



TITUS

A HEALTHY CHURCH

IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: A HEALTHY CHURCH

TITLE: A HEALTHY CHURCH TAKES DISCIPLESHIP SERIOUSLY

SCRIPTURE: TITUS 2:1-10

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INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, Paul gave Titus clear instructions about establishing healthy leadership in the churches of Crete. Titus was to appoint godly elders who were above reproach and able to teach sound doctrine (Titus 1:9). A healthy church takes *leadership* seriously.

Paul also instructed Titus to confront false teachers who were rebellious, deceptive, greedy, and spiritually harmful. These teachers were not merely mistaken in their beliefs; their false teaching was leading people away from God's truth and producing ungodly living (Titus 1:10-11, 16). Therefore, a healthy church must take *truth* seriously.

Now, as Paul begins chapter 2, he turns his attention directly to Titus himself. It is not enough simply to silence false teaching. False doctrine must be replaced with sound doctrine. Interestingly, the Greek word translated "sound" literally means "healthy." Paul's point is that healthy teaching produces healthy believers and, ultimately, a healthy church.

Titus 2:1-10

But as for you, teach what accords with sound^[a] doctrine. ² Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. ⁶ Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.⁷ Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸ and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. ⁹ Bondservants^[b] are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

Explanation

But as for Titus

At this point, Paul does not focus primarily on major doctrinal categories such as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, justification, or sanctification. Those truths are essential, but Paul emphasizes that true doctrine must always affect the way we live. Right belief should lead to right conduct. A person who truly understands the gospel should increasingly reflect the character of Christ.

Therefore, Titus is instructed to teach in a way that produces godliness among the people of God. Sound doctrine is not merely information to understand; it is truth that transforms our lives.

Paul then applies this instruction to every group within the church. Older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and even bondservants all receive specific instructions. This reminds us that spiritual maturity is not only the responsibility of pastors and leaders. Every believer is called to pursue a life that reflects the truth of the gospel.

Men and Women, Young and Old

Before examining Paul's instructions to each group, two observations are helpful.

First, many of the qualities Paul mentions in Titus 2 are similar to the qualifications he gave for elders in Titus 1. While elders carry a unique responsibility and are held to a higher level of accountability, the church should never assume that godly character is only expected from its leaders. The qualities that make for faithful leaders should increasingly characterize every follower of Christ. Elders are not called to a different standard of holiness; rather, they are examples of the holiness every believer should pursue.

Second, although Paul highlights different qualities for different groups, we should not conclude that certain virtues belong only to certain people. For example, self-control is emphasized for older men, younger women, and younger men, but certainly the older women should also seek to develop self-control. Likewise, love, faithfulness, and perseverance are not limited to any one stage of life. Paul likely emphasizes certain characteristics because they addressed specific needs within the churches of Crete. However, his larger point is clear: every believer, regardless of age or position, should be shaped by sound doctrine and transformed by the gospel.

This also helps explain why Paul gives older men several characteristics, older women additional instructions, younger women a specific emphasis, and younger men a single highlighted quality. Paul is not suggesting that younger men need only one virtue or that older believers have greater expectations placed upon them. Instead, he highlights areas of particular importance while expecting Titus to teach the full counsel of God.

Older Men (Titus 2:2)

Paul begins with older men. They are to be "sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness." These qualities describe men whose years have been marked by spiritual maturity and faithful perseverance. Older men have a unique opportunity to model what a lifetime of following Christ looks like.

- **Sober-minded** – This refers to clear, balanced, and wise thinking. Older men should not be easily swept along by cultural trends or passing fads, nor should they reject change simply because "we've always done it this

way." Instead, sober-mindedness reflects discernment that avoids unnecessary extremes and seeks wisdom rooted in God's Word.

- **Dignified** – A dignified man lives in a manner worthy of respect. This does not mean he is always serious or reserved. Rather, he knows how to conduct himself appropriately in every situation. His character naturally earns the respect of others.
- **Self-controlled** – Throughout Titus 2, Paul repeatedly emphasizes self-control. A self-controlled man is not ruled by emotions, temptations, or impulses. He responds thoughtfully rather than reacting rashly. Instead of blaming circumstances or other people, he accepts responsibility for his actions and seeks to honor Christ in every area of life.
- **Sound in faith** – Paul likely has more than doctrinal knowledge in mind. Mature believers not only know God's truth but faithfully trust and live by it. Even when obedience is difficult or unpopular, they continue to rely on God's promises rather than their own understanding.
- **Sound in love** – Spiritual maturity should produce increasing love for others. As believers grow in Christ, their love becomes more abundant (1 Thess. 4:9–10), more discerning (Phil. 1:9), and more closely resembles the love described in 1 Corinthians 13:4–6.
- **Sound in steadfastness** – Years of walking with Christ should produce perseverance. Mature believers remain faithful whether life is easy or difficult. Their consistency becomes an encouragement to younger believers and a testimony to God's sustaining grace.

Older Women (Titus 2:3)

Paul next addresses older women. Like the older men, they are called to lives that display spiritual maturity. Their years of following Christ uniquely position them to encourage, disciple, and influence the next generation of believers. Rather than viewing their later years as a season of diminished usefulness, Paul sees them as an opportunity for increased ministry. Paul highlights four characteristics.

- **Reverent in behavior** – Older women are to live in a manner that reflects reverence for God. Their conduct should demonstrate holiness and dignity, making them worthy examples for younger believers to follow.
- **Not slanderers** – Their speech should build others up rather than tear them down. They avoid gossip, false accusations, and careless words, recognizing the tremendous influence their speech has within both the church and the home. Paul shared a similar charge to widows in 1 Timothy 5:13.
- **Not slaves to much wine** – Rather than being controlled by alcohol, they are to demonstrate self-control in every area of life. Christians are to be

governed by the Holy Spirit rather than by any earthly appetite or addiction. Of course, to become drunk contrasts with the positive commands to be reverent.

- **Teachers of what is good** – Older women have a God-given ministry of investing in younger women. Whether formally or informally, they are to pass along biblical wisdom gained through years of faithful walking with Christ.

Younger Women (Titus 2:4-5)

The purpose of older women teaching what is good is so that they may train the younger women. Paul's instructions focus primarily on the home because the home was, and still is, one of the primary places where Christian character is displayed. His concern extends beyond creating happy families. Ultimately, he desires that the conduct of Christian women would uphold the reputation of God's Word before an unbelieving world.

Paul gives six characteristics that older women are to teach.

- **Love their husbands and children** – While this may seem obvious, biblical love is much more than natural affection. Christian wives are called to demonstrate sacrificial, faithful, and enduring love that reflects Christ's own love. Few influences are greater than a godly wife and mother whose love shapes the spiritual atmosphere of her home.
- **Self-controlled** – Once again Paul emphasizes one of the central themes of this chapter. Self-control enables a believer to submit desires, emotions, and decisions to the lordship of Christ. This virtue is essential for every Christian regardless of age or gender.
- **Pure** – Purity includes sexual faithfulness, but it extends further to purity of heart, motives, and conduct. Peter likewise commends the "pure conduct" of godly wives (1 Peter 3:2). Christians are not merely to avoid outward sin but to cultivate inward holiness.
- **Working at home** – Paul is not forbidding women from employment outside the home, nor is he declaring that every woman must be a stay-at-home mother. Rather, he emphasizes that the home should be viewed as a primary sphere of Christian service. A godly woman values her responsibility to care for and nurture her family rather than neglecting it.
- **Kind** – Kindness is one of the clearest expressions of Christian love (1 Corinthians 13:4). It is characterized by compassion, humility, gentleness, and a sincere desire to bless others (Colossians 3:12; Ephesians 4:32). Kindness is especially powerful within the home, where our true character is often most visible.

- **Submissive to their own husbands** – Paul consistently teaches that wives are to submit to their own husbands as part of God's design for marriage (Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1). Biblical submission is not a statement of inferiority or lesser value but a willing embrace of God's created order. Just as husbands are called to sacrificially love their wives, wives glorify God by joyfully supporting and respecting their husbands' leadership.

Paul concludes this section by giving the reason for these instructions: "that the word of God may not be reviled." The conduct of believers either adorns or dishonors the gospel. God's people should live in such a way that no legitimate accusation can be made against the Christian faith because of their behavior.

Earlier, Paul acknowledges that the false teachers were upsetting whole families (Titus 1:11), now he sees the young women particularly pivotal to perhaps restore godliness in the home.

Younger Men (Titus 2:6)

Paul's instruction to younger men is remarkably brief: "urge the younger men to be self-controlled."

At first, it may seem surprising that Paul mentions only one characteristic. Surely young men need more instruction than this. However, Paul's brevity should not be mistaken for lowered expectations. Throughout the New Testament, young men are called to pursue holiness, humility, love, wisdom, diligence, and faithfulness.

Instead, Paul highlights the quality that may have been most needed. Self-control serves as a foundational virtue from which many other godly qualities grow.

- **Self-controlled** – Young men often face unique temptations related to ambition, pride, anger, recklessness, and sexual desire. Self-control enables them to resist sexual temptation (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8), restrain sinful anger (Proverbs 16:32), and pursue disciplined lives devoted to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). As young men mature, self-control should become one of the defining marks of Christian manhood.

Titus Himself (Titus 2:7-8)

Paul returns to Titus himself. A teacher's credibility is closely connected to his character. People are often willing to overlook an imperfect presentation, but they quickly dismiss a hypocritical life. Paul expects Titus not only to teach godliness but also to model it. His life should reinforce his message rather than undermine it.

Titus is to demonstrate several qualities.

- **A model of good works** – Titus's life should consistently display obedience to Christ. His example would often teach as powerfully as his words. The false teachers were earlier described as unfit for any good work (Titus 1:16)
- **Integrity in teaching** – His instruction should faithfully communicate God's Word without compromise or manipulation. Titus must resist the temptation to soften difficult truths or alter the message to gain acceptance. This attribute contrasts with the greediness of the false teachers (Titus 1:11).
- **Dignity** – His teaching should reflect the seriousness and worthiness of the gospel. This does not mean lacking joy or warmth but recognizing the eternal significance of what he teaches.
- **Sound speech** – Titus's words should be truthful, gracious, and beyond legitimate criticism. His opponents may reject the gospel, but they should not be able to point to careless speech or sinful conduct as grounds for their criticism. The false teachers were described as “empty talkers and deceivers” (Titus 1:10).

Paul gives the purpose for these qualities: "so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us." A godly teacher strengthens the credibility of the gospel before both believers and unbelievers.

Bondservants (Titus 2:9-10)

Finally, Paul addresses bondservants. While the institution of first-century slavery differs significantly from the race-based chattel slavery familiar in more recent history, Paul's instructions reveal timeless principles about serving faithfully under earthly authority.

Just as Paul has addressed every other group in the church, he now reminds bondservants that they too can honor Christ through their daily work.

He gives five characteristics.

- **Submissive to their own masters in everything** – Elsewhere Paul teaches that servants are to obey not only when being watched but with sincerity of heart, recognizing that they ultimately serve Christ (Ephesians 6:5-8). Peter similarly instructs servants to show respect even toward difficult masters (1 Peter 2:18). Their earthly submission reflected their greater submission to their heavenly Master.
- **Well-pleasing** – Bondservants should seek to perform their work faithfully and willingly rather than reluctantly. Their attitude should reflect Christ's teaching about going the second mile (Matthew 5:41). Christians should strive to be employees, volunteers, and servants whose diligence earns the respect of others.
- **Not argumentative** – Rather than displaying a spirit of constant complaint or resistance, they should serve with humility and sincerity. Paul is not forbidding respectful disagreement but condemning a quarrelsome spirit that resists rightful authority.
- **Not pilfering** – They must not steal or misuse what belongs to another. Faithfulness in seemingly small matters demonstrates integrity before both God and man. Even when no one else notices, the Lord sees every action.
- **Showing all good faith** – Their trustworthy conduct should demonstrate the reality of their faith in Christ. Honest work, dependable character, and joyful service become powerful testimonies to the transforming power of the gospel.

Paul concludes with one of the most beautiful statements in this chapter: believers are to live this way "so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior." The picture is that of making something beautiful or attractive. Christians cannot improve the gospel itself, but through faithful, godly lives they display its beauty to the watching world.

Discussion Questions

- How is Titus to be a contrast to the false teachers as described in Titus 1:10-16?
- To the men in the room, do you consider yourself an older or younger man? To the women, do you consider yourself an older or younger woman?
- In your estimation, how do the expectations for each demographic relate to their stage of life? Do you see attributes particularly relevant? If so, how?

- Several times Paul emphasizes self-control. Why do you think this virtue receives so much attention? What areas of life most require self-control today?
- What attributes would you say you need to improve in the most?
- Are you better at living out godliness in the home or outside the home?
- Our text describes the impact of an older generation investing in the younger generation. How do you see this playing out in our church? If you are older, do you feel as if you are investing in the younger in some way? If so, how? If you are younger, do you feel like you are being invested in? if so, how?
- Paul gives character expectations to Titus as a teacher. Which of those qualities do you most appreciate in a teacher?
- If someone observed your daily life for a month—but never heard you speak about Christ—what conclusions would they likely draw about the gospel?