

The sermon describes corrupt teachers as people whose outward profession of faith is contradicted by their actions -- in what ways might we be tempted to claim knowledge of God while denying Him through our daily behavior?

Paul quotes a Cretan philosopher to make a point about the people Titus was ministering to -- what does it say about the nature of truth that even a pagan writer's observation can be used to illuminate a spiritual reality?

The sermon draws a sharp contrast between exegesis, drawing meaning out of Scripture, and eisegesis, reading our own ideas into it -- how do you personally guard against allowing your own biases and presuppositions to shape what you want the Bible to say?

The legend of George Washington and the cherry tree was fabricated by a preacher to teach children about honesty -- what does this irony reveal about how easily well-intentioned people can blur the line between truth and deception, even in ministry?

The sermon suggests that people with a purely external, legalistic faith are often more susceptible to serious moral failure than those who cultivate an interior life -- why do you think an obsession with outward appearances can leave the heart so vulnerable?

Titus 1:15 teaches that to the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupted nothing is pure -- how does the condition of your heart shape the lens through which you interpret the world around you, including other people's motives?

The sermon emphasizes that good deeds are not the means of salvation but the overflow of sound doctrine and a pure heart -- how does understanding this distinction change the way you approach serving others and doing good in your community?

Paul warns in this passage that false teachers disrupt whole households for the sake of dishonest gain -- what safeguards do you think individuals and churches should have in place to identify and address corrupt teaching before it causes widespread harm?

The sermon references John Wesley's famous call to do all the good you can in all the ways you can for as long as you can -- what would it look like practically for you to live out that kind of intentional, lifelong commitment to good works?

The story of the woman who was baptized but returned unchanged in her disposition raises the question of genuine transformation -- what do you believe is the relationship between sound doctrine, a pure heart, and visible, lasting change in a person's character?

Small Group Guide

Built to Last | Titus 1:10-16

Before You Begin

Open your time together with prayer, asking God to give your group pure hearts and receptive minds as you dig into this passage. Have someone read Titus 1:10-16 aloud to the group.

Key Takeaways

1. Corrupt teachers and teaching are a real and ongoing threat. Paul warned Titus that false teachers were actively disrupting families and communities on Crete. Their defining characteristics included rebelliousness, deception, divisiveness, and a pursuit of personal gain. This is not a problem limited to the ancient world or to televised ministries -- it is a present danger that requires discernment.

2. Sound doctrine is powerful and worth fighting for. The word "doctrine" simply means teaching. What we believe shapes who we are and how we live. Paul urged Titus to rebuke false teachers sharply, not out of cruelty, but so that people might become sound in the faith. Doctrine is not dry medicine to be endured -- it is the foundation of a life built to last.

3. A pure heart changes how you see everything. Titus 1:15 offers a striking contrast: to the pure, all things are pure, but to the corrupt, nothing is pure. Those who neglect their interior life while focusing only on outward religious performance become distorted in their thinking and their conscience. Guarding the heart is not optional -- it is foundational.

4. Sound doctrine and a pure heart overflow into good deeds. The false teachers Paul described were "unfit for doing anything good." The inverse is also true: those who know God, hold to sound doctrine, and guard their hearts will naturally overflow into good works. Throughout Titus, good deeds are not presented as a way to earn salvation but as the visible fruit of genuine faith.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. The sermon opened with the image of truth and lies -- the idea that a lie dressed in truth's clothing can be very difficult to detect. Where in everyday life do you find it hardest to tell the difference between truth and falsehood?

Digging Into the Text

2. Paul describes false teachers as "disrupting whole households." Why do you think false teaching tends to do its most serious damage at the family level? Have you seen this play out in any context, personally or in the broader church?
3. Paul quotes a Cretan writer who said that Cretans are "always liars, evil brutes, and lazy gluttons," and then says, "this testimony is true." What does it tell us about Paul's approach to ministry that he was willing to name a cultural reality directly rather than soften it? How does that challenge or encourage you in your own conversations about truth?
4. Paul says these false teachers should be rebuked sharply "so that they will be sound in the faith." What does it say about God's character that even this harsh passage contains a note of hope and redemption for the very people being corrected?
5. Titus 1:15 says, "To the pure, all things are pure." The sermon connected this to the danger of a legalistic, externally focused faith. In your own experience, what is the difference between someone who obeys rules out of a pure heart versus someone who follows rules while their interior life is neglected?
6. The sermon pointed out that the false teachers "claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him." How would you describe the relationship between what a person believes and how a person lives? Where have you seen that connection break down, and what caused it?

Broader Reflection

7. The sermon described people in the congregation as servant-minded, dependable, and faithful -- those who say yes even when their schedule is already full. What motivates that kind of person? What is the difference between good deeds done out of obligation and good deeds that flow from a pure heart?
8. John Wesley's quote was referenced: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." Does that feel inspiring or overwhelming to you? What would it look like to take one small step toward that kind of life this week?

Practical Applications

This Week, Choose One:

- **Examine your intake.** Spend fifteen minutes this week evaluating the teachers, podcasts, books, or voices you regularly listen to. Ask honestly: Does this source align with sound

doctrine? Does it point me toward knowing God and doing good, or does it feed something else?

- **Guard your heart.** Identify one area of your interior life -- a habit, a thought pattern, a relationship -- that you have been neglecting. Bring it before God in prayer this week and ask him to purify it.
- **Do one good deed to meet one pressing need.** Think of someone in your neighborhood, workplace, or church family who has a specific need right now. Do something about it before your group meets again, not to earn anything, but as an overflow of what God is doing in you.
- **Memorize Titus 1:15.** Write it somewhere you will see it daily. Let it shape how you approach the people and situations you encounter this week.

Closing Prayer

Close your time by praying specifically for three things Paul cared about in this passage:

1. Discernment -- that your group would recognize and hold firmly to sound doctrine
2. Purity -- that God would guard and cleanse your hearts
3. Fruitfulness -- that your faith would overflow into good deeds that meet real needs

Series: Built to Last | Titus 1:10-16

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

Day 1: The Foundation of Sound Doctrine

Reading: Titus 1:9 -- The call to hold firmly to trustworthy teaching so that sound doctrine can encourage believers and refute those who oppose the truth.

Devotional: Doctrine is not dry medicine to be swallowed and forgotten. It is the structural framework upon which a life of faith is built. When Paul instructed Titus to appoint leaders who clung to trustworthy teaching, he understood that what a person believes shapes everything about how that person lives. False ideas produce false living. Sound teaching produces sound character. Consider what you are feeding your mind and heart this week. Are you anchored to the truth of Scripture, or are you drifting on the currents of popular opinion? A church and a life built to last must be built on the bedrock of God's unchanging Word.

Reflection Questions:

- Where do you most consistently encounter sound biblical teaching in your daily life?
- Is there an area where your beliefs and your actions are not yet aligned?

Practical Application: Choose one core Christian doctrine this week and spend fifteen minutes reading what Scripture says about it directly. Write down one way that doctrine should practically change how you live.

Day 2: Recognizing Truth in a World Full of Deception

Reading: Jude 3-4 -- The exhortation to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, because certain people have crept in who distort grace and deny Christ.

Devotional: The ancient legend of truth and lie going swimming together captures something painfully real. Lies rarely announce themselves. They arrive dressed in familiar clothing, speaking in confident tones, appealing to what we already want to hear. Jude warned that false teachers would not storm through the front door but would creep in quietly, unnoticed. This means spiritual discernment is not optional for the follower of Christ. It is a discipline to be cultivated through prayer, Scripture, and community. The world is full of voices competing for your trust. Not all of them deserve it. Lean into the truth that does not change.

Reflection Questions:

- What voices or influences in your life are you currently accepting without careful examination?
- How does your church community help you discern truth from deception?

Practical Application: Spend time this week reading a passage of Scripture slowly and asking, "What is the author's intended meaning here?" Practice letting the text speak rather than reading your own assumptions into it.

Day 3: The Beauty and Power of a Pure Heart

Reading: Proverbs 4:23 -- The instruction to guard the heart above all else, because everything a person does flows from it.

Devotional: Paul's words in Titus 1:15 land like an oasis in the middle of difficult terrain. To the pure, all things are pure. This is not a license for carelessness. It is a description of how a clean heart changes the way a person sees the entire world. When the interior life is healthy and surrendered to God, the eyes that look outward see clearly. But when the heart is corrupted, even good things begin to appear distorted and suspect. Jesus confronted the Pharisees on exactly this point. External religion without internal transformation produces exactly the kind of hypocrisy that drives people away from God. Ask God today for a clean heart.

Reflection Questions:

- Are there areas of your interior life -- thought patterns, hidden attitudes, private habits -- that you have not yet surrendered to God?
- How does a guarded and pure heart change the way you interact with the people around you?

Practical Application: Set aside ten minutes today for silent prayer. Ask God specifically to reveal any area of your heart that needs cleansing. Write down what surfaces and bring it honestly before Him.

Day 4: When Profession and Practice Must Match

Reading: Titus 1:16 -- The sobering description of those who claim to know God but whose actions deny Him, rendering them unfit for any good work.

Devotional: One of the most uncomfortable truths in the entire book of Titus is that it is entirely possible to speak the language of faith while living in complete contradiction to it. Paul did not write these words to condemn from a distance. He wrote them as a warning and an invitation. The gap between what we say we believe and how we actually live is not a private matter. It is

visible to everyone around us. The good news is that the same God who exposes the gap is the God who closes it. He redeems, purifies, and equips His people for exactly the good works that a hollow profession cannot produce. The life of faith must be whole.

Reflection Questions:

- Is there a specific area of your life where your actions are not yet reflecting what you say you believe?
- Who in your life holds you accountable to the consistency between your faith and your daily conduct?

Practical Application: Ask a trusted friend or fellow church member this week to speak honestly with you about whether your life reflects your stated faith. Receive what they share with humility and gratitude.

Day 5: The Overflow of Good Works

Reading: Titus 3:8 -- The declaration that those who trust God should be careful to devote themselves to good works, because these things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Devotional: Good works are not the engine of salvation. They are the exhaust of it -- the natural, visible overflow of a heart that has been genuinely changed by the grace of God. Paul returns to this theme in nearly every chapter of Titus because he understood that a faith which produces nothing is a faith that has not yet taken root. John Wesley's famous charge to do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, for as long as you ever can, was not a call to earn God's favor. It was a call to live out what God's favor has already produced in you. A church built to last is a church full of people whose pure hearts and sound doctrine spill out into beautiful, pressing, practical good works done in the name of Jesus.

Reflection Questions:

- What specific good work is God calling you toward right now in your family, your church, or your community?
- How does understanding good works as overflow rather than obligation change your motivation for serving others?

Practical Application: Identify one pressing need in your immediate community this week and take one concrete step to meet it. Do not wait for a program or a committee. Let the overflow begin with you, today.