Paul instructs Titus to 'stress these things' referring to the core truths of the gospel -- in what ways might your own church community be tempted to stress secondary or personal matters over the essential truths of salvation?

The sermon draws a distinction between 'contending for the faith' and 'contending for my take' -- how do you personally discern when you have crossed that line from defending what God has clearly revealed to defending your own preference or interpretation?

Reflecting on the three-ring framework of convictions written in blood, ink, and pencil, can you identify a belief you currently hold that you may have placed in the wrong category, and what would it look like to rightly categorize it?

The preacher describes a church member who left because political perspective was not being preached from the pulpit -- in what ways can political conviction, even when sincere, subtly replace the gospel as the central test of Christian faithfulness?

Paul warns Titus about divisive people and instructs him to warn them twice before distancing the church from them -- what does this process reveal about the balance between protecting unity and extending grace to those who cause division?

Titus 3:8 connects the trustworthy saying of the gospel directly to the call to devote ourselves to doing what is good -- how does a deeper understanding of what God has done for us in Christ practically motivate and shape the good works we pursue?

The sermon suggests that sound doctrine is meant to produce a sound life -- where do you see a gap between what you believe about Jesus and how that belief is actually shaping the way you live, lead, or treat others?

The preacher reflects that 'the church we are becoming today is the church somebody else will inherit tomorrow' -- how does thinking about future generations who have not yet been

born or found faith change the way you approach disagreements within your church community?

Paul describes divisive people as 'warped and sinful' and 'self-condemned,' which is striking language -- what does this strong warning reveal about how seriously God views the fracturing of Christian unity, and how should that shape our response when we feel the urge to recruit others to our side of a disagreement?

The sermon closes with a vision of a church marked by unchanging truth, unconditional love, uncommon relationships, unbroken unity, and uncomfortable generosity -- which of these five characteristics do you sense God calling you personally to invest in, and what would that look like in a practical, everyday way?

Small Group Guide

"Built to Last: Stay Focused on What Matters"

Based on Titus 3:8-14

Overview

In this final message from the letter of Titus, the Apostle Paul gives one last warning to the young preacher: do not let the church get distracted from what matters most. Sound doctrine is meant to produce a sound life. Churches that are built to last stay centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ and devote themselves to doing what is good rather than wasting energy on unprofitable arguments and division.

Key Takeaways

- Sound doctrine is supposed to produce a sound life. What we believe about Jesus should shape the way we live, lead, and love one another.
- Paul draws a sharp contrast between what is "excellent and profitable" and what is "unprofitable and useless." Not every argument deserves our energy.
- Church disagreement is not the same thing as divisiveness. Christians can hold convictions and still remain unified around Jesus and his mission.
- Not every conviction carries the same weight. Learning to distinguish between essential, important, and personal matters helps us know how to respond to disagreement.
- We have inherited a church from those who came before us, and we are stewarding it for people who are not yet here.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Think of a time when your group, family, or team got so caught up in a minor disagreement that you lost sight of the original goal. What happened, and what did it cost you?

Getting Into the Text

1. Read Titus 3:4-7 together. Paul calls this a "trustworthy saying" and tells Titus to stress these things. In your own words, what is the core message of these verses? Why do you think Paul considered this the foundation everything else is built on?
2. In Titus 3:9, Paul tells Titus to avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, arguments, and quarrels about the law, calling them "unprofitable and useless." What do you think makes a controversy or argument fall into that category? How can you tell the difference between a discussion worth having and one that is a waste of time?
3. Paul instructs Titus to warn a divisive person once, then a second time, and after that to have nothing to do with them. Why do you think Paul takes division so seriously? What does that tell us about the value God places on the unity of the church?

Going Deeper

4. The sermon introduced three levels of Christian conviction: essential matters written in blood, important matters written in ink, and personal matters written in pencil. In your experience, what happens when someone elevates a personal preference or secondary belief to the level of an essential truth? Can you think of an example where you have seen this cause damage in a church or relationship?
5. The sermon pointed out that the problem is not always the topic itself but the weight we give it and the spirit we bring to it. What does it look like practically to hold a strong conviction humbly? What makes that so difficult?
6. The pastor said, "There is a difference between contending for the faith and contending for my take." How do you personally evaluate whether you are defending what God has clearly said or defending what you personally prefer? What questions do you ask yourself?

Personal Reflection

7. Paul's closing words in Titus emphasize people on mission doing good rather than people sitting around arguing. Where is your energy currently going in your life of faith? Is it being devoted to what matters most, or has something pulled your attention away from the mission of Jesus?
8. The sermon closed with this thought: "We have inherited a church from people who came before us. We are stewarding this church for people who are not here yet." What does it mean to you personally to be a steward of the church rather than simply a consumer of it? How does that perspective change the way you show up?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

- Identify one area of your life where you have been spending energy on a disagreement that may fall into the "unprofitable and useless" category. Prayerfully consider whether it

is worth the energy you are giving it, and talk to God about how to redirect that energy toward what matters most.
- Using the three-ring framework from the sermon, take a belief or conviction you hold strongly and honestly evaluate which ring it belongs in. Ask yourself whether you have been treating it with the appropriate weight.
- Think of someone in your life with whom you have a standing disagreement about something related to faith or the church. Pray for that person this week and ask God to help you pursue unity without compromising what is truly essential.
- Consider one specific, practical way you can devote yourself to doing good this week, whether that is meeting an urgent need in someone's life, serving in the church, or investing in a relationship with someone who does not yet know Jesus.
- Reflect on the legacy question the sermon raised. Write down one way you want to contribute to building a church that the next generation can inherit. Share it with your group or with a trusted friend who can hold you accountable.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your time together in prayer, asking God for the following:

- Wisdom and discernment to know the difference between what deserves our full attention and what deserves to be left alone
- Humility to hold convictions without letting disagreements fracture relationships or divide the church
- A renewed devotion to the gospel and to doing what is good in the world
- A vision for the kind of church you want to hand to the generation that comes after you

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Memory Verse for the Week

Titus 3:8 -- Reflect on Paul's call to stress the trustworthy truths of the gospel so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Built to Last: Staying Focused on What Matters

Day 1: The Gospel Is the Foundation

Reading: Titus 3:4-7

Devotional: Everything the church does must be rooted in what God has done for us in Christ. We did not earn salvation through righteous living. God, in his kindness and love, sent Jesus to rescue us. His mercy, not our merit, is the ground on which we stand. When the church drifts from this foundation, it loses its reason for existing. Before you pursue good works, before you engage in ministry, before you take any next step in faith, return to this truth: you are saved, renewed by the Spirit, justified by grace, and given the hope of eternal life. That is where everything begins.

Reflection: In what ways have you allowed busyness or church activity to replace your personal dependence on the gospel?

Practical Application: Write down Titus 3:5 in your own words and place it somewhere visible this week as a daily reminder that your standing before God rests entirely on his mercy.

Day 2: Stress What Matters, Avoid What Doesn't

Reading: Titus 3:8-9; Philippians 4:8

Devotional: Paul instructs Titus to stress the truths of the gospel and to avoid foolish controversies that are unprofitable and useless. This is not a call to intellectual laziness. It is a call to discernment. Not every argument deserves your energy. Not every controversy deserves your engagement. The same time and passion spent defending a personal preference could instead be devoted to proclaiming the gospel, discipling a younger believer, or meeting a neighbor's urgent need. The church that lasts is not the church that wins every argument. It is the church that keeps the main thing the main thing, year after year, generation after generation.

Reflection: Are there controversies or debates in your church life that have consumed more energy than the gospel itself? What would it look like to redirect that energy?

Practical Application: Identify one ongoing disagreement or distraction in your spiritual life that is drawing your attention away from what truly matters. Pray specifically today, asking God for the wisdom to either address it humbly or release it entirely.

Day 3: Convictions Without Division

Reading: Romans 14:1-13; Jude 3

Devotional: Scripture calls us to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, but it also calls us to extend grace to fellow believers on matters where faithful Christians disagree. There is a meaningful difference between defending what God has clearly revealed and demanding that others conform to our personal interpretations. Essential truths written in the blood of Christ must be held firmly. Important matters deserve humble, honest study. Personal preferences deserve patience and Christian liberty. Division enters the church when we treat our opinions with the same weight as the gospel. Unity is not the absence of disagreement. It is the commitment to remain together in love while disagreements exist.

Reflection: Think about a conviction you hold strongly. Is it essential to salvation, important for growth, or a personal preference? How does your answer change the way you should hold and share that conviction?

Practical Application: Have a conversation this week with a believer who holds a different view on a secondary matter. Approach it with genuine curiosity rather than the intention to persuade, and practice listening well.

Day 4: Protecting the Unity of the Church

Reading: Ephesians 4:1-6; Titus 3:10-11

Devotional: Paul does not tell Titus to tolerate division indefinitely in the name of kindness. He says to warn a divisive person, and if they remain unrepentant, to remove their influence from the body. This is not harshness. It is stewardship. The unity of the church is a gift purchased by the blood of Christ, and it must be protected. Leaders who love the church will sometimes have the difficult responsibility of drawing boundaries around people who are fracturing the fellowship. The goal is always restoration. The motive is always love. But the health of the whole body cannot be sacrificed indefinitely for the stubbornness of one who refuses to repent.

Reflection: Have you ever witnessed division in a church? What was the cost to the body? What would it have taken to protect the unity before the damage was done?

Practical Application: Pray today for the leaders of your church by name. Ask God to give them wisdom, courage, and grace as they protect and shepherd the people entrusted to their care.

Day 5: Devoted to Doing Good

Reading: Titus 3:14; Galatians 6:9-10; Ephesians 2:10

Devotional: The letter of Titus ends not with a theological argument but with a call to action. Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives. The church that is built to last is not merely a church that knows the right things. It is a church whose faith becomes visible in the way its people live every day. You are stewarding something that will outlast you. The church you help build today is the church someone else will inherit tomorrow. Live and serve in a way that makes that inheritance worth receiving.

Reflection: What does it mean for your faith to be visible in your daily life? Where is God calling you to devote yourself to doing good in a way you have not yet fully embraced?

Practical Application: Identify one specific, tangible act of good you can do this week for someone inside or outside your church. Do not wait for a perfect moment. Do it as an act of worship, trusting that God works through ordinary faithfulness to build something that lasts.