

III John

Many times, my family has hosted missionaries and out-of-town pastors in my home for stay-over while they were in town. My children were very helpful of supporting my wife and me to clean the house and to perform other preparations. Every time was a whole family affair. We had a good time with those guests especially in sharing spiritual matters. I believe the Bible teaches us Christians to show hospitality and care for others especially God's servants like pastors and missionaries. The book of III John is one of the Bible chapter that we can learn about this topic.

The book of III John is one of the three letters written by apostle John between AD 85 to 95. This letter was written to John's good friend Gaius but the general audience is all Christians. The letter covers three topics: the encouragement to Gaius, condemnation of Diotrephes' behavior, and the praise of Demetrius. The main theme is John's praise and encouragement to Gaius on his hospitality to the missionaries.

1) Prayer

The letter starts with "I pray". John prayed for his fellow servant of Christ. One of the most important part of supporting God's servant is to support them in prayer. We are limited but God has no limit. God is almighty and all knowing. He knows the need of His servants, and He can provide those need in His perfect will and in His time. We can pray for their physical needs, healthy soul and spiritual strength. Most God's servants especially missionaries often encounter physical dangers and lack of good physical environments in a foreign land. They also often receive rejections, and don't have much Christian partners in the field. Thus, prayers and encouragement are highly needed.

2) Affirmation and Encouragement

a) Affirmation

Verse three states "It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it". It is very important to show affirmation/endorsement of the work done by God's servants. They often face difficult challenges and rejections from the world. You are standing on their side, and showing you are in the battle with them against their adversaries.

b) Encouragement

God's servants need emotional and spiritual support. Kind words of support is a great encouragement to them. Thus, affirmation is a good encouragement. One way of giving good encouragement is to list and praise one's faithful actions. Verse 5 states the specific actions this Christian brother have done. He welcomed and loved the missionaries at that time, who were strangers to him.

One can also use God's word in the Bible to encourage God's servants.

3) Hospitality

We need to show hospitality to God's servants. Gaius showed hospitality and love to God's servant. Verse 8 states "We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth." Show hospitality is one of the way to team with them in serving God together.

Lydia is a good example in the Bible that she has shown hospitality to apostle Paul and his team. It was written in Acts chapter 16.

Priscilla and Aquila, wife and husband team, also has provided great hospitality for apostle Paul. In addition, they really partnered with apostle Paul. (Acts chapter 18, and Romans 16:3-5)

Today, there are many forms to give hospitality. Churches can keep a prayer list and pray for God's servant/team in the field. We can send gifts to them and supply them with physical needs. Churches often send Christmas gifts to missionaries. We can keep continuous contacts like email or text with them. Of course, we still can host missionaries when they are in town.

Using military in a battle as an illustration, the missionaries are in the front line where as the supporters are like the rear military force. In this III John chapter, Gaius is more like a rear soldier when he hosted the missionaries. Gaius is a God's servant which John prayed for him, affirmed him and encouraged him. Regardless someone is in the "front line" or in the "rear" serving God, the above should be done for them by each of us.

In summary, you are partnering with God's servants when you pray for them, affirm them, encourage them and show hospitality towards them. It would be a greater joy when the whole family involve instead of one person. Family members can learn how to show hospitality and to learn the concept of teaming in ministry.