

The Essence of a Healthy Church: Part 2

Titus 2:1-10

Intro: Don't Waste Your Young Life

When you are on your death bed, what kind of life do you want to look back on? That's a question many young people fail to ask. It ought to wake you up to the beauty and brevity of life. You got one shot; don't waste it, especially don't waste your younger years.

That's what Paul urges in vv4-6. He left his ministry partner Titus on the island of Crete to make churches healthy there. And one of his tasks is to tell various church members what it looks like to live a life that shows forth the beauty of the gospel... because *a healthy church is full of healthy members whose lives adorn the gospel*. That's the main point of this passage. **[v1, v10]**

To ADORN the gospel does NOT mean we make what is ugly look pretty. It is NOT like *Charlie Brown's Christmas tree*. **[EXPLAIN]**
It's more like *prongs on a diamond ring*.
[EXPLAIN]

If Jesus bought your life with his own life, then you show forth the beauty of that gospel by living your life as one bought by Christ! That's why Titus must address the *older men and women* they Paul tells him in **[vv2-3]**.

And now, our attention is turned to *younger women and men* who also, in that season of life, must adorn the gospel. We begin with...

Category #3: Younger Women [v3b-5]

Clearly, the focus of younger women is on their role in the home. So why doesn't he address ladies not yet married? The simple answer is in that culture, most women were married young; marriage was arranged.

So Paul is addressing the common experience of young women in that day or what they would likely experience soon enough. Of course, there were women who didn't marry (1 Cor. 7). Paul cuts straight to the chase—what was common in that day. (There's still in these verses application to those not married.) So consider six exhortations to younger women....

1) Learn to love your family. [v4] I'm wording it as "LEARN to love your family" because you need to be trained in this! It doesn't always come naturally. That should encourage you! It's not easy. It requires help and training! So listen to the older women in your life.

LEARN to love your husband/children. Each phrase is a combination of two words into one: *husband/love* and *children/love*. Be a *husband-lover* and a *children-lover*.

The word used for *love* carries the idea of affection—the inner heart inclination toward your family. You must exhibit not mere behavioral dutiful outward deeds. You must fight for affection for your family!

"But what if I don't have it at times??" This is where moms/wives can feel so defeated.

"Sometimes I don't even like my husband/kids!" That's why you need training. It's ok to need to CULTIVATE affection for your family. How do you do that?

Towards your husband, reflect on evidences of grace you see in him. Guard your heart from putting most of your attention on how he falls short. Focus on good. And thank God for that.

It often does wonders to man to know how much his wife loves him! You cannot nag him into godliness. So fight for affection that affects him. Be a husband-lover.

What about your kids? How do you cultivate affection for them, especially when the sin they inherited from Adam seems so overt? Here's one way: dwell upon their unique creational qualities more than their sinful distortion of those good qualities.

Don't ignore their sin. Discipline is good. Gentle parenting is not. *You know that movement? Never correcting your child, only redirecting them to something else. That is not good.* But you know what else isn't good? Constant angry toward your kids, especially about things that aren't sinful.

When one of our sons was little, he had the biggest personality. He was the life of the party. But he was so stinking loud! We learned to rejoice in the lively personality God gave him, while helping him be aware that he needs to turn the volume down several decibels.

Ladies, learn to love your family.

2) Gain power over your passions. [v5a, self-controlled] Self-control might apply to ladies a little differently than it does men, but the idea is the same. It's talking about the passions of a person. Control them!

Now why might young women need to hear this? Ordinarily (not always, but often) women are more emotional than men. And that's a good thing! Their ability to connect with God and others more deeply than men often can. But the Fall has affected the emotions. Your own sin AND your bodies affected by sin can distort good emotions.

This why you need older women in your life who've been through this to help you think on what is true and what's not. Talk to them!

3) Pursue purity. [v5c, pure]

This pursuit pertains to home life, so it's talking about sexual faithfulness to your husband. Pursue that, ladies. Don't go elsewhere. Give your heart to your husband.

Now, why might a young woman with young children be tempted towards such impurity? Young moms often feel overwhelmed by the stressors/burdens of caring for little ones, and they can be tempted to look for an escape. And the escape doesn't have to be real! It can be a fantasy—dwelling upon what life might be like with THAT man who might actually care for me and notice me and pay attention to me.

Why do many women escape to social media or romance movies? Maybe because they feel unseen, unappreciated, unloved. Worse, they feel unlovable. Their body has changed with all these kids. And it becomes a perfect storm when a kind man shows a little attention.

Ladies, don't take that bait! Resist it! The grass is NEVER greener on the sinful side of the fence. It's always greener on the side of

obedience, even if it's harder. Stay pure. Don't fantasize. Pursue purity.

And brothers, I gotta press on us here. We must pursue our wives and cherish them in this season. Your standard of beauty is what your wife currently looks like! Tell her that.

4) *Hone your heart toward your home.* [v5d, *working at home*] Not it's getting real! This phrase is one word: *home-worker*. Be a home-worker. Does that mean a wife/mother cannot work outside of the home? Of course not. The Proverbs 31 wife works outside the home. But her heart is honed-in on her family.

Sometimes our discussions about these get heated because we focus on the do's/don'ts of a wife's role and we miss the heart of it. The key question is: Is your heart honed toward your home?

It is so sad to me that live in a day where the role of a wife/mother is viewed as less-than. I came across a blog post by a husband a while back entitled, *Fathers: You Can't Afford a Stay*

at Home Mom. Listen to what he said, “I’ve had to evaluate the economic value of a stay-at-home mom. And after evaluation, I’ve been thinking that I can’t afford for my wife to be a stay-at-home mom.”

And we think he’s gonna say: “Therefore, she needs to get a full-time job for us to make ends meet.” But that’s not where he goes. He says, “I mean that I quite literally cannot afford my wife to be staying at home...She changes [my son’s] diapers, feeds him, plays with him, puts him down for his nap and comforts him when he’s upset. And that’s just the bare minimum. A child can typically get that attention at a day-care. But on top of that, he is her only focus. There are no other children to tend to. He gets all of her. All of her love, all of her time, all of her energy. She is always there, always near, always listening.”

And he essentially concludes, “If I had to pay her for the services she is due, I couldn’t afford her.” You see? He’s show how valuable his wife is! And the focus of his article is just on the quantitative value of her work. He

doesn't mention the countless organic/unplanned opportunities of impact she has on her child.

Think about it: How many young adults do you hear say things like, "Well, my momma always told me..." OR "It's like my mom always said..." Why? Because God designed mothers to have an impact on their kids like no one else in the world can.

I can't tell you how often I hear people say, "You have such great kids!" And my response is always the same, "They're a reflection of the mom." Of course, I'm involved as a dad. I lead. But I'm gone a lot! So were it not for my wife's diligence in intentionally caring for our kids, they would NOT be who they are.

Did you know, statistically speaking, the main way most people become Christians is because of their moms? Do not minimize the importance of having a heart for your home.

Now, some of you might be thinking, "This is so 1950's! Are you just trying to get us back to

the good ol' days?" No, I'm trying to get us back to the Bible. It doesn't mean, as one person says, that Paul is "locking women up in the kitchen and cleaning supply closet." (Yarbrough, 516). It simply means she thinks carefully about the needs of her family.

It's a heart issue. It's not about how much time you work outside the home vs. in the home. It's about your heart for your home. A full-time stay-at-home mom could neglect her family more than a full-time working outside the home mom. (And some ladies have no other option.) The question is: where's your heart? Is it honed toward your home?

5) Cultivate kindness. [v5e, kind] It could be translated *benevolent*. You have a disposition of gentle care for your family. You're inclined toward their good. Ladies, are you kind?

It is easy in this season to be ruled by anger. You're overwhelmed by the demands, your governed by anxiety, you want everything to be in control and it's not, so you have bursts of anger. Guard your heart from that. Cultivate

kindness by...being ok with a messy house...
being patient with childishness... trusting the
Lord that he'll take care of your kids. Be kind.

6) *Develop a disposition of submission.*

[v5f] Notice that qualification. It does not say, “be submissive to every man.” It says, “be submissive to your OWN husband.” That possessive adjective “own” is emphasized in the original. AND the word “submissive” carries the idea of “submitting yourself.” You willingly place yourself under the leadership of your husband.

Nowhere does the Bible teach husbands make their wives submit. It's always the responsibility of the wife to do so willingly. And nowhere is it said that a wife submits herself to abuse or sin or harm or violating her conscience. Her submission to God always trumps her submission to her husband.

With those qualifications, ladies, how can you cultivate a disposition of submission? Gen. 3:16 says that the impulse of many women because of sin is to dominate your husband.

Why? One reason is this: anxiety. You are so filled with fear of things turning out wrong or him making a bad decision...that you control him and don't give him opportunity to lead. Give him opportunity. Encourage his leadership, don't usurp it.

The happiest women in this church are those whose husbands not only bear the burden of leadership, but they let him bear that burden. So let him. "I don't know how!" Talk to the older women about it.

1) Learn to love your family, 2) Gain power over your passions, 3) Pursue purity, 4) Hone your heart toward your home, 5) Cultivate kindness, and 6) Develop a disposition of submission. Now, that's a lot!...especially when we compare it to...

Category #4: Younger Men [v6]

That's it! One exhortation! Why? It's not because younger men are more on the ball than younger women. The opposite is likely true! I think the point is: If young men focus on this one thing, it'll affect all of life.

Your...purity, schooling, job, friendships, family life, health, mood, church involvement, relationship with the Lord. This simple focus: Be self-controlled! Take that with you to school, your job, when you're chilling with your friends, or spending time with your girlfriend. Be self-controlled! One exhortation.

But it's not exactly an exhortation. It sounds like one in **[v6, urge]**. But that word has an encouraging tone to it, not admonishing tone. Young men need encouragement. Strong encouragement, but encouragement, still.

So here's how I'll word this encouragement: *Young men, lay hold of your life.* Be self-controlled. Get a handle on your life. Take charge of your life. The fact that this is the only charge given to young men suggests it should be applied to all of life. Proverbs 25:28 says, "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls." Your vulnerable to all sorts of attack.

JC Ryle, an English pastor, wrote an entire book in 1888 called *Thoughts for Young Men*.

It's amazing how relevant it is today. The first chapter gives the reasons why he wrote the book. Lemme summarize them.

First, he says there are very few young men who seem to take the Lord seriously. (pg.3) He says, "I tremble to observe how few young men are led by the Spirit...how few are on that narrow way which leads to life...how few are setting their affections on things above... how few are taking up the cross to follow Christ."

Second, he says that death will come upon young men, but most don't even think about it. (pg. 6) They live as if they're not gonna die. "Hell is paved with such fancies," he says. And so exhorts young men to "Leave nothing unsettled that is eternal. Run no risk when your soul is at stake...There is but a step between...you and death." (pg8)

Third reason: What young men will be later in life usually depends on what they are now. (pg9) You can't give yourself to lusts/pleasures early on in life, and then somehow serve God with ease when you're older. (pg9) JC Ryle says, "I

grant you true repentance is never too late,
but I warn..., late repentance is seldom true.”

(pg10) Don't wait!

Lastly, young men to be encouraged to walk with Christ now because of the sorrow it will save them from later. (pg14) Speaking of older men who wasted their younger years, Ryle says, “The foolish acts he did...the time he wasted...the mistakes he made...the bad company he kept...the harm he did himself, ...the chances of happiness he threw away...the openings of usefulness he neglected;—all these are things that often embitter the conscience of an old man...”

Of course, the Lord can redeem! He never wastes anything—even when we waste a lot. BUT that doesn't keep us from feeling regret of wasting so much. *You may have heard the story of the elderly man for whom a church prayed for many years who finally gave his life to Christ at an evangelistic meeting. And yet, even though there was great joy in his salvation, he kept repeating: “I've wasted it! I've wasted it!” Referring to his life!*

Brothers, get control of your life. Put porn to death. Kill your laziness. Murder your unreliableness. Clothe yourself in dependability. Walk in purity. Be faithful in serving. Be a man!

Here's your encouragement, men: You *can* do this! Paul wouldn't tell Titus to encourage the young men to do this if he didn't think they could. You have everything you need, if you're a Christian: The Spirit of God indwelling you, the church walking alongside you, the Bible guiding you, prayer holding you, the promises of God fueling you.

Promises like... Isaiah 41:10, "*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*" You can do this, men! God's grace is enough.

Conclusion: Don't Blaspheme the Gospel
You gotta do this. Notice what's at stake. **[v5]**. The word *revile* is the word *blaspheme*. We must live in a way that does not make the gospel vulnerable to blaspheme. Your life

should make it hard for a watching world to revile the gospel! Your life should adorn it.

I wonder if you've heard the name Steve Bartlett. He hosts one of the most popular podcasts in the world that aims to share raw conversations about truth claims, worldview insights, lessons on life. He's not a Christian but he likes interviewing Christians, and he recently interviewed John Lennox.

Lennox is a Christian apologist and one of the smartest people in the world AND one of the people in the world. At the close of the interview, Bartlett said this to Lennox, "One of the most compelling arguments for God that you've presented...is not... anything you've said. It's...you...You have a certain peace and contentment I rarely see in people I interview ...but I...almost always see in the Christians I've interviewed. It seems to be a trend that a lot of the Christians...have an anchoring that so many of us are looking for."

Do you? **[Appeal to non-Christian]** Come to Christ and anchor your life in him.

Christian, show for that anchor/peace you have in Christ. Your life will either blaspheme or beautify the gospel. Beautify it! Be the prongs on a diamond that show how glorious the gospel of Christ really is!

And young people, don't wait on this. Give your whole self to Christ now and spend the rest of your life showing off his beauty to a watching world.