

The Essence of a Healthy Church: Part 3

Pastors and Servants

Titus 2:1-10

Intro: The Simple Goal of Church Life

Our aim as a church is fairly simple. We are called to fight our sin, pursue holiness, and help others do the same. That's the essence of a healthy church: Members who show forth the beauty of God's saving work in Christ by living changed lives and helping each other do the same. Doing church ain't rocket science! It's pretty simple. It's not easy. But it is clear.

This is what we've been talking about for the past several weeks from Titus 2—how the different categories of church members adorn the gospel in their stage of life: 1) older men, 2) older women, 3) younger women, and 4) younger men. And now, Paul addresses Titus himself and then servants. Let's take each...

Category #5: Pastors

Now, I'm referring to this category as "pastors" because Titus himself functioned a lot like a pastor on the island of Crete. Paul

left him there to get the churches healthy by appointing qualified men as pastors to teach sound doctrine and model sound living.

Since Titus functions a lot like a pastor on Crete, this category will focus on the responsibilities of pastors. He gives two *prescriptions* and a *purpose*. **[v7a]**

That's the first prescription for Titus/pastors: *model good works*. The word *model* is the same word for idol/image, because literal idols were physical statues/copies of what people thought their god looked like.

So Paul is saying to Titus, you need to be a model/example/copy/image of what it looks like to pursue good works. "Oh that's what it means to be a Christian; it looks like Titus/pastors. That's what it looks like to love your wife...handle a disagreement...respond to a heavy situation with measured thinking...love those who are hard to love...repent of sin."

God's people need models to emulate.

Now, that point is reinforced by the a connection between v6 and v7. That connection is not clear in the ESV because it sounds like Paul is addressing a separate category in v7, namely Titus himself. But in the original language, there's a connection between the Titus and the young men.

The first word in v7 is *show*, but should be translated *showing*, which would make vv6-7 read like this, “Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled, **SHOWING** yourself *in all respects* to be a model of good works.”

That phrase *in all respects* in the original language is stated first in v7. And it likely connects to the young men in v6, not Titus in v7. (There was no period in Greek. So it's a judgment call of translators of when a sentence stops and a new one starts.)

So here's how vv6-7 read: “Urge the younger men to be self-controlled *in every respect*, *showing* yourself (Titus) to be a model of good works.” And the implication is “*to them*.”
Model good works to them.

So the primary WAY Titus is to encourage young men to be self-control is by SHOWING them how. You need that, young men. You need examples to look to. This is what pastors are for! Look at the way Dillon loves Bobbi with tenderness and steadiness. Look at the way Logan cares for his kids with gentleness but also firmness. Look at how Bill is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

Look at the godly men in this church and watch them! They're not perfect; in fact, you can watch how they handle failure. But all young men need such modelling. *Phil. 3:17, "Brothers...keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us."*

One of the saddest things about young men in general (including Christian men) is that they've not had this example. *I looked at the pictures of men under the age of 40 in our church directory this week counted way too many men who didn't grow up with a faithful father. BUT I was encouraged by how many spiritual fathers are available in this church. Watch them. Be disciplined by them.*

And give yourself to the Lord now, keep growing in grace so you can become a kind of spiritual father that perhaps you never had. Be a *model* of good works.

The next prescription Paul gives Titus (and pastors) is to *faithfully teach the Word*. **[vv7-8a]** The descriptions of *integrity* and *dignity* in teaching tell us that, what matters is *not only* WHAT Titus teaches, but HOW he teaches it. He must teach with integrity. That means incorruption. And I take that more to be referring more to HOW he teaches than WHAT he teaches. He needs teach from a place of integrity, an uncorrupted life.

And we must do it with *dignity*. This word means something like *serious*. The Latin word for it is *gravitas*. “Don’t be flippant/slapstick with the Word, Titus. Be serious! The message you have is too important to joke about.” *There are far too many who cannot talk seriously for very long time without feeling the need to crack a joke to lighten the mood.*

I love to have fun, but we gotta be serious/reverent with God's Word. This isn't comedy hour/entertainment time. This is "get the Bible open in your lap and get your noses in the text and let's figure out together what the Holy Spirit meant when he inspired it and why it matters for your eternity!"

I literally heard a pastor say recently, "Church should be entertaining because God is not boring." I agree God is not boring, but when that same pastor is trying to justify why he just drove a Rolls-Royce onto the stage because Jesus also use props in his teaching, I don't buy it.

The opposite of boring is not entertainment in church, it's awe of God.

I have a framed picture in my office above the place where I prepare sermons that just says: "Preach the Word." And then a quote by Spurgeon that says, "A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining goats." And if Spurgeon were here today, he would

say, *“That time has come.”* If you’re not yet a member of a church and you’re looking for one, this is, without a doubt, top priority. The pastors better not think their job is to entertain you. They need to preach the word. Find a church that preaches the Word!

And it needs to be done with *accuracy*, which is the next description in **[v8a]**. *Sound speech* means the teaching is healthy/accurate. Titus is passing on Paul’s authoritative Word to the churches, and we have those authoritative Words here in Scripture.

Our family visited several churches this summer. It was very encouraging to be reminded of how many churches do this well in Austin. But it was also very discouraging to see how many don’t.

One large prominent church we went to was most discouraging because the preacher gave the allusion that he was preaching the Bible, when he was just preaching his own thoughts. He went verse by verse through a passage, but missed the whole point. He treated the Bible

more like a trampoline to jump off so he could talk about what he wanted to talk about.

That is really scary to me. That's potentially worse than a preacher who keeps his Bible closed and overtly says, "We're not talking about that. I wanna share my own thoughts." Why? I heard one person put it like this: *There is a way to preach the Bible that silences the voice of God.* It must be taught accurately.

Why? Notice the **purpose** Paul gives in **[v8b]**. The "us" is Paul and Titus, and it pertains to the Word they preach. Opponents of their message should be ashamed. Shame is not always a bad thing. Sometimes people should feel shame, especially when they oppose God's Word. And that shame will be brought upon them if God's Word is accurately taught.

Category #6: Servants [vv9-10]

The word is "slaves." That's who Paul is addressing. Now, we gotta think through this carefully. Paul is in no way condoning the institution of slavery, especially the kind of

slavery we might be familiar with: American chattel slavery or modern-day trafficking.

In Paul's day, slavery was very different. It wasn't race based; it was economically based—the poor were slaves. And they would often sell *themselves* into slavery as a means of getting back on their feet financially.

But slavery in that day was still inhumane in many ways, especially depending on what kind of Master they had. That's why NT writers never condoned it. In fact, 1 Tim. 1:10 says *man-stealing* is contrary to the gospel, and in 1 Cor. 7:21, slaves are encouraged to seek their freedom if they can.

But even more, the NT says that slaves and masters who become Christians are to treat each other like brothers and sisters. Gal, 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither *slave nor free*, there is no male and female, for *you are all one in Christ Jesus*." That is a staggering countercultural claim in that day! Slave and free have the same worth in Christ.

This is why I love the verse in that Christmas hymn *O Holy Night* that says, “Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love and His Gospel is Peace; Chains shall He break, *for the slave is our brother*. And in His name, all oppression shall cease.”

That’s what the gospel does! It demolishes any thought that one class of people is inherently better than another. We’re all brought to the foot of the cross when we see our desperate need as sinners, and we realize we are saved by grace and grace alone. That levels the playing field! And then, we are brought into one family of God.

This change of relationship brought by the gospel becomes clear in the way Paul addresses the Christian slaves on Crete. He honors them in such a countercultural way that is so gospel saturated. We’ll see why. But first, look at 5 prescriptions for servants (that apply to all of us because we’re all under some kind of authority—boss, parents, government, etc.).

Prescription #1: Submit willingly. [v9a]

Notice, the authority is limited to one person, not just anyone. They're to be submissive to their OWN master. But then he adds, "in everything." What do we do with that?

Does this mean that the master had ultimate/unlimited authority over his slave? No. In the original language, the phrase "in everything" could be connected to what came before (namely, *submit*) OR it could be connected to what comes after. **[v9b]** So it would read, "In everything they are to be well-pleasing."

I think that's the correct reading. I don't think he's saying they are to be submissive in everything, as if their Master has unlimited authority. I think it's saying they are to be "well-pleasing" in everything. This takes to...

Prescription #2: Aim for acceptability.

"In everything be well-pleasing. Don't be half-hearted in your work. Don't do a sloppy job. Do a good job in all your work, so that it is acceptable/pleasing..." To whom? His master?

This word *well-pleasing* is used 8 other times in the NT. And every single one of its uses has God as the object. “Be well-pleasing to GOD.” I think that’s what’s going on here! “Your focus should be on him! Your aim is to please him, even if your master/boss/person in authority is never pleased. Your aim is to please God!”

Listen to how Paul puts it in Col. 3, “Bondservants, obey...those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”

Won’t this help you at your job? If your highest aim is to please your boss, you’re either gonna hate your job (because he/she is never pleased) or you’ll find too much worth in your job (because you’re living for the approval of man). But when your aim is to please God, you won’t be IDLE at work and work won’t be an IDOL. Aim to please God.

Prescription #3: Bite Your Tongue. [v9c]

That literally means to “not speak against.” It could be translated “back talking.” Every time your boss tells you to do something, you give all the reasons why it’s not a good idea. You have a bent towards disagreeing/complaining. Don’t be like that!

- Prov. 13:3 says, “Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.”
- Prov. 18:6 says, “A fool’s lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating.”

You might do well to hold your tongue more often. Don’t be argumentative with those in authority over you. Of course, it doesn’t mean you can never bring stuff up. But are you bent towards back-talking/being disagreeable?

Prescription #4: Don’t take what isn’t yours.

[v10a] That means *stealing*, or “putting aside or keeping something back for yourself” (BDAG). Often slaves handled the goods and finances of their masters. So if he was sent to make a purchase for the household, he could *keep back* some for himself. He could pocket some tools and try to sell them.

This principle is timeless: *Be honest with your employer's resources.* Don't take work supplies from the office for personal use without asking. Don't pad an expense report. Don't manipulate receipts/reimbursements. Don't secretly use paid work hours to do personal stuff. Don't steal your company's time. *Don't take what isn't yours.*

- “But you don't know how bad my boss is!” It doesn't matter. God is your boss. A bad boss does not justify your sinfulness.
- “But my job is awful.” It doesn't matter. A bad job doesn't justify sinfulness.

Prescription #5: Be trustworthy. [v10b]

This is the positive flipside of *not pilfering*. *Showing all good faith* which means *be completely trustworthy*. You don't need anyone looking over your shoulder to make sure you're doing your work. You don't need to be held accountable to get your work done.

You're trustworthy. Are you known for that? Loyalty. Integrity. Honest hard work. It is so important. WHY? Notice the ***purpose*** at the end of **[v10c]**.

Now, that purpose can be applied to this entire passage: older men, older women, younger women, younger men, Titus (pastors), and servants...they all must live out their role in a way that adorns the gospel.

BUT...it is most directly applies here to slaves, which is staggering! Know why? Slaves were deemed the lowest of the low in society. Therefore, the ugliest, most demeaned and looked-down-upon person in all of society... can show forth the beauty of the most glorious and precious message in the whole world—namely, the gospel.

Do you see how Jesus changes everything? It doesn't matter who you are or how bad your job is or how looked-down-upon it is...you can show forth the beauty of God's saving work in Christ by the way you...clean toilets, do data entries, change diapers, lay floors, or say "My pleasure" a thousand times a day...

If a slave can adorn the gospel in his work, anyone in any job whose been changed by that gospel can adorn it as well. How?

The answer is found in the way Paul describes the gospel in **[v10c, the doctrine of *God our Savior*]**. We're not just to adorn doctrine (truth) in general. We're to adorn something specific about God—he is our *Savior*. The way a Christian servant works ought to show forth the beauty of God *as Savior*. How?

This phrase is used 6 times in Titus. In 1:4 and 3:4 it says that Jesus Christ is *God our Savior*. So this doctrine/truth we are to adorn pertains to the saving work of Jesus Christ. How do we adorn the saving work of Jesus? **[2:11-12]**

The saving grace of God trains us to renounce ungodliness. When we pursue ungodliness, it's NOT because we haven't fully understood God's law/rules. It's that we haven't grasped his grace! His grace changes us. **[2:13-14]**

That's what it means that Jesus is our Savior. He didn't just die on the cross to pay the *penalty* of our sin. He died to free us from the *power* of sin, so that we can fight against the very *presence* of sin.

And when we do that in the workplace, in our homes, among our friends, at school...we adorn the gospel—the doctrine of God our *Savior*. We're showing forth to the world, "I've been saved by grace!" [**Gospel appeal**]

Conclusion

That's the essence of a healthy church! It's not rocket-science. It's not easy. But it's clear. Our job is to kill sin, pursue holiness, and help others do the same. And as we do that because we've been changed by the gospel so that we will adorn the gospel. So let's do it.