



The Harvester

*Preparing Souls
To Serve The Lord!*

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What If Diotrephes Wrote A Letter Withdrawing Fellowship From Gaius?

Brian R. Kenyon

Several years ago, the eldership of a local congregation fired their preacher for being a “false teacher” and wrote letters to the brethren indicating such. I personally knew the preacher and could not imagine him teaching false doctrine. After talking with the preacher and then talking further with his former eldership, I learned it was that eldership who actually promoted false doctrine and did not like the preacher countering their claims with biblical evidence! An eldership certainly has a right to change preachers (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:5; 1 Pet. 5:1-4), but not at the expense of his sound reputation by claiming he taught false doctrine (Rom. 12:17)!

John’s third epistle was addressed to Gaius (3 Jn. 1). The Holy Spirit described Gaius as one who walked in the truth; faithfully helped brethren and strangers; loved and supported missionaries; and was a “fellow worker for the truth” (3 Jn. 3, 5-8). Diotrephes, on the other hand, was described as one who loved to have “the preeminence” over the local church; did not receive faithful brethren; “unjustly accused” faithful brethren with “wicked words” (NAS); forbade faithful brethren from participating; and drove brethren “out of the church” (3 Jn. 9-10). What if Diotrephes wrote you a letter, on “official” stationery, saying the local church of whom he was a member has withdrawn fellowship from Gaius? Perhaps, if you did not know Gaius (or Diotrephes), you would honor the letter and not have fellowship with Gaius. However, what if you actually knew Gai-

us, and knew him to be a faithful Christian? Do you automatically take Diotrephes’ word that Gaius has suddenly turned to “walk disorderly” and must be “withdrawn” from fellowship (cf. 2 Thes. 3:6) or do you investigate further (cf. 1 Thes. 5:21)? Below are some truths to consider in ascertaining whether a brother’s accusation of “False teacher!” is true.

Know and Appreciate The Importance of Truth

God places a premium on truth! Yes, Jesus said of the gospel, “you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32). God’s love for truth, however, is not limited to the truth that frees us from sin. Truth flows from God’s nature, for He is the “Lord God of truth” (Ps. 31:5). God’s “counsels of old are faithfulness and truth” (Isa. 25:1). God wants us to meditate on truth (Phil. 4:8), to love in truth (1 Jn. 3:8; 2 Jn. 1; 3 Jn. 1), and to acquire truth (Pr. 23:23). Being a false teacher is a serious matter with serious implications and consequences (cf. Mt. 7:15-



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20; Rom. 16:17-18; Gal. 1:6-9; Phil. 3:18-19; 2 Jn. 9-11). Faithful brethren should not flippantly, or casually, label someone a “false teacher.” Such a charge must be verified by adequate evidence! Faithful brethren must “Provide things honest in the sight of all men” (Rom. 12:17, KJV), including truly identifying false teachers.

Ascertain Whether The Accusation Is True

It is usually easier to “take the word” of someone who agrees with us on most biblical subjects than to go (face to face, if possible) to the actual person about whom an accusation is being made. Some false teachers are so obvious that the principles of Matthew 18:15-17 would not apply. However, if we knew, or at least thought we knew, Gaius, and received a letter from Diotrephes saying Gaius was a false teacher, would not our love and concern for Gaius demand that we contact him directly to see if the accusation were true? I have known brethren who “weaponized” disfellowshipping, not because someone was truly “walking disorderly” (2 Thes. 3:6-15 cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-13), but to “put ... out of the church” (3 Jn. 10) a faithful brother who countered their false teaching with truth! Sometimes, when we hear a snippet of what someone said, we jump quickly to “false teacher” conclusions. Some people may use denominational lingo (which I wish they would not), but do not mean by it what denominations teach. Sometimes, a “false teaching” is not really false, but the ac-

cusation merely amounts to a difference of opinion in an optional matter (i.e., expediency cf. 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23). Sometimes, a person, like Apollos, is indeed teaching untruths, but he does not know it and easily accepts the truth when taught (Acts 18:24-26).

We must not judge and convict someone of being a “false teacher” without having sufficient evidence. The God-breathed wise man wrote, “He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him” (Pr. 18:13). The term “before he hears it” has to do with a failure to examine all sides of an issue before making a judgment. We must be willing to dig deeper than the mere accusation. Only hearing one side of an issue may seem to be the clincher, but that one side may not be the whole picture. Again, the God-breathed wise man wrote, “The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him” (Pr. 18:17). We cannot go wrong by heeding James’ instruction, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19).

Value Each Faithful Soul Who Builds-Up the Kingdom

Every church member is important, and the church needs every faithful member of the body of Christ in order to build-up and expand the borders

The Harvester

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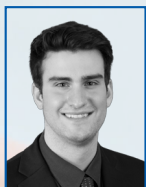
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EVANGELISM

January 19-22, 2026

"And the sower went forth"

Monday, January 19, 2026

- 9:00 What Is Evangelism? Zackary Williams
 9:40 The Gospel's Built-in Evangelistic Mechanisms Aaron Cozort
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Using Jesus... Model for Evangelism Jason Ridgeway
 10:45-11:30 Children's Class
 11:30 LUNCH Provided by Poinciana
1:20 Forum: Intentionality
 1:20-3:00 Children's Class
 1:25 Evangelism Must Be Deliberate Cary Gillis
 2:00 Evangelizing Different Ethnicities Rico Brown
 2:30 Evangelism Must Include Discipleship Training J. Colwell
 3:30 Ladies Evangelistic Insights: Samaritan Woman K. Grimes
 3:30 Questions and Answers on Intentionality
 4:30-5:00 - Alumni Reception - Alumni please RSVP online
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30-8:30 Children's Class
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Teaching Belief in Evangelism C. J. Grimes
 7:45 Spiritual Renewal Sidney Moore

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

- 9:00 Jesus Must Be the Center of Evangelism David Pharr
 9:40 Is Salvation Outside of Christ or Only in Christ? G. F. Beals
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Evangelizing Those Captured By Calvinism Stephen Atnip
 11:30 LUNCH Provided by Laura Street
1:20 Forum: Importance of Local Church
 1:25 The Strength of the "Jerusalem Model" David Stearsman
 2:00 Internal Local Church Evangelism Dylan Johns
 2:30 How Busy Preachers Can Still Evangelize Hiram Kemp
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions and Answers on Importance of Local Church
 4:30 DINNER - Appreciation Banquet - ALL WELCOME
 Please RSVP online
 6:30-8:30 Children's Class
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Teaching Repentance in Evangelism Kurtis Leaks
 7:45 Jesus' "Make Disciples" Commission Jimmy Clark

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

- 9:00 Flipping the Script on Evangelism Lance Mosher
 9:40 Debunking Evangelism Stereotypes Rick Kenyon
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Evangelizing the "Unchurched...Atheist Types" Jimmy Clark
 11:30 LUNCH Provided by South Florida Avenue
1:20 Forum: Mobilizing the Membership
 1:25 What Can Youth Do to Evangelize? Ty Rhymes
 2:00 What Can Elders Do to Evangelize? Don Garner
 2:30 What Can Families Do to Evangelize? Byron Chapman
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Ladies Evangelistic Insights: Tabitha & Lydia S. Kenyon
 3:30 Questions and Answers on Mobilizing the Membership
 4:30 DINNER - Phoebe Group Fundraiser Dinner

- 6:30-8:30 Children's Class
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Teaching Confession in Evangelism Forest Antemasaris
 7:45 Jesus' "Preach the Gospel" Commission B.J. Clarke

Thursday, January 22, 2026

- 9:00 Using Technology in Evangelism Joey Ferrell
 9:40 Aquila's Role in Working with Priscilla Steven Ford
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 The Soul's Value Is Worth...Training Evangelists C. Graham
 11:30 LUNCH Provided by Orange Street
1:20 Forum: Cultural Necessities
 1:25 Evangelizing People with Addictions James Eaves
 2:00 Meeting People Where They Are Lance Mosher
 2:30 Using Social Media for Evangelism Paul Mays
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Ladies Evangelistic Insights from Priscilla Carlisa Ford
 3:30 Questions and Answers on Cultural Necessities
 4:30 DINNER - Phoebe Group Fundraiser Dinner
 6:30-8:30 Children's Class
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Teaching the New Birth in Evangelism Hiram Kemp
 7:45 The Macedonian Call Melvin Otey



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of God's kingdom (1 Cor. 12:13-27 cf. Eph. 4:11-15). Given the description of Diotrephes (3 Jn. 9-10), we can see why he would not want Gaius, a faithful brother (3 Jn. 3, 5-8), in the local church, but why would some brethren today, who claim to be followers of Christ, want to lessen the number of faithful church members by crying wolf, "False teacher!," and "putting them out of the church" (3 Jn. 10)? Like Diotrephes, it seems they too want to "have the preeminence among" the brotherhood! Rather than diminishing the number of faithful brethren, should we not be encouraging the faithful along with reaching out to the lost in order to strengthen and expand the local church (Eph. 4:2, 25, 32; 1 Thes. 4:9, 5:11; Heb. 3:13, 24-25)?

Yes, when there truly is evidence of a false teacher, the same love that would give Gaius the "benefit of doubt" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4-5, 7), demands the false teacher be dealt with according to Scripture (cf. 1 Cor. 13:6). Even this includes the goal of building up and expanding the borders of God's kingdom! When all efforts of teaching fail to move a false teacher from his or her erroneous position (cf. Acts 18:26; Gal. 6:1), then we are to "withdraw from every broth-

er who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us" (2 Thes. 3:6). "Tradition" (from *paradosis*, παράδοσις) here refers to that which was "handed down" by Paul and his fellow apostles, whether written or oral instructions (cf. 2 Thes. 2:15). One reason for this withdrawal is so the brother or sister "may be ashamed" (2 Thes. 3:14), which will, hopefully, lead to repentance and salvation restored (cf. 1 Cor. 5:4-5). Even when the local church has withdrawn fellowship from a member, "do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thes. 3:15).

Conclusion

Accusations of "False teacher!" are serious and should not be given or taken lightly! If you knew Gaius, yet received a letter from Diotrephes stating Gaius was now a withdrawn from false teacher, how would you react? May the Lord help us to be guided by love (Col. 3:14 cf. 1 Cor. 13:4-7), to "love the brotherhood" (1 Pet. 2:17), to "Test [prove, KJV] all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thes. 5:21-22), and to act accordingly (1 Cor. 11:1; Gal. 6:15-16; Phil. 3:17-21).