

Paul describes himself as both a servant and an apostle, highlighting both his submission and his authority -- in what ways do leaders in the church today need to hold those two qualities in tension, and what happens when one is emphasized at the expense of the other?

The sermon warns that it is possible to hear the truth, admire the truth, and even appear to have your life together, yet still have no real foundation underneath -- what are some signs in a person's life that might reveal the difference between a genuine foundation and a convincing appearance?

Paul connects faith, knowledge of the truth, and godliness as things that belong together and cannot be separated -- where do you see the greatest gap between what Christians say they believe and how they actually live, and what contributes to that gap?

The sermon draws a contrast between a culture obsessed with immediate gratification and a church called to live with eternity in view -- in what practical ways does an eternal perspective change the decisions you make in everyday life?

Paul grounds the hope of eternal life in the character of God who cannot lie, a promise made before the beginning of time -- how does understanding that redemption was God's plan from eternity rather than a reaction to human failure affect the way you relate to God personally?

The sermon states that when a church's conduct consistently contradicts its confession, the world stops taking the church seriously -- what would it look like for a local congregation to close that gap in a way that is both honest about struggle and visibly transformed by the gospel?

Paul's relationship with Titus is described as a spiritual father-son bond formed through a common faith -- who in your life has invested in your spiritual formation the way Paul invested in Titus, and who might you be called to invest in that same way?

The sermon argues that healthy churches do not happen by accident but require intentional discipleship, courageous correction, and shared responsibility -- which of those three do you think is most often neglected in church life, and why?

Titus was entrusted to strengthen what had been started, correct what had become disordered, and establish what was still missing -- if you were to honestly assess your own spiritual life using those same three categories, what would you find in each one?

The closing challenge is not to simply hear the word but to put it into practice, beginning with the prayer that God would start in you -- what is one specific area of your life where you sense God is asking you to move from hearing to obedience?

Built to Last: Small Group Guide

Week 1 -- Titus 1:1-4

SERIES OVERVIEW

This guide accompanies the sermon series "Built to Last," a walk through Paul's letter to Titus. The central truth of the series is this: a healthy church makes the gospel visible. Each week we will explore what it looks like for a church to become strong, faithful, and built to endure for generations to come.

THIS WEEK'S BIG IDEA

Church health does not happen by accident. It requires believers who submit to God's authority, allow gospel truth to transform their lives, anchor themselves in eternal hope, and invest their faithfulness in the next generation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The church belongs to God, not to its leaders, its longest-tenured members, or its most influential personalities. Everyone -- from pastor to first-time visitor -- serves under his authority.
 2. Gospel truth is not merely information to accumulate. Sound doctrine is meant to produce sound living. What we believe about Jesus should become visible in how we speak, work, serve, forgive, and lead.
 3. Biblical hope is not wishful thinking. It is a confident expectation grounded in the character of a God who cannot lie and who promised eternal life before the world began.
 4. Faithfulness must outlive us. A healthy church intentionally develops disciples and leaders so that the gospel is passed forward to the next generation.
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OPENING QUESTION

Use this question to get the conversation started. Keep it light and accessible.

- When you think about something in your life that was "built to last" -- a relationship, a habit, a tradition -- what made it endure? What would have caused it to fall apart?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Work through these questions together as a group. You do not have to cover every question. Let the conversation go where the Spirit leads.

The Church Belongs to God

1. Paul introduces himself as both a servant and an apostle -- describing his submission and his assignment at the same time. How does holding both of those realities together shape the way a leader leads? How does it shape the way a church member participates?
2. The sermon raised this question: "What does God desire for his church?" rather than "What do I want from my church?" How does shifting that question change the way you approach your role in the life of this church?
3. When a church forgets who owns it, the sermon said, everyone begins fighting to control it. Have you ever seen that dynamic play out -- in a church, an organization, or even a family? What does it look like when it goes wrong, and what does it look like when it goes right?

Gospel Truth Transforms Lives

4. Paul writes that his ministry exists to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness -- with faith, truth, and godliness all belonging together. Why do you think it is tempting to separate what we believe from how we live? What makes that separation so easy to fall into?
5. Titus 1:16 describes people who claim to know God but deny him by their actions. Without pointing fingers at anyone else, where in your own life do you sense a gap between what you confess and how you actually live? What would it look like to close that gap?
6. The sermon said: "The gospel is not something we affirm on Sunday. It is meant to shape who we are on Monday." What is one area of your daily life where you feel the gospel calling you to something different right now?

The World Needs Enduring Hope

7. The sermon described a culture that is fixated on the here and now -- measuring life by what can be accumulated, achieved, or experienced before time runs out. Where do you feel the pull of that mindset most strongly in your own life?
8. Paul grounds our hope in the character of God himself, specifically that God does not lie. Why is the character of the promise-maker just as important as the promise itself? How does knowing that God cannot lie change the way you hold onto hope during hard seasons?
9. The sermon said the church should be a place where people can see Christians "grieve without despair, suffer without surrendering, sacrifice without resentment, and face uncertain futures without fear." Which of those is hardest for you personally, and why?

Faithfulness Must Be Passed Forward

10. Paul invested deeply in Titus, calling him "my true son in our common faith." Who has invested in your spiritual growth in a meaningful way? How did that relationship shape who you are today?
 11. The sermon warned that when a church stops developing disciples and leaders, the same small group of people carry all the responsibility until they burn out. Have you ever experienced that -- either as someone who burned out or as someone who watched it happen? What did it teach you?
 12. What would it look like for you personally to begin investing your faith into someone else right now? Is there a specific person or opportunity that comes to mind?
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REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

Take a few minutes individually before sharing with the group.

The sermon closed with several personal questions worth sitting with:

- Is there any area of your life you need to surrender to God's authority?
- Is there truth you already know that you have not yet put into practice?
- Have temporary things become more important to you than the eternal hope you have in Christ?
- Is God calling you to stop standing on the sidelines and begin investing your faith in someone else?

Choose one of those questions and share your honest answer with your group. Then identify one specific, concrete step you will take this week in response to what you heard.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

The sermon ended with a clear call: do not simply hear the word -- put it into practice. As a group, hold each other accountable to that. Before you close, have each person answer this question out loud:

"Based on what I heard this week, one thing I am going to do differently starting now is _____."

PRAYER FOCUS

Close your time together in prayer. Consider praying for these things specifically:

- That God would begin his work of transformation in each person in the room before anyone looks outward
 - That your church would become a community where gospel truth is not just taught but visibly lived
 - That God would raise up faithful leaders and disciples from within your congregation
 - That your group members would live with eternity in view, especially in the areas where temporary pressures feel most overwhelming
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PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

Read Titus 1:5-9 before your next group meeting. As you read, pay attention to what Paul says about the qualifications for church elders. Ask yourself: what do these qualifications reveal about what God values most in a leader? Come ready to discuss.

Built to Last: A 5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Day 1: The Church Belongs to God

Reading: Colossians 1:15-20 (the supremacy of Christ over all things, including the church)

Devotional: It is easy to treat the church as a human institution shaped by preferences, personalities, and programs. But the church was purchased at an enormous cost and belongs entirely to God. Before you walk through its doors, before any leader takes a platform, Christ is already Lord of it. This means every decision, every ministry, every direction must be submitted to his authority rather than our comfort. Ask yourself today: in what areas of your life or your church involvement have you been more concerned with what you want than what God desires? Surrender that area to him now.

Day 2: Truth That Transforms

Reading: James 1:22-25 (the call to be doers of the word, not hearers only)

Devotional: There is a dangerous form of Christianity that collects truth without ever being changed by it. A person can attend church for decades, accumulate sound doctrine, and still live in a way that contradicts everything they claim to believe. The gospel was never meant to be stored; it was meant to be lived. Sound doctrine produces sound living. Where your theology ends and your daily conduct begins, there is either integrity or hypocrisy. Today, identify one truth you already know that you have not yet put into practice. That gap is where transformation is waiting. Ask God to close it.

Day 3: A Hope That Cannot Fail

Reading: Romans 8:18-25 (present suffering and the confident hope of future glory)

Devotional: The world offers hope that is built on circumstances, accomplishments, and things that can be taken away in a moment. Biblical hope is entirely different. It is not wishful thinking or uncertain optimism. It is a confident expectation grounded in the character of a God who cannot lie. He made promises before the foundation of the world, and not one of them has ever failed. When the storms of life press in and temporary things begin to feel ultimate, the church

must anchor itself to what is eternal. Let the unchanging promises of God reorient your perspective today. What is eternal deserves your deepest trust.

Day 4: Passing Faithfulness Forward

Reading: 2 Timothy 2:1-7 (the charge to entrust the gospel to faithful people who will teach others)

Devotional: Faithfulness was never meant to stop with you. Every generation of the church carries the responsibility of passing the gospel forward to the next. Paul invested in Titus. Titus was sent to invest in elders. Those elders were to teach others. This is the pattern of a healthy church. When mature believers stop investing in the next generation, the mission stalls and the church slowly weakens. You do not have to hold a title or fill a platform to disciple someone. You simply need to be willing. Who in your life is younger in faith and needs what God has already given you? Begin there.

Day 5: Begin in Me

Reading: Psalm 139:23-24 (the prayer of honest self-examination before God)

Devotional: It is always easier to identify what everyone else needs to change than to open your own life to honest examination. But church health does not begin with pointing outward; it begins with surrendering inward. Before God can build something lasting through a congregation, he must be allowed to build something lasting within each person who makes up that congregation. The wisest prayer a believer can offer is not, God, fix the church, but rather, God, begin in me. Search me. Know me. Correct what is wrong. Strengthen what is weak. A church built to last is made up of individuals who are daily willing to pray that prayer and mean it.