
Commanding Biblical Living

Titus 2:1-10

The purity of the church is in how each member together with the church as a whole translates doctrine into duty, learning into living.

Notice the continuous connection between soundness of doctrine and purity of living. Any attempt to break the connection destroys the vitality of both.

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

In addition to “the sound doctrine”, Titus is to teach “the things which fit it”, or are ‘in accord with’ it, that is, the practical duties which arise from it. For there is an indissoluble connection between Christian doctrine and Christian duty, between theology and ethics. Moreover, Paul immediately does what he has told Titus to do. First he outlines some detailed ethical instructions which Titus is to pass on to different groups in the Cretan churches (2-10), and secondly he unfolds the sound doctrines which undergird these duties, in particular the two comings of Christ (11-14).

All of the kinds of people who make up the home-circle should conduct themselves in such a manner that by their life they may beautify, adorn, ornament the doctrine of God, their Savior.

We see again the repeated use of “our Savior”. This is important for the believers in Crete. They were to understand that our God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ was not one of the many saviors on Crete. He was not even above them. Jesus is unique. He is God. He is the only God. He is One prophesied all through the Old Testament. The salvation our Savior brings is one that produces a godly people who live and behave in certain ways. Our Savior transforms our **persons** and our **behavior**.

The Responsibility in Preaching (v.1)

But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

The passage is wrapped in the responsibility of God's men to tell the truth to the church in such a compelling way that the church hears and heeds.

Drawn from Sound Doctrine

Titus is to teach what aligns with and is appropriate to sound doctrine. Biblical principles have Biblical practices that are aligned with it. The idea that we can just preach doctrine and people will naturally begin to live is simply not what the Bible tells us. We are to tell people what to believe and we must tell people what to do.

Develop into Specific Application

Titus, as a representative elder/pastor, is to help people make specific applications. It is not merely enough to say what must be done that is derived from and aligns with sound doctrine. We must also help people to make specific applications.

Now if we stop here and do not follow the flow of the text, then we will end up with preaching that is vulnerable to several dangers:

We will have preaching that spirals downward into legalism. It begins to command the how-to's that actually belong in wisdom areas. It becomes commands instead of counsel.

We will have preaching that is merely how-to. It ends up being helpful advice rather than saturated with the Bible and truth.

We will have application that is so specific, so directed that it is not useful to many in the congregation. For example, preaching that has very specific steps on how to administer the rod or serve children at dinner will not be applicable to many people.

You can see that we may have a dilemma. How do we have preaching that avoids these pitfalls, expounds the Scriptures and is faithful to the mandate?

The solution does not rest in the preaching. Preaching is to prepare people for discipleship. It is in discipleship, that concrete, detailed applications are worked out.

The Responsibility in Discipling (v.2-6)

Titus is to preach in such a way that able, older people in the Lord are identified and encouraged to disciple the younger.

. 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.

The General Principles

We can observe some general principles that help us think about discipleship as a church.

The Importance of Discipleship

Notice that the emphasis on discipleship; on those experienced in Christian living mentoring those who are younger in the faith.

Practical godly living is transmitted through discipleship as much as it is taught in gatherings.

The Focus of Discipleship

Emphasis on gender/station of life ministry. We often think of discipleship in theological, doctrinal, teaching terms. But the emphasis in the Bible is on turning truth into living. It consistently calls for intentional abandonment of the world's way of living and embracing a new kind of life.

The Qualifications to Disciple

The people involved in doing the discipling are to be of a certain maturity in character in conduct. They have been taught the Word. They have lived the Word. They know what and how to help others.

The Process of Discipleship

Discipleship involves both teaching and training. It is telling and showing how to do something. Therefore, it will have both an explain and exemplify component.

The Purpose in Discipleship

Biblical discipleship glorifies God. But in this text, Biblical discipleship is also aimed at producing the kind of character and conduct that exemplifies and enhances the gospel. Weak, ignorant, sinning Christians hinder the gospel and give people reason to despise and disparage the Scriptures.

The Practical Instruction

What Titus is to do is to organize the discipleship in a way to promote good and wise Christians. This is not exhaustive. This is an example of what was what needed, particularly in their culture. It also seems to be addressing the particular failings and tendencies of each group.

Develop specific areas of character so that they will be able to disciple or train others. Titus is to look for a certain kind of people to teach and train to becoming the discipling core of each church.

Cultivate specific areas of obedience so that they bring no dishonor on the Word. Paul is still thinking in categories of behavior. This is what those discipling are to work on but with their own specifics.

The Men

The men are to be older in age and in the faith. The emphasis not so much in being elderly. The emphasis is that they have experience in life and the Christian walk so that they have matured in certain clear ways. They are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. The picture here is of a person of maturity and stability, who is serious about life. He lives a disciplined life and is self-controlled. His doctrine is sound. His love is unquestioned. He is reliable and steadfast.

Titus is to identify older men who are sound or mature in every aspect of their character, not least in the three cardinal Christian virtues, namely in faith (trusting God), in love

(serving others) and in endurance (waiting patiently for the fulfilment of their Christian hope).

The Women

The women also are to be older in age and the faith. As with men, the emphasis is on their maturity. Like the men, they are to be serious, dignified and experience in the Christian life. Older women are to be reverent or respectful in behavior. They are to be careful in their speech, not slanderers. They are not be enslaved to much wine.

The women are to teach what is good in that it is Scriptural and in that it is wise. Discipleship has wholistic. So it is to help the younger women to please God in all of the aspects of their life. Because of some mishandling of some of these, I want to pause and linger over them for a minute. Younger women are to be disciplined to:

To love their husbands and children...

The natural tendency of the human heart is to love selfishly or idolatrously. Younger women are to learn to love Biblically and selflessly. It is unhelpful to over-emphasize the words for love in the New Testament, particularly in the marriage relationship. All three kinds of love are experienced and expressed in marriage. Each one encourages the other and grows better in the well-watered garden of grace.

To be self-controlled...

Ladies (as well as men, look at the context) need to learn to be self-control. Godliness and wise living are almost impossible without self-control and self-discipline. There should be a growing impulse control leading to more careful thoughtful, intentional obedience.

To be pure...

The ladies are to be taught how to be pure and chaste in the context of their culture. While purity is pretty much the same no matter where or when, the particular challenges, temptations, provocations and tendencies of the person and their situation should be addressed.

Working at home...

The early translations of this word and phrase have been misunderstood and misused to say that Christian women are supposed to stay at home and not work outside the home. This is not what the text is saying nor does it square with the evidence of the rest of the New Testament. The ESV has it right. The younger ladies are to be taught to take care of their responsibilities at home. They are to know how to take care of their home and their family. This is not so much about a philosophy of family as it is about the need to train ladies in all that is their responsibility. Diligence, hard work, growing skill and a love for the home are all to be cultivated by discipleship. This can start with godly mothers working with their daughters. But it also extends to experienced women teaching the basics of cooking, house care and children to young ladies who don't know how.

To be kind...

There is good general instruction here that may grow out of a specific problem in Crete. All Christians must be kind, quick to forgive, tender-hearted. But this is so

needed when the pressures of home, finance, work, children squeeze frustration, anger and bitterness from our hearts that overflow into unkindness. In a day in which there is so much nasty, crass, sarcastic, hateful speech, all of us need to learn to have the oil of kindness on our tongues.

To be submissive to their own husbands...

The older women are to train the younger women to be submissive to their husbands. Now look, this is not popular in our day. This is regularly denounced in our day. It was no different then than it is now. Submission is not tested when you are of one mind with your husband. Submission is tested when you are being asked or told to do something you don't want to do. But godly experienced Christian women are to help other young women to be submissive.

The Youths

⁶ Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.

At first it looks like this is simply not enough to say to the young men. Really? With all the temptations that accompany both singleness and early marriage, self-control is somehow enough? However, I want you to notice the "likewise". In the same way that the ladies are to be disciplined in the areas specific to their home, so young men are to as well. They also must learn to love their families, to work hard at their work, to be pure, to be kind, to learn how to lead and how to serve. None of this will be cultivated without the core virtue and discipline of self-control.

The Responsibility in Living (v.7-10)

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 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.

As Elders (v.7-8)

Titus is to model what he preaches. There must be gap between living and speaking. He is not only doing this for the sake of the elders he will appoint, but also for all who learn to lead in the church. Develop in the areas you are responsible for:

We are to be an example of a godly life. But more, we are to exemplify the good works that Christians are to practice.

We are to hold ourselves to high standards of truth, aiming to be untarnished in doctrine. Paul commends speaking in a way that is full of integrity and is dignity. I want you to notice how much concern Paul has for seriousness and dignity. In his day just as in ours, frivolity, lightness, silliness are all not only accepted but sometimes even cultivated. Paul does not care whether our style will be accepted or even approved. He simply calls for integrity and dignity.

We are to develop skilled accuracy in communication. While Paul employed some of the common rhetoric of his day, he never relied on it to do what only the Spirit and power of God can do. So we are to speak in such a way that it is clear, understandable and not misleading. I believe Paul would detest the kind of vague double-speak that is often used today.

We are to live, speak and preach in such a way that it will bring shame the opponents of the Word. Too much church living and preaching just bring shame on the gospel. The opposite ought always to be true.

As Employees (v.9-10)

Without getting into the argument (again) about slavery, note that Titus is to move to entirely the opposite spectrum. From leaders, now we turn to slaves. The following is adapted from Hendrickson in his wonderful commentary on Titus.

The three points with respect to which slaves must be admonished are:

In their Conduct

The slave must comply with the wishes of his master, and this “in every respect. From morning until evening and in every category of work the slave must be submissive to his master. It is hardly necessary to add that this phrase “in every respect” must not be taken in the absolute sense, as if the apostle meant to say that he must obey even then when the master demanded of the slave to tell a lie or commit thievery, adultery, or murder. The purpose-clause at the close of verse 10 implies a restriction, for surely by agreeing to sin the slave would never be able to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.”

In their Attitude

External compliance with the will of the master is not enough, however. Growling and grumbling underneath are also forbidden. The sullen disposition has never yet won a soul for Christ. Slaves, accordingly must be *eager to please, well-pleasing*. This adjective is typically Pauline: elsewhere the apostle uses it no less than *seven* times, while in all the rest of the New Testament it occurs only *once* (Hebrews 13:21).

The negative aspect of being well-pleasing is *not talking back*. Although the basic meaning is that of *talking back*, it often conveys the overtone of *active disobedience, resistance, rebellion, strife*. It probably has that coloring here also. Thus interpreted, the two expressions make a fitting pair: “well-pleasing” and “not rebellious” in attitude.

In their Reliability.

When the master’s back was turned, petty larceny was often committed. Such pilfering or stealing is forbidden. The slave secretly *held back* or *withdraws* or *sets apart for himself* a portion of that which belongs to his master. It must never be excused by saying, “The master owes me much more than this, for he has taken away my freedom and he is robbing me of my strength and talents, all without adequate compensation.” The slave must show “the utmost *trustworthiness*” or “*fidelity*”.

In their Purpose

Now the reason that slaves are to display a submissive conduct, an humble attitude, and utmost dependability is this: **so that in every respect they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior**. A sanctified life, which brings into clear perspective all the fruits of transforming grace – obedience, cheerfulness, integrity, etc. – sparkling like so many precious jewels, is an ornament to “the doctrine of *God our Savior*”. It should cause masters to exclaim, “If the Christian religion does this even for slaves, it must be wonderful!”

For us then, we must cultivate integrity and honesty in your employment putting the security of your future in God’s hands so that truth is beautified by your conduct.

Reflect and Respond

Is our pulpit ministry truly reflecting the dual nature of preaching? It is my belief yes. Many of you are not fully profiting from it because you are absenting yourself from our gatherings to pursue your own pleasure.

Where is our discipleship in these terms? We are making great strides. But there is so much more that could be done.

Many of you are struggling with basic issues of Christian living. Yet you want preaching that solves your every problem. Maybe what we need is preaching that motivates the younger to listen to the wise and practical counsel of the older and there is, from generation to generation, a growing godliness.