

Text: Titus 2:1-15

Title: “Growing Disciples ... Surrounded by Godly Believers” Pt.1

Let's open our Bibles once again to the NT book of Titus. It's a letter written by the Apostle Paul to his assistant Titus who has been left on the island of Crete to lay the foundation for churches to produce growing disciples of Jesus. Part of that is to recruit high caliber men of character called elders or overseers who are men who have a firm grasp of the truth of Scripture. This is so they can encourage believers with sound teaching, but also to refute the false teachers in Crete. Matt taught us last week about these false teachers...

Titus 1:16 - They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

When you really know God and have a relationship with Him through Christ it will show up in your behavior. These false teachers are really good for nothing. But Titus and the leaders he recruits for the churches are to be different. Paul says, “Titus, as for you...”

Titus 2:1 - You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.

ILLUSTRATION – A few weeks ago *GQ* (Gentlemen's Quarterly) magazine published a list of “21 books you don't have to read and 21 you should read instead.” Number twelve on their list of books you should skip reading was the Bible. One of their editors wrote, “The Holy Bible is rated very highly by all the people who supposedly live by it but who in actuality have not read it. Those who have read it know there are some good parts, but overall it is certainly not the finest thing that man has ever produced. It is repetitive, self-contradictory, sententious, foolish, and even at times ill-intentioned.” I'm not surprised that secular journalists would trash the Bible. What does concern me is that many believers today are losing their confidence in and dependence upon the Word of God. And that's exactly what Titus was up against on crazy Crete and why the churches needed pastoral leaders who ...

Titus 1:9 - He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

So one of Titus' main responsibilities was to teach sound doctrine, and to raise up leaders in the churches who would do the same. But these elders do more than

teach. In Titus 1:7 they are called “overseers” who are entrusted with God’s work. They serve God and the church by leading. They do the “spiritual” work of praying and the ministry of the Word and they also give oversight (leadership) to the “temporal” work of the church as well. I Timothy 5:17 refers to elders “who direct the affairs of the church...” They lead.

EXAMPLE: The book of Acts tells us that there was a famine in Judea and the church in Antioch took up an offering for the believers in Jerusalem and Judea.

Acts 11:30 - This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

So along with their spiritual duties the elders of the church in Jerusalem had oversight of the use of the funds to meet the needs in the church. This is why overseers must be blameless. The church must be able to trust these men with the resources of the church. Now we learn from Acts 6 that men later called deacons would have assisted the elders so those pastoral leaders could focus on their “spiritual” leadership. And the congregation had a part in picking those men. Later in Acts 15 we see the congregation and the elders of the church in Jerusalem deciding together about how Gentiles were to be included in the church. So elders led, but looked to the congregation for important decisions.

This biblical pattern is reflected in the leadership structure proposed in our new bylaws. The congregation chooses elders who give oversight to the direction of the church assisted by staff, deacons, and gifted people in the church. So the spiritual direction is linked to the business direction so the resources God gives the church are used for the spiritual mission of the church. After two years of studying Scripture with some of the most highly regarded members of our church I am convinced that what is being proposed is thoroughly biblical. We should not hesitate to order our lives and our church according to Scripture.

So Titus is to enlist elders who are overseers entrusted with the *work of God* in the church and who are also entrusted with teaching *the Word of God*. So we’re back to...

Titus 2:1 - You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.

This is a command ... “you must teach.” The word “teach” here means ordinary conversation. That verb in the present tense shows that he is to talk about it all the time with believers. “Sound doctrine” is healthy, correct teaching about the Gospel

and the life to which we are called as followers of Jesus. Then Paul goes on to show how the Word is to be taught to different groups in the church. **Read Titus 2:2-12.**

So we get the picture of how various groups in the church are to be taught to behave and to be examples for one another and witnesses to non-believers in a corrupt culture. Growing disciples need to be surrounded by godly believers.

ILLUSTRATION – Recently I went to a band concert for our granddaughter Caroline. This is a band of younger musicians so they’re still learning to play their instruments properly. I got there a little early to watch them rehearse and the band director stopping them in the middle of a song to help the trombone players to breathe at the right time or to show the bass drum player how to hold his drumsticks properly. When it came time to perform the kids were riveted to the sheet of music in front of them showing them how to play their part. Now there was still a squeaking clarinet from time to time or a trumpet player not quite hitting their note, but I saw how diligently each player was working to play their part of the music as best they could. And the result was harmony.

Titus and the elders he recruits are to be spiritual band directors to help the various sections in the church play their part properly. The result would be harmony in the church and a godly witness to the community. Every person, whatever season of life they are in is to be taught, exhorted and encouraged to live godly lives.

There’s teaching for men and for women. So with next Sunday being Mothers’ Day I thought we’d just look at the guys today and the ladies next week. One time one of our men asked, “Pastor, why is it on Mother’s Day you always go easy on the ladies and tell them how great they are? But on Father’s Day you bring out the hammer and tell us all that we’re doing wrong.” Well, I hope this is encouraging to all of us.

So how are the men to live in this present age? In v.2 there’s the exhortation first to “teach the older men.” Why would Paul start with this group? Perhaps it’s because the Word has to be *taught*, but it also has to be *caught* by seeing good examples. And the older men would set a good example for others. The same will be true for older women.

ILLUSTRATION – Old age has its challenges mentally and physically. I heard about an elderly man who was visiting his daughter and he asked her for the password to her Wi-Fi. She said, “It’s taped under the modem.” After trying and

failing three times to log in the dad asked, “Am I spelling this right ... taped under the modem? You should get a shorter password.”

Old age has its challenges spiritually as well and they (we) need to keep trying to grow in the graces of Christlikeness. Well this is what godliness looks like in older men and the men who look to them as an example:

1. GODLY MEN ARE TEMPERATE.

Titus 2:2 says, “Teach the older men to be temperate.” The word means to be sober. It doesn’t say “somber”; they’re not to be grumpy old men. They’re not somber but sober ... restrained and un-intoxicated. Don’t let anything in this world intoxicate or impair you except the Spirit of God. Peter uses the same word in ...

1 Peter 5:8 - Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Next...

2. GODLY MEN ARE RESPECTABLE.

Titus 2:2 says “Teach the older men to be ... worthy of respect...” We’re talking here about the dignity and respect that should go with old age. It comes from wise living over the long haul. Senior guys should live in a way that engenders the respect of younger guys.

ILLUSTRATION – I had a farmer friend tell me years ago that one morning after it had rained he put on his boots and walked across the yard to the barn to feed his cows. Every step left a footprint in the mud. He looked back and saw that his little boy had followed him out the door and was doing his best to step in his dad’s footprints across the yard. My friend said, “God taught me something that day about leaving good footprints for my children to walk in.”

Godly men are to be worthy of respect. Next...

3. GODLY MEN ARE SENSIBLE.

Titus 2:2 says, “Teach the older men to be ... self-controlled...” This means being sensible in judgment. We’re not careless with our time or our words. The word “discretion” comes to mind. We avoid saying or doing anything that would offend

others. When we get old we think we've earned the right to say whatever we want, even if it offends. The wisest and most sensible older men I know do more praying and listening than they do talking. So when they speak we all want to hear what they have to say.

I'll come back to this in a moment when we get to the challenge to the younger men. Next...

4. GODLY MEN ARE FAITHFUL.

Titus 2:2 says, "Teach the older men to be ... sound in faith..." Men, we need to be focused on growing in our confidence in God ... anchoring our lives to the promises of God. Also...

5. GODLY MEN ARE LOVING.

Titus 2:2 says they are to be "sound ... in love." The word for love here is *agape*. It means a sacrificial commitment to the good of others. This is about our love for God. Jesus said that in the last days the love of many will grow cold. Don't leave your first love. And it's about our love for our wives and our children and our fellow believers. In elderly years it's easy to become selfish. "I've given all my life, now it's my turn to get my way." No! Godly men are loving. Next...

6. GODLY MEN ARE DURABLE.

Titus 2:2 says "Teach the older men to be sound ... in endurance." The word for endurance is combination of two words that mean "to abide under." It means to stay under the heavy load for as long as you have to, faithful and loving to the end.

ILLUSTRATION – In a football game when the fourth quarter comes often you see the teams changing ends of the field and as they do they hold up four fingers reminding one another to play all four quarters of the game.

What a powerful package of virtues ... sound faith, sound love and sound endurance. This is what Eugene Peterson called "a long obedience in the same direction."

Then Paul shows Titus what he is to do for the younger guys.

Titus 2:6 - Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled.

This is the same word Paul used back in v.2 for older men. It's also a challenge for younger men ... to have control of his spirit and to make wise choices. Proverbs 16:32 says that he who rules his spirit is better than he who captures a city. Along about this same time Paul wrote to another young pastor friend, Timothy, about what he should run from and what he should run to.

2 Timothy 2:22 - Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

ILLUSTRATION – Many of us are still in mourning over the retirement of #82, Cowboys tight end Jason Witten. What a great guy! In his retirement speech last week he talked about a time when he broke his jaw in a game and was trying to decide if he would play the next week. Coach Bill Parcells came to him with a challenge: “Durability and dependability, in this league, in this business, it’s invaluable.”

Where does that durability and dependability come from? It comes from becoming a new man on the inside that happens through faith in Christ. The Christian life isn't about self-improvement. It's about surrendering your life to Christ and allowing Him to do the inside work.