



## Titus 2 What Makes A Good Church?

We begin this morning by picking up where we left off last week – Paul is the middle of providing some mentoring to Titus, who has been sent to the island of Crete to give guidance to the churches. He’s just been told what to look for when appointing men to leadership in the church and now Paul is going to tell him what kind of behaviors to encourage among the people of the church.

Here’s the overarching message: God has called Christians to live a particular way, a distinct way, a way that looks different to people outside the church, and is compelling to them. He is calling men, women, young, old, workers and bosses, to live a life of integrity, purpose, and commitment to God and others instead of ourselves.

Whether you’re 16 or 66, whether you’re a man or woman, whether you work for others or they work for you, God has something to say about your life. He has a shape your life should take, and there is someone or some group He wants to reach through you. God wants to make a difference in the life of someone else by making a difference in you first.

But along the way, there are some hard things that need to be said, some challenging things, and so Paul begins and ends the chapter with an encouragement to Titus to do the hard thing, say the hard things. In the middle we find guidance from God on how we should live and the promise we have. Read with me:

**Titus 2:1** But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; 3 the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— 4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 *to be* discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. 6 Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, 7 in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, 8 sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. 9 *Exhort* bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all *things*, not answering back, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

The first group to be addressed is the older men who are told: (vs 2) “be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love (*agape*), in patience.”

Here's the ideal: older men should be a strong, dependable presence in the life of the church, in their family, and in every other setting. They should be spiritually healthy, anchored to the firm foundation of Christ, providing guidance and stability to others. Older Christian men should be like that lighthouse that gets pummeled by massive waves, but the water just breaks around it and it goes on providing guidance, showing the way for everyone who needs direction.

Paul says we should look to the older men of the church for an example of faith, love, and patience. They have stories to tell of the things they've seen, they've got scars and regrets and years of experience to pass on to the rest of us. And we need to be seeking them out. We need to listen to the older men and women of the church, we need to ask for their stories. They're farther down the road we're all on, we need to learn from them how to navigate the obstacles we face today and gather some information on what lies ahead.

God wants the older men of the congregation to be the kind of men others are looking for, looking up to, drawing encouragement and strength from, learning from. When the storms of life stir up gigantic waves that smash and crash and roar, God wants you to be the lighthouses we all look to for guidance and reassurance. And, He wants that to be true of people outside the church too. He wants your unsaved neighbor and sister and coworker and boss to see the things happening in your life and to see how you're handling them, and marvel. He wants to use you to provoke them to ask deeper questions about life and meaning.

But that means you've got to avoid some traps, you've got to be aware of the ditches you can fall into.

You need to be sober – you need to avoid the things that would take away your edge or your focus. The specific context here is not be someone who just sits around drinking on a regular basis.

There are those people, aren't there? People who pass their days with a six-pack, or twelve pack, or bottle and a remote control. Don't be that guy. Don't hang out regularly with that guy. Stay away from substance abuse of any kind, be sober, be vigilant, be aware of what is going on, be more concerned about others and don't just check out because you're old and tired. Stand firm, hold your ground, and look out for other men you can pour into. You have valuable lessons you've learned, pass them on – but don't just tell your old war stories for the sake of reliving the glory days, help the younger men see how they can improve or be encouraged by the things you've experienced, learned, or seen - show them how it applies to them.

And notice, God wants to give you a place of honor, but He also wants you to be honorable. So Paul tells Titus to encourage the grown men of the congregation to be temperate, or self-controlled. And to be reverent. The idea is, older men should be dignified. One Greek lexicon says: "august, venerable, reverend." Now that doesn't mean you wear all black and a little white collar, it means you're respectable, you command respect without demanding it. You carry yourself well, and have a good reputation.

There are some of you in this room who are models of this for me. You're the kind of man I want to be like when I grow up. I don't want to be that guy who doesn't realize how old he is, who's always trying to dress and act like he's still in his 20's. I want to age well, like some of you, to be venerable, respectable. You give me something to aspire to because you make me think more of Christ, not less. And that's the whole point – we need older men who show Christ to the church and the world, who give us something to aim for as the years tick by.

But men, the only way you're going to be able to do all of that for us, is if you are anchored in what Christ has done for you.

Watching the lighthouse withstand crushing waves is impressive, but if it was not attached to a firm foundation it would topple and roll right to the bottom of the ocean. Men, you are able to be all of these things that we need you to be, only when Christ is your foundation and strength. And then, you can be a source of guidance, strength, and encouragement to all of us.

Of course, it's not just the men who are called to be an example to the church and the community: [3 the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.](#)

Ladies, there's that same word: you too should be reverent, august, venerable, dignified. You should be the kind of woman others look up to, setting an example, walking a path worthy for others to follow.

But it doesn't happen automatically. Aging gracefully takes effort and attention, yet you do it because it's helpful for others. It's easy to give up and stop caring, it's easy to be tired, and you have every right to be, but God is calling you to stay engaged – to be regal in the way you respond to things and the way you go about your life. Don't become that bitter old lady everyone avoids. Be the one everybody wants to be near, because they see Christ in you.

As we age, we settle deeper into certain habits and preferences. I remember my wife's grandma loved drinking tea, but only one kind: Earl Grey. Don't buy her another kind of tea, she didn't like all tea, she liked Earl Grey. The point is: as we age, we can get set in our ways, our opinions. And if we're not careful, we can also begin to talk down about anyone and anything else that doesn't agree with *our* way. So Paul warns older ladies especially about something we all need to be aware of: don't be a slanderer. You have your thoughts and opinions, there's no need to be cutting about those who don't share them. Guard your tongue, guard your mouth; have a heart that is open to others, don't be closed and judgmental.

Keeping guard over your mouth will help not only with what comes out, but with what goes in because just like the men, you're not to be given to much wine. You're not to be overly fond of it or any other substance that takes the edge off.

As we age, we frequently have more discretionary time, and more discretionary income, we've acquired some material goods in this life and it's possible to sit back and just enjoy what we've accomplished. Some amount of that is OK. You should enjoy the fruits of your labor. But don't go building your entire life, routine, and schedule around doing whatever you want to do – God is calling us to have a much greater impact by giving our lives away to others.

You are called to be [teachers of good things](#). Much like the men, there are lessons you've learned, things you've experienced that you can share. And there are women in this church and in your community who would love to listen and talk and receive from you. There are women in this church who would love to know that you are praying for them. There are women in this church who would love to learn more about Jesus and the Bible and practical ways to rely on them as mothers, daughters, wives, and workers. And you are the ones they should be looking to for that help. Are you available for them, or are you somewhere else caught up in irreverent behavior, slander and wine or anything else that is keeping you from the great opportunities that could be yours?

Our ladies meet on Wednesday nights, Thursday mornings, and once a month on Saturday for breakfast. And that's just the ladies only gatherings. Women are a part of our home groups and small groups and standing around in the hallways and foyer before and after the service. Go out by the playground after the service and you'll find moms keeping an eye on the kids. Older ladies, are you in those places? Are you available for the younger ladies, because I can tell you something: they want you. They need you. They say it themselves, but God also says they need you to [4 admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.](#)

Now, I know this passage provokes a reaction in some people. You've got questions and "what abouts?" or you've already got an answer or explanation or excuse, and I want to ask if you could just set all that aside for a minute. Let's hear what God says first, let's make sure we understand that, and then we can ask some of our individual questions about our modern lives.

Because I want to start with what's on the line. The Scripture says when a young woman is not living according to a certain pattern a door is opened for the Word of God to be blasphemed. That's pretty serious. Do you believe that? Do you accept that? Do you understand that when people look at you and your life, they are either impressed by what they see, provoked to ask questions about what makes you so different, and drawn to the God you serve, or they find reasons to mock and call you a hypocrite, and say that the Word of God and church and all that other Christian religious stuff is just a joke.

Now, that's not just true of young women, it applies to young men too. In fact, it applies to all of us who bear the name of Christ. When people see us, when they get to know us, when they observe our lives, they should see something attractive as they see Christ in us. There should be externally observable evidence of what God is doing within. And if we will let Him organize our lives according to His commands instead of our preferences, it will

happen. But if we resist, if we make excuses, there are consequences – the Word of God may be blasphemed. I just want to make sure we all understand what is at stake here before we react to what the Scriptures say.

So, what do they say? Well, the first thing they say is younger women should love their husbands and their children, which never ceases to amaze me. This is the first thing older women are encouraged to teach younger women. Why is that?

Well, remember, there is only one Bible and it applies to all people across all the ages of history and all around the world. There is not an African Bible and an Asian Bible and a European Bible. There is not a Bible for the 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century and another for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This one Bible speaks to all people, in all places, at all times. And one aspect of the time when Titus was ministering was the idea of arranged marriages. Back in the first century, and still, in some places today, a marriage occurred because the family thought it was a good idea, not because the couple had fallen in love. Not all the marriages on Crete were held together by mutual attraction, but according to God, there could still be love.

And even in our modern age when attraction does form the basis for most marriages, people still need to hear this instruction. I'm sure in a room this large, there are women here this morning who need some encouragement in loving their husbands and their kids.

Why is that? Because marriage and parenting are not easy. They are demanding. They require you to think about and sacrifice for and serve others. And that's not always fun. But the Scripture says the way a woman fulfills her greatest obligation to her family is of the utmost importance and will reflect positively or negatively on God, the gospel, and the church. So, she needs to know, and be reminded of, the love God has for her personally, and then attempt to show the love she has received to others.

She is called to live a life that is categorized as being **5 discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.**

I understand this list can aggravate ladies today. I understand it rubs you the wrong way, this is the kind of stuff a radical feminist loves to mock and scorn. It gives her ammunition to say all the church wants to do is rollback 100 years of progress in women's rights and liberal agendas; it's regressive and misogynist. But friends, that's reactionary, and there's more to say here. So let's work through some of this.

First of all, let's remember the cultural context when this was written. Titus lived in the first century, on an island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea during the days of the Roman Empire. He's not speaking to career women telling them to give up their cubicle and get back to passing out popsicles.

This is not a command for the woman to stay home. It is a command for young women to love and live in a manner that is attractive to others. Let's go back to our fundamental understanding of marriage: marriage is supposed to be the result of joining two lives together into one. That means, for a Christian couple, there is no such thing as her career.

There's no such thing as his career. It's all one joint venture, one partnership, one mission, one vision, one pathway for him and her, together. And everything they do, every choice they make, should be in alignment with that one life, that one purpose.

The problem comes when we, men or women, begin to prioritize our career over our other commitments. When we start to ask our family to accept sacrifices so we can get the position or promotion we want. When we forget there's only one life in our marriage, there are no longer two. And you can't live one life in two directions. You both need to be working together, in agreement, about how to spend your lives for the glory of God and the good of others.

So ladies if it fits within the overall plan for your marriage, if it's mutually beneficial, you can work outside the home, that's absolutely fine. We need scientists and doctors and lawyers and small business women. But you cannot make an idol out of your career, and he can't make an idol out of his. You have to find your identity in your marriage and your family first because these are the primary responsibilities God has given you. This is where God wants to see you excel.

Your husband and your children need you. Don't allow, and don't expect someone else to be more concerned for, committed to, or approving of your husband or kids than you are. You're all supposed to be one team. When it comes to your marriage, the Bible says, "What God has joined together, let no man separate" and that includes separation induced by the aggressive pursuit of a career.

When you care more about work than about your marriage or family, when you put more effort and attention toward work than your marriage or family, you're transgressing the Scripture, you're leaving what God has given you and called you to in the pursuit of something else. If your career is leading you away from your husband and/or your kids, you need to take a time out and consider: are you sure this is really how God wants you to be spending your life? Your career is meant to be a way to provide for your family, not tear it apart.

A godly wife brings the full weight of her giftings and abilities to bear upon the one life created between her and her husband. Maybe she accomplishes some of that outside the home – instead of making clothes for the kids like a wife in 7<sup>th</sup> century Europe, she earns money and buys them online. Maybe instead of educating her kids at home she earns money to send them to a good school or to provide for sports and activities. Maybe instead of gathering wild berries and baking bread all day over a fire like some women still do in parts of the world, she has it delivered to the front door by Amazon or Giant with money from the paycheck she earned outside the home. All of that is fine.

The Proverbs 31 woman bought real estate and had her own start up company – a vineyard she planted. She made goods and sold them at a profit, she had entrepreneurial ability and ran a business. But who benefitted from all her effort in the markets? Her husband and her family.

You see, the focus is not on the easy question of where can and can't she work, the focus is on the deeper question, "Why does she work?" What is it all to accomplish? Is it to give her a sense of self-worth? Is it for some subjective notion of fulfillment? Or is it for the glory of God and the good of others, in unity with her husband, while prioritizing her family?

It's not easy ladies. But that's why the older ladies are supposed to be pouring into you and helping you. And that's why the older men are supposed to be doing the same for the younger men. We're all supposed to be in this together. We're supposed to benefit from being with other Christians in the body of Christ. And what happens as we do that is our lives become attractive to those outside the church and inspiring to each other inside.

There's not much time or need to dig into the instructions for young men and servants, because they're really just echoes of the things we've already heard: be in control of yourself, for the sake of others. The instruction is almost exactly the same as what we've already discussed. No one gets off easy. We're all in this together, each seeking to know the Lord and make Him known as we love one another. And here's the summary of it all, why we do it:

**Titus 2:11** For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His own special people, zealous for good works.*

Friends, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, I know the things we have seen in the Scripture this morning can be difficult. I know there is a lot to think about here. I know there are some issues that don't have easy or simple answers. There is complexity involved. And, doing these things will make you look strange at work and in the neighborhood. You're going to make decisions differently than others do. And it may cost you. But you're not on the same track as everyone else. Their path leads to a different destination.

You're **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.** They're not. So you can't just follow them and their career paths and daily routines, their vacation and retirement plans. You can't use them as your role models or inspiration in all things. We're called to **[deny] ungodliness and worldly lusts, ... and ... live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,** because we are God's own **special people, zealous for good works.**

There is a purpose for your life. You are special. There are good things God wants you to do. But remember, He is inviting you into His kingdom; He's not offering to help you build your own. It's going to look different, but it's going to be better. I promise. Life lived His way is always better.

And if you find it hard to receive this message today, I want you to notice it was hard for the people who heard it first too. Notice how the chapter ends as Paul the apostle tells Titus:

15 Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

Friends, this is the word of God. I'm just His messenger. But I want to see you win. I want to see things go well for you.

You need to attend a church that speaks from all of Scripture. You need to attend a church where they say hard things. You need to gather with other Christians who aren't looking for the easy explanation or alibi. You need Christians and pastors in your life who will speak the truth in love, and wrestle through hard things with you so that you grow stronger, the people in your life benefit from that strength, and people outside are drawn in.

I want to close this morning by doing something rare. I want to take a little survey. If you're here this morning and you would like an older man or woman to pour into your life, to have lunch with you, to grab coffee, to go fishing, or play golf, or whatever, but if you would like to have an older Christian invest into you, would you just stand up for a minute – you're not committing to anything, we're not planning anything, you're just saying, yes, I would like that.

OK, now look around. I want us to see that people are open to being taught, to being led, to being counseled and guided. And maybe you're the one to do it.

After the service, or in the next week or two, maybe you could approach them and say, "hey, I say you stand up, what are you looking for?" And if you're not the right person for them, maybe you can help find someone who is. Men, get together for coffee or lunch on Saturday. Women, offer to connect. Maybe some of you older ladies could be a help to the younger ladies by watching their kids so they can get out. Let them go for a run, or go to Target without kids. Can you offer them something small like 2 or 3 hours a week? Go their house or meet here. We've got space for the kids to play and toys for them to use, just contact the office and make sure we don't have another group using the space.

Maybe some of you standing can reach out to someone else who is standing, maybe you're a little farther along the road of life than they are.

We are the body of Christ, we are the church, we are the family of God and we are called to meet one another's needs, to instruct and encourage one another, to walk the road of life together as we all head towards the coming kingdom. We have individual experiences and wisdom to share and tremendous obstacles and burdens to bear, and God wants to use us be His hands and feet in the lives of one another. Will you let that happen in your life?

Let's pray.