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Translation Notes (unfoldedWord)

3 John - Introduction

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of the book of 3 John

1. Introduction (1:1)
2. Encouragement and instructions to show hospitality (1:2–8)
3. Condemnation of Diotrephes (1:9–10)
4. Instructions to imitate what is good (1:11)
5. Praise for Demetrius (1:12)
6. Conclusion and greetings (1:13–15)

Who wrote the book of 3 John?

The letter does not give the name of the author. The author only identified himself as **The elder** (1:1). The letter was probably written by the apostle John near the end of his life, after he had written the Gospel of John and the letters 1 John and 2 John. In this letter, John referred to himself as “the elder.” This may have been because of his old age, or because he was a leader in the church, or both, since both were true. If possible, in your translation use a word in your language that can refer to both old age and church leadership.

What is the book of 3 John about?

John wrote this letter to a believer named Gaius. He instructed Gaius to be hospitable and helpful to fellow believers who were traveling through his area. These were probably groups of traveling Christian preachers and teachers. John also warned Gaius about a bad leader in the church there named Diotrephes. He also commended a good leader there named Demetrius. This may have been someone in Gaius’s congregation whom John wanted Gaius to support as a leader rather than Diotrephes, or he may have been the person who carried this letter to Gaius and John was introducing him to Gaius. If so, he was part of the same group that had come to John; they would be traveling back to where Gaius was and then traveling farther on.

How should the title of this book be translated?

Translators may choose to call this book by its traditional title, “3 John” or “Third John.” Or they may choose a different title, such as “The Third Letter from John” or “The Third Letter John Wrote”. (See: How to Translate Names)

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

What is hospitality?

Hospitality was an important concept in the ancient Near East. It was important to be friendly towards foreigners or outsiders and provide help to them if they needed it. In 2 John, John discouraged Christians from showing hospitality to false teachers. In 3 John, John encouraged Christians to show hospitality to faithful teachers.

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

How does the author use family relationships in his letter?

The author used the terms **brother** and **children** in a way that can be confusing. The Old Testament scriptures often used the term **brothers** to refer to fellow Jews. But in this letter, John used the word to refer to fellow Christians. Also, John called some believers his **children**. He meant this in a spiritual sense; these were believers whom he had taught to obey Christ.

John also used the term **Gentile** in a way that could be confusing. The scriptures often used the term **Gentile** to refer to people who are not Jews. But in this letter, John used the word to refer to those who did not believe in Jesus.

Which form of “you” occurs in this letter?

This is a personal letter from John to his friend Gaius. All instances of **you** and **your** in this letter refer to Gaius and are singular.

How can I translate verses 6–7 in a logical order?

Verse 7 provides the reason for the action that John recommends in verse 6. In some languages, it is

more natural to state the reason first, and the action afterwards. If this would be more natural in your language, you can reverse the order of the sentences and then combine the verse numbers. (See: Verse Bridges)

For the ULT, reversing the sentences would look like this:

6–7 who have attested your love before the church. Because they went out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles, you will do well to send them on worthily of God.

3 John 1:1 (#1)

"The elder"

John assumes that Gaius will know who he is when he calls himself **The elder**. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could make John's name explicit. (See the Introduction to 3 John for a discussion of how to translate the term **elder**.) Alternate translation: "I, John the elder, am writing"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

3 John 1:1 (#2)

"to" - "Gaius"

Gaius is the name of a man, a fellow believer to whom John is writing this letter.

See: How to Translate Names

3 John 1:1 (#3)

"whom I love in truth"

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **truth**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: "whom I love sincerely"

See: Abstract Nouns

3 John 1:3 (#1)

"For"

John is using word translated as **For** to introduce the reason for what he said at the end of the previous verse. Use a connector in your language

that makes this clear. Alternate translation: "I know that your soul prospers because"

See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship

3 John 1:3 (#2)

"brothers"

John is using the term **brothers** to mean people who share the same faith. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. In this case, these **brothers** were probably all male. Alternate translation: "fellow believers"

See: Metaphor

3 John 1:3 (#3)

"you are walking in truth"

Here, **walking** on a path is a metaphor for how a person lives his life. Alternate translation: "you are living your life according to God's truth"

See: Metaphor

3 John 1:3 (#4)

"to" - "truth," - "truth"

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **truth**, you could express the same idea in another way. The UST models one way to do this.

See: Abstract Nouns

3 John 1:4 (#1)

"I have no greater joy"

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **joy**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: "Nothing makes me more joyful"

See: Abstract Nouns

3 John 1:4 (#2)

"my children"

John speaks of those whom he taught to believe in Jesus as though they were his **children**. This also emphasizes his love and concern for them. Alternate translation: "my spiritual children"

See: Metaphor

3 John 1:4 (#3)

"are walking in the truth"

Here, **walking** on a path is a metaphor for how a person lives his life. Alternate translation: "are living according to God's truth"

See: Metaphor

3 John 1:4 (#4)

"in the truth"

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **truth**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: "in God's true ways"

See: Abstract Nouns

3 John 1:5 (#1)

"the brothers"

John is using the term **brothers** to mean people who share the same faith. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "other believers"

See: Metaphor

3 John 1:6 (#1)

"your love"

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **love**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: "that you love them"

See: Abstract Nouns

3 John 1:6 (#2)

"to send on"

Here, **to send on** is an idiom that means to provide people with what they need for a journey. If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "to supply with what they need for their trip"

See: Idiom

3 John 1:6-7 (#1)

"whom you will do well to send on worthily of God" - "for they went out for the sake of the name, receiving nothing from the Gentiles"

If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the action that the first phrase describes. If you do so, you will need create a verse bridge in order to combine verses 6 and 7, as described in the Introduction to 3 John. It may be helpful to begin a new sentence here. Alternate translation: "Because they went out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles, you will do well to send them on in a manner worthy of God"

See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship

3 John 1:7 (#1)

"for the sake of the name"

John is referring specifically to the name of Jesus. He is using the term **name** by association to mean Jesus himself. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "to tell people about Jesus"

See: Metonymy

3 John 1:7 (#2)

"receiving nothing from the Gentiles"

John assumes that Gaius will know what he means by **receiving nothing from the Gentiles**. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate that explicitly. This could mean: (1) that the traveling believers had resolved not to accept any help from unbelievers. Alternate translation: "and they have resolved not to accept any help from unbelievers" (2) that people who did not

believe in Jesus would not help these traveling believers. Alternate translation: “and no unbelievers are assisting them”

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

3 John 1:7 (#3)

“the Gentiles”

Here, **Gentiles** does not mean people who are not Jewish. It refers to any people who do not trust in Jesus. Alternate translation: “unbelievers”

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

3 John 1:8 (#1)

“Therefore”

John is using the word translated as **Therefore** to introduce the result that should follow from the reason he gave at the end of the previous verse. Because **such ones** are accepting nothing from “the Gentiles” (verse 7), believers ought to help them. Use a connector in your language that makes this relationship clear. Alternate translation: “This is why”

See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship

3 John 1:8 (#2)

“we ourselves ought to support”

John is stating the pronoun **we**, whose meaning is already present in the verb translated **ought**, to emphasize it. If your language can state implied pronouns explicitly for emphasis, you may want to use that construction here in your translation. Other languages may have other ways of bringing out this emphasis. The ULT does so by using the intensive pronoun **ourselves**. Alternate translation: “we certainly should welcome”

See: Pronouns — When to Use Them

3 John 1:8 (#3)

“we ourselves ought”

John is using the words translated as **we** and **ourselves** to refer to Gaius, himself, and all

believers. So use the inclusive forms of those words if your language marks that distinction.

See: Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’

3 John 1:8 (#4)

“to support”

John assumes that Gaius will know that when he tells him to **support** these believers, he means that Gaius should provide hospitality, including giving them what they need for their journey. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “to help” or “to provide for”

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

3 John 1:8 (#5)

“so that”

Here, **so that** marks becoming **fellow workers** as a goal or purpose of supporting **such ones** as the traveling teachers. Use a natural way in your language that makes it clear that this is a purpose. Alternate translation: “and in this way”

See: Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship

3 John 1:8 (#6)

“so that we may become fellow workers with the truth”

John is speaking as if the **truth** were a living thing that he and his fellow Christians could become **workers** with. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “so that we can cooperate with them in announcing God’s truth to people”

See: Personification

3 John 1:8 (#7)

“with the truth”

John is using the term **truth** to represent something or someone associated with the truth. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or state the meaning plainly. This could mean: (1) the true message from

God. Alternate translation: "God's true message" (2) God himself, who is Truth. Alternate translation: "the true God"

See: Metonymy

3 John 1:9 (#1)

"something"

What John wrote was a letter, probably containing instructions about helping traveling Christian teachers. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "a letter about this"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

3 John 1:9 (#2)

"to the church"

Here, **the church** refers to Gaius and the group of believers who regularly met together with him to worship God. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "to the assembly of believers in your place"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

3 John 1:9 (#3)

"Diotrephes"

Diotrephes is the name of a man who was a leader of the church.

See: How to Translate Names

3 John 1:9 (#4)

"the one loving to be first among them"

John is using the word **first** in the sense of "most important" or "in charge." Alternate translation: "who loves to be the most important one among them" or "who loves to act as though he is their leader"

See: Idiom

3 John 1:9 (#5)

"does not receive us"

John is using the word **us** to represent someone or something associated with himself and those with him. This could mean: (1) that Diotrephes opposes providing hospitality and support to the traveling believers whom John endorses. (The word translated **receive** in this verse is the same one as in the phrase "he does not receive the brothers" in the next verse.) Alternate translation: "opposes helping these traveling believers" (2) that Diotrephes does not accept John's authority and so will not do what he says. Alternate translation: "rejects our instructions"

See: Metonymy

3 John 1:9 (#6)

"us"

Here the word **us** refers to John and those with him but not to Gaius, so use the exclusive form of that word in your translation if your language marks that distinction.

See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

3 John 1:10 (#1)

"Because of this"

Because of this indicates that what follows is a result of what came before. Because Diotrephes "does not receive" John and those with him (verse 9), John will expose his evil works. Use a natural way in your language that makes this relationship clear. Alternate translation: "Therefore" or "This is why"

See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship

3 John 1:10 (#2)

"if I come"

John speaks as if he were uncertain about this, but he means that he is planning to come. If your readers might think that what John is saying is uncertain, then you could translate his words as a confident statement. Alternate translation: "when I come" or "at the time that I come"

See: Connect — Factual Conditions

3 John 1:10 (#3)

"I come"

In a context such as this, your language might say "go" instead of **come**. Alternate translation: "I go to you"

See: Go and Come

3 John 1:10 (#4)

"accusing us with evil words"

John is using the term **words** to mean what Diotrephes has been saying by using words. These **words** are an example of the **works that he is doing**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "slanderous us maliciously"

See: Metonymy

3 John 1:10 (#5)

"not being satisfied with these things"

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "even these things do not satisfy him. In addition"

See: Active or Passive

3 John 1:10 (#6)

"the brothers"

John is using the term **brothers** to mean people who share the same faith. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "these fellow believers"

See: Metaphor

3 John 1:10 (#7)

"and he stops the ones willing"

John is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "and he stops the ones who are willing to receive the believers"

See: Ellipsis

3 John 1:11 (#1)

"do not imitate the evil, but the good"

John is using the adjectives **evil** and **good** as nouns in a general sense. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate these words with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: "do not imitate evil things that people do, but imitate good things"

See: Nominal Adjectives

3 John 1:11 (#2)

"but the good"

John is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "but imitate the good things that people do"

See: Ellipsis

3 John 1:11 (#3)

"has not seen God"

John is using the word **seen** to mean "believed in" or "experienced." If it would be clearer in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "has not experienced God" or "has not believed in God"

See: Metaphor

3 John 1:12 (#1)

"Demetrius has been attested to by all"

If your language does not use this passive form, you can state this in active form. Alternate translation:

"All attest to Demetrius" or "Everyone praises Demetrius as a good person"

See: Active or Passive

3 John 1:12 (#2)

"Demetrius"

Demetrius is the name of a man.

See: How to Translate Names

3 John 1:12 (#3)

"by all"

John says **all** here as a generalization for emphasis. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a different way to express the emphasis. Alternate translation: "by those who know him"

See: Hyperbole

3 John 1:12 (#4)

"and by the truth itself"

John is leaving out some of the words that in many languages a sentence would need in order to be complete. You can supply these words from the context if that would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "and he has been attested to by the truth itself"

See: Ellipsis

3 John 1:12 (#5)

"by the truth itself"

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **truth**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: "by the way he truly obeys Jesus"

See: Abstract Nouns

3 John 1:12 (#6)

"by the truth itself"

John is speaking of **the truth** as if it were a living thing that could testify that Demetrius is a good person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "by his right way of living"

See: Personification

3 John 1:12 (#7)

"we ourselves also attest"

For emphasis, John is stating the pronoun **we**, whose meaning is already present in the verb translated **attest**. If your language can state implied pronouns explicitly for emphasis, you may want to use that construction here in your translation. Other languages may have other ways of bringing out this emphasis. The ULT does so by using the intensive pronoun **ourselves**. Alternate translation: "we too firmly attest"

See: Pronouns — When to Use Them

3 John 1:12 (#8)

"we ourselves" - "attest," - "our"

Here the words **we ourselves** and **our** refer to John and those with him but do not include Gaius, so use the exclusive form of those words in your translation if your language marks that distinction.

See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

3 John 1:13 (#1)

"with ink and pen"

John is using something associated with a letter, the **ink and pen** he would use to write a letter, to represent the letter itself. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation, as in UST: "in a letter"

See: Metonymy

3 John 1:14 (#1)

"mouth to mouth"

Here, **mouth to mouth** is an idiom meaning "in person." If this phrase does not have that meaning

in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "face to face" or "in person"

See: Idiom

3 John 1:15 (#1)

"Peace to you"

John ends his letter with a blessing for Gaius. You could express this as either a blessing or a prayer, in whichever way is more natural in your language. Alternate translation: "May God give you peace"

See: Blessings

3 John 1:15 (#2)

"Peace to you"

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **peace**, you could express the same idea in another way. Alternate translation: "May God make you peaceful"

See: Abstract Nouns

3 John 1:15 (#3)

"The friends greet you"

John assumes that Gaius will understand that by **The friends** in this instance, he means the believers who are with him. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "The believers with me send their greetings to you"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

3 John 1:15 (#4)

"Greet the friends"

John assumes that Gaius will understand that when he says **the friends** in this instance, he is referring to the believers who are there with Gaius. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "Greet the believers there for us"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

3 John 1:15 (#5)

"by name"

Here, **by name** is an idiom that means "personally." If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have this meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "one by one" or "personally"

See: Idiom