

Women's Bible Study: The book of Titus Titus Overview

In this first week of Bible study on Titus, we are going to read the entire book (which is available in one of the links on the website). But it's only three chapters so don't panic! You may want to read a chapter a day, or read it once all the way through and then again later in the week. Whatever works for you but this first week is about getting a high level view of the entire book and not zooming in on the details quite yet.

Before you get reading, here is a quick historical overview of the book as well as some themes to keep an eye out for.

Historical Context for the person Titus

- Titus shows up quite a bit in Paul's letters. We know he was a Gentile convert and was an example of a new Christian who was not raised Jewish.
- At that time one of the big problems was supposed Jewish converts claiming that new Christians from Gentile backgrounds had to observe the laws and practices of Judaism, including the men getting circumcised.
- Paul spent quite a lot of his time combatting this heresy and Titus is a prime example of a Gentile Christian who did not follow Jewish customs such as circumcision.
- We learn this about Titus in Gal 2:3, and since Galatians is one of the earlier Pauline books we also can infer that Titus was an early convert and therefore one of the longest co-workers and fellow missionaries who traveled and worked with Paul.
- Titus was at the famous Jerusalem Council records in Acts 15 and settled the question about how Gentile converse were to apply the law of Moses or not.
- Titus worked at the church in Corinth for a period of time which we can read about in 2 Corinthians.
- At some point he and Paul traveled to Crete to build a ministry there and Titus stayed behind to grow the church. It is in that context that Paul wrote this letter to him.
- Later, it seems he reunited with Paul, and was in Rome during Paul's final imprisonment based on the text of 2 Timothy 4 when Paul sends him back out.
- Paul sent him off to Dalmatia (modern day Croatia region) before he, Paul, was martyred.
- From all this we can see that Titus was an important figure in the early church and a critical player in the development of the early faith and gospel transmission.

Context for the Book of Titus

- Titus is an ‘pastoral epistle’ which means it’s a letter, but specifically it’s a letter written to advise Titus on the actual growth and development of the church.
- Paul wrote it around the same time that Paul wrote 1 Timothy. In fact there are many similarities between the two letters - both written to younger men Paul had trained to do the work of building the church in places he had evangelized.
- Titus was probably written in the mid 60’s AD, after Paul had completed most of his missionary journeys and after his first imprisonment in Rome, but just before his second imprisonment in Rome that led to his death. This means Titus is one of the later letters he wrote, possibly the second to last (2 Tim being the last).
- Crete had a number of harbors that made it a gateway to many places and nationalities coming through for trade - so it was a good place to start a church or series of house churches.
- Just like in one of Paul’s first letters to the Galatians, the people of Crete were being swayed by false teaching having to do with the former Jewish way of life.
- And much like Paul’s letter to Corinth, Crete had a fairly bad reputation and problem with how to live faithful, godly lives.
- These were new churches, with new converts, trying to get a handle on the gospel and the life it promised. Paul’s letter to Titus is one that instructs the Christians in Crete how to live in faith, and how this faith in Jesus would then give them the fullest sense of true freedom (in contrast to the perceived freedom of living according to the culture).

Content of the letter to Titus:

- Ok, be honest, if you were raised in the church what are your stereotype answers to the question, “What is Titus about?” or “What comes to mind when you think of Titus?”
- If you were not raised in the church you may have the advantage!!
- Titus comes with a lot of unfair baggage and a bad rap as being one of the epistles that promotes gender stereotypes for women in the church.
- This is NOT what Titus is about and this study will hopefully demonstrate that Titus is a book of encouragement for all Christians who are living during challenging times (ahem, just in case you know any one feeling challenged right now in the spring of 2020).
- Broadly speaking the book of Titus is about:
 1. Paul’s instructions to Titus as he works in Crete
 2. A new kind of household based on gospel freedom (as opposed to how families had been operating under pagan ways)
 3. A new kind of society based on gospel freedom (again, as opposed to the way pagan society was functioning).

Read:

- Read the book of Titus in the copy included in the second attachment.* It's laid out so that there is a wide left margin to write in.
- Circle words that stand out to you, don't make sense, are repeated etc.
- Write down thoughts or questions on the side.
- Underline or highlight places where the gospel message is clearly proclaimed.
- Underline or highlight phrases or verses that encourage you (and maybe jot in the margin why).
- When you are done reading the entire book jot down quick answer to the following question:
 - *One thing I hope I can understand better about the book Titus is:*

If you are so inclined, email me the answers to that last question (email below)! I'll keep it anonymous but would love to see a list of questions this first read and study has raised in your minds.

*The version included is the English Standard Version (ESV) which tends to be translated the most accurately but can be cumbersome because it's so precise in its word choices. If you prefer a more 'modern' sounding translation try the New Living Translation (NLT) or the New International Version (NIV), for a paraphrased version sometimes the Message is a useful read though it is so loose in its word choices that it doesn't always make the full point. All of these version can be found for free on biblegateway.com and I suggest reading two or three versions can always help you get a better sense of the text.

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