

HEALTHY, WHOLE, AND HOLY



STUDY 2

A Quality Friend (3 John 1-14)

Ancient Near East cultures viewed hospitality as a major virtue. Potential guests often carried letters of recommendation to assure the hosts that they were safe guests. It is into this context, with themes of humility and hospitality, that John writes Gaius and those in the neighbouring house churches. He commends Gaius' character even as he warns him about another individual.

Explore & Share

Tom Wright makes it clear that healthy, whole, and holy qualities involve both the personal and interpersonal life. In his *For Everyone Series* he states, "We can take it that this involves not just correct doctrine and proper outward behaviour, but that love for God and for one's fellow believers which, for John, is the sign that the truth of the gospel has really been grasped, not as an abstract idea but as what it is, the very life of God Himself is at work in His people." Let us, then, examine character quality from two angles: 1) The qualities of the writer, John, and of his main recipient, Gaius, and 2) The qualities of their relationship.

1. The relational qualities (3 John 1-14) The Greek word that is, typically, translated "dear friend" in this passage is *agapētos*, "beloved". The root word of beloved is *agápē*, God's love.

Discuss: *What is the significance of the repetitive use of "dear friend" in this epistle? How does the link of the word for beloved to the word for God's love set "dear friend/beloved" apart from other human friendships? Where, in other verses, are there clues to the depth of the relationship between John and Gaius?*

2. The character qualities (3 John 3,4, Hebrews 13:2) John's joy was increased by the testimonies from travellers/missionaries who had spent time with Gaius. They shared that Gaius was faithful to the truth (v. 3) and was walking in the truth (v. 4). This phrase "walking in the truth" relates to being healthy, whole, and holy. It is similar to the word "integrity" — being complete, whole, and incorruptible.

Discuss: *What are some practical ways that "walking in the truth" and being faithful to the kingdom of heaven impacts our daily lives, making us increasingly more whole and more holy?*

3. Character and relational encouragement for us, today (3 John 2-4, 13) John prayed for Gaius, "that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." NIV. To greet someone with a prayer that asked that all would go well with them would have been a standard greeting similar to today's "I trust you are well". Yet, there is something appealing and thought-provoking about this phrasing. It might turn your thoughts to a well-loved hymn — It is Well With My Soul. (Check out a recording and the hymn story if you don't know the hymn.)

Discuss: *What must exist in a relationship and within each person for a report about a friend to bring you joy? What elements are likely to be present in relationships when you desire to be face-to-face, as John was with Gaius? What steps can we take to invest in long-term relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ? Spend some quality time in prayer for specific relational needs as they are shared in your group and then pray for the relationships within your Connect. As you wrap up, pray for one another - that "your soul is getting along well."*