



Shepherding Shepherds

Titus #1 • September 28, 2025

Series Introduction



"If you don't have a plan to care for every sheep, you will ultimately fail." – Ed Stetzer

Our leaders at TCC have been talking, discussing, and planning how to improve the way we care for every sheep in the flock ("sheep," aka "you"). Why? Because, like the quote from Christian writer, professor, and teaching pastor Ed Stetzer says, if we aren't caring for our sheep, we will miss the mark...and we don't want to miss the mark with something as important as Jesus' church!

Caring for every sheep means a lot of things.

- **Feeding you** – providing adequate spiritual nutrition (not always your favorite meals, but teaching that is biblical and truthful)
- **Protecting you** – warning you about dangers and trying to keep you away from those things that would harm your soul
- **Leading you** – steering you into situations where you can grow and thrive as a follower of Jesus
- **Praying for you** – lifting up your needs, both physical and spiritual, to God
- **Loving you** – caring for you and trying to help you find connection within the family of Christ

As the senior minister, I feel the weight of making sure these things happen...but it can't be *me* alone doing those things. The math simply doesn't work!



How many personal connections can I have where we talk meaningfully?

*Right now, I can realistically tell you the **names** of 90% of the people in this room...maybe more (even then, I struggle! Ex: Charlotte & Georgia Hatfield on Wednesday). I can tell you a **handful of details** about 70%. I've **hung out at social gatherings** with a smaller number of you and*

would call you a friend. I would name a select few individuals **close friends** and trust you with the details of my life.

I can **care** for all of you, but **not at the same level**. For some of you I'm just a **call** on the drive home from work, catching up on life and laughing about what happened that day. For others, I'm the **first call** when something big happens. For many, I'm an **emergency call**, like dialing the doctor when you're sick.

I don't need us ALL to be close...but as the church grows bigger...I need you to have connections to solid Christian people who ARE close. I need to make sure you have connections and have a place to go where your needs are cared for.

"If you don't have a plan to care for every sheep, you will ultimately fail."

*I can't shepherd **everyone**; I need to shepherd **shepherds** who can!*



Church, you are sheep. **I also need you to be shepherds**. I need you to take ownership of the part of the flock closest to you, and to welcome in new sheep and care for them. I need you to be *pastoral*.

After wrapping up our series on Artificial Intelligence last week, I decided to take us in a more pastoral direction. I chose to take us to a part of Scripture that fits – to a part of the New Testament sometimes called the *pastoral letters* (“*epistles*,” if you’re fancy). These are letters written by the apostle Paul to his coworkers, Timothy and Titus. Paul wrote to these coworkers to give them some directions on how to care for others.

In other words, he was trying to *shepherd* some *shepherds*.

My focus for the next several weeks will be one of those three pastoral letters: the letter to Titus. I want to dig deeper, not just skim over some of the surface points. This series will be more like a slow-motion instant replay, allowing us to look with greater detail and clarity than we could going at normal speeds. I want us to be shaped by God’s Word, learning from a man who was **great at planting churches** and **raising up leaders who could strengthen** the church after he was gone.

If you have your Bible, turn to the book of Titus and let’s start making our plan to care for every sheep in this church.



Titus 1:1-4

“This letter is from Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. I have been sent to proclaim faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives. This truth gives them confidence that they have eternal life, which God—who does not lie—promised them before the world began. And now at just the right time he has revealed this message, which we announce to everyone. It is by the command of God our Savior that I have been entrusted with this work for him. I am writing to Titus, my true son in the faith that we share. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior give you grace and peace.” (Titus 1:1–4, NLT)

Prayer

Would you pray with me?...



The Letter to Titus (1:1-4)

The letter to Titus (*did you find it? Short one right after 2 Timothy*) starts with an introduction. It’s a standard 1st century greeting format for letters. Just like you might start a letter, “Dear Titus,” *Paul* starts off by saying who the letter is **from**, who it’s **to**, and then he articulates a **standard greeting**: “From Paul, to Titus, grace and peace.”

Of course, if you ever read anything written by Paul in the New Testament, you know he is the king of the run-on sentences! He says a lot, and he throws in a lot of descriptors. It feels a little unnecessary, like the Catholic church and their titles for the Pope, the head of the Roman Catholic Church. If the Pope wrote a letter, he might say: “*From the Pope, Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province, Sovereign of the State of the Vatican City, Servant of the Servants of God.*”

It’s a lot, right? And we would just need to power through all of those titles before getting to the good stuff.

But slow down!





In the past, I used to skim through this until we got to the body of the letter. But as Paul writes to Titus, he doesn't throw in extra details and descriptors in the introduction just for fun. Remember, Titus doesn't need an intro – he *knows* Paul! He's worked side by side with him for years. The details aren't included to help Titus know who he's talking to; instead, they are written to help Titus understand the focus of this letter.

So, this week as I studied, I took extra time with this section. I dug in. I evaluated and pondered what Paul wrote. And after wrestling with it, it seems that Paul's introduction to Titus isn't just about greetings; it is Paul preparing Titus for a goal: to ***inject eternity into your present community!***



I'll tell you more about how I got that in a minute.

But right now, I want you to think about that sentence. **Inject eternity into your present community.**

If I were to attach a GoPro camera to you to record your day (“a day in the life of _____”), what would it capture? What kind of words and actions would be included? If we watched, what evidence of your faith would be present? What reminders of eternal truth would we hear? What encounters would be holy? How would the people on 24/7 know that you are a Christ-follower? How would the people on your block see you following Jesus?

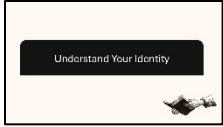
In chapter two, Paul is going to say something that I hope would describe your day. It furthers this idea of **injecting eternity into your present.**



*“For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to **turn from godless living and sinful pleasures**. We should live in this evil world with **wisdom, righteousness, and devotion** to God, while we look forward with **hope** to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. He gave his life to **free us** from every kind of sin, to **cleanse us**, and to make us **his very own people**, totally **committed to doing good deeds**.” (Titus 2:11–14, NLT)*

That's what I would want to see from you.

But it doesn't happen until you understand who you are – your **identity**.



Understand Your Identity

Paul knows who he is.

“This letter is from Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ...”
(Titus 1:1, NLT)

But what about you? Who are you? What words would you claim for yourself?
If I asked you for a description, what would you share?

“I am Steve, husband to Deb, father to Jacob and Chaynee.”

“I am Steve, senior minister at TCC, graduate of Manhattan Christian College.”

“I am Steve, citizen of the United States, and resident of Kansas.”

“I am Steve, a fan of BBQ, Dr Pepper, hockey, and nerd games.”

“I am Steve, introvert, perfectionist, and unsuccessful delegator.”

Each statement puts forward a true part of my identity. But Paul goes a different direction. He says, *“I am a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.”*

His identity is rooted in nothing other than his relationship with God.

- **“Slave”** (or “servant”), meaning he views God’s will as being superior to his own. He is ready to obey and follow wherever God sends him.
- **“Apostle”** (or “sent one”), meaning he views himself as being on mission. He was chosen by God to share the gospel with the Gentile world (see Acts 9:15-16)

Let me ask you: Do you view your identity in Christ as the most important descriptor of who you are? If the answer is “yes,” you’re going to have an easy time **injecting eternity into your present community!** If not, you’re going to have little reason to identify yourself as an ambassador for Christ.



So, work to understand that identity. Consider what words – in Christ – best describe you.

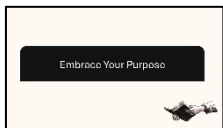
- **Forgiven** – pointing to a past that needed a Savior
- **Blessed** – pointing to an awareness of God’s generosity
- **Chosen** – pointing to God’s plans for you
- **Adopted** – pointing to the relationship you now have with the Father

- **Servant** – pointing to your work on His behalf
- **Made Holy** – pointing to the transformation He is enacting
- ...or another?

Unless you start thinking about those words as your primary **identity**, you'll always struggle to bring Jesus up in your community. If your description focuses attention on your accomplishments, your wealth, your looks, your personality, your smarts, or anything other than Jesus, you won't inject eternity into the discussion.

Understanding your identity matters!

But Paul talks about more than just identity. The identity is there for a **purpose**!



Embrace Your Purpose

One of the most important words in this introduction is a little, throw-away word: “*kata*.” It’s a Greek preposition that means “*according to*” or “*for*.” It is an indicator of *purpose*.

Paul has his identity...but why? What is it for?



*“This letter is from Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. I have been sent **to proclaim faith** to those God has chosen and **to teach them** to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives.”*
(Titus 1:1, NLT)

Paul is a slave and apostle “*kata*” (for) the sake of others. He is there for the **purpose** of **bolstering** the **faith** of the elect¹ and **teaching** them life-changing **truth**.

It is for others! Not himself.

Please do not miss this! We as a culture have become comfortable with the idea of a “personal” faith – one that is between me and God. We think our religious beliefs shouldn’t spill over to others.

That’s a lie from Satan.

God wants our identity to create **purpose**! We have our identity in Christ **SO THAT** we can impact others.

¹ Don’t get hung up on this. Just use the word “chosen” and move on... today. 😊



If I raised millions of dollars to build a fancy new hospital in town, full of the latest amenities and technologies, brimming with the latest diagnostic equipment...but never opened the doors to patients...what good would it do?

If I had hundreds of acres of corn to harvest (like what is happening now for families in church like the Lees, the Normans, and the Holtons), and I got it out of the field and into the barns...but never sold it...would that help?

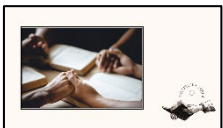
No! We need distribute the corn so it can do its good work of feeding cows, making popcorn, and creating nachos! We need to admit patients so they can receive treatment and get better.

The “what” without the “why” is useless.

Identity is the “what.” Purpose is the “why.”

Your identity in Christ needs purpose; it can’t be for yourself. If you sit here in service, you will learn. I pour Scriptures into you...I pray every week for God to use what I preach to change you. But where does it go from there?

If it gets implemented, that’s awesome! Then you will have an easy time **injecting eternity into your present community**. But if not? Your faith is falling short.



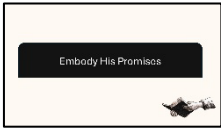
I want you to consider what your identity is “*kata*” (for). Is your purpose in Christ:

- **Encouragement** – helping the church stay strong
- **Love** – modeling the love of Jesus
- **Unity** – bridging barriers and crossing unnecessary divides
- **Kindness** – showing mercy and grace to friends and enemies alike
- **Sharing the gospel** – telling others about Jesus
- **Creating stronger disciples** – teaching them to grow in godliness and truth
- **Investing in the next generation** – helping younger Christians mature

Unless you start thinking about the **purpose** of your identity, you’ll always struggle to bring Jesus into your community. If your purpose is self-centered, focused on pleasure or success or power or comfort, you are missing out.

Embracing your purpose for the glory of Christ is the only thing that matters!

But Paul talks about more than just identity and purpose. Those two are given to embody God's **promises in the present**.



Embody His Promises

I'm glad this passage is more about **God's promises** than my own. You and I sometimes are terrible at promises. Whether it is a promise to get ice cream after school, to remember to change the oil today, or even promising "I do" at the altar, we don't always carry out what we say we will.

Yet God is **without deception**. What He says, He will do.

"... For I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will do what I say."
(Ezekiel 36:36, NLT)

We have an identity in Christ, and we have a purpose...and now God will use those to embody his promises **now**.



"This truth gives them confidence that they have eternal life, which God—who does not lie—promised them before the world began. And now at just the right time he has revealed this message, which we announce to everyone. It is by the command of God our Savior that I have been entrusted with this work for him." (Titus 1:2–3, NLT)

Verses 2-3 describe the promise: God has a plan for eternal life! It has been His plan since **before time began**. Passages like Ephesians 1:11-15 describe a God who knows the ones He will save and who knows the future He will prepare. It's not a hidden or complicated promise!

*"Peter replied, 'Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This **promise** is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.'"* (Acts 2:38–39, NLT)

That has been what God "*promised before the world began*."

But it isn't just a far-off promise. It is a promise that is revealed **here...and now**.

"At just the right time God has revealed this message." For Paul, it was revealed in his preaching. He was given the message, and he proclaimed it. **Then...and there**.



But what God has promised must be revealed. **Here...and now.**

Elsewhere, Paul elaborates on this sharing of God's promises.



“Now all glory to God, who is able to make you strong, just as my Good News says. This message about Jesus Christ has revealed his plan for you Gentiles, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. But now as the prophets foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this message is made known to all Gentiles everywhere, so that they too might believe and obey him.” (Romans 16:25–26, NLT)

For it to be made known everywhere, it must be made known in NE Kansas. You and I must make that message known, through our identity and our purpose!

What else is worth doing? What else will last? Your high school trophies? Your 401(k)? Your beautiful lawn, or your “business legacy?” (You know the answer!)



“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ. Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person’s work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.” (1 Corinthians 3:11–15, NLT)

Don’t you want to build well?! Don’t you want to live with an eternal purpose and help others discover God’s unchanging promises?

I hope so. Because while Paul is the one doing it in this introduction, he doesn’t want to be the only one.

Including Others

Paul said to Titus, *“This is who I am, this is why I’m doing it, this is the work God entrusted to me because it matters.”* But He didn’t stop there.



He said, *“Titus, you’re doing this, too.”*

“I am writing to Titus, my true son in the faith that we share. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior give you grace and peace.” (Titus 1:4, NLT)

Paul is shepherding sheep in his ministry. But he's also shepherding a **shepherd** who can do this as well.

Titus is his "true son" in the faith. He follows Paul's pattern, he does what he has been shown.

I need YOU to be (and to WANT to be) true sons and daughters like Titus...here...and now...that do the same thing. I need you to follow that same pattern of knowing your identity, embracing your purpose, and embodying the eternal promises of God in the present. In other words:

Inject eternity into your present community!

Conclusion

I can't emphasize this enough. This falls on you! In this church, I need YOU to show the love and grace of God. I need YOU to build disciples. I need YOU to bring God's promises to those who need them in the present. I need you to be shepherds, caring for the sheep around you.

Tonganoxie and Basehor and the surrounding areas aren't going to look to Paul for answers. They will look to **you**.

Members of Tonganoxie Christian Church won't be discipled by Paul and Titus – they'll be discipled by **you**.

"If our church doesn't have a plan to care for every sheep, we will ultimately fail."

Church, YOU ARE the plan. It is up to YOU to **inject eternity into your present community**.

So, as you reflect on this passage from the New Testament letter of Titus, I want you to identify your circle of influence. Look to see where you have relationships...then...

- **Understand your identity.** Examine who you claim to be among those people. Count your identity in Christ the most important thing about you.
- **Embrace your purpose.** Rethink those relationships with a gospel mindset. Understand why God has put you here, knowing that it's for *their* benefit, not yours.

Inject eternity into your
present community!



• Understand your identity
• Embrace your purpose
• Embody God's promises



- **Embody God's promises.** Bring God's eternal promises into the present through your conversations and your convictions and your concern, helping the lost to find Jesus and helping the found to follow Jesus.



It's up to us to shepherd our present community this way! **Help me do it!**

Prayer

Invitation

If you would like prayer as you try to live out God's eternal purposes in Tonganoxie's local church, I want to invite you to come forward and receive it as we stand and sing our invitation song!

Sermon Notes

The Letter to Titus (1:1-4)

Inject eternity into your present community!

(Titus 2:11-14)

Understand Your Identity (1:1)

Embrace Your Purpose (1:1)

Embody His Promises (1:2-4)

(Ezekiel 36:36; Acts 2:38-39; Romans 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

Sermon Discussion Questions

- Make time to read Titus 1-4. It should take less than 10 minutes. What stood out to you?
- How does Paul describe himself in Titus 1:1? What would change in your daily life if your primary identity was “servant of God” before anything else?
- How is Paul’s identity connected to his purpose (1:1)?
- Paul’s identity was *for* a purpose. How does your identity in Christ give you a mission?
- Why do we need people in the present (i.e. relevant) to show the gospel? Does the message change, or just the method of sharing the message?
- Paul says God’s promises were revealed “at just the right time.” How has God revealed His promises in your life at the right time?
- How are you living as a “true child” of the person who led you to Christ? How could you improve?
- Why is it important for every believer, not just pastors, to take ownership of shepherding others? Who might you shepherd in our church? What would that look like this week?