

People of the Word
New Testament Letters
Titus: “Christian Conduct”
January 7, 2016

If someone gave you a big responsibility or task, wouldn't you like to have an instruction manual to help you get the job done? That's exactly what this small letter from Paul is for Titus. He had been given the responsibility as the Bishop/Overseer of the island of Crete.

1st Century Map of CRETE Crete is a large island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, south of Greece. Its 165 miles long and 35 miles wide, quite mountainous with fertile valleys; a Roman province with 100 cities. Its highest mountain is Mount Ida, the traditional birthplace of the Greek god Zeus.

Titus, a Greek from Antioch, had long been a Christian missionary and companion of Paul. He'd carried a fundraising letter from Paul to Corinth to collect for the poor in Jerusalem, and he accompanied Paul to the council held in Jerusalem that we read about in Acts 15. All in all, Titus was a peacemaker, administrator and missionary that had Paul's full confidence for this new task assigned to him. So Titus might have looked at the instruction manual Table of Contents something like this:

Chapter 1 **“Take charge and silence false teachers”**

Chapter 2 **“Counsel specific groups”**

Chapter 3 **“Encourage doing what is good”**

Chapter 1:5 “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.” Immediately we know that elders were to be hand-picked for appointment, it was not just a popularity contest.

So, What Qualifies A Person To Be An Elder/Overseer? Paul gave Titus a list of character qualities to be looking for in an elder. These church leaders must be of the highest character, as evidenced by:

- **A strong family life (1:6)**
 - well thought of for his good life
 - faithful to his wife in marriage (not promiscuous) = fidelity
 - children who are believers, and not wild or rebellious
- **A good reputation in the community (1:7-8)**
 - a blameless life vs. 7
 - not arrogant, or quick-tempered, or a heavy drinker, or violent, or greedy
 - hospitable; enjoys having guests in his home
- **A solid grounding in their faith ((1:9)**
 - holds fast to the faithful Word of God, with sound doctrine (trustworthy message)

--encourages others with right teaching
 --opposes those who oppose or contradict “*sound doctrine*” (“refutes” = convinces by argument that they are wrong.

Two Examples: 1) Matthew 18:15: “*If a brother sins against you, go and show him his fault.*” Goal is to bring repentance and change; and restore the relationship! 2) In Luke 3, John the Baptist reproved Herod for his illicit relationship with Herodias...

The Bible is an enormous book that contains over 1,000 pages of information, written a long time ago to a people far away. While it is true that new Christians can read and study the Scriptures on their own and gain spiritual truths through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is highly unlikely that anyone can grow to a mature understanding of the Bible without relying on teachers who know more about the Bible than they do. Therein lies a danger. We may not know enough about the Bible to determine if what is being taught to us is accurate. Therefore it is important to align ourselves with a church that believes and teaches the Bible. This type of setting will help safeguard us from being led into error.

We should note that it is not enough to be well-educated, to have special talents or speaking abilities, or to have a large following to be Christ’s kind of leader. *The principle qualities that qualify an elder here are qualities of **character**: a person who is being transformed into the image of Christ. “In the Kingdom of God, a person’s competency should never outshine their character.”* Bill Hybel’s book *Who You Are When No One’s Looking* focuses on the qualities that are the foundation of character: courage, discipline, vision, endurance, compassion and self-sacrifice. God wants Christians to aspire to leadership in His church, but *they must be the right kind of leaders*. Who you are is more important than what you do. *It’s character first; then competency and chemistry.*

Why Did Titus Need To Be So Strong And Orderly? Verse 10-11 “For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group (Jewish Christians who thought you had to be circumcised to be saved). They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach – and that for dishonest gain.” Paul’s instruction – “Rebuke them sharply so that they will be sound in the faith ...”

He goes on, “They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for any good thing.” In other words – our deeds either defend or deny our doctrine.

To be a good leader in God’s Church, you need both sound doctrine and good Bible teaching. That’s reflected in a changed life, transformed by the Spirit of Christ and walking daily with HIM! Hebrews 13:7—“*Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.*”

Off to a good start in selecting leadership, now Titus was on to the next step of counseling various groups. That's all a part of pastoral care for the church – instruction. *“You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine”* vs. 1

What is the best way to protect believers against error (both doctrinal and ethical)? Build up their inner life with *“sound doctrine”*!

The “You” is emphatic in vs. 1. Titus, this is **your** main job! Don't leave it to someone else! Sound doctrine is orthodox teaching that promotes spiritual health. Correct doctrine must result in good behavior.

What follows is good Christian behavior, specific to age and gender . . . for older men; for older women; for younger women; for younger men; and for slaves.

The Older Men

Denotes age, not office (of Elder)

Senior male members of households

The value of their example depends on their moral character

4 qualifications:

- 1) temperate (abstaining from wine) = clear-headed
- 2) worthy of respect; personal dignity and purposeful living; 3) self-controlled, in thought, in judgment, in speech; and
- 4) sound in faith, in love and endurance;

The Older Women

“be reverent in the way they live” = inner character that suits a sacred person

“not be slanderers or addicted to much wine” = not given to gossip or speak maliciously of others, nor do they overdo the wine

“teach what is good” especially to the . . .

Younger Women

There is no stronger example to learn from than that of the right conduct from the older Christian women...Where does this take place in the church?

Why do you think Titus was to delegate this spiritual formation to other women?

-- “younger” could also imply newly married.

-- *“to be self-controlled and pure”*; *“to be busy at home, to be kind, to be subject to their husbands”*...(vs. 5) = voluntary acceptance of their husband's headship . . . What is a great benefit of right Christian living from God's people? **Vs. 5:** *“So that no one will malign the word of God.”*

What kind of behavior do Christians do that maligns the word of God—behavior that discredits our Christian faith? Is there anything I am doing or saying that is hindering the Word of God—the message of faith in Christ?

The Young Men

“Encourage the young men to be self-controlled”. = appeal to their moral sense of personal responsibility!

Slaves

Be subject to their masters; to please them; not stealing; “so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.”

The grace of God is our motivating power for Christian living (2:11-15). *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”*

Paul was explicit (vs. 15) *“These are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.”* In other words, **follow Jesus’ example!** Begin with yourself, Titus, *“⁷ And you yourself must **be an example** to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching.⁸ Teach the truth so that your teaching can’t be criticized. Then those who oppose us will be ashamed and have nothing bad to say about us.”*

The knowledge of Christ must effect a transformation in our lives so that our attitudes and actions will “adorn the doctrine of God” (v. 10). The words we speak will influence others only if our actions support our words. God has redeemed us from the slavery of sin, assuring us of “the blessed hope” of the coming of Christ (v. 13). Because we will one day be delivered from this world, we are to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, fixing our faith on the coming of “the blessed hope.” This means we must be good stewards of the things of this world and live for the things Jesus would live for if He were in our place.

Organizing a church with effective leadership and teaching the congregation God’s Word and what is expected of a Christian is a solid beginning. But then, Titus, it’s time to put “boots on the ground” and actually do what is good, not just in church, but also in society.

It is difficult for us to separate our hope of heaven from our good works. We instinctively feel that we must be good to get to heaven. While God certainly wants us to live good lives, none of us can live a life good enough to get to heaven. One sin disqualifies us, and everyone has sinned more than once. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us . . . that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (vv. 5, 7). Salvation is a gift: we don’t work to earn it; we just humbly receive it! To practice what we preach begins with . . .

1. Good Citizenship: 3:1-2

- A. *“Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient...*
- B. *“To slander no one...to be peaceable and considerate, and show true humility to all men”*
- C. A reminder that, in everything we do—even our citizenship actions—are done *“so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.”* (Titus 2:10)

Paul and Titus wanted no trouble with authorities that would put the church under suspicion. We Christians live at peace with the state and do our duty as citizens, as long as the

state allows us to live by our religious convictions. “*Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and give to God what is God’s.*” Christians, overall, should not be agitators, but reconcilers. (e.g. ML King, Jr., abortion clinics, gay marriage, etc.).

⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,” Titus 3:4-5

2. Leading a Good Life: 3:3-8; 14

A. Our past: “*At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.*” Does this paint an accurate picture of you in the past? To what degree?

B. Let’s learn from our past, but not live in the past. God pours out his kindness and love through Jesus, and he saved us from judgment and death for our sins.

C. And now? “*I want you to stress these things [salvation in Christ], so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing good.*” Titus 3:8

What motivates you to do good? Is it . . .

- 1) call of duty
- 2) fear of judgment
- 3) hope of Christ’s return
- 4) gratitude for what God has done for you or,
- 5) needs of others?

Over the past year or so, where have you sensed your own personal growth in “leading a productive life”? Where are you making the world better? Where are you making a difference in someone else’s eternity?

3. Handling Church Relationships: 3:9-11 (Paul reminds Titus that he will encounter resistance.) “*But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments about the law because they are unprofitable and useless.*” This is about petty quarrels, not about difficult Bible passages, or an honest discussion that leads to wisdom. Remember 2 Tim 3:16: The Word of God is “*useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and for training in righteousness.*”

You cannot allow someone to lead others astray with false teaching, and to cause division in the church. Their church-wrecking behavior must stop.

So, **What do you do with a divisive person?** One who just likes to criticize and tear down and argue? Paul tells Titus: “*Ward a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.*” vs. 10. To the Thessalonian church, Paul said, “*If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.*”

(2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

4. Remember Ministry is a Team Sport: 3:12-13

Do you think Titus, after travelling throughout Crete and teaching and appointing Elders in local congregations, would be tired?

- **No one can “do it all”, all the time**—even a seasoned, hard-working leader like Titus

- Everyone needs a rest once in a while (so Paul was sending Artemas or Tychicus (he delivered letters of Ephesians and Colossians and Philemon for Paul,) so that Titus can “pass the baton” over to them and go meet Paul at Nicopolis, in western Greece.
- **“Help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, and see that they have everything they need.”** Travelling teachers and preachers (like a Dr. David Reagan; a Dr. John Cloud; a Christine Caine). Hospitality was encouraged, as well as financial assistance...
“Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for daily necessities, and not live unproductive lives.” vs.14. To Paul, being productive meant doing good and serving the needs of others!

Satisfied that that Titus had completed the task and was ready to hand the reins over to others, Paul summoned Titus to join him at Nicopolis. Later he would travel to Dalmatia and minister there. The New Testament does not record his death; however, church tradition says that Titus returned to Crete and remained there into his old age and died in the city of Candia (modern Heraklion).

William Barkley writes, “Titus was the man for a tough assignment. He clearly had the strength of mind and the toughness of fibre which enabled him to face and handle a difficult situation. There are two kinds of people . . . people who can make a bad situation worse, and . . . people who can bring order out of chaos. Titus was the man to send to the place where there was trouble.”

Paul had confidence in Titus and Jesus has confidence in you. You may have the opportunity for leadership beyond what you do in your home; you may have the opportunity to teach and instruct beyond that which you do with your family and children; but the opportunity for doing what is right is constantly before us. You’re an example to someone whether you know it or not. Living out our Christian life involves good citizenship, good relationships, and joining in ministry with others – being part of a team. We need no other instruction manual than the Word of God. Learning to find what’s in it to guide and direct us is why we’re here at People of the Word. We welcome you back in this new year.