

Series: Open Door

Sunday, June 5

Titus Sermon: #3: Being a Character Witness

Scripture: Titus 2:1-10

Text: "In everything set them an example by doing what is good." -Titus 2:7a

Theme: Chapter 2 of Titus describes the kind of person God intends His followers to be. He describes the character of men, women, and those working for others. God wants to develop the character of His people to influence those around both in the church and also the wider community. God wants to develop our character.

Blurb: We are witnesses to others around us, both to other Christians, and to everybody else. How we live and what we do shows God to others. Come Sunday to hear about how God wants to develop you as a character witness to others around. How we live makes all the difference. Every day we are on the witness stand!

Opening Song: "Good, Good Father"

Welcome: Pastor David (Explain HC)

Songs: "Hosanna (Praise is Rising)"

"Your Grace Is Enough"

"Did You Feel the Mountains Tremble"

Worship Prayer

Kids go to Kid's Church

Celebrating the Graduates: Pastor David & Andrew Buschena

Erin Goodale, Andrew Bonsell, David Werner

Not present: Gabriel Benson, Jared Thiele

ASP Commissioning: Pastor David

Students: Morgan Laughlin, Torri Richter, Josh Sarver, Emily Masterjohn

Adults: Andrew Bonsell, Ann Kleiner

PP#1: Being a Character Witness

"In everything set them an example by doing what is good." -Titus 2:7a

Being a Character Witness. Titus 2:7a "In everything set them an example by doing what is good."

We're walking on the other side of God's open door. That means we have made the decision to walk with Jesus: walking the walk, living the life.

That's why we're spending some time in the biblical book of Titus. Paul, who wrote this as a letter to Titus, tells him to tell the other Christians on the Island of Crete what it looks like for them to walk the walk as Christians in their setting. And the foundational principle woven throughout this whole letter is Paul's linking of Gospel belief with Gospel behavior. Put your believing on Jesus, and that means keeping your belief and behavior connected.

PP#2: Outline of Titus

- Chapter 1: 1-4 Paul's greeting
- 5-9 Titus should appoint elders
- 10-16 Correcting the false teachers
- Chapter 2: 1-10 Instructions for men, women & slaves
- 11-15 God's loving-kindness

Today we're looking at chapter two. Here, Paul gets very specific. This is what it looks like to live the way we believe.

I think, just to get our head around it all, I'll just read through the chapter first. That way you get a sense of what's going on.

PP#3: Titus 2 (NIV)

- 1 You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.
- 2 Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. 3 Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. 4 Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. 6 Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled.

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PP#4: Titus 2 (NIV)

- 7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. 9 Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, 10 and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

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PP#5: Titus 2 (NIV)

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. 15 These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

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PP#6: *In very large letters: “The main point!”*

So, from all these verses, what is the main point? What is the most important word from God that we must take to heart. Ready? Here it is. The one thing you must live by is...Titus 2:5, “Tell women...to submit to their husbands.” This is the Word of the Lord! Amen.

[Begin to walk away as though the sermon is finished. Then, pause and come back.]

What? You’re going to just let me walk off like that?

Perhaps you are just too much in shock.

Or perhaps you were torn. I mean, you know it’s Scripture, I just read it from Titus. So, that means we revere it. But at the same time, especially women, on the inside you were going, “What?!” Men, at least married men, were going—on the inside!—“Yeah!” but didn’t dare let that out, lest our wives would hear...and that would not go well.

Maybe that’s it...you all know my beautiful and submissive wife so well, that although I may be able to get away with this in the pulpit, but you’re satisfied that Reese would settle things once we got home. Am I right?

You know, to me, verse 9 is equally problematic, “Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything.” What? Paul is telling slaves to shut up and take it? What is going on?

PP#7: *An image for straining to listen amid all kinds of noise.*

See why pastors are reluctant to preach on Titus? But there is Gospel here—this is in the Bible on purpose!—and on this graduation Sunday, with all the learned people here, we just may be able to get into this enough to hear God’s Word of life.

To do that, I’m going to suggest that we work backwards. For, it’s when we see where Paul is going with all this, and take a look at that, that we can see better why he is saying this, and what he means by it.

Now, although I read it before in a much more literal translation, now we’re going to switch to the Contemporary English Version, which, although trying to stay close to the original verbiage, also tries to put it in the kind of English that we use today. That may help us a bit.

PP#8: Titus 2 (CEV)

1 Titus, you must teach only what is correct.

15 Teach these things, as you use your full authority to encourage and correct people. Make sure you earn everyone's respect.

So, first of all, notice that Paul ends the chapter the way he begins it. He is telling Titus to teach what is correct. And, teach people with your full authority! What authority? Claiming to be Paul's appointee? That might help, but look at the end: *earn* everyone's respect! Titus is to earn his authority by how he lives. You see, Paul spends the chapter telling them to live in a way that earns respect. And he finishes by telling Titus to do the same. This is key to this whole passage: earning respect by behavior: Titus to the Christians, the Christians to one another, the Christians to others.

PP#9: Titus 2 (CEV)

11 God has shown us how kind He is by coming to save all people. 12 He taught us to give up our wicked ways and our worldly desires and to live decent and honest lives in this world.

13 We are filled with hope, as we wait for the glorious return of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. 14 He gave Himself to rescue us from everything that is evil and to make our hearts pure. He wanted us to be His own people and to be eager to do right.

In fact, this is what *God* has done! God has earned our respect by how He showed us His loving-kindness by coming in Jesus to be our Savior. You see, Paul calls them to give up their wicked ways and earthly desires and to live honest and decent lives, not because he said so, or even because God said so. We do it because God has done it, has modeled it for us. God asks us to live like He does. We do what we see God doing. What did He do? "He gave Himself to rescue us from everything that is evil and to make our hearts pure."

What is the right teaching? It is Jesus, in whom we see God sacrificing Himself so we can be His own people. Jesus came. Jesus loved. Jesus helped. Jesus gave up His own personal pleasures. Jesus self-sacrificed. Jesus suffered. Jesus died. Jesus became our Savior.

PP#10: Being a Character Witness

1. Living *for* God by living *like* God

When we walk with Jesus, we walk as Jesus walked. Not because we have to obey, but because in living this way, we find God, we find life, we find what it means to be truly alive. We wake up! Living for ourselves slowly numbs us to shallow living, where we just kind of exist. Living God's way is startling, but it startles us awake. It's a life of sacrifice and giving, but it is exactly this that is the life of true joy, inner peace, and real fulfillment that's really living!

Church, do you want to live? Do you long to be truly alive? Are you *eager* for authenticity? Then, get ready for the submit! It's coming! That's how.

PP#11: *Image of Jesus washing the disciples' feet.*

God witnesses to me all that He is, His love, His sacrifice, His character. And, it is His character that others witness in us. We witness to, by our behavior and belief, God's character to others around us.

Just as God came in Jesus, not to be served, but to serve, so, when we walk with Him, we serve, and not seek to be served. Our lives are character witnesses pointing to God.

PP#12: Titus 2 (CEV)

7 Always set a good example for others. Be sincere and serious when you teach. 8 Use clean language that no one can criticize. Do this, and your enemies will be too ashamed to say anything against you.

9 Tell slaves always to please their owners by obeying them in everything. Slaves must not talk back to their owners 10 or steal from them. They must be completely honest and trustworthy. Then everyone will show great respect for what is taught about God our Savior.

A couple of verses earlier, in verse 7, Paul says it bluntly. Others, who are not Christians, should be able to look at us and see Jesus. “Always set a good example for others.” Be authentic when you explain to others about God in your life. Others notice not just what you say, but how you say it. Clean language. You see, people who are resisting God look for excuses. “Well! Pastor David just swore. Did you see him pocket that extra money that the clerk overpaid him? Why is he always talking so negatively about people when they aren’t around? So that’s what a Christian is, huh?”

No. Live your faith in a way that others have no good reason to blame you for not wanting Jesus. Live honorably, so that you never provide an excuse for others to resist God. You are a character witness!

And this is why Paul talks to slaves like he does. Does Paul condone slavery? Actually, not! Elsewhere, Paul says that God intends all people to be equal: slaves and free. This is not about value. Biblically, slaves are not worth less than others. But in a system where there are slaves, what should slaves who are Christians do? They have no different calling than any other Christian. They should treat their masters, and everyone else, like Jesus. That is what we are all, always to do.

But Paul is on to something here. Even though slaves may be wrongfully treated like property, even though they may have masters who wrongly think their value is somehow less than themselves, Paul says that slaves have a unique opportunity to be character witnesses. They can take their deplorable lot and use it to glorify God. They can show others what righteous living is like. They can gain respect and impress others. “Wow, did you see how that slave gave back to his master what he could have stole. How is that? What? He claims to be a Christian? Well, my neighbor claims to be a Christian. Come to think of it, he treats me like this slave treats his master. Wow, Christians must mean it when they talk about loving their neighbors and their enemies. I need to learn more about their God.

PP#13: Being a Character Witness

1. Living *for* God by living *like* God
2. Showing Jesus in you to others

A Christian, says Paul, is 1) being a witness to everyone for God. And, 2) it is showing Jesus in you to others. Now, it is on these godly principles of living like God, in order to be witnesses to others, that Paul builds everything he is saying here. Now we’re ready to go back to those first verses.

PP#14: Titus 2 (CEV)

2 Tell the older men to have self-control and to be serious and sensible. Their faith, love, and patience must never fail. 3 Tell the older women to behave as those who love the Lord should. They must not gossip about others or be slaves of wine. They must teach what is proper, 4 so the younger women will be loving wives and mothers. 5 Each of the younger

women must be sensible and kind, as well as a good homemaker, who puts her own husband first. Then no one can say insulting things about God's message. 6 Tell the young men to have self-control in everything.

Paul starts, back in verse two, with older folks. These, you see, are the ones who are supposed to get it right more than the rest! They've learned life's lessons. They have seen the emptiness of selfish living. They've had a chance to walk with Jesus longer and can testify to this life with Him. Their characters bear the strongest witness.

You wizened men, you who have walked with Jesus for awhile, you are to show self-control, a focus on what is important, how to be reasonable when hot heads spout off. Your faithful-love is what sustains your patience. Your care for those younger than you, that is why you are so gracious.

You wizened women, your behavior reveals your deep love for the Lord. You're different. You don't gossip like others around you. You don't use wine to cope or avoid. (For some of you that may be ice cream, or chocolate. Am I right?) You don't avoid your issues by self-medicating. You wizened witnesses to God: teach! Teach what is good, what is right, what is life-giving. Teach by your words and your actions.

Why? Because younger folks are watching. I am watching. Andrew is watching. Erin is watching. You are a witness to God's character for us. You have an impact on our lives. And then, by how we live, we can have an impact on the lives of others around.

Encourage younger women to be loving wives and mothers. Now, it might be easy to *feel* love for husbands, perhaps even more so for your kids. But this is not *feelings* of love. This is actions of love, conforming your behavior to your commitment. Love in service, and blessing. Love is so misused in our world. But this is not God's kind of love. God's love is demonstrated through sacrifice. Now, this doesn't mean giving yourself away, in unhealthy or enabling ways. It means fully being yourself, by willfully gifting your love. This includes what we call tough love, doing what is needed, rather than what is wanted. Love is not a feeling. It is a verb. It is action.

Younger women are to learn to be sensible, and kind. And they are to learn to create a home that is good, and healthy, and life-giving for the whole family. Don't hear in this verse the patriarchal role of homemaker. Paul's point is not that women are to be barefoot and pregnant.

Paul is writing to 1st century Romans. In that culture, yes, men were dominant. Women were property. But that culture was also built on honor. Men, who were the ones in authority, had honor. And this honor was built by his character, his possessions, his job, his family ancestry, and by how his own family behaved. A wife could ruin her husband's public respectability if she lived defiantly.

Paul is saying here that wives, even though wrongfully treated like property, have a unique opportunity to be a character witness. She can take her subjugated role and live it in a way that brings honor to her husband, and brings witness to others. It's not that she doesn't deserve better. But this is how she can live sacrificially like God in her setting.

I just need to clear this up. Paul, being a man of his day and culture, may have very well had no problem with people being slaves or wives treated like property. But nowhere in his biblical writings does he ever say that's OK. Instead, he tells wives to submit to their husbands, and husbands to love their wives like Jesus loved the Church. How does Jesus show His love? By submitting to, serving and dying for those He loves. So, to be like Jesus, husbands need to love their wives by submitting to, serving, and dying for them. There is mutual submission here, all under God.

My wife has always told me, when I try to live fully obedient to Jesus, and I live self-sacrificially for her and our family, then she readily yields to my decisions in those areas of my authority. I just hope, dear, that I can strive to earn your submission! You show Jesus to me that way! And I need God's help to love like Jesus!

What we need to hear as Scripture here is how Paul is saying that wives have an amazing opportunity to show God's love to their husbands, and by doing that, showing God's love to everyone else around. Not that wives should ever be treated by their husbands in any other way than the full value they have as God's daughters. But wives show Jesus to others by how they treat their husbands. And husbands strive to reciprocate that special treatment.

Verse 5, "Then no one can say insulting things about God's message." That's the point!

Young men, verse 6, also need to demonstrate their witness to God's character.

PP#15: Being a Character Witness

1. Living *for* God by living *like* God
2. Showing Jesus in you to others
3. Be role models for those who are younger

Well, we survived Titus 2. Actually, pretty amazing stuff. The Gospel is there!

God showed us how kind He by coming to save all people. Therefore, as recipients of that loving-kindness, we live differently. We live *for* God by living sacrificially *like* God. We live by showing Jesus in us to others. We live as role models for those who are younger. We live in a way that our belief and our behavior are one.

PP#16: "He gave Himself to rescue us from everything that is evil and to make our hearts pure. He wanted us to be His own people and to be eager to do right." -Titus 2:14

I don't know about you, but as I read this, I'm overwhelmed. I am so very aware how far I have yet to go. My life is not as holy as my witness needs it to be.

So, I want to turn your focus to Holy Communion, and remember verse 14. Jesus knows our weakness, our failings, our faults. And He came to rescue us from them. He gave Himself, dying on the cross to take all of this away from us, winning for us forgiveness, and a new start from the inside out.

I want to invite you to sit with verse 14 for a bit. Use it for your prayer time. Open your heart to Jesus. Confess the ways you struggle to live up to Titus 2. Ask Jesus to rescue you from all that is evil, and to make your heart pure. Ask Him to make you His own, and to change you from the inside out to be eager to do what is right.

Go in prayer to Jesus. He is giving Himself to you!

Prayer Time

Time of silent prayer

Words of Assurance: David

Hear this good news: Jesus "gave Himself to rescue us from everything that is evil and to make our hearts pure. He wanted us to be His own people and to be eager to do right." This is the Jesus who calls us to meet with Him right now.

Calling in the Kids: David

I'm going to invite the kids to come in for Holy Communion. And as they come, I'm also going to ask the Rev. Dan Hair to come and help me officiate.

Introduction to Holy Communion: David

This table, with bread and juice, is an expression of Jesus' love for us. It is a way for us to remember Jesus' sacrifice, and to proclaim He offers it to each and every one of us here today. We are all invited to receive, as Jesus invites everyone to experience Him anew.

Words of Institution: Dan (extemporaneous)**Prayer of Thanksgiving / Prayer for the Holy Spirit:** David (extemporaneous)**Lord's Prayer:** David**Invitation to Come Forward:** David**Serving the Elements:** David, Dan, Andrew & Erin
“Come Thou Fount”**Closing Song:** “Holy, Holy, Holy”**Benediction:** David

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR JUNE 5, 2016

Sermon: “Being a Character Witness”

Scripture: Titus 2:1-15

Opening prayer

Introductions: Share about how you have tried to live with the biblical teaching of submission.

Background: Skim Titus 1. Share what you remember about this book, its author, and situation.

Read: Titus 2:1-15

1. What stands out as you hear this chapter read? What caught your attention?
2. What would you suggest is the main theme or message of this chapter. Put it in one sentence.
3. Verse 1 and 15. Paul begins and ends the chapter with instructions to teach. Why might this be so important for Paul to tell Titus?
4. Verse 2. Describe a godly older man. Share about someone you knew/know who demonstrates/d these characteristics.
5. Verse 3. Describe a godly older woman. Share about someone you knew/know who demonstrates/d these characteristics.
6. Verse 4-5. What is the relationship between older and younger women?
7. Verse 4. Why might women have to be instructed to love their family members?
8. Verse 5. How would you interpret the instruction for wives to be subject to their husbands, to someone today who asked you about its meaning?
9. Verses 7-8. What is the overarching reason for behaving well? What greater purpose does it serve?
10. Verse 9. How would you interpret the instruction for slaves to be subject to their masters, to someone today who asked you about its meaning?
11. Verses 11-15. What is the connection between God’s grace and our living?
12. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?