a church-full of spiritual children.

LOVE IN TRUTH

John writes "to the elect lady and her children whom I love in truth..."

Here's the theme of 2 John - *love in truth*. 1 John told us if we love God we'll love our brother - but here we're told real love never ignores the truth. *God's love* is always in harmony with *God's truth*. If ever love causes us to ignore the truth - if in the name of love we tolerate, or gloss over, or accept a falsehood - we're not exhibiting the true love of God. God's love affirms and supports God's truth!

There are a growing number of churches today who've adopted a "Unity at all Cost" mentality - nothing is as important as love and peace, and unity between us.

Apparently, those churches have forgotten the words of Jesus in Luke 12:51-53 when He said, "Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided..." Jesus draws a line in the sand. He confronts us with the truth about God, and it's up to us to make a decision that invariably put us at

odds with folks who make the opposite choice. Jesus says friction will even erupt in the same family.

As one philosopher put it, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you mad." To insist on unity at all cost denies the reality and impact of the truth.

Let me get more specific. To suggest that Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and Mormons should forget about their differences and love one another as brothers is ridiculous. As Christians we should love all men and want to lead them to Jesus, but for us to embrace them as brothers is to deny the truth of God's Word!

Real love never denies God's truth. To say that all that really matters is your love for other people is to be totally naïve about what the Bible teaches!

The notion that truth is irrelevant is straight from the pit of Hell. Your *doctrine* will *determine* your *destiny*. Faith and love have to be grounded in truth!

Bible Scan - 2 John, 3 John, Jude

SC 103A

FEBRUARY

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2003

Devotion Box - Love In Action

In 2 John 5-6 John says his emphasis has not changed. His ageless exhortation is "to love one another." Theologian Richard Niebuhr once said, "The great Christian revolutions come not by discovery of something that was not known before. They happen when somebody takes radically something that was always there." We look for new tactics, but it's the rediscovery of simple truths that sets the world on fire. It's not new, but it's true... love into action will change the world!

MANY DECEIVERS

John says in 2 John 7, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

It was the homespun philosopher, Mark Twain, who said, "A lie runs around the world while truth is putting on her shoes." Bad news travels faster than good news.

This is also true in the church. Paul warned the Ephesians about being "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive..." False doctrine is constantly blowing through the church, and we need to be on guard against it.

Warren Wiersbe quotes a pastor of a successful church who said, "If I took my eyes off this work for 24 hours and stopped praying, it would be invaded before we knew it." We need to be vigilant in the pursuit and protection of sound doctrine.

LOOK OR LOSE

Verse 8, "Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward." John labored in his ministry to lay a solid foundation for the church, but he knew it could be lost if each believer neglected to take personal responsibility for what they could do to insure its preservation.

I look at all God has done in our church, and I rejoice - but we also need to realize that with blessing comes responsibility. If we don't serve and give and encourage and support we can lose the things for which we've all worked.

If we shirk our responsibility... if we kick back and say, "Well, I've done my part. I did my time in the nursery when my kids were younger... I gave money to the last project... I've already served as an usher... Hey, it's now someone else's turn."

If we all just pass the buck we can lose what we've worked so hard to build.

Devotion Box - When The Cultist Comes To Your Doorstep

1:10, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds."

In the early days of Christianity many churches lacked adequate leadership so traveling apostles went from place to place to fill the gaps. Individual Christians would put these guys up, provide their needs, and support their ministries.

But in the name of love some of the believers were showing this kindness toward false teachers - aiding and abetting a deceiver. John says stop!

Let's say two Mormon missionaries pull up in front of your house on their bicycles. It's a hot July day, and their shirts are

soaked with sweat. You invite them in to cool off in the air conditioning, and take a nap. John would rebuke you.

They're out spreading false doctrine, and you shouldn't do anything that would help recharge their batteries. I don't think John would mind if you invited them in for a discussion and tried to witness to them - but don't make their way easier. Don't feed them a meal, or offer to drive them from house to house.

John warns us not to unintentionally collaborate with the enemy. Your attempts to love a false prophet may help him spread his deception. Don't be mean, but when he comes to your door don't moisten lips that lie with your lemonade.

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JOHN'S GREETING NOT GOD'S GUARANTEE

Verse 2, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." John's words are a simple greeting common to believers and unbelievers in the first century. Greek scholar Gordon Fee calls verse 2, "the standard form of greeting in a personal letter of antiquity."

Yet what was intended as an innocent greeting has been twisted by today's prosperity preachers to teach that the Bible guarantees every believer material wealth and physical health. They've taken John's wish for Gaius, and made it God's guarantee for all believers. This is a gross misapplication.

Oral Roberts says that when he first came across

3 John 2 he said to his wife, "Evelyn, now this means we're supposed to prosper." He says his whole Christian experience since has grown out of this understanding of 3 John 2. That's tragic.

I believe Oral is guilty of misinterpretation. The Bible is full of devout people who didn't prosper in an earthly manner - yet walked with God. In the Bible godly people get sick, just like sinners - we both live in a germ-infested fallen world.

Again Gordon Fee writes, "To extend John's wish for Gaius to refer to financial and material prosperity for all Christians of all times is totally foreign to the text."

Devotion Box - Walk In Truth

In verse 3 John mentions that Gaius is a brother who “walk(s) in truth”.

Earl Weaver, manager for the Baltimore Orioles, once threw a temper tantrum in the dugout – knocking over coolers and throwing what he could grab. Also on the team that year was a born again Christian, named “Pat Kelly”. After Weaver pitched his fit, Pat spoke up, “Coach, I hope you learn to walk with the Lord.” Weaver snapped back, “I hope you walk with the bases loaded.”

Throughout the Bible the Christian life is referred to as a *walk*. We’re to walk in love, walk in the Spirit, walk by faith, walk as children of light. Our life with Christ is not a run – it’s not a crawl – it’s a walk. When you run you lose focus... when you crawl you have no focus... but when you take a walk the focus is on the One you’re with. A walk denotes a consistent, steady forward progression. It’s one step at a time. There’s a gentle leading. The time spent is refreshing and rejuvenating.

To walk in truth is to continue learning, and applying the truths of God’s Word to your everyday life. And in verse 4 John hopes that all of us will “walk in truth.”

SUPPORT FROM THE GENTILES

In verses 5-6 John commends Gaius for giving to the saints. Apparently, he had supported ministers who had gone out in Jesus’ name. We’re told that due to Gaius’ generosity these ministers went out “taking nothing from the Gentiles.”

I’ll never forget the first time I came across this verse. The church was just a couple years old, and we were occupying a building on a temporary basis. The owner wasn’t even charging us rent. But after reading John’s words to Gaius I felt convicted – *we were taking from the gentiles*. We were drawing worldly support for a spiritual venture. I felt it was the responsibility of God’s people to provide for God’s work so the next week we starting sending a check to the landlord.

Before we sent the check the owner didn’t want to rent to us. He was adamant. He wanted far more for the building than we could pay. But after a couple of months of us sending him the money unsolicited, he called me up and asked if we wanted to sign a lease. I believe God blessed our step of faith!

Guys, the church doesn’t need to apply for government grants, or dip into the community chest. I believe God wants to fund *His work* through *His people*. He reserves for believers in Jesus, the joy of giving and supporting His work!

Devotion Box - Diotrephes, A Spiritual Hot Dog

In verse 9 John tells us, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.”

I’m sure you didn’t realize, but the average American eats 87 hot dogs a year. Well, Diotrephes, didn’t eat hot dogs... grab the mustard - *he was a hot dog - a spiritual hot dog!* Diotrephes loved the spotlight. He was haughty, and loved to run the show. It reminds me of a comment Woodrow Wilson once said of a proud associate, “He was the only man I have ever known who could strut while sitting down.”

Diotrephes could strut! He was a power-monger - the type of person who has to be in control. He learned early how to manipulate, intimidate, and dominate.

And when he came into the church he brought along his attitude. Call him *Diotrephes the dictator*. He was the self-appointed church sheriff. He thought nothing should go on in his town, even in Jesus’ name, without his approval.

This lust for preeminence made Diotrephes jealous. He was threatened by the ministries of other believers – and that’s why He refused to receive John.

In fact verse 10 tells us he made vicious slurs in an attempt to discredit John. Diotrephes was the party boss, and he didn’t like John’s infringing on his turf.

Bible expositor, AT Robertson, once wrote an article for a Southern Baptist magazine. He wrote a story depicting the conduct of Diotrephes without naming him. In the weeks following the article 25 deacons from various Baptist churches throughout the state wrote letters to the editor canceling their subscriptions to the magazine. They all claimed that Robertson had been pointing his finger at them. It’s sad, but the majority of churches today are still plagued by a Diotrephes.

When a church develops a boss it loses much of its blessing. When a single person tries to run the show, and dictates to people and God what they can and can’t do – the work of the Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched.

Christian leaders are called to be *servants*, not *sergeants* – *disciples*, not *dictators*. The challenge of a leader is to “lead and not drive, inspire and not dominate, cause respect and not fear, win support and not opposition.”

J U D E

The book of Jude begins, “Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James...” Two

Judes are actually prominent in the Gospels – the apostle Jude – and Jude, the half-brother of Jesus. Along with the early church leader, James, this Jude was probably Jesus’ brother.

If Jude had been a name-dropper he could’ve introduced himself, “*brother of the Lord Jesus*” – instead it was “brother of James, bondservant of Jesus”. It’s a show of Jude’s humility. More than a

BONDSERVANT OF JESUS

sibling, Jesus was His *Savior* – rather than *brother*, Jude is a “bondservant”. This was the

slave who after gaining his freedom, continued to serve his master, not out of obligation, but out of love.

Guys, we too are bound to the Lord. Jesus holds claim to heaven and earth, and His Lordship demands our allegiance. But once you know Jesus – His grace, and His gentleness, and His mercies... *desire* replaces *duty*. We end up serving the Lord Jesus not just because we *have to*, but because we *want to!*

Bible Scan - 2 John, 3 John, Jude

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - Men's Huddle Wednesday, 2/19 @ 7:30 pm - guest speaker Paul Lester, CC in the Ozarks.. "Fabulous Friday" - Moms and tots age 2-4 walk-thru safari at the Yellow River Game Ranch, 2/21 @ 9:30 am; cost: \$7 adults, \$6 children..... "Equipping Women to Serve Conference" - February 28-March 1; Guest Speaker Kelly Bell of CC Murrieta-Register Sunday am in either foyer..... Mission Trip to Ireland, April 7-14
Next Bible Scan - February 23, 2003 - Revelation 1-5

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." - 3 John 4

Bible Scan
Memory Verse

CONTENDING EARNESTLY

In verse 4 Jude says that he had detected "*certain men... ungodly men*", obviously false teachers, who were denying the truth about God and His grace. In 2 Peter 2:1 Peter warned the believers, "there *will be* false teachers among you". Jude tells us they're already here - and he directs his letter to encourage his readers to fight for the truth!

Recently, I ran across some interesting statistics, "Among Americans 40% agree with this false statement, "*All religious faiths teach equally valid truths.*" 38% agree, "*It doesn't matter what religious faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons.*" 34% agree with this erroneous statement, "*The Bible is not totally accurate in all that it teaches.*" 53% accepted, "*All people pray to the same god or spirit, no matter what name they use for that spiritual being.*" And 55% concurred, "*If a person is generally good or does enough good things for others during their lifetime, they will earn a place in heaven.*"

As a matter of fact among Americans the most quoted "*Bible verse*" is: "God helps those who help themselves" - which is not a verse at all! It's a saying of Thomas Jefferson. Yet, 82% of Americans believe it comes from the Bible.

Churches in America have done a poor job of contending for the faith. Jude says we're to "contend earnestly". The Greek word means "*to struggle*". We need to be willing to wrestle for the truth of the Gospel.

I'll never forget the little bit of wrestling I had to do in Junior High. My time on the mat was the longest 3 minutes of my life. It was intense, grueling, exhausting. When the whistle blew I was completely drained - totally spent... We need to be just as zealous and sacrificial and committed to preach and defend God's Word.

Devotion Box - Keeping In The Love Of God

In Jude 20 the letter turns from warning to encouragement. "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Here's the key to victorious living - "keep yourselves in the love of God" - in other words, "stay under the *spout* where the blessings *come out!*" And Jude gives us 3 steps for keeping ourselves in the love of God... *build up your faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, and look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus.*

TWO KINDS OF EVANGELISM

In verses 22-23 Jude describes two types of evangelism, "And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh." Some people respond to the love and kindness of God. It's His goodness that leads them to repentance. Whereas other people need the hell scared out of them. God draws some men to Himself through His kindness, while others come out of fear of hell.

Devotion Box - Jude's Doxology

Jude closes his letter with a doxology, or praise song...

Verses 24-25, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

Temptation is such a powerful force - the Tempter is so deceptive - the world and its evil so pervasive. When we look at what we're up against, how can we be confident that any of us will still be living for Jesus next week - or next year?

Here's why? It's because *God is able to keep us from stumbling!* We are weak. On our own, we are not able to keep ourselves from stumbling - but Jesus is able! He's able to keep us! Let's trust in Him!

Devotion Box - Avoiding Pitfalls

In verse 11 Jude gives three more examples warning us not to fall away from the truth that's in Christ. Here are three dangers we need to avoid at all costs: "the way of Cain", "the error of Balaam for profit", and "the rebellion of Korah."

All three men started in a good place, but wandered away from God. The way of Cain was anger. The error of Balaam was greed. And the rebellion of Korah was jealousy. Anger, greed and jealousy are pitfalls to avoid!