



Speaking as Shepherds (Titus 2:15-3:15)

Titus #4 • October 19, 2025

Opening

Show me your phone, and I can tell you how effective you are for the Kingdom of God.



I'm not going to *actually* look at your phone, but I want you to pull yours out for a minute. Do you have it in hand?

- Open up the **call history**, and scan the calls you've had in the past several days.
 - Count the number of calls you've had with people in the church
 - Count the number of calls you've had with people you are actively trying to bring to Jesus (if you aren't actively trying, then the number is zero)
- Open up the **text log**, and scan the conversations you've shared.
 - Count the number of texts you've made with people in the church
 - Count the number of texts you've had with people you are actively trying to bring to Jesus (if you aren't actively trying, then the number is zero)
- (You could do the same with SnapChat or Messenger or any other platform – the concept is the same)

Now ask yourself, what percentage of those conversations or text threads were about Jesus? What percentage were speaking truth, encouraging godliness, motivating others to good works, praising God for blessings, asking friends for prayer, or pointing them back to the Savior they need?

Was it... 50%?... 0.5%? If I asked you to share your number, would you be embarrassed or excited?

How effective do your words say you are for the Kingdom of God?

You have probably heard people say that your wallet (or checkbook, or banking app) is a great mirror for your heart. Your purchases reflect your real

priorities. What you spend at what locations will speak volumes about what really matters to you most.

But your phone is a great mirror as well. In fact, it is more than a mirror! Not only does it reflect the **current** condition of your heart (just like your checkbook), but it also serves to predict your **future** effectiveness for the Gospel!

Your words not only show your heart...**your words can** also **steer the church!**

Recap



Today we are bringing our sermon series about the **Letter to Titus** to a close. We have looked at this “pastoral” letter, written by the apostle Paul to his coworker Titus, as a great example of “shepherding shepherds” – advice from a leader to help us know how to lead and care for other believers in Christ around us.

That matters to us, because WE ALL need to be more than *members* of a flock (church); we need to be *pastoral*. We need to take ownership of the part of the flock closest to us, to welcome in new sheep and care for them, and to actively shepherd those around us.

As the letter concludes, we’re going to move on from identity, purity, and motivation...and we will focus more on *conversation*.

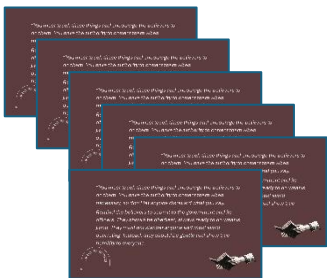
Because...as Paul points out to Titus, from one shepherd to another...

Your words can steer the church!

Let’s dive in and see how Paul gives guidance related to our speech.



Scripture Reading: Titus 2:15-3:15



“You must teach these things and encourage the believers to do them. You have the authority to correct them when necessary, so don’t let anyone disregard what you say.

Remind the believers to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. They must not slander anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.

Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other.

But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.

This is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to insist on these teachings so that all who trust in God will devote themselves to doing good. These teachings are good and beneficial for everyone.

Do not get involved in foolish discussions about spiritual pedigrees or in quarrels and fights about obedience to Jewish laws. These things are useless and a waste of time. If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with them. For people like that have turned away from the truth, and their own sins condemn them.

I am planning to send either Artemas or Tychicus to you. As soon as one of them arrives, do your best to meet me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to stay there for the winter. Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos with their trip. See that they are given everything they need.

Our people must learn to do good by meeting the urgent needs of others; then they will not be unproductive.

Everybody here sends greetings. Please give my greetings to the believers—all who love us.

May God's grace be with you all.” (Titus 2:15–3:15, NLT)

How does my speech impact the faith of others? This passage shows that the **content of my conversations** needs to be speech that lifts others up. Titus is told to “teach” and “encourage” and “correct” and “remind.” His words (as he speaks God’s words) are what will make a difference.

But how do **words** impact and **steer the church**?



Reminders of the Past We've Left (Titus 3:3)

Sometimes our words bring reminders of the past.

“Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other.” (Titus 3:3, NLT)

Here's a question: **Do your words bring up the past?**

The Wrong Way

That's a loaded question for some of you, because you have become experts at speaking about the past.



Comedian Jim Gaffigan has a stand-up bit about wives not understanding the “forgetting” part of “forgiving.” He jokes:

Probably the most impressive thing my wife can do is her ability to remember absolutely every horrible things I've ever done. She'll just bring it up! We'll be watching TV and she'll be like, “Remember that time you humiliated me when we went out to dinner?” (Now, I do. I must have blocked it out searching for self esteem)¹

We laugh and tease about our spouse having a long memory on past sins, and it *can* be funny...as long as we keep it in check.

But words that bring up the past should be handled with care. They are like a knife: they can be helpful for cooking and food prep, cutting an apple or slicing a steak...or they can be plunged into someone's back and cause terrible harm!

If you are bringing up the past for the sake of humiliation or injury, reliving the hurt causes you to become bitter and it can destroy the relationship.



“Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.” (Proverbs 17:9, NLT)

Your words can steer the church! And words that carry injury forward, that perpetually repeat an offense or a mistake or a harm? Those can handcuff a

¹ <https://www.tiktok.com/@jimgaffigan/video/7168560028662730026>

church to its worst moments! That's the wrong way to remind ourselves of the past.

The Right Way

As Paul talks to Titus about the past, he does so for far better reasons. The right way to speak of the past is to use it as a *contrast*.



A “before and after” photo is a helpful reference here.

- **Bitter hurt** is more like a “**mug shot**” – a reminder of criminal behavior that ties people to a past wrong.
- But **godly reminders** of the past are like a “**before and after**” photo. We acknowledge the past, but only as it relates to a better future!

Sometimes it is helpful to remember how far we have come. It's a step on the scale. It's a glance at how many chapters you have read. It's a glance at a recording of an old performance. The reminder tells you how far you've come.

“Once,” Paul says...



“Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other.” (Titus 3:3, NLT)

But that no longer describes us! **Our words can steer the church** to see how far we've come and be reminded of what we no longer **do** or **pursue** or **crave**.

The snapshot might sometimes be painful to look at, but it loses its power when we compare it to the present.



“But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)” (Ephesians 2:4–5, NLT)



Reminders of the Power for Change (Titus 3:4-7)

Those words from Ephesians echo what we hear in Titus.



“But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life

through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.”
(Titus 3:4–7, NLT)

This is the classic “lollipop in the port-a-potty” concept that we discussed last week (if you know, you know!). You and I contribute more than enough life-ruining **bad**...and never enough righteous **good**...to our salvation; nothing we do will fix our spiritual condition. Instead, we rely on Jesus to save us!

Do you speak about this truth enough? Do you talk about the **power for change** that has worked a miracle in your life?

If so, your words can steer the church!

What would it look like if all of us in the room adjusted our speech patterns? What if we all spoke about Jesus more frequently?

Without any talk of Him, the church is really not much more than a club of people who share some of the same values. It is a Cultural Club, a Feel-Good Fraternity, a Good-Behavior Gathering. It only works as long as we like some of the same stuff, and it’s easy to leave and find something better.

Think about it like any concert you’ve ever attended.



In the lead-up to the event, you walk past the vendors, maybe buy a t-shirt, and then make your way to your seat. Row 33, seats 8 and 9. You settle in and find yourself sitting by people who come from all walks of life. To your left is a soccer mom and her friends. The row ahead of you has an overly affectionate couple, and you try not to gag. The person on your right is already two drinks in, and the people behind have no idea how loud they are talking, but they are kinda funny!

Before the bands play, your connection with the people around you is tenuous, at best. But when the main act hits the stage, you are high fiving and cheering and singing along with them at full volume! They are no longer strangers – they are your people!

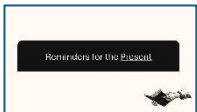
Church is like that. On our own, we may not be the best of friends. But when we **talk about Jesus**, the dynamic changes! We agree that we’re here for Him. Our speech points us to our shared power for change! Our words focus our attention on our common Savior!

This needs to be in our language!



“Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.” (Colossians 3:16, NLT)

When you choose to talk about the work of Jesus, your words can steer the church!



Reminders for the Present (Titus 3:1-2, 8-11)

But, as the letter to Titus shows us, it matters *how* we talk about Jesus.

Not Arguments



“Do not get involved in foolish discussions about spiritual pedigrees or in quarrels and fights about obedience to Jewish laws. These things are useless and a waste of time. If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with them. For people like that have turned away from the truth, and their own sins condemn them.” (Titus 3:9–11, NLT)

Faith conversations are not always helpful. Here, Paul is tying this idea back to what he said in chapter 1, where some Jewish ideas were clashing with some Jesus ideas.

- For sure, the old law and those who followed it had value. They were implemented by God and had His blessing and approval. Even Jesus said about the Old Testament Law:

“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved.” (Matthew 5:17–18, NLT)

- And Jesus DID fulfill the law! Now, though, we have a different focus. Rather than legalism, we can move to love:

*“For the whole law can be summed up in this one command:
“Love your neighbor as yourself.”” (Galatians 5:14, NLT)*



Anyone who wastes time **arguing** about the legal nuances is missing the point.

Note: **Debating** the exact percentage we should be giving, or which groups do or don't deserve our love, or trying to figure out which of us have the best heritage, or deciding when commands to obey do or don't apply...such conversations can be **instructive** and **helpful** if done in a **spirit of learning** and **understanding** and **clarification**.

But when it moves to **division**, that's not helpful. In fact, Titus was instructed to warn such divisive people a couple of times....then move on. One commentator points out:

“Further efforts would not be a good stewardship of his time and energies and would give the offender an undeserved sense of importance.”²

Your words can steer the church! So, if you are using your words to **nitpick** and **create factions** and elevate **head knowledge above heart knowledge**...then your words are taking the church in the wrong direction!

Action!

But if your words **spur people to godly life and action**? That's awesome!



Listen to the things Titus was supposed to **speak** (aka “remind”):

“Remind the believers to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. They must not slander anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone....This is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to insist on these teachings so that all who trust in God will devote themselves to doing good. These teachings are good and beneficial for everyone.” (Titus 3:1–2, 8 NLT)

His words follow along with instructions from the previous chapter – for old, young, men, women. They focus on applying faith to daily life.

² Hiebert, D. E. (1981). [Titus](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon* (Vol. 11, p. 448). Zondervan Publishing House.

We all need that voice beside us calling us out when we stray, or spurring us on when we are slow. We need encouragement to be faithful, support to know we are on the right path. We need a “good job!” A “Keep it up!”

Who does it for you?

Putting it in the language of K-LOVE, **who “speaks life”** (Toby Mac)? **Who “speaks the name of Jesus over you”** (Katy Nichole)?



“In every encounter we either give life or we drain it; there is no neutral exchange.” – Brennan Manning (Christian author)



If and when those words about Jesus are spoken, they steer the church to be better and more vibrant. They help us to develop a stronger spiritual life. They help us to *be* the church, not just *talk about* the church.

Closing

Church, your words are going to shepherd the rest of the church to be who it should be, to go where it should go, to do what it should do.



Your words can steer the church!

So, show me your **phone** next week. Show me the name of a person you talked to who needs Jesus. Tell me about the conversation you had with them and how you shared truth. Recount the prayer you offered. Summarize the encouragement you provided.

Show me a **text thread** that spoke God’s word to a fellow believer, that used the language of Scripture to offer hope and a reminder of God’s promises.

Or better yet, let me catch words as I’m **walking past**. Let me hear you **praying** for people in the Fellowship Hall. Let me hear you **quoting** the Bible in class. Let me hear you be the voice of **compassion** at a football game or the grocery store, **meeting “urgent needs”** in our community by bringing those needs to Jesus.

You have the lips. You have the heart. So...

Let me hear you use your words to steer the church to glorify God and accomplish His mission!



Prayer

Invitation

That wraps up our look at the letter to Titus...but it's just the start of you being pastoral. I'm trying to shepherd you to be better shepherds of one another here! So I invite you to take on that mantle. Be a shepherd to others...through your identity, through your purity, through your example, and through your words.

Consider how you'll do it while we stand and continue our worship time together.

Sermon Notes

Your words can steer the church!

Reminders of the Past We've Left (Titus 3:3)

The Wrong Way (Proverbs 17:9)

The Right Way (Titus 3:3; Ephesians 2:4-5)

Reminders of the Power for Change (Titus 3:4-7)

(Colossians 3:16)

Reminders for the Present (Titus 3:1-2, 8-11)

Not Arguments (Titus 3:9-11; Matthew 5:17-18;
Galatians 5:14)

Action! (Titus 3:1-2, 8)

Sermon Discussion Questions

- How effective would you say your words are for the Kingdom of God? How many of your conversations are Jesus-focused...for discipleship, or for evangelism?
- When your words bring up past sins, do they cause bitter regret or do they bring joyful celebration of change? How can you adjust your words to bring more joy and less bitterness?
- Why is it important to keep reminding ourselves and others about Jesus' power to change us (ex: Titus 3:4-7)?
- Read Colossians 3:16. What are some ways you could speak this week that would share the richness of Christ?
- Read Titus 3:9-11. Are you ever tempted to argue about your faith or beliefs? Why is it foolish to do so? Does it promote unity in the church?
- How can you spur your friends, family, and church to godly life and action this week? Who will you intentionally encourage? List three names.