

3 John 1:9-11 (NLT)

I sent a brief letter to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who loves to be the leader, does not acknowledge our authority. When I come, I will report some of the things he is doing and the wicked things he is saying about us. He not only refuses 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.

Dear friend, don't let this bad example influence you. Follow only what is good. Remember that those who do good prove that they are God's children, and those who do evil prove that they do not know God.

When you read this you may be thinking, “Wow, how could a leader in the church be such a bad influence and not care about other Christians?”

First off, notice it says that he “*loves to be the leader*” not that he is the leader in the church. It seems that he may have made himself the leader and not the church. Yet still he had the influence to cast those out who were actually doing good in the church, and the good that they were doing was to support other Christians in their ministry. It would be like you supporting a missionary who went to another country preaching the gospel. When the leaders in your church found out, they would kick you out for supporting this missionary.

You think it can't or won't happen in today's church? I can think of a lot worse things that have happened in some of the churches I've been to, or heard about.

So what are we to learn today from all of this?

First off, we must respect our leaders in the church, and if they tell you that you are doing something wrong, then check it out against the word of God. If you find that according to God's word that you are not wrong, then present it to the leader(s) in your church and they will either agree with you and ask your forgiveness, or show you the correct answer **according to scripture**.

But if you find that you are wrong according to God's word, also go to them and thank them for guiding you along the correct path and ask for their forgiveness. Remember that even though they are church leaders, that they are also human. just like you and I are, and can make mistakes, just like you and I can.

I remember a time years ago when the church leadership told me something that I didn't like and I acted like a child and left the church. Soon the Lord laid upon my heart that I was really wrong and that they were right. I had to swallow my pride and return and ask their forgiveness, and the cool part is that they did forgive me. Now that is true church leadership, because they never said, “I told you so” or put me down, or didn't let me come back, but rather they forgave me.

If you are in leadership in the church, also remember that true leadership will also admit when they are wrong and seek forgiveness of the one(s) they have wronged.

† **2 Corinthians 2:5-7** *But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent--not to be too severe. This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.*