

Women's Bible Study: The book of Titus Titus Chapter 2

Read:

- The text of Titus can be found in a printable version with wide margins suitable for note taking on the website.
- Go back and read chapter 2 in detail this week noting anything you underlined or circled last week, and/or emphasizing new words or phrases that stand out to you.
- List out any themes you see or questions you have.

Verses 1-6 Questions: (Do your best to answer these first, but in this case you may also want to come back a second time after you read the commentary portion so you have further context)

1. Verse 1 begins with the statement, "But as for you," this implies a contrast. What is Paul about to contrast against?
2. In verse 2 we see a list of characteristics of the older men and in verse 3 of the older women. Write out the two lists and compare and contrast. (There is no secret code here, it's just interesting to compare the various instructions).
3. In verse 4-5 we get the famous "Titus 2" characteristics where the older women are to teach the younger women. While this list makes sense in the context of the early church time period, we all know that the word 'submissive' can be, and has been, taken out of context and used for inappropriate and wrong purposes. How does going back to Chapter 1:1 and Paul's first self-descriptor help you understand this word? How does Paul's critique of the Cretans in 1:10 also help you contextualize this?
4. What is the 'why' behind Paul's instructions at the end of verse 5? How does this 'why' also help give this section context?
5. Verse 6 is not highlighted quite as often in our churches, and yet what do we see in this verse? Paul has jumped around a little bit, read carefully, who is verse 6 written to?
6. What does the word that begins verse 6, "likewise" (or in some translations may say 'similarly') imply about it?

7. What word do you see used in verses 2, 5 and 6? What are the three groups Paul is talking to in each verse with this charge?
8. These are instructions about handing down the faith and modeling it in our lives. Can you think of examples where you have learned by watching a role model in your life? Can you think of examples that have been present for your sons or husbands or brothers? What is the importance of having role models in the faith? Or, if you are older, what is the importance of passing on your knowledge and faith to those younger than you - remember Paul's why's as you answer.

Verse 1-6 Commentary:

- These are the verses that get used, misused and have been historically taken out of context in the American evangelical church. What should be a series of very equalizing instructions to members of the house, have often focused in (wrongly) on just the women.
- While it may seem imbalanced that Paul has more instructions (on just pure word count) for the young women in comparison to the young men, the fact of the matter is, these instructions were to Titus with respect to the family units and households.
- In ancient times, (and perhaps in many ways still today with obvious exceptions and better recognition and understanding around women/ vocation/gifting) it was the women who shouldered the bulk of the household work.
- What could seem like an imbalanced charge to young women over and against young men, may have been an acknowledgment that the young women would be doing most of this work; making most of the family-based decisions and having the greater responsibility when it came to raising a family that the Cretans could see the glory of God through.
- Remember that Paul opens the letter to Titus in chapter 1 by saying he, himself, is under submission to God and the problem in Crete is people being insubordinate.
- So chapter 2 paints a picture of the standard household unit where everyone does their thing properly and orderly and in a way that would make the families of Crete, who were getting upset or pulled into myths, stop and take notice.

- But we know from other letters Paul wrote that he was aware that there were some women who also had roles 'outside the home' as we would say it now.
- In Romans 16:1 he refers to Phoebe who was a deaconess and he frequently included instructions to greet his friends and fellow workers who included women.
- When reading challenging verses it is important to see them in context of their chapter, their book, and in the overall body of work of the author.
- *Everyone* in Titus 2 is given a charge and all members of the household are to live in such a way that when people look at them they see families not caught up in myths, but living in grace.
- Further, as we saw, Paul does charge the men in Titus 2 in verses 2 and 6 and, Titus himself, was a man receiving the entire pastoral charge and he was to encourage the young men 'in a similar way' as the older women were to encourage the younger women. (vs 6).
- Many churches have 'Titus 2' women's groups (including at times, our own) and that is good and appropriate, but our churches could (and should) equally have a Titus 2 men's group.

Verses 7-8 Questions:

1. Verses 1-6 were to the men and women of the household, verses 7-8 pulls back and addresses who? (You may need to compare a few versions of the text to settle on a translation that works best for this . . . I might suggest looking at the NLT).
2. Verse 8 (like verse 5b) gives us a little bit about the 'why' - - that is, why is Paul giving Titus, and the Cretan families these instructions?
3. How do you think about your actions? Do you think about them in a way that God may actually draw people to Himself?
4. In our culture what are some examples where our actions might put us or the faith to shame, or conversely, make even our biggest critics have 'nothing evil to say' at least about how we conduct ourselves?

Verses 7-8 Commentary

- Paul has just given a charge to the men and women of the households and now he is pulling back to remind Titus that just as the household's need to live their life in accordance to the faith, Titus does as well as their leader.

- Inasmuch as the Cretan community watched the families, the families watched Titus and he was there to train and instruct the local church leadership.
- The opponents, or the cultural Cretans, were watching for any reason to point fingers and show how the church was no different than they were.
- This is a tough balance for us today: on one hand we know that life lived with faith in Jesus DOES change us and make our hearts inclined towards him with actions that match it.
- On the other hand we know that until we are called home to glory, we are not fully there yet and we do fall short of the calling put on our lives. We will make mistakes and we will give our ‘opponents’ reason to point the finger. *Unless* we are able to show that even in our mistakes we rely on God and His grace alone (which Paul will expound on in vs. 11).

Verses 9-10 Questions:

1. These can be some equally challenging verses to our modern ears. Again we see the same word used to describe the household servants that Paul used to describe himself. What does it automatically imply that Paul is asking Titus to instruct the servants in matters of living out the faith?
2. What do you think it means when Paul instructs the servants to ‘adorn the doctrine of God our Savior’? What do you think of when you think of the word ‘adorn’? (the NIV says to ‘make attractive’).
3. Do you think about your actions as drawing people into this lifestyle because they see your life as attractive? What are some examples of ways you could make the faith attractive to nonbelievers just through your normal life?

Verse 9-10 Commentary:

- When Paul talks about slaves or servants in that time period, it represented a different concept than what we think of when we think of American Slave (though it still is not something we agree with to be very clear).
- Again like with Paul’s views on women, it’s important to consider Paul’s full body of work.
- The entire New Testament letter of Philemon is written from Paul to Philemon about his run-away-slave Onesimus and how Paul seeks to reconcile the two men. It’s quite clear that Onesimus was an important

Christian convert in Paul's life assisting him while he was imprisoned and we see Paul's obvious regard for him as an equal - a 'brother' - when writing to Philemon.

- This is not to say the system of the servant/slave/bondservant was on Paul's radar to be overturned, but more to say that Paul clearly believed that the faith should be the same even across societal positions and ought to create a relationship of equality within the church.
- This is quite different than the historic American slavery construct where equality was not recognized at any level.
- The word Paul uses in verse 10, telling the slaves to 'adorn' the gospel is the word that we get our word cosmetics from. The idea was to help show off, or to bring out the beauty of something.
- What an interesting charge to give to slaves! Not only were they to perform their jobs in a way that showed off the faith and highlighted, or brought out the beauty, of the gospel, but also Paul was asking even more of those in positions of servanthood - - positions that could be the hardest. But it was in those moments their lives could show that true transformative power of the gospel.
- Paul gave this great responsibility to what the world might say were the least among the household, and yet that is who Paul asked to shine the brightest and bring forth the truth of what life in Christ could really produce in a person's heart.

Verses 11-15

1. Verse 11 again gets to the 'why' of these new standards for households. What stands out to you most in verse 11 having just read through all the new ways for households to operate? How do we see from just this first phrase that Paul sees the faith as an equalizer across the various categories of people?
2. Verse 12 is for everyone and is in contrast to the way people were living on Crete - so while Paul addressed various group separately at first, here we see many of the same rules of life being applied to everyone. What does the 'training us' refer back to? What is doing the training?
3. How is the word hope used in verse 13? How is this different than how our culture uses the world hope?

4. In verse 14 we see what the work of Christ was: it was to redeem us out of the lawless behavior (for example the cultural Cretans). But notice then what Jesus does with those who follow him - - what are the two 'p' related things? How does that fit into the larger theme of servanthood and subordination of Pauls' letter?

Verse 11-15 commentary

- In verse 11 when Paul says 'all people' he is referring again to the groups in the household listed just before, this grace from God IS the great equalizer.
- This is not an 'all people will be saved' statement, rather it is a 'the gospel is for all people in all positions' claim.
- 2:11-14 is the gospel message. The household instructions are all leading to this - this is the big WHY and we should see that our lives are always to be pointing to the big WHY
- And the reason we can do all this is made clear in verse 12, it is not our own fabulous ability but because of God's grace - it is through grace alone that any of these families in Crete, or today, could point people to Jesus. Paul called them to this higher standard while at the same time reminded them that no-one could live up to such a standard apart from the grace of Jesus Christ.
- We can be encouraged by all this because the work of Christ is already accomplished. It was accomplished for the families of Crete and it is accomplished for us today through the work of Jesus, and that is what our hope in verse 13 is rooted in.
- Hope, as found in the Scriptures, is not wishy washy aspirational thinking, it's not a Disney style hope. It is a firm reality, already realized in Christ. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is being **sure** of what we hope for, and **certain** of what we can not see."
- This hope Paul describes is sure, it is certain and our faith in Christ is 100% secure.
- It is for THAT reason that the families on Crete could live the way Paul charged them to live. And that kind of certain faith and hope should be attractive to a world full of myths and whispers that are based on lies.
- Finally, this chapter comes full circle. Paul talked about various family members of the household, all having a role to play, all under authority in some form or another just as Paul was, and ultimately it points us to the larger reality which is that: it is Jesus alone who accomplishes this purification (think salvation there) process and. . . he possesses us.

- *Our culture does not want to be possessed by anything and as a result it's possessed by almost everything.*
- Our drive for success, money, education, beauty, social favor . . . it possess the hearts and souls of people.
- Jesus says if we follow him, he alone will possess us, and in doing so he purifies us, he saves us and he assures us of a hope which is firm and real and a life lived with purpose and eternal security.