

# 3 John 1:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

**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.** Pivoting from Diotrephes' negative example, John exhorts Gaius directly. "Beloved" (ἀγαπητέ, agapēte) introduces tender pastoral appeal. "Follow not" (μὴ μιμοῦ, mē mimou) uses the verb μιμέομαι (mimeomai), meaning to imitate or mimic—we derive "mimic" from this root. John warns against imitating "that which is evil" (τὸ κακόν, to kakon), clearly referencing Diotrephes' behavior. Instead, "follow that which is good" (τὸ ἀγαθόν, to agathon), exemplified by faithful ministers and Gaius himself.

John then provides theological grounding: "He that doeth good is of God" (ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, ho agathopoion ek tou theou estin). The present participle ἀγαθοποιῶν (agathopoion, "doing good") indicates continuous action—habitual goodness, not isolated acts. The phrase "is of God" (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ) indicates source and identity: those who consistently practice goodness demonstrate divine origin, having been born of God (see 1 John 2:29, 3:9-10, 4:7).

Conversely, "he that doeth evil hath not seen God" (ὁ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἑώρακεν τὸν θεόν, ho kakopoion ouch heōraken ton theon). Again, the present participle indicates habitual action—characteristic evil-doing. "Hath not seen" (οὐχ ἑώρακεν, ouch heōraken) doesn't mean physical sight but spiritual knowledge and relationship. This echoes 1 John 3:6: "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." Habitual, unrepentant

evil-doing provides evidence of unregenerate state, regardless of religious profession. While believers still sin, their overall life pattern shows increasing righteousness; those whose lives characteristically display evil demonstrate they've never truly known God.

## Historical Context

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First-century churches faced constant challenge discerning genuine from counterfeit Christianity. Without New Testament Scripture yet compiled, Christians relied on apostolic teaching, observable life transformation, and the Spirit's witness to identify true believers. John's epistles repeatedly emphasize tests of genuine faith: right doctrine (confessing Jesus as Christ come in flesh), right behavior (keeping God's commands), and right relationships (loving fellow believers).

The phrase "of God" (ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ) carries significant theological weight in John's writings. It indicates spiritual birth from above (John 3:3-8), reception of divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and fundamental identity transformation. Unlike mere moral reformation, biblical conversion creates new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17) whose deepest identity shifts from "in Adam" to "in Christ." This ontological change produces observable ethical change—not perfect sinlessness but definite, progressive sanctification.

John's stark either/or categories (doing good versus doing evil, of God versus not having seen God) reflect biblical realism about human nature's fallen state apart from grace. While we all sin and fall short (Romans 3:23), there exists genuine distinction between those walking in light versus darkness (1 John 1:5-7), those born of God versus children of the devil (1 John 3:10), and sheep versus goats (Matthew 25:31-46). Life patterns reveal heart reality; persistent evil-doing, especially when coupled with religious profession, indicates self-deception requiring urgent repentance.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## 1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

### Study Questions

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1. Whose example are you following—people who genuinely practice goodness or those who merely appear religious?
2. Does your life's overall pattern demonstrate being 'of God' through increasing righteousness and decreasing sin?
3. How do you respond when confronted with your own sin—with repentance or with defensiveness and rationalization?

### Interlinear Text

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Ἀγαπητέ, μὴ μιμοῦ τὸ κακὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ  
**Beloved** **not** **follow** G27 G3361 G3401 G3588 **that which is evil** **but** G2556 G3588 G235  
  
ἀγαθόν ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστίν· ὁ  
**that which is good** G18 G3588 **He that doeth good** G15 **of** G3588 G1537 **God** G2316 **is** G2076 G3588  
  
δὲ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἑώρακεν τὸν Θεόν  
**but** G1161 **he that doeth evil** G2554 **not** G3756 **hath** G3708 G3588 **God** G2316

### Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 37:27** (Evil): Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

**Ephesians 5:1** (References God): Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

**1 Peter 3:11** (Evil): Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

**Psalms 34:14** (Evil): Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

**1 John 2:29** (Parallel theme): If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

**John 3:20** (Evil): For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

**1 Peter 3:13** (Good): And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

**2 Timothy 3:10** (Love): But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

**Exodus 23:2** (Evil): Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:

**John 10:27** (Parallel theme): My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: