

5 SESSIONS

TITUS

MIKE ACKERMAN

**NEXT
LEVEL**  **ONLINE**

OZARK CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Titus Session 1

Introduction and Titus 1.1-4

The apostle Paul wrote the book of Titus to a young pastor named Titus who was ministering on the Greek island of Crete. Crete has some Jews living in their towns, so they would have had some knowledge of God. But it was a massive shift for most individuals in Crete who put their faith in Christ. Titus was ministering in this new and dynamic environment and this letter gives him guidance about how to faithfully navigate things. It can help us reflect on the core elements of our faith and how we should live it out in our own context.

Paul refers to himself as a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ and addresses Titus as a son. This is perhaps a surprising blend of authority and tenderness in his way of relating to Titus. Paul is speaking on behalf of God but does so with the concern of a father for his son.

The substance of Paul's ministry, and in turn Titus', is to further the faith of God's people and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. This encapsulates Christian service. It is about helping people believe in God and grow in godliness. While there are all kinds of diverse environments that Paul, Titus, and we serve people, it is this basic influence that we aim to have.

Paul also highlights that the hope of eternal life found in the Christian message is something God promised before the beginning of time! This is not an afterthought or back-up plan. This was God's intention all along. But since the death and resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit, this message is going out to all the world through God's servants. We are all a part of that mission.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

- Does the combination of authority and tenderness that Paul has in his relationship with Titus remind you of any relationships you have experienced?
- While we don't want to oversimplify the work God has for us to do in the world, how does the boiled down description of "furthering faith" and "knowledge that leads to godliness" help clarify God's mission?
- How can you further participate in bringing the good news about Jesus to the people in your current environment?

Titus Session 2

Titus 1.5-16

In Titus 1:5 we find out an aspect of a specific task Titus has been commissioned to do: to appoint elders in the towns throughout Crete. This is a similar passage to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 written to Timothy who was ministering in Ephesus. These passages, along with Acts 14:23, help us to learn that the normal and fitting experience of life in the community of believers is that godly leaders would be appointed to oversee and guide God's people.

The description of who should be elders emphasizes godly character. It is noteworthy that the accent is not on talent, social status, or wealth. Instead, being a model of godliness and a trustworthy steward of our faith is the focus.

The expectation of godly character in Christian leaders is contrasted in Titus 1 with the dominant culture in Crete. Paul even quoted Epimenides, an author from Crete, who said that "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons" (Titus 1:12). This is a strong criticism of the local culture where Titus is serving. We should not be surprised if our pursuit of godliness and expectation of godliness from our leaders is quite different from the norms around us. We allow the Word of God to define our standards and expectations.

For those who are believers in Jesus Christ, the portrait of godliness given in Titus 1 should provide a target for us to aim for in our way of life. While not all people are called to be leaders in the church, we can all strive for this kind of godliness. And while we understand that church leaders are imperfect people, we should all be able to expect a certain measure of success in godliness from those who are appointed to lead.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

- How does the portrait of a leader in Titus 1 differ from what you might naturally think of when you think of a "leader"?
- How does Titus 1 (and 1 Timothy 3) help guide your church in the selection of leaders?
- What are elements of your cultural context that are at odds with the portrait of godliness given here?

Titus Session 3

Titus 2

While godliness is universally defined for all believers, there are distinct opportunities and challenges with different situations in life regarding how we demonstrate godliness. In this section Paul guides Titus, and us, about how to think through various life stages and economic situations to live faithfully.

Older men are encouraged “to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance” (Titus 2:2). In contrast to potential tendencies men might have as they age to become more demanding and self-indulgent, Christian men are challenged to be a role model and show love for others.

Older women are to be taught “to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine” (Titus 2:3). Furthermore, they are commissioned to be mentors and teachers of the younger women in the church. They are to help the younger women live godly lives and help them navigate marriage and raising children, if that is part of their situation.

Younger men should be taught to be self-controlled. Titus is challenged to be an example to the other young men by his integrity and speech.

After the stage-in-life instructions, instructions are given for those in slavery. Slavery in Crete during this time would have been quite different from the slavery of Africans in the last several centuries. It was not based on ethnicity. It could be temporary. It could even provide certain avenues for economic and social advancement. That being the case, we can think of this as an employee being challenged to be a great worker. Through their excellency and trustworthiness in the workplace, believers can make the good news about Jesus attractive!

All of this comes as a response to the grace God has given us. It is not to earn his favor, but a grateful response because we want to do good.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

- What are some of the distinct challenges and opportunities in your current stage in life?
- How can you use the current phase of life you are in to pursue godliness?
- If you are an older man or woman, are you intentionally mentoring younger believers? If not, why not?
- What are ways you can use your current employment situation to make the Christian message attractive?

Titus Session 4

Titus 3.1-8

Believers are called to submit to those in authority over them and show kindness toward everyone. We can relate graciously to all people when we realized how much grace we have received from God.

While our lives prior to being believers in Jesus Christ may vary greatly from one another, we can all at some level identify with the unflattering spiritual biography Paul describes in Titus 3:3-4: "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." This is the natural state of humanity in a fallen world.

But Paul pairs the bleak picture of a person prior to faith in Jesus with an incredible description of the salvation that is available in Christ. In vivid language he pictures our salvation as a rebirth, a declaration of innocence, and an adoption as a child of God awaiting inheritance. None of these things are earned or achieved through our own efforts, but they are an expression of God's kindness to us.

We can show patience and love to those around us when we remember this transformation we have experienced. Paul tells Titus that this message of grace should be the focus of his teaching so that the people keep it in mind at all times!

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

- Prompted by Titus 3:3-4, how could you describe your life prior to faith in Jesus?
- How can it help us relate graciously to others to keep this text in mind?
- Of those incredible images (rebirth, declaration of innocence, adoption as heir), which stands out to you personally and why?

Titus Session 5

Titus 3.8-15

Not only does the message of grace in Titus 3 help us relate well to those outside the faith, it helps us relate well to one another within the family of God. When we keep God's grace in mind, we can maintain unity and support one another the way God desires us to.

Paul warns Titus about quarrels and tells him to avoid divisive people. While there is a need to clarify our beliefs in the church and correct wrong thinking, a quarrelsome attitude is destructive. And the language here about avoiding divisive people is among the strongest in the New Testament about disassociating with people. This is a striking reminder of God's desire for unity in his church.

Paul models the kind of familial love he is asking of Titus and the believers in Crete in his final words to Titus. He is eager to be with Titus in Nicopolis. Though brief, he mentions his concern for some of he and Titus' mutual friends such as Zenas and Apollos. Ironically, Apollos is someone that the church in Corinth saw as a rival of Paul. But the warmth of these brief verses characterizes the unity of the church friendship that should be the norm.

Paul ends his letter with one last encouragement that the people should be productive, perhaps making one more contrast with the culture of Crete. And he ends the letter as he begins and ends all his letters, with a reaffirmation of the grace of God for them.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

- How would you characterize your experience with Christian friendships?
- How could you help foster more of the familial love for other believers that Paul exhibits for Titus and the others he mentions?
- Paul encourages hard work for the believers in Crete, perhaps in contrast to their infamous laziness. What would be a virtue or habit that you could embody to contrast your own cultural situation?