

III JOHN: THE NURTURING NATURE OF OUR FELLOWSHIP

I. The Extensive Personal Nurturing Nature Of Our Fellowship

(3 John 1-4)

I. Introduction

- A. Having written on true spiritual fellowship in 1 John and about whom we are to exclude from our fellowship in 2 John, the Apostle John wrote a third epistle on the nurturing nature of our fellowship in the Lord!
- B. Though we believers generally think that nurturing one another in Christ means nurturing one another in our spiritual lives alone, 3 John 1-4 reveals that our fellowship in Christ, being of the personal nurturing nature, is far more extensive, so we view this passage for our insight, application and ultimate edification (as follows):

II. The Extensive Personal Nurturing Nature Of Our Fellowship, 3 John 1-4.

- A. Our fellowship involves concern for the comprehensive **livelihood** needs of *individual* believers, 3 John 1-2a:
 - 1. John's epistle to the beloved fellow believer, Gaius, claimed that "concerning" (*peri*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 830; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 650-651) "all things" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to 3 John 2) regarding the issue at hand, John "wished, desired" (*euchomai*, *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 329) that he "prosper, succeed" (*euodoo*, *Ibid.*, p. 324), 3 John 1-2a.
 - 2. The verb *euodoo* literally means to "'be led along a good road'" (*Ibid.*), and figuratively here where it is distinguished from John's later reference to Gaius' health (3 John 2b), we understand that John expressed concern here for Gaius' success and prosperity relative to the meeting of his livelihood needs.
 - 3. Accordingly, since John was concerned that Gaius succeed in **all things** relative to his livelihood, he was concerned about Gaius' employment, income level, spending, indebtedness, savings and investments, housing, clothing and the many other related issues involved in securing a good livelihood.
- B. Our fellowship involves concern for the comprehensive **health** needs of *individual* believers, 3 John 2b:
 - 1. John added that he "wished, desired" concerning all things relative to the issue that Gaius "be in good health" (*hugiaino*, *Ibid.*, p. 839-840), what in this context means "physical health" (*Ibid.*), 3 John 2b.
 - 2. Applying the "all things" term John used earlier in the verse to Gaius' health, John was concerned that Gaius have proper food and drink intake, avoid toxins and obtain his needed exercise, sleep and mental welfare.
- C. Our fellowship involves concern for the comprehensive **spiritual** needs of *individual* believers, 3 John 2c-4:
 - 1. John used the verb *euodoo* again in 3 John 2c to acknowledge that Gaius' "soul," what in this context means "spiritual life" (*psuche*, Theol. Dict. of the N. T., v. IX p. 651), already "prospered, succeeded" (*Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 324). Applying the "all things" term earlier in verse 2 means John would have been concerned about every aspect of Gaius' inner man, that he order his life in the truth in every way!
 - 2. John added that he rejoiced "exceedingly" (*lian*, *Ibid.*, p. 474) when believers came and testified to Gaius' truth, just as he was "walking" (*peripateo*, *Ibid.*, p. 654-655), i. e., ordering his life in the truth, 3 John 3.
 - 3. The Apostle added that he had no greater joy than to hear that his spiritual children, people he had led to Christ and disciplined were walking, or ordering their lives in the spiritual truth that is in Christ, 3 John 4.

Lesson: *In a personal letter to his child in the faith, John exemplified intense interest in the comprehensive, personal nurturing nature of true Christian fellowship: (1) he was intensely concerned about Gaius' livelihood needs, including his employment, income level, spending, debts, savings and investments, housing and clothing etc. (2) John was intensely concerned about Gaius' physical health, including his food and drink intake, avoidance of toxins, exercise, sleep and mental welfare affecting his health. (3) Above all, John was intensely concerned about Gaius' spiritual welfare and all it entailed, and rejoiced greatly to hear he was walking in the truth in Christ.*

Application: *(1) May our fellowship with one another reach far beyond concern over how others believers function in Church meetings to include intense, personal concern for the comprehensive livelihood, health and spiritual needs of one another in our daily lives outside the Church meetings. (2) Of necessity, this involves obtaining knowledge about how to obtain good employment, a decent income, care in spending and seeking to avoid debt, saving and investing, gaining and keeping good housing, clothing on top of food and drink intake, avoiding toxins and getting proper exercise, sleep and preserving our mental welfare besides all that is involved in maintaining a healthy spiritual walk. (3) In addition, this involves teaching and/or communicating with each other to help one another in our livelihood, health and spiritual vitality to assist where our assistance is needed. (4) Some ministries in our Church already address some issues such as our Food Pantry and Prayer Chain ministries, but there may be room for more such ministries on a personal level that aim to support one another in areas of personal needs.*