

3 John - Love for the brothers, the organic church in action

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Last week when we were looking at the difference that Jesus makes in our lives, one of the differences that we discussed was that we have a love for the brothers - that is we honour, accept, love and care for our brothers and sisters in the church both local and around the world.

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This is one of the hallmarks of the New Testament Christian experience and a powerful way of communicating the deep truth - that when the father saves a person through his free and unearned grace and mercy he causes them to be born again into his kingdom.

He births them into an amazing family from every part of the world who belong to Jesus.

One of my great hopes and prayers for this church is that we would “get that” and that we would “own that” and that getting it and owning it we would “live it out” in word and practice.

I have tried to encapsulate this sentiment into the welcome page of our website which reads.

As a church we humbly seek to live out, in word and practice the simplicity of New Testament Christian living to the Glory of God.

Our lives have been rescued from emptiness and ruin and radically transformed by Jesus Christ Himself and the scriptures clearly teach that the Christian life is to be lived - both in community and in the context of what God is doing in the rest of the world.

As a result we gather together regularly as a church to worship Jesus and share fellowship with one another. We are also connected relationally to a team of men and women from numerous local churches worldwide known as New Covenant Ministries International.

From City Edge Church website welcome page www.cityedgechurch.com.au

I am a firm believer that 2000 years on from where we see this lived out in the lives of the first Christians we are in great danger of complicating the Christian life by letting it become hugely organisational and forsaking the radically organic nature of the church.

It's more like a family than a corporation.
It's more like a body than a machine.
It's more like a household than a factory.

It is radically organic.

I am a RADICAL. The word radical is from the Latin and it simply means “back to the roots”.

I believe that as Christians we all need to be radical and continually go back to our roots - that is we need to always be looking back 2000 years to see how they lived and what they believed and living these truths out in a 21st century cultural setting.

Now, let's turn to the scriptures to see what makes up the organic nature of the church. Let's read 3 John through first and then we will extract some of the ingredients of an organic church.

3 John

1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

2 Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.

3 For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

5 Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are,

6 who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.

7 For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.

8 Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

9 I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.

10 So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

12 Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

13 I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink.

14 I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. (1:15) Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, every one of them.

Ingredients of an organic church

3 John

1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

- a) *The organic church has shepherds and not CEOs. Shepherds who are not afraid to express their love in word and practice. John was an elder or shepherd and he loved Gaius.*

2 Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.

- b) *These shepherds are concerned for people, not just spiritually but physically. They want them to be complete, whole and prospering.*

3 For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

- c) *The organic church has a deep concern for truth not wishy washy half truths couched in soft language that dulls the senses and distracts the mind, but solid bible truth spoken in love that transforms and changes lives for the glory of Jesus.*

There is also a concern for truth in relationships - that we would not tolerate gossip, but would talk about each other in a manner that honours and upholds reputations.

5 Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are,

- d) *The organic church has a love for the brothers, some of whom we have never met before - they are strangers yet they are brothers and we love them. Next week we have the privilege of welcoming Leon & Sonja Bowles from Brisbane. To, many of us they are strangers - we have never met them before - but they are brothers and we love them. Can I encourage you to welcome them as you would your own family?*

6 who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.

- e) *As we love these strangers who are brothers that belong to us, let us send them on a way that is worthy of God. Let us leave them with a real sense that Jesus is alive in his church, one that they will testify about to others.*

7 For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.

- f) *Leon & Sonja come to Melbourne at our invitation. They come because of Jesus and I can tell you that they make no demands from us at all. They have already expressed to me that they are honoured to come and minister. They haven't named a price or made accommodation demands and I believe they never would*

8 Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

- g) *They make no demands but we as a church will do all we can to look after them and support them so that we can be fellow workers for the truth. It is our intention to thoroughly bless them as they come to minister. Their church has also been praying for us and our time together.*

9 I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.

- h) *The organic church is not one that does not have authority. It is organised but not organisational with multi-layers of management professionals who are only out to "feather their own nests" and keep people down. Diotrephes was one such guy who would have fit well into many business models we see today but not in the church.*

10 So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

- i) *The shepherds of an organic church are not afraid to confront authoritarian figures and discipline them for the sake of the church. The reason is because Jesus is the head of the church and anyone who tries to assume this role obscures the true nature of the church. He is the Chief Shepherd, the senior pastor if you like and all other shepherds are under shepherds. They don't make the decisions on their own authority as Diotrephes was doing but seek counsel from the head of the body - Jesus and as delegates prayerfully lead the congregation in the direction that Jesus gives.*

11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

- j) *The organic church is filled with good - it has a building up adding to quality about it so that people feel as though they really are the BELOVED, dear and*

highly esteemed, encouraged and welcomed. I hope you feel this way and I hope you make others feel this way.

12 Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

- k) *The organic church should be one where everyone is called Demetrius. Men, women, boys and girls who have received a good testimony from everyone.*

13 I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink.

- l) *The organic church receives input, much input from the outside. From people who they have close a relationship with the church - not just a remote one but a face to face one by people who have the church's best interests at heart. Not guest speakers who are spruiking the latest and the greatest but people that are intent on building the kingdom and bringing much glory to Jesus.*

14 I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, every one of them.

- m) *The organic church is not only a family but also a group of great friends who will spend eternity together. Friends who do things together and enjoy one another's company of passing the time away over coffee and looking out for each other in prayer and encouragement. Friends that get together with other friends from other places. One of those times will be the Leadership Training Time in Adelaide next week which I can't wait to be at. We have already teed up time with friends to have lunch & dinner together. If you can't make it this year can I encourage you to put it in your diary for next year.*

The organic church is where I want to be. I hope you do too.

She is what Jesus died for - a lady worthy of our love, devotion and protection.