

Titus: “Doing Good” series
Week 7: Productive and Profitable Lives
September 20, 2026

Titus 3:9 But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. 10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. 11 You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned. 12 As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there. 13 Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. 14 Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives. 15 Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

Introduction

- We live in a culture that says it prizes and rewards productivity.
- Be more efficient. Do the right things. Don't be lazy. This country was built on a good work ethic. Etc. Etc.
- Yet this drive to accomplish is not shared in other cultures. Many parts of the world value a slower pace of life. More and more people are coming to the conclusion that being busy is not the same thing as being productive.
- Is productivity a American thing or is it a God thing? Does it even matter?
- Today we are wrapping up our series from the NT book of Titus. We have spent seven weeks within this framework of “Doing Good.”
- And just like with many letters, what Paul wrote at the end of this letter sums up everything he has been writing to Titus about. Other than a final personal greeting, the last thing he wrote in his letter to Titus was this:

14 Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

- Titus, as you lead this church, I want you to focus on helping people shape the orientation of their lives, that what they devote themselves to is doing good, such that needs are met and that lives are productive. A couple of sentences earlier he uses the term “profitable.”
- What does it mean to live a productive or profitable? Is it what I talked about earlier? Or something else? What is God's definition of a productive life?
- What we will see is that **a productive life is a life where we say “yes” to God.**

Main Sermon Text

- It will help us, I think, if we review how we have gotten to where we are today.
- We saw that godliness (doing good) should be the result of a life devoted to Jesus. (1:1-10) There is supposed to be a visible result of following Jesus in your life.
- This puts the focus directly on Jesus as we saw that the Gospel of Jesus is never “Christ-plus.” We are not doing good to earn anything or to try and gain heaven, but in response to what Jesus has done in our lives (1:10-16)
- This gospel centered focus on Jesus that changes how we live will point people towards Jesus in their own lives. (2:1-10)
- We can't do this on our own, but it is God's grace which trains and empowers us to be people who “do good.” (2:11-15) and as a result we must preach the gospel of Jesus to ourselves regularly. (3:1-8)
- At the end of this whole letter, Paul calls people to live productive lives. He describes what it means to live this way with two broad actions and then summarizes the “why” for all of it.

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I. Prioritize that which has practical value.

- Avoid meaningless discussions
- Foolish controversies - foolish means absurd, dull, of no benefit. Although we don't have all the details, it is most likely referring to discussions on Torah, Mosaic or Pharisaic regulations – even Gnostic ones. It was the focus on whether you needed to be circumcised, the historical families of certain Jewish people in Scriptures, and much more.
- Paul, who himself is the preeminent theologian of history, and who probably had a very informed opinion on all these issues, calls them foolish and unprofitable.
- They are a waste of energy because they have no practical value. These are the things that people press into that scratch a curiosity itch or gets people worked up. Paul is saying that these should be avoided.
- The focus here is not on people who have genuine questions or want to have a discussion, but about those who hold positions in a belligerent manner, or who have their own agenda,
- This sounds good in theory, but it is easy to get caught up in stuff that ultimately has lesser value. It might have some value, but is not of first importance.
- Remember that sound doctrine, according to this letter, is beliefs that result in a life that looks like Jesus, that has us living Christ-like lives.
- After all, it is a lot easier to be a person who debates the differences in eschatology and Jesus' return than it is to repent, forgive and love another person.
- To avoid these kinds of things is not to ignore them altogether necessarily, but to put them to the bottom of the list. Deal with them last.
- He goes on to say that he is to distance himself from people who stubbornly remain focused on these kind of things, because they are divisive people.
- A divisive person is one that is obstinately attached to an opinion, specifically, the opinions on the foolish controversies that he just spoke about.
- These people are so committed to certain teachings that they will not see reason or listen to Scripture. In doing so, they divide the body of Christ, the church.
- A good example in the church was those who maintained Judaism in opposition to Christianity. These people focused on external behaviors that they said were necessary to know God or follow Jesus.
- Paul tells Titus to point this out and warn them, but to not devote a ton of time to them. He did not need to win arguments or try to argue them to a different position. He simply tells Titus to move on.
- What's a little startling is that Paul describes these people as warped and sinful, condemned by their own behaviors.
- This is all about putting the energy into what makes a person most like Jesus.
- This is not about ignoring theology or saying that discussion of the differences in belief don't matter.
- Remember what Paul said earlier in the letter – sound doctrine is essential. But sound doctrine is that which promotes someone to look, taste, smell, and feel more like Jesus.

II. Invest in other people.

12 As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there. 13 Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. 14 Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

- Paul finishes a letter with some personal directives to Titus, but in it he summarizes his entire letter.
- “Do everything you can to help” speaks to an ongoing desire to put other people first, to empower them, to support them. But it is what is next that puts the bow on the whole thing.
- This has been his whole letter. As followers of Jesus, as being part of the church, devote yourselves to doing good. To being good. To preaching the gospel to yourself. And this is not theoretical goodness. It is not just focused on not doing the wrong things.
- In other words, the focus of doing good is other people.
- Titus, don’t waste your time on things that have no value. Warn people that are and in doing so being divisive.
- Model what it is to care for others. To invest in them. Use all your energy to do so.

Conclusion

- Good works, throughout this entire letter, are those things that we are to do as a result of following Jesus and being more like him. That is what Paul calls a productive and profitable life. A life that has value. That matters. That God values.
- What does this look like for us in our context. In our church?
- In the end, there is productivity (getting a bunch of stuff done in a specific amount of time) and this can be good. But how efficient I am at preparing each week, or getting to all my kid’s activities, or hitting all my work targets, is not how God evaluates our lives or our church.
- He has created you and me to follow Jesus and as a result to live lives where we “do good.” And doing good consistently means to listen to what God is telling us through the Holy Spirit and then living that out.
- It is saying to God, “I’m in. What are you leading me to do? How are you asking me to live? What conversations do you want me to have? How do you desire me to use my time and resources? What behaviors are you promoting or pushing back on? What people are you putting in my path?” And then telling God, “Yes.” “Ok God, I trust you enough to do, believe and say whatever you lead me to do.”
- We entitled this whole series “Doing Good.” As we said at the beginning, this is not a self-help, work harder kind of thing. To be nice to the world so we have good karma or something like that.
- No, it is all about realizing that the grace of God sent his son Jesus to live the life I was meant to live and die the death I deserved, and then raised him to life again SO THAT I might be forgiven, know God personally, be adopted into his family, be freed from my sins, and AS A RESULT, because of his great grace, to say yes to God.
- This means saying yes BEFORE I hear the instruction. It means saying each day, “God, you have my unqualified yes. I will follow you. I do not get the right what I choose to listen to and what I don’t. You are my king and will do it.”
- We give God our yes because of his grace to us. He poured out his grace to save us from the worst of all possible eternities and give us a new identity. We say yes as a response to this.
- He takes our yes to make our lives the kind of life HE desires.

- Charles Stanley famously said “God takes full responsibility for a life fully devoted to him.”
- We have said we are a church that does hard things. What we mean is that saying “Yes” to Jesus all the time can be intimidating. Difficult even. But because of Jesus, he empowers us to do whatever it is he is asking us to do.
- The question facing you and me at the end of this series is simply this, “Am I giving God my yes?” Am I willing to follow without reservation or am I retaining the right to do and live what I want to do.
- The question facing all of us this morning – what is your yes.
- Is there something God has been asking that you have been reluctant to say yes to?
- If there is nothing specific, are willing to give God your unqualified yes ahead of time.
- The greatest danger to the mission of God through our church and in your life rarely comes from the outside, but from compromise on the inside.