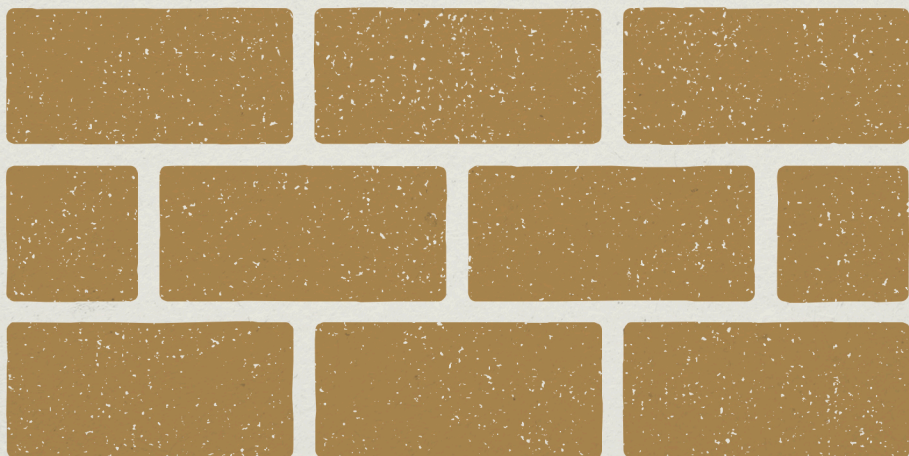


J. Josh Smith

THE TITUS TEN

FOUNDATIONS *for* **GODLY MANHOOD**



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To my one and only son, Josiah.

You are a living testimony to the healing
power of God. May you, like your namesake,
follow the Lord with all your heart, soul, and strength.

I love you, son.

(2 Kings 23:25)

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THIS BOOK HAS been written over the past thirteen years in the context of many men's groups. These groups not only helped me formulate these thoughts, they also gave me a vision for what God can do with men who are willing to trust and follow Him. Because of that, I am so grateful to the men of MacArthur Blvd. and Prince Avenue. This book exists because of you. May God continue to raise up many more like you!

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Introduction

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WHEN I ACCEPTED my first senior pastor position at the age of thirty-two, I had no idea what I was doing.

I am a fourth-generation pastor on both sides of my family, I had been a full-time missionary, and I had been on staff at a large church, but none of that seemed to prepare me for the role of the senior pastor. It was overwhelming.

After about a year of trying to navigate this role by myself, it became abundantly clear that I needed help. Specifically, I needed the help of godly men. I not only needed their practical help; I needed their wisdom. We didn't have the financial resources to hire more staff, so I had to find these men within the congregation.

This growing sense that I needed the help of godly men coincided with the death of a few men who were founding members of the church. These were men I had gotten to know in the first few months of my pastorate. They told me stories

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about the early days of the church, when there wasn't enough money in the offering to pay the pastor so they took money out of their own pockets to pay him. They told me stories of coming to the church on Saturday evening to clean for Sunday morning. They even told me about going door to door in the community selling bonds to raise money for their first building. These were men who had given themselves, in unbelievable ways, for the good of the church. But these men were dying. And I didn't see any younger men taking their place.

I began to pray fervently that God would help me know how to raise up leaders from within the church who would carry the burden with me—men like those founding members. After a few months, I decided to begin taking men through the book of Titus. I asked ten men, ranging in age from early twenties to late eighties to give me ten weeks to walk through the book of Titus together. I called the group the Titus Ten.

After doing this twice a year for a few years, I began to realize that the forty-six verses of Titus laid an incredible foundation for manhood. Almost every basic question a man asks on his journey to becoming a godly man was answered in this little book. And year after year, ten men at a time, I began to see God use the book of Titus to raise up a generation of godly men who were not only committed to the Lord, but committed to the church and to each other. Over time, every man in our church wanted to be a part of the Titus Ten.

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When the Lord called me away from that church after eleven years, they had a reception for my family. The most surprising thing for me that evening was the number of men who came up to me, wrapped their arms around me, and with tears in their eyes told me how much Titus Ten meant to them.

The book of Titus was not specifically written to be a manual for manhood. It was written to be a manual for the local church. As one of the three pastoral epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus), it was written to clarify how the local church should best function to develop the people of God and fulfill the mission of God. There may be no more practical, concise, and comprehensive guide for the local church than the forty-six verses of Titus. But, after walking hundreds of men through Titus, I am more confident than ever this book can and should also be used as a foundation for building godly men. This becomes even more clear as we get to know Titus, the man and this letter written to him.

Titus: The Man

When Andrea and I were dating, I went to her family's home for Easter lunch. Her father made sure I sat directly to his right at the table. At some point during the meal, he turned to me and asked, in front of the whole family, one simple question. "Josh, what Bible character do you identify with the most?"

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Now, my father-in-law is one of the most faithful, godly, and fun men I have ever known. He is also the most strategic and intentional man I have ever known. When he asked this question, I knew he was trying to figure out something about me.

I remember not knowing how to answer his question. I'm not sure I had ever thought about it before. I mean, certainly, I wanted to be like Jesus. But I couldn't say "Jesus." I was still trying to walk that balance between being nice and not looking like I was trying too hard. Saying "Jesus" seemed like it would have crossed that line.

I don't remember what Bible character I named, but I do remember the moment. And to this day, that simple question has continued to play a significant role in my life and ministry.

Over the years I have discovered that for a man to discern his calling, gifting, and purpose in life, that question is one he needs to answer. Finding a Bible character you identify with can bring clarity and perspective to your life. It can move you a long way down the road of understanding your own passions and gifting. My own answer to that question has given me clarity on who it is God has called me to be and what He has uniquely gifted me to do.

I have been asking men that question for fifteen years now, and over all of those years, not one man has ever said Titus. And that's a shame, because Titus was a great man, worthy of imitation.

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One of the reasons no one lists Titus as their favorite Bible character might be because he's not easy to get to know. You have to dig. There are only thirteen references to him in the New Testament, and there is more we don't know than we do. We do not know when he became a follower of Jesus, when he first met Paul and began to travel with him, or anything about his personal life and family. We have no record of anything that Titus ever wrote or said. But, as we look at all the references that we have, we can piece together a picture of a man whom we would all be well served to know and imitate.

First, Titus was a faithful follower of Jesus. In Titus 1:4 (NIV) Paul refers to Titus as "my true son in a common faith." This is the same way Paul refers to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:2). Paul brought Titus on an important mission. In Acts 15 the early church was in a debate over the belief that all Gentile believers needed to be circumcised. Paul, who had been ministering to the Gentiles and strongly disagreed that all of these new converts had to be circumcised, went to Jerusalem as the apostles debated the issue. To prove that circumcision was not necessary for salvation, he brought with him a living example—an example of an uncircumcised Gentile who was so clearly a believer that his life would show how unnecessary circumcision was for the Christian. Paul brought Titus (Gal. 2:1).

Second, Titus was a courageous servant. In Acts 18 we learn that Paul spent a year and a half in Corinth with the church he had just planted. He then left there and spent two

and a half years in Ephesus. Titus was most likely with him during this time. While in Ephesus, Paul received a report of how things were going at the young church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11). It wasn't good. So, Paul sent Timothy to check things out. Timothy soon learned that the situation was worse than Paul thought. Paul then made an urgent visit to confront the false teachers and deal with the sin in Corinth. After leaving them, he sent them a painful letter (2 Cor. 2:1–4). This letter was hard for him to write and hard for them to read. He sent that letter by the hands of Titus.

At some point, most likely while Paul was under arrest and being taken to Rome, he and Titus stopped in Crete. While there, Paul saw the false doctrine, rebellious men, and lazy gluttons present in the church. It was a church that needed godly men, sound doctrine, and courageous leadership. Paul left Titus there to put things in order (Titus 1:5).

Proverbs 25:13 says, “Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the soul of his masters.” Paul felt this way about Titus. He knew that delivering this letter, waiting for them to read it, and then being able to respond to it, would not be an easy task. It demanded courage and faithfulness. This is why Paul also sent Titus to take up an offering for the church in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:6). Paul viewed Titus as a courageous servant, ready for the most difficult assignments. From the Jerusalem council to the church in Crete, Paul had incredible

confidence in Titus, who became his go-to man for the most difficult tasks.

Finally, Titus was a beloved friend. After Titus's trip to Corinth, he was supposed to meet Paul in Troas, but he was delayed. They had a plan, knowing there was no way for them to communicate along the way. But something happened, and Titus didn't show up. Paul tells us he was in great distress when Titus never made it to Troas (2 Cor. 2:13). Paul went on to Macedonia where he was harassed at every turn and experienced conflicts all around him and fear inside of him. But, when he was downcast, he was deeply encouraged and comforted by the arrival of Titus (2 Cor. 7:6).

As I walked through Scripture trying to trace the life of Titus, Paul's deep affection for him was the most moving part of his story. To Paul, Titus was more than just a fellow worker, and courageous helper in the ministry (2 Cor. 8:23). Titus was a friend. And Paul needed a friend. Paul had been betrayed by many, but Titus remained a faithful companion.

I think the reason this part of the story resonates so much is that all of us need a friend like that. We need a friend who sticks closer than a brother. I remember the moment early in my marriage when I discovered that Andrea and I both needed friends. This was hard for me to admit. I had just assumed that once we got married, I was going to be all that Andrea needed. I assumed that as promised, I would be the fulfillment of every dream and every desire that she had. Why would she

ever need anyone other than me? But the reality was, Andrea needed friends. And so did I. We all do.

The journey toward manhood demands friends. There is more and more research being done on the devastating effects of loneliness and isolation. A recent study showed that loneliness is just as lethal as smoking fifteen cigarettes a day! Lonely people are 50 percent more likely to die prematurely than those with healthy relationships. A lack of good relationships is associated with a 29-percent increase in the risk of coronary disease and 32-percent risk of stroke.¹ Doctors and scientists are just catching up with what the Bible has always told us. Isolation is physically, mentally, and spiritually dangerous (Prov. 18:1).

The temptation to remain isolated is even greater for a man. Not because men prefer isolation, but because the older we get and busier we get, the harder it is to find time to cultivate friendships. And, moving from casual acquaintance to meaningful friendship is often awkward. We tend to be satisfied with surface friendships that lack any real depth. But Paul and Titus remind us that good friendships are essential in our journey to manhood.

Titus: The Letter

Paul left Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5) to invest in a struggling church and deal with rebellious men. It's unclear whether

Titus knew just how dysfunctional this church was when Paul left him there, but this little letter seems to indicate that Paul did know. Paul knew that this church needed Titus. And he knew that Titus was uniquely gifted to help this church become healthy.

One of the primary issues infecting the church was that the pagan culture of Crete had infiltrated the culture of the church. Crete is an island in the Mediterranean off the coast of Greece. It is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea and in Paul's day was an important commercial weigh station for the seagoing trade. Because of its location, it would have been a melting pot of all kinds of religious and philosophical views. Although Olympus claimed to be the "seat of the gods," the Cretans believed those very gods were but men and women of Crete elevated to deity by their goodwill. They were not only pagan; they were proud of it.

One of the most humorous verses in the entire New Testament is found in Titus 1:12. Paul, quoting a Cretan poet, says, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This is one of those moments in which you can say these kinds of harsh things about people as long as you are quoting someone saying it about himself! But Paul goes beyond that. He then says, "This testimony is true." "Yes," Paul says, "I agree with the Cretans' admission; *they are* always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons!" I assume you could say these kinds of things more easily before social media. But Paul's point was that the

reputation was true, and this character problem had infiltrated the church.

We do not know when the gospel was first brought to Crete. We do know there were people from Crete who heard the gospel in their language at Pentecost (Acts 2:11). Most likely, devout Jews had come from Crete to Jerusalem for Pentecost, heard the gospel, and went back to Crete to plant a church. When Paul and Titus stopped in Crete on their way to Rome, they discovered this little church.

A little and highly dysfunctional church.

There are three primary themes that Paul emphasizes to Titus to help him shepherd this church. First, Paul emphasizes the *centrality of the local church in the mission of God*. The primary concern for Paul when writing Titus is that the church at Crete would become healthy and strong to be effective in advancing Christ's kingdom. Although many things are discussed, the ultimate purpose of preparing a church to reach unbelievers effectively must not be lost. Paul desired the church both to think correctly and act correctly and to be people of both proper doctrine and proper duty.

Second, Paul wrote this book to emphasize the *centrality of the gospel in everything*. The entire book of Titus was written to combat a false understanding of the gospel. Some false teachers were adding to the gospel, and as a result, were undermining the message and ministry of the church. The church *must* get the gospel right. If not, everyone will suffer (Titus 1:11).

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The book of Titus gives us two of the greatest gospel texts in all of the New Testament.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his possession who are zealous for good works. (Titus 2:11–14)

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4–7)

And finally, Paul wrote to emphasize the *centrality of good works in the life of the believer*. The book of Titus is all about the connection between doctrine and duty, principle and

practice, faith and works. Paul knew that for the people of God to reach the lost they must be a people who both think correctly and live correctly. This is why there is so much

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emphasis on “good works.” No place in the New Testament emphasizes good deeds more strongly than Titus. Paul mentions it six times in just these few chapters (1:16; 2:7; 2:14; 3:1; 3:8; 3:14). This letter is about doing. Paul applies this instruction to the three primary areas of our lives: our church, our families, and our culture.

The primary message of Titus is this: God has saved us so that we might join with the local church to declare and display the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Titus: Foundations for Becoming a Godly Man

If this is essentially a manual for building a foundation in the local church, how can this also be a manual for how to lay a foundation in your life as a man? There are two compelling reasons.

First, Paul’s instructed Titus to find godly men and put them into leadership. In Titus 1:5 (CSB), Paul says, “The reason

I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town.” When it came to dealing with all of the difficulties, divisions, and false doctrine in the church, Paul wanted to make sure that first things came first.

The *first* thing that Paul instructs Titus to do is to put godly leadership in place. Before the false teaching, the immorality, and the immaturity could be fixed, there needed to be godly men in leadership. Then, Paul instructs Titus on how to find these men and what these men should be doing. The local church, as well as the family and society in general, will go the direction of the men.

Second, the book of Titus was written by one courageous godly man to another courageous godly man. It wasn’t written directly to the church; it was written directly to another man. And even though 1 and 2 Timothy are also written from one man to another, those letters feel more like a father writing to a son. The book of Titus feels like Paul writing to his coworker and companion. It feels different. Paul speaks more directly to Titus. Within the forty-six verses, we start to get a clear picture of both of these men. In their words, we find a great picture of manhood.

Emerging from the pages of this little letter are ten foundations for becoming a godly man:

1. Dominion
2. Gospel

3. Identity
4. Assignments
5. Authority
6. Character
7. Doctrine
8. Mission
9. Zeal
10. Investments

How to Read This Book

The Titus Ten does not contain everything a man needs to know. *The Titus Ten* contains ten foundations upon which a man must build a godly life. We not only need these foundations in our own life; we need these foundations as we seek to raise up a new generation of godly men.

Before you begin this journey, I want to tell you how to get the most out of it.

First, you need to read this book in the context of relationships. I want to plead with you not to read it alone. This book came to life in the context of a series of early morning men's Bible studies. I watched these foundational truths from Titus radically change men. But it did so in the context of multi-generational groups of men, sharing the Word, sharing their stories, and sharing their hearts. Ideally, you would gather men for ten weeks to walk through *The Titus Ten* together.

One of the reasons men do not often cultivate meaningful friendships is because they just don't know where to start. You don't want to just ask a guy if he would be your friend. This book is a great way to start. If you ask a few men to walk through this book with you, it gives you not only a context in which to build friendships, but also a shared experience.

Second, read this book with a commitment to action. Every chapter is written not just to inform, but to activate. The goal of this book is to raise up a generation of godly men in the church. Men of action. Men of depth. Men of courage. Solid men who have built their lives on a strong foundation. The truths contained in this book will challenge you. They will call you into being the man God wants you to be. Take the time at the end of each chapter to discuss with others the ways in which you can practically apply these things every week.

Don't allow yourself to be overwhelmed by how far you have to go. Take one step of action with every chapter. The most important thing for you to do is always the next thing God tells you to do. As the Spirit prompts you to respond, respond. Be a man of obedient action.

Finally, read this book with your eyes on Jesus. It is critical to remember that our pursuit of becoming a man is really a pursuit of a Man—the man Jesus Christ. We must discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:7–8). We must apply great effort to the cultivation of godly character and virtues (2 Pet. 1:5). We must be committed to continual and

strenuous effort toward the calling God has placed on our life as a man and a Christian (Phil. 2:12–13). Becoming a godly man takes time, thought, attention, effort, and action.

Yet, what we really want is not just to cultivate manly qualities, but to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the man we want to become. Jesus is the Second Adam who fulfilled God's vision for manhood. And He is not just the model of manhood; He is our only hope for becoming the man God wants us to become.

So, as you read these pages and take this journey with others, keep your eyes constantly on Jesus. Make Him your greatest pursuit. Continually invite Him into this process. Allow desire, ambition, insecurity, and deficiency to drive you to Jesus. Let's run together toward manhood with our eyes fixed on Jesus (Heb. 12:1–2). Let's begin laying a foundation for becoming a godly man.

Discussion Questions

1. How have you seen the men of the church impact the church, both negatively and positively?
2. In what ways do you see the need for strong faithful men in the church? What kind of men are lacking? What kind are needed?

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3. What do you see as the primary challenges in our culture that are keeping men from being the kind of men the church needs? In other words, what in our culture is working against us as men?

4. This week, think about what Bible character you identify with or want to be like. And no, you cannot say “Jesus.” If you already know who it is, share it at the table. If not, come back next week ready to share it.

Chapter 1

DOMINION

WHEN MY FAMILY and I moved to Georgia in 2017, we bought a home that sits on a little over two acres of land. To my family, who spent the previous eleven years in zero-lot homes in the suburbs of Dallas, Texas, this new home made us feel like we had become homesteaders—especially to me and my young son, as we quickly discovered the joy of exploring and working in the woods behind our house. Every chance we get, Josiah and I go into the backyard to cut down trees and dig holes just for the fun of it. To this day, I often come home from work and my son says, “Dad, let’s go dig!”

Normally, as Josiah and I head out the door to work in the yard, I jokingly tell my wife we are going to take dominion over the land. Just saying those words makes me feel manly. When I walk outside, get right in the middle of the thorns and debris, and begin to clear the land and kill the weeds, I feel like I’m doing something I was created to do. And that’s

because, in reality, that *is* something I was created to do. Every man was. Not just in the backyard, but in every area of his life. Every man was created by God to take dominion.

Distortion vs. Intention

My favorite passage of Scripture to use at a wedding is Matthew 19:1–12. In most Bibles, the title of that passage reads, “Teaching about Divorce.” That might seem like an odd choice for a wedding sermon, but in this passage, Jesus reveals God’s original intention for marriage.

The religious leaders, testing Jesus, asked Him about divorce. Jesus answers by taking them back to Genesis 1–2. Why? Because, while the Pharisees wanted to talk about the distortion of marriage, Jesus wanted them to see beyond the distortion, to God’s original intention.

Many people, like the religious leaders in Matthew 19, like to focus more on modern distortions, which often gets more “Amen.” *Especially* when it comes to manhood.

Calling out
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Calling out modern men for their failures has become a sport. And although there is certainly a lot to say on the distortions of manhood, the Bible takes a different approach. The Bible does

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not just point to modern distortions; it helps us discover original intentions.

In *The Masculine Mandate*, Richard Phillips takes us to God's original intentions for manhood in Genesis 2 and points out four essential truths about a man: who a man is, where a man is, what a man is, and how a man is to fulfill his calling. In other words, almost everything we need to know about manhood has been clearly articulated in *one* chapter of the Bible. All of God's intentions are there.

Starting in Genesis 3, the rest of the Bible shows just how spectacularly mankind can distort God's original intention. And because we see the distortions on every other page of the Bible, and in every man around us, we tend to focus more on the distortions than the intentions. But our goal is not to tear men down; it is to build them up. We are trying to lay a foundation on which to build a godly life, and we must begin with God's original intentions. That starts with dominion.

Dominion

Mankind was created to have a relationship with God, to live under God's authority, and to have authority over everything God created (Psalm 8). Adam found his true identity in his relationship with God, and he was to fulfill his God-given assignment by ruling over God's new creation on God's behalf.

In so doing, God's glory would spread to the ends of the earth (Gen. 2:10–17; Hab. 2:14).

The responsibility that God gave to Adam and Eve was clear: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen. 1:28). To take dominion meant to take responsibility, to care, to lead, to cultivate.

And yes, God tells Adam and Eve *both* to take dominion. They both bring different and essential skills to the assignment. God's instruction to Adam and Eve shows us that God

God's instruction to Adam and Eve shows us that God created both Adam and Eve equal in essence but distinct in roles.

created both Adam and Eve equal in essence but distinct in roles.

Adam needed Eve. God was the one who looked at Adam and knew that something was missing. He could not fulfill his God-given assignment without her. Yet, God gave Adam the primary responsibility of leadership. They would work together to take dominion under Adam's direction and leadership. This is why, after Adam and Eve sinned, God called Adam and held him accountable for Eve's actions (Gen. 3:8–9).

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When we read about God's original intention in Genesis 2, we get the picture of Adam leading Eve on an exhilarating adventure through life. Adam has been given this vast and beautiful domain of the earth, and he is working and tending and exploring it all. And by his side is Eve, an indispensable and irreplaceable lover and helper who finds her greatest joy in following Adam on this great adventure and helping him every step of the way. No conflict. No tension. No pride. No battle of the wills. Adam and Eve were both happy and fulfilled. They knew that they were equal. They knew their roles. They were a team. And they thrived.

The Way of Dominion

Although deeply distorted by sin, the original mandate for men to take dominion is still a mandate. It is a part of God's original intention. Everything we are trying to do, by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is to get back to God's original intention for our lives. God has created men, under His authority, on His behalf, as His representatives, manifesting His character, to take dominion.

There are two words in Genesis 2 that give clarity on the meaning of dominion: *work* and *keep* (Gen. 2:15). The primary role of every man, in every area of his life, is summarized in those two words.

When you think about “work,” think about a plow. A plow is used to cultivate the earth. It is used to turn up the soil and prepare the ground for seed. You can think of a hand-held instrument like a hoe, a large metal mold-board pulled behind an animal, or a 400-horse power, 8-Series John Deere tractor. Either way, the idea is to cultivate the earth so that what is planted will grow.

Plowing is a selfless and thankless task. It’s hard work. It’s sweaty work (unless you get that 8-Series John Deere with leather seats, cup holders, ventilated massaging seats, six-ways speakers, and XM radio). Yet, plowing is the work to which every man should be devoted. Not to tend a garden, but to sacrificially work hard for the sake of others. To sweat and toil, to cultivate and nurture everything and everyone God has put under his charge. As a man, you were created to work this way.

Every man should wake up every morning and imagine a plow in his hand and be ready to work. This is God’s calling. And under your leadership, things should grow and thrive.

When you think about “keeping,” think about a sword. To keep is to watch, guard, and protect. That which God has put under your charge should not only grow and thrive; it should be cared for and protected. God has created every man to be a guardian, a protector, a defender. He is called not only to stand in the watchtower and watch but to take up his sword and fight.

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I have four daughters and one son. My son came last. After having four daughters, one thing my wife and I were not prepared for was the innate aggression in this little man. It was not just aggression toward his four older sisters (but to be fair, having four sisters has to be a challenge for the little guy); it became a bit of a problem in preschool too. It's always fun to start a phone conversation with the words, "This is Josh Smith, the pastor at Prince. My son is the one who put your son in a headlock on the playground earlier this week."

At one point, we went to meet with Josiah's teacher about it. She said that she had been watching him carefully and had noticed something about his aggression. She noticed that he was only aggressive when he perceived an injustice. If he saw someone being mean or felt as if someone were not doing something they should, he just took matters into his own hands and whacked them!

There is a part of his aggression that we, as his parents, need to control and discipline. You can't go through life hitting people. On the other hand, part of this needs to be cultivated instead of squelched. In reality, a lot of it is just the man in him. God has created him to carry a sword. God has put inside of his little heart a desire to defend. To protect those around him. It is a desire to keep.

This desire and this calling have been placed in every man. It is in you. Someone might have taken the sword from your hand and sin might have distorted the way you use it, but

you were created to carry a sword. You were created to defend and protect. You were created to stand against injustice and sacrificially lay down your life for the good of those around you.

Working and keeping are at the very core of manhood. God models both for us in the garden. He creates us in His image so we might reflect His glory by doing the same. When you work and keep, as a man living under the authority of Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit, you bear the image of God and begin to lay a foundation for manhood.²

Domains

The areas in which God calls a man to take dominion are called domains. You can't give a man dominion without giving him a domain. God created Adam to take dominion and then gave him a domain in which to work: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). The domain in which Adam was to wield his plow and his sword was in the garden. The garden was his responsibility.

We will talk more specifically about dominion within domains in the chapter on assignments, but to lay a foundation for manhood, we must understand in broad terms the primary domains that God has given every single man.

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This is where the structure of the book of Titus is helpful for us. John Stott, in his commentary of Titus, says that Titus can easily be divided up into the three primary areas of Christian living: the church, the home, and the world. Many other commentators have noticed the same divisions.

Titus 1 focuses almost entirely on the church itself and the need for men to lead in the church. Titus 2 focuses on the people of the church and how both men and women should live. Titus 3 focuses on what it means to live as a Christian outside the church in the world and more specifically in the workplace.

The church, the home, and the workplace are the three primary domains of every man. But for a man to take dominion in those areas, he must first take dominion in another area, an area that is seen in every chapter of Titus. *A man must first take dominion over his flesh.*

These four areas—the flesh, church, family, and work—are every man's four primary domains.

These four areas—the flesh, church, family, and work—are every man's four primary domains. I also believe the order of these domains is the priority of every man.

Domain 1: Flesh

A few years ago, as I was looking to add some new staff members at our church, I reached out to an older pastor and mentor and asked for some advice. Specifically, I wanted to know what questions he asked in the interview process. He told me he always asks a man to give a “personal overcomer story”—a story of overcoming some area of sin or temptation in his own life. And then this pastor said, “If a man has not learned how to control his flesh and get personal victory over sin, he has no business being a pastor.”

He’s right. And it’s not just about being a pastor. Our ability to take dominion over our flesh will directly determine our ability to take dominion in every area of our life. The first battle in every man’s life is the battle with his sinful nature. If we lose that one, we can’t win any other one.

After Paul tells Titus to find good men and put them in leadership, he tells Titus what to look for. Listen to how he describes the men the church needs:

If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy,

DOMINION

and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:6–9)

Apart from the direct reference to a man having self-control, there are multiple references to things that demand self-control. A man must be able to control his pride, his temper, his drinking, and his flesh. A man cannot be a leader until he learns to take dominion over himself.

This is why Paul said, “I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:27). Paul was very aware that after a lifetime of gospel preaching he could be completely disqualified if he did not take dominion over his flesh. I don’t need to illustrate this. You have seen countless men undermine a lifetime of good with a momentary failure to control the lust of the flesh.

We often talk about men having a “moral fall.” We say “moral fall” as if to say that a man was doing great, walking with Jesus, fighting sin, overcoming his flesh, when all of a sudden, out of nowhere, he fell into sin. This is never the case. Men do not have quick moral falls; they have slow moral slides. Behind every moral fall is years of failure to control the flesh.

Taking dominion over your flesh is not just about fighting against sin. We will never gain any victory over sin unless we truly believe that walking with Jesus is better than living in sin. We should long for the life, joy, peace, and blessing that come when we walk with Jesus. Our primary motive is always more of Jesus.

This will be a theme throughout this book: the foundation of our lives will always crumble if we do not begin with working and keeping our flesh. No matter what else you build, the foundation of self-control must be laid. If it is not, the building will ultimately fall.

Domain 2: Church

What I am going to say right now might seem completely foreign, and even wrong to many of you, but I am convinced it is true. Before your family or your work, your greatest areas of sacrificial and loving leadership should be in the local church to which you have committed yourself. This is where you learn to use your plow and sword in the home and workplace.

Paul was writing Titus to help him fix a church in turmoil (Titus 1:5). The primary cause of turmoil was the presence of useless, ungodly, and rebellious men (1:10–16). The first thing Paul tells Titus to do is find godly men (men who have cultivated self-control) and put them in leadership in the church. The first place he calls godly men into action is the church.

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The church is the body of Christ. The church is the bride of Christ. The church is the house of God. The church is the family of God. God uses those metaphors so we might understand His love for the church. And “church” is not just a reference to all believers, but to local assemblies in which the body, bride, house, and family are manifested.

You cannot say you love Christ if you do not love His bride. You cannot say you are serving Christ if you are not an active part of His body. If you are not sacrificially attending, serving, and supporting a local church, you cannot become the man God wants you to be. God has set His church as the primary place in which He works in and through men. You cannot expect God to bless your life if you reject His means of doing so! And, if you are unwilling to commit yourself to a church, you are undermining all the good work God wants to do in you.

The local church is not only the primary place in which a man learns to be a Christian; it is the primary place in which a man learns to be a man. It is there, surrounded by generations of godly men, that he learns about himself and his God. Find

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a church and make it a priority. Give it your greatest effort. Serve it, love it, and protect it. Work and keep it.

Domain 3: Family

Your next domain is your family. If you are young and/or single, don't skip this section. This also includes you.

The reason marriage comes after the church is that the family exists to point to the relationship between Christ and His church. The church is the greater of the two. But these things do not conflict; they both thrive when they are given their proper place in a man's life. A healthy church is made up of healthy families.

One of the reasons a young man must learn to take dominion over his flesh and then must learn how to sacrificially love and lead in the church is because both of those things prepare him to take dominion in the home. I want you to think about this. When a father allows his family to make other things more important than the church, the father undermines the primary training ground for his family. God has given us the local church as the means to train us in how to love those in our family (this is the point of Titus 2).

One of the most important pieces of advice I give to husbands regularly is simply this: go home and work. God has entrusted you with that family. It is your domain. It is your responsibility. It demands the constant use of the plow and the sword. Serve your wife. Serve your children. Be the hardest

DOMINION

worker at home. Give yourself sacrificially every single day for the good of your family. And it's not just about working hard and providing. It's about doing the hard work of loving and leading and helping at home. A woman will not despise the idea of godly dominion if she sees this manifested in the way you love, serve, and help at home.

This is not just for husbands and fathers. I had a middle school boy ask me recently, "Why is it so hard to be nice to my mom?" I loved the honesty of that question. I think most middle school boys, if they were honest, would ask the same question. My answer was simple. God is teaching you how to be a man by teaching you how to love, serve, and respect your mom, even when you don't feel like it. The home is the training ground for godly, sacrificial, servant-hearted dominion. And learning to take dominion as a young man, looks like working and keeping in your home in a way that honors Jesus.

Domain 4: Work

Finally, we take dominion in the workplace. Titus transitions from life in the church (chapter 1) to life in the home (chapter 2), to life in the workplace (chapter 3). Titus 3 begins with these words to employees: "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, always showing gentleness to all people." Notice that to be a godly man at work, you must learn through the ministry

of the local church and the ministry in the home how to obey, work, deal with conflict, and be kind.

Part of using your plow and sword in the workplace means working hard and providing for those under your care. Without question, every husband has been given the primary role of financial provision. First Timothy 5:8 says that a man who does not provide for his family is worse than an unbeliever. Every man should carry the primary weight for financial provision. But a man's responsibility in the workplace does not end with provision.

The workplace is where a man displays to a lost world what self-sacrificing, loving, and godly dominion looks like. It

No one should be a harder worker, a better employee, or a better boss than a man who follows Jesus.

is where a man shows the world God's original intention. Paul says, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" (Col. 3:23). No one should be a harder worker, a better employee, or a better boss than a man who follows Jesus. You should work harder, sacrifice more, and lead more graciously

than anyone else. In so doing, you are not only seeking your good and the good of those under your charge; you are seeking to glorify God through your work ethic.

The Wisdom of God in Domains

Do you see the wisdom of God in our domains? Do you see the wisdom of God in the order of our domains? At a young age, a man should be learning how to control his flesh. And in the local church, he is seeing how to love and serve and give of himself sacrificially for the good of others. And then in the home, he is applying what he sees in the church and learns how to work hard, love well, be kind, and be submissive to authority. Then, from his dominion in those three areas, he learns how to be a successful man in the workplace. God knows what He is doing when He clarifies those domains and tells us the proper order.

Have you ever known a man who just couldn't keep a job? In my experience, as I have talked with these men, I have noticed there is almost always a reason why he can't keep a job. And sadly, everyone sees it but the man himself. While he blames everyone else for his misfortune, everyone else knows he's the one to blame. In most of these cases, the problem goes back to this man's failure to learn in his own life, in the church, and in the home, how to take godly, loving, sacrificial dominion. He does not know how to work and keep. He does not pick up his plow and sword. And as a result, he is often—like many of the men in Crete—"unfit for any good work" (Titus 1:16).

The only reason the world has a problem with the idea of manly dominion is that they have not seen dominion as God

intended it. To use your plow and sword in your domains is to work hard, sweat, toil, and sacrifice for the good of those under your charge. It is about manifesting the very death of Christ for the good of others. Taking dominion is about displaying the gospel. It's about seeing the way sin has distorted God's original intention. It is about manifesting the glory of God. It is about God's original intention. It is about having our manhood redeemed. And that is where we go next.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the idea of dominion resonate with you? Do you sense that God has created you to work and keep?
2. What are the negative effects of men not taking dominion in our day? How are people suffering by the lack of godly dominion? Think about it in all four primary areas: flesh, church, family, and work.
3. Personally, in which of the four areas do you find it most difficult to walk in dominion? Why?
4. In what area do you feel like you need to be walking in more dominion right now? Be specific.

EVERYTHING IN A MAN'S LIFE HINGES ON THE KIND OF MAN HE IS. YET, NONE OF US IS

**NATURALLY A GODLY MAN. THAT'S SOMETHING
WE HAVE TO LEARN, PURSUE, AND CULTIVATE.**

WE NEED A MANUAL TO HELP US.

This book is a manual for becoming the kind of man God intends for you to be, and leading other men to do the same. Taking ten qualities from the apostle Paul's short letter to his mentee Titus, *The Titus Ten* will help you grow in your understanding of the gospel, your identity, your character, your doctrine, and more.

EACH CHAPTER INCLUDES questions for reflection and discussion, to process the way the Lord is growing you or to be read in a group with other men. As you grow in these areas of your life, you'll become the kind of man God desires to use in your family, your church, and the world.



J. JOSH SMITH (DMin, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) is the senior pastor of Prince Avenue Baptist Church in Athens, Georgia. He and his wife, Andrea, have four daughters and one son. He enjoys music, reading, collecting LP's, spending time with his family, and rainy days.

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