

2 and 3 John

Memory Verses: *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 ESV).

Background Helps:

For background helps, see the information on these two brief letters at the end of this forecast

Both letters emphasize the importance of truth (2 John 1-4 and 3 John 1, 3, 4, 8, 12) and love (2 John 1, 3, 5-6 and 3 John 1, 6). Notice also how John frequently addresses Gaius as “beloved”: 3 John 1, 2, 5, 11.

Notice that the same three tests for genuine believers, found in 1 John, are repeated in these two letters:

1. The doctrinal test: Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the incarnate Son of God? (2 John 7)
2. The moral test: Do live a righteous (obedient) life? (2 John 6; 3 John 11)
3. The social test: Do you love your brother? (2 John 5)

Lesson Helps:

Here are two alternative aims and plans for this week’s lesson:

1. My students will learn about John’s teaching on hospitality, so that they will practice Christian hospitality in their own lives. With this aim you can teach a lesson that covers both letters, considering when hospitality ought to be withheld (2 John 7-11) and when hospitality ought to be offered (3 John 5-10). Discuss the practical application of this teaching, for example: What should be our response to cultists who want to teach their false doctrine in our homes? How should we welcome missionaries or other Christian workers who visit our church? Etc.
2. My students will learn about the contrasting attitudes of Gaius and Diotrephes toward traveling missionaries in 3 John, so that they will welcome newcomers into our church (or class). This lesson is confined to 3 John only and would work well in children’s classes. Introduce your students to “Gaius” and “Diotrephes” (and even “Demetrius” in v. 12)—perhaps by interviewing some older youth or adults who play these roles (ask them ahead of time). You could even create a story line out of verses 5-10, showing how the same missionaries were welcomed by Gaius but refused by Diotrephes. This lesson would provide a great opportunity to teach children and young people the importance of welcoming newcomers to the church.

Home Assignment:

 Read: Luke 1–2.

 Memorize: Luke 2:11 ESV



2 and 3 John

Author: “The elder” (2 John 1 and 3 John 1). As with 1 John, external evidence indicates that this “elder” was the apostle John. Both letters similar in theme, style, and vocabulary to 1 John. Peter also called himself an “elder” (1 Pet. 5:1). Author writes with authority.

Recipients: **2 John:** “the chosen lady and her children.” Either, literally, an unknown Christian woman and her children or, figuratively, an unknown local church and its members (1, 4-5, 13). **3 John:** a Christian friend, Gaius (1). In both cases, likely located in province of Asia (western Turkey). Not General Epistles but grouped together with 1 John.

Date: Probably in John’s later years, after destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70).

Place of Origin: According to early traditions, Ephesus, where John spent his last years.

Occasion and Purpose: **2 John:** to warn against extending hospitality to heretics (7-11). **3 John:** to urge showing hospitality to itinerant evangelists of the truth (5-10). Theme: Christian hospitality.

Characteristics:

- The two shortest books in the Bible
- Both letters emphasize truth and love.
- Both letters address the duty of Christian hospitality.
- 2 John, like 1 John, emphasizes the incarnation of Jesus Christ as an essential Christian truth (7-11), contrary to Gnostic heresy.
- Demetrius (12) may have been the bearer of the letter of 3 John.

Outline:

2 John	3 John
I. Greeting (1-3)	I. Commendation of Gaius (1-8)
II. Message (4-11)	II. Condemnation of Diotrephes (9-10)
III. Conclusion (12-13)	III. Commendation of Demetrius (11-12)
	IV. Conclusion (13-14)

Key Passages:

- 2 John 10: Hospitality forbidden
- 3 John 5-8: Hospitality enjoined
- 3 John 9-10: Danger of church leaders assuming too much power

Applications: Practice hospitality, especially to Christian workers.