Do you know who Diotrephes is in the Bible?

Diotrephes was a church leader in the same congregation where a godly man named Gaius worshiped. He likely began his ministry well, but his end was tragic. His behavior became so problematic that the Apostle John wrote a personal letter to Gaius warning him not to imitate Diotrephes' conduct.

Let's take a closer look at Diotrephes and learn from his example—what a servant of God must never become.

> *3 John 1:8–10 (ESV)*
> 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.

This short passage exposes four destructive traits in Diotrephes. These serve as a serious warning for every pastor, preacher, evangelist, prophet, teacher, or singer in the church today.

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1. He Loved to Be First

The first issue was Diotrephes' desire for preeminence. He loved to be first—not in service, but in status. Wanting to lead or to excel is not wrong in itself. But when someone craves recognition, control, and human praise—especially in ministry—that desire becomes sinful.

This is leadership built on ego, not servanthood. Jesus clearly warned His disciples against this kind of ambition:

> *Matthew 20:25–28 (ESV)*
> 25 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.
> 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,
> 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,
> 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to

> serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Christ—the Son of God—took the lowest place. He washed His disciples’ feet. He died for sinners. That is what greatness looks like in the Kingdom of God.

So if you are called to serve in any capacity—whether as a pastor, singer, or missionary—remember: to be great, you must become a servant of all. Never seek the spotlight. Never crave honor from people. That path ends in ruin.

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2. He Slandered the Apostles

The second sin of Diotrephes was that he spoke maliciously against the apostles—even against the Apostle John, the one referred to in Scripture as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23).

He slandered true servants of God using lies and insults, undermining their authority in the eyes of the church. And what was the root cause? Jealousy. He envied the influence and honor the apostles carried, and rather than humbling himself, he tried to

tear them down.

This same spirit is still active today. Some church leaders and ministers, motivated by envy, discredit others who are genuinely called and anointed by God. They spread false narratives or criticize publicly—not out of concern for truth, but out of wounded pride and competition.

But Scripture warns us:

James 3:16 (ESV)
For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

True ministers must guard their hearts against envy. Instead of tearing others down, we should rejoice when the truth is proclaimed, no matter who God uses.

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3. He Refused to Welcome Other Ministers

Third, Diotrephes rejected the visiting brethren—fellow workers in the gospel. Instead of receiving them with Christian hospitality,

he shut the door.

Hospitality in the early church wasn’t just a nice gesture—it was a critical part of the spread of the gospel. Traveling preachers, missionaries, and apostles often relied on the generosity and hospitality of local believers. To refuse them was to hinder the work of God.

> *Hebrews 13:2 (ESV)*
> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Diotrephes didn’t want anyone else to minister in “his” territory. He saw visiting preachers as threats to his influence. But again, this reveals a heart full of pride and competition.

A faithful servant of Christ must never act this way. If God sends true ministers into your area—confirmed by Scripture and bearing fruit in the gospel—you should welcome them joyfully. We are all co-laborers in God’s vineyard (1 Corinthians 3:9).

4. He Forbade Others from Welcoming Ministers

Diotrephes went even further. He not only refused to welcome the brethren himself—he prohibited others from doing so. He even expelled from the church those who dared to extend hospitality to visiting gospel workers.

This was spiritual abuse and authoritarianism, rooted in arrogance and fear of losing control. He had moved beyond pride into outright opposition to the work of God.

Sadly, this can still be found in some ministries today—leaders who silence, isolate, and even exile those who challenge their authority or welcome outside voices. This is not godly leadership; it is carnal control.

Final Warning and Encouragement

Diotrephes didn’t begin this way. He likely started well and rose to a leadership position—perhaps even as a bishop. But over time, pride and the love of recognition corrupted him. His ambition turned into rebellion, and his ministry turned toxic.

That’s why God, through the Holy Spirit, ensured that this brief account of Diotrephes was recorded in Scripture. It serves as a serious caution for every minister of the gospel.

> *John 12:43 (ESV)*
> For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

Let us not fall into the same trap. Instead, may we be like Gaius, who received John’s exhortation with humility and faithfulness. Let us embrace the truth, love the brethren, welcome fellow workers in Christ, and strive to serve—not to be served.

May the Lord keep us humble and faithful to the end. Maranatha—our Lord is coming!

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