Small Group Guide: Are You Walking in Truth?

Based on 3 John

Overview

The Apostle John's third letter serves as a public review of three men: Gaius, who receives high praise for his faithful hospitality and integrity; Demetrius, who is commended as trustworthy; and Diotrephes, whose pride, gossip, and abuse of power earn him a sharp rebuke. This letter challenges every believer to examine whether they are genuinely walking in truth or simply going through the motions of church life.

Key Takeaways

1. Walking in truth is more than believing the right things. It means living consistently -- the same person at church, at work, at home, and everywhere in between. Gaius was not praised for what he said he believed, but for how he actually lived.

2. Hospitality is love in action. Gaius opened his home and resources to traveling ministers at personal cost. Serving others in tangible ways is not optional for the follower of Jesus -- it is evidence of genuine faith.

3. Pride is a ministry killer. Diotrephes loved being first. His self-centeredness led to gossip, exclusion, and abuse of his position. Pride blinds a person to the needs of others and ultimately to God himself.

4. Imitate what is good, not what is evil. The standard for what is good is not personal preference or cultural opinion -- it is what God defines as good in his Word.

5. Following Jesus has a cost. Belief is not passive. Like stepping off a diving board into your father's arms, genuine faith requires action, surrender, and trust.

Discussion Questions

Opening (Choose one to get the conversation started)

- Think about someone in your life whose faith you have genuinely admired. What was it about the way they lived that stood out to you?

- Have you ever left a review for a business or product? What made you feel strongly enough to write one? What would it take for someone to write a review about your faith?

Digging Into the Text

1. The sermon described walking in truth as being the same person at church, at work, at home, and in private. How consistent would you say your life is across those different settings? Where is the gap the widest?

2. The pastor asked: "If you woke up tomorrow and your physical health and your spiritual health had linked up, how ill or how well would you be?" Sit with that question honestly. What does your answer reveal about the current condition of your spiritual life?

3. Gaius was praised because other believers came and testified about him -- not because he told everyone how faithful he was. What do you think the people in your life would say about you if someone asked them to describe your faith?

4. The letter contrasts Gaius, who was humble and hospitable, with Diotrephes, who loved to be first. Where do you see the temptation toward Diotrephes-like behavior in your own life -- at home, at work, or even in church settings?

5. The pastor said, "What is in your heart is going to find its way out of your mouth." Diotrephes spread malicious gossip because his heart was malicious. What does the way you talk about others -- especially when they are not in the room -- reveal about what is in your heart?

6. John praised Gaius for his generosity and hospitality, and even prayed for his prosperity because he trusted Gaius would use any blessing to further the kingdom. If God evaluated your current generosity, would he find someone he could trust with more? Why or why not?

7. The sermon described the difference between a fraud and a follower, a counterfeit and a Christian. What is the difference in practical, everyday terms? How does a person know which one they actually are?

Going Deeper

8. The pastor said, "Following Jesus costs you things. Worshiping has a cost." He referenced the account of David refusing to offer something to God that cost him nothing. What has following Jesus actually cost you? If the answer is "not much," what might that indicate?

9. The diving board illustration described genuine belief as the moment you actually jump -- not just the moment you acknowledge your father is in the water. Have you jumped? Or

are you still standing on the board, believing all the right things but not fully surrendering?

10. The sermon ended with the challenge that followers of Jesus are part of a rescue team. We were saved so that we could carry the same gospel that rescued us to others who need it. Who in your life right now needs someone to throw them that life preserver? What is stopping you?

Practical Applications

Choose at least one of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

Examine your consistency. Pick three settings where you spend regular time -- such as home, work, and church. Ask a trusted person in each of those settings to honestly describe what your faith looks like from where they stand. Be prepared to hear the answer without being defensive.

Practice hospitality. Identify one practical way to open your home, your table, or your resources to someone this week -- a neighbor, a coworker, someone from your church, or a person in need. Do it at a real cost to yourself.

Audit your words. For one week, pay close attention to how you talk about other people when they are not present. At the end of the week, reflect honestly on what your words revealed about your heart.

Get alone with God. The pastor recommended finding a place with no distractions to be alone with God in prayer. If you do not have a regular practice of this, commit to doing it at least three times before the group meets again. Come prepared to share what you experienced.

Answer the question honestly. Before the next group meeting, spend time in private prayer asking God directly: "Am I walking in truth, or am I playing church?" Write down whatever comes to mind and bring it to the group if you feel comfortable sharing.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your time together by praying specifically over these areas:

- That each person in the group would have the courage to examine themselves honestly
- That God would reveal any areas of pride, inconsistency, or half-hearted faith
- That the group would grow in genuine hospitality and generosity
- That each person would identify at least one person in their life who needs to hear the gospel and find the courage to share it

"*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth*." -- 3 John 4, summarized