

February 13, 2023

The Spirit of Diotrephes

3 John1:9-10

The Apostle John wrote a letter detailing some concerns he had about the Church. Do you want to know those concerns? Reading 3 John1:9-10 we see that John said in (v. 9), **“I wrote a letter to the church (congregation): But Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.”** (Loves to be in charge, will not accept us), (vv. 10-11) **“Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”** (In other words, John is saying *“When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing, And the evil accusations he is making against us. Not only does he refuse to welcome the traveling teachers, He also tells others not to help them. And when they do help, he puts them out of the church”*).

So, who was Diotrephes? He was a leader and a self-seeking troublemaker in an unnamed local church in the first century. What were the issues Apostle John accused Diotrephes of: 1) He loved to be first, 2) He refused to welcome the apostles into the church, 3) He maliciously spread gossips about men of God, 4) He deliberately withheld help from other believers, 5) He expected others to follow his footsteps, 6) He excommunicated anyone that went against his stand.

Diotrephes was already an institution in that local church. The last point above (#6) proved that he was not just an ordinary member of the church. He was a leader with certain authority which he abused.

The Apostle John said, Diotrephes loves to be first. Other translations say, *“Diotrephes loves to be the leader, likes to put himself first, loves to be in charge, loves to have the preeminence among them, loves to be their number one.”*

Hmm...Does it mean one should not aspire to be the best or number one in whatever God puts in your care? No! Please be the best you can ever be! Mediocrity (the state or quality of being mediocre) is not a synonym of Godliness. Hone your skills, talents and gifts and be the best in your areas of calling. One thing is missing today in our churches and that is giving one hundred percent to God. After all, do not church members give a hundred percent for secular things?

The Apostle John in this letter was describing a personality disorder that, unfortunately, some people are cursed with, it is called a narcissistic personality disorder! There are some individuals out there who are all but impossible to get along with. Their arrogance causes them to see themselves as all but infallible while everyone else deserves to be criticized intensely. These individuals are known as narcissists, and it is very likely you know at least one (unfortunately I

do). Narcissists are manipulative and can learn to cover up their nature when someone is first getting to know them, though over time, they will often reveal their true selves. Should you feel like someone is emotionally abusing you or is unable to take any criticism, you might be dealing with a narcissist. These are some signs of a narcissist. Diotrephes had it!

If you marry a narcissist...you are in for a troublesome marriage. If you have a narcissist as your boss...Trouble. If you now have just one narcissist in your local church...You had better pray well or else that church is sitting on a keg of gun powder! Oh, how true, dear reader, do not sluff this off, this is most serious and I want to really put some emphasis on this, once again, “narcissistic personality disorder” is a disorder in which a person has an inflated sense of self-importance and a personal egotistic need for power and admiration. Three things characterized this personality: 1) Dominance, 2) Arrogance, 3) Hostility.

All these were seen in Diotrephes. He did not just love to be in charge (dominance), he disrespected Apostle John’s directives (arrogance). Do not forget Apostle John was the oldest Apostle at that time, yet Diotrephes never obeyed him. Also, Diotrephes caused divisions within the church (hostility). Therefore, he was qualified to be called a narcissist!

How then do you know people with the spirit of Diotrephes? 1) Every discussion revolves around them, it starts with them, it ends with them...It is me, me and I, I. They will talk endlessly about themselves, and if at all they ask about you, they are not really interested! They only ask for “asking-sake,” 2) The spirit of Diotrephes will lay burdens and restrictions on others that he is not willing to take upon himself. Diotrephes forced people to respect his orders but was not willing to submit to Apostle John and other Apostles that visited the church, 3) The spirit of Diotrephes is an autonomous spirit that finds it difficult to function peacefully with other leaders. It cannot work peacefully with other fellow ministers. The spirit will always kick against anything called “constituted authority,” 4) It is a critical spirit. It will always be looking for faults in any decision taken by others. It is a spirit of destructive criticism. If you say ‘A’, they will say ‘Z’. Though he actually wanted to say ‘A’, but just because you said ‘A’, he must say ‘Z’ in order to fuel his ego. It is a spirit of antagonism! 5) It is a spirit of double standard that exercises different discipline towards different people based on his perception. It is a spirit of nepotism.

If you have this personality, you need help! Do not rationalize it. Do not say you are trying to help God’s work to progress. Diotrephes actually thought he was doing that by preventing his church from external influence of the Apostles. Little did he know he was a clog in the wheel of progress. Meanwhile Diotrephes was not an ordinary member of the church! Research showed he was probably the Bishop or Pastor of that church! That was why he had the authority to even send people that did not tow his line out of the church. Leaders be careful!

In your local church are you like Diotrephes? Are you a leader in whatever capacity and you notice you have these traits in you? Do you antagonize every decision made by constituted authority? Do you think all decisions are wrong except the ones you make? Do you spread malicious nonsense about people of

God in order to cause divisions? Do you use your words to dissuade people from doing the good they want to do and yet you will not lift your finger to do anything?

Repent today! Seek help medically and spiritually. Medically, because it is a personality disorder! This personality does not affect your relationship with people in the church alone, it affects your marriage, career etc.

The problem now is that people who have this personality problem may never seek help because of their self-grandiosity! In fact, they will never admit they have this disorder. So, help may be elusive to them!

Spiritually, because it can be a spirit! Evil spirits can attach themselves to these personality disorders to cause troubles in the church, marriages etc. So, the evil spirit needs to be cast out of his/her life. The problem here too is the fact that these people are likely leaders (they love to be in charge), so they may not be able to humble themselves before God and other ministers!

Lastly, the spirit of Diotrephes is a destructive and divisive spirit. If you see its manifestations in your church, marriage, organization, bind it and send it out. If you have it, admit it, and humble yourself by seeking help!

Do you know this guy. He purposely quotes out of context (which is nothing more than a lie) in order to gain a following against a brother he is obviously very jealous of. He maliciously spread gossips about men of God! Do you spread malicious nonsense about people of God in order to cause divisions? God Bless!