



NG Study Guide: Titus 1:1-15 :: “Gospel Centered Leaders” [2.11.24]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. Regularly review the notes at the bottom.

The Study

Thesis: There is a need for healthy godly leadership within the church, and we should all aspire to be healthy godly leaders.

Subject: Qualifications for healthy godly leaders

Object: Aspire to be a healthy godly leader

Context: The book of Titus is a letter written by Paul to Titus. Titus was a Gentile believer who traveled and served with Paul, was trained by Paul, and was instructed by Paul to stay in Crete (the southern island of Greece) to serve and minister. Titus is referred to as a “Pastoral Epistle” because Paul writes this letter towards the end of his ministry to encourage the next generation of pastors and church leaders. The primary issues Paul will address in our passage today are related to ensuring that there are qualified godly leaders who are charged with upholding the genuineness and sincerity of the Church. There were believers, and the gatherings of believers in Crete, however the leaders of these gatherings were not qualified and were teaching people doctrine that was contrary to the teachings of Jesus. Paul encourages Titus to instate qualified and godly leaders in the churches in Crete.

A. Example of godly leaders (1-4)

Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, ² in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, ³ but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior; ⁴ To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

1. Paul:

i. servant (1), apostle (1), preacher (3)

Paul’s role in Church History and the spread of the gospel is prolific. He was a missionary, an evangelist, a disciple-maker, church planter, and a leader. However, he refers to himself in three ways in his introduction to Titus. Paul first states that he is a bondservant of God (1). This term is interchangeable with a “slave.” His first priority is to state that he

is no longer a slave to sin and the things of this world, but he has submitted his life as servant of God. He does not act on behalf of his own desires, wants, and needs, but submits to constantly seeking and serving God. This is important for us to understand that as we consider healthy godly leadership, leaders must be fully submitted to God, living their lives as servants to Him and His people.

The next description Paul states is that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ (1). The term apostle simply means "one who is sent out." We must make an appropriate distinction between the office of an apostle and the spiritual gift of apostleship. The office of apostle refers to a specific position and designation that we see in Scripture as it relates to the 12 disciples and Paul. The reason for this designation is that these were people who encountered Jesus and were commissioned specifically by Jesus for the work of establishing the early church. However, Paul's reference to an apostle in Titus 1:1 appears to be referring to the spiritual gift (Ephesians 4, 1Corinthians 12:28-29) of visionary leadership and making Christ known. He is stating that as an example of healthy godly leadership, he is gifted and committed to making the gospel and grace of Jesus Christ known. This again is something that should be a characteristic of all healthy godly leaders. Finally, Paul refers to himself as one who preaches the word, he is a preacher (3). This indicates that he has the gifting and calling to present to others the Word of God and right doctrine. Again, this is not referring to an office or title as "preacher," but rather the willingness to study and share God's truth with others. Healthy godly leaders all must have the willingness, like Paul to be preachers of the Word, and share the truth of God with others.

ii. Focus on salvation & sanctification (1)

Paul states that in his ministry he has two primary objectives: that others would come to place their faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin (salvation) and that they would grow in godliness (sanctification) (1). The text states that Paul purpose as servant and apostle is for the sake of the faith of God's elect (1). We see the term elect used here and through Scripture which refers to God's sovereignty. The term is used throughout the OT as a description of Israel (1Chronicles 16, Psalm 105, Isaiah 43, 45, etc.) and used for believers in the NT (Matthew 22, 24, Luke 18, Romans 8, etc.). We see in verse 2 that God promised eternal life before time began. God is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), and outside of time (2). We are not any of those things. We are limited in our knowledge, limited in our power, and bound by the constraints of time. Therefore, it is impossible for us to fully comprehend God's sovereignty, but we also must understand according to Scripture that we must willfully choose to follow Jesus. We're told constantly that we must repent and believe (Matthew 3, 4, Acts 3, 1John 3, etc). Verse 2 uses the term faith. Faith requires a willful submission, otherwise it's not faith at all. Choosing to place our faith in the forgiveness of Jesus, and the hope of eternal life (2) is completely necessary in our salvation.

Paul's second primary intention in his leadership and ministry is to help others acknowledge truth and grow in godliness (1). Once we've received salvation through placing our faith in Christ, we then naturally and intentionally grow in godliness (sanctification), and our lives begin to flourish as God's children.

2. Titus:

i. Disciple (4)

Titus is referred to by Paul as a true son (4). This familial language is used to indicate that Paul has been a spiritual father, leading and discipling Titus. A spiritual son is a disciple. He has been a spiritual authority in Titus' life. Titus has traveled with Paul, observed Paul lead, and been taught intentionally by Paul. As we contemplate healthy godly leaders, we

obviously all need to be disciples of Jesus, but we also must have people who are ahead of us in their lives and journeys with Christ to teach us, train us, and equip us for the work that God is calling us to.

ii. Shared faith (4)

Paul states that he and Titus have a common faith. This is such a beautiful phrase because he's just stated the spiritual authority that he has had in the life of Titus, but here acknowledges the fact that they share a common faith. Though there is a relationship of mentor and mentee, an authoritative distinction, they are of completely equal importance due to the common faith that they share in Jesus. We see this reaffirmed in 2Corinthians 12:18 where Paul calls Titus a brother and states that they walked in the same Spirit and in the same steps. Through this very statement of common faith (4), Paul is empowering Titus.

B. Characteristics of godly leaders (5-9)

⁵ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—

Paul then moves from his introduction to the content of his letter to Titus. He states that the purpose of leaving Titus in Crete was that there was a lack of order within the churches there (5). He has previously been instructed to appoint elders in every city (5). Now Paul is writing to show Titus the characteristics that he should be looking for in the healthy godly leaders that he will be instating.

The term "elders" is used interchangeably with bishop, overseer, and pastor. The term refers to one who is responsible before God and man for shepherding a flock. Because of the significance of this position, there are substantial qualifications for those who are in this leadership role.

1. Healthy home life (6)

⁶ if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

The first is a healthy home life. We are told that the man ought to be blameless (6), or upright and above reproach. There must be a genuine consistency in conduct in every realm of their lives. They exemplify these godly characteristics around everyone in their lives, and when no one is around. We are told that the man must be the husband of one wife (6). Therefore, we've been told that an elder must be a man and this is more explicitly communicated in Paul's letter to Timothy in 1Timothy 2. This is not an indictment of anyone's skills, capacity, or dignity. We recognize that both men and women were created in the image of God and are of equal value and importance to Him. In Genesis 3 we see that as a result of the fall and of sin chaos and disorder entered the equation. To navigate challenge and difficulty, we need a system of order. And God's order is for men to take incredibly seriously the weight of responsibility of leadership within the home and within the church. That does not preclude women from having leadership roles within the church. Many women in scripture had very prominent roles: Pheobe (Romans 16:1-2), Priscilla (Acts 18:26), and Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3) as well as women who were judges (Deborah), prophetesses (Miriam), evangelists (Mary Magdalene), and other leaders.

The husband of one wife (6). Leaders who are married are to be pure and faithful to their spouse. "Husbands love your wives as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25). Those who have been married know that marriages are challenging at times, and true character is demonstrated in difficult situations. Leaders whole lives must reflect blamelessness starting within the home.

Leaders are to have faithful children who are not accused of dissipation (debauchery) or insubordination (rebellion) (6). Again, leaders are to take seriously their role and responsibility of discipling their children to love God (Proverbs 22:6). Parents cannot neglect the spiritual development of their children, deal harshly with them, or cause them to stumble. This is a characteristic of healthy godly leaders, and for those of us who have children should daily be striving for. God's desire is for our whole being to love him (Deuteronomy 6:4) and that begins and is clearly reflected in the home.

2. Healthy actions and attitudes (7-8)

⁷ For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled

Again, Paul repeats the significance of being blameless or above reproach. He begins to extend that beyond the home, and into our daily actions and attitudes. The leader is to be a steward of God (7), honestly and blamelessly stewarding the flock (including people, their spiritual gifts, and the resources that they provide).

Leaders are not to be self-willed (self-motivated) or quick-tempered (7). They are to be motivated by a love for God and a love for others (Matthew 22:37-39), not seeking their own best interest, but the best interest of others (Philippians 2:3-4). They are to be slow to anger (James 1:19). Leaders are to not be given to wine, violent, or greedy (7). These are all things that are not permissible in the lives of leaders. And in verse 8 we see a shift away from the potential pitfalls of a leader to the positive actions and attitudes that a leader should possess. Hospitable, a lover of what is good, and sober-minded (self-controlled) (8). Leaders should be caring and compassionate towards others, just, and holy (8). Leaders shouldn't be exemplifying these big mood swings in their thinking and actions or how they treat others, but level minded, fair, and holy (right before God).

C. Role of godly leaders (9-16)

1. Healthy doctrine (9-14)

⁹ holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. ¹⁰ For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹² One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.

Healthy godly leaders must hold fast to the faithful word of God that they have been taught (9). There is a shift again from moral qualifications to doctrinal or theological qualifications. Leaders must have a grasp on the Word of God and of sound doctrine so as not to lead others astray. Verse 9 concludes with the fact that there are leaders who teach things that contradict the truth and the Word of God. Verse 10 continues to affirm this idea stating that many leaders are insubordinate, idle talkers, and deceivers. There are leaders who are not submitted to God's authority, and deceive others away from His truth, especially those of the circumcision (10). There were several issues with leaders in the churches of Crete: teaching the ideas of the circumcision part, exemplifying the lazy lifestyle associated with the Cretan way of living, and those entangling Jewish fables and commandments that were in conflict with the Word of God. The "circumcision" refers to the Jewish believers who are infiltrated the churches and perpetuated the idea that in order to truly be saved men must be circumcised. This is not accurate or true as Romans 10:9-11

shows us that salvation is available by confessing and believing in Jesus. Therefore, it's so important that the leaders within a church uphold the truth, stick to God's Word as the ultimate authority, and are willing to rebuke those who teach things that are contrary (13). As leaders, we must have a hunger and thirst for God's Word and for His truth. Daily, we must be consuming His Word and growing in our understanding. As we all grow in our leadership capabilities we must ensure that we are rooted in the truth of God's word.

2. Healthy hearts (15-16)

¹⁵ To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

Paul then begins discussing the purity of heart that is necessary for leaders to possess. He uses the word "pure" (Greek: *katharos*) in two senses in verse 15. He's showing that to the pure of heart, those who are morally pure, they are also ritually pure. But to those who are not pure of heart and unbelieving, they cannot become ritually pure. They may go through the process of ritual purity, but their heart is impure. Therefore, they profess to know God, but deny him in the way that they live (16). The language Paul uses is very strong, they are being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified (16). The reason that the language is so strong here is because they are claiming to be leading others spiritually as an authority, but are causing so much damage to the bride of Christ. God loves His church, so much that He sent His son to die for them. There is so much beauty in the church, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ. It is imperative that we protect the purity and sincerity of it. It is so important for us to look at these godly leaders (Paul and Titus), look at the characteristics of godly leaders, and look at the role of godly leaders, and ensure that each one of us is growing as healthy godly leader, using our influence to leaders others to enjoy the beauty of the bride of Christ.

Study Guide Qs:

Q1. As you consider the example of healthy godly leaders, share someone in your own life who has who stands out as a healthy godly leader and why.

Q2. Verses 5-9 state the qualifications of healthy godly leaders. Review this list and share which of these may be difficult and why they are important.

Q3. Why might it be important to ensure that healthy godly leaders preserve right doctrine and teach biblical truth?

Q4. Why is it important that all believers grow as healthy godly leaders?

****As we consider the qualifications and role of church leaders, please spend some time praying for our leaders.***

“Disciples Who Dig Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. David Guzik’s commentary on Titus 1: https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/titus/titus-1.cfm

2. An article on biblical leadership: <https://www.gotquestions.org/church-leadership.html>

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?
2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:
Grow in godly leadership by having a spiritual conversation with a neighbor where you live, work, study, play or worship.

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don’t force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Notes:

1. Preparation and participation: Group participants should read the teacher’s notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don’t hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

3. The “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or

not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. The “Love your neighbors” section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better. As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

5. The “Disciples who make disciples” section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples. Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.