

HOW YOUR LIFE CAN MODEL THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Teaching Through Titus Verse by Verse - Part six

Sunday, October 16th, 2011, a.m. - Teaching #1508

HOW OLDER AND YOUNGER WOMEN WORK TOGETHER TO BRING HONOR TO GOD'S WORD

Titus 2:1-5 - "But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. [2] Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. [3] Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, [4] and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, [5] to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled."

Those first four words reveal Paul's understanding of the authority of God's Word for the church. Titus wasn't to line up with the most culturally acceptable mind-set. There were many messages available to hold the attention of the church. There were lots of voices to tempt the church's ear. It's in the middle of all of this that Paul rings out his "*But as for you....*" to Titus. Titus had a different message. It wasn't always the most popular or the most prevalent. But that made no matter. Titus was working with a *given* message - a *revealed* message.

Another introductory point. This opening text is really a detailed expansion of what Paul taught about a healthy church in other portions of the New Testament:

1 Corinthians 12:13-18 - "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. [14] For the body does not consist of one member but of many. [15] If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. [16] And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. [17] If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? [18] But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose."

This is so much more than just some point of pentecostal doctrine. This is the actual *nature* of the church. This is how the church must function if it is going to function at all in this world. The church is a body. You can no more separate each group in the church, and still have a healthy church, than you can separate your eyes from your head, or your hand from your arms and still have a healthy physical body.

There is a fundamental *connectedness* to the life of the church. That's the basic reason you need to *go* to church regularly. You never get spiritual enough to make it in Christ on your own. How much life does a finger have on its own?

But these words also describe the kind of *ministry* that must take place *within* the church. We see so clearly the need for each one to be involved in the life of the others. We see so clearly the kind of relational, connected ministry people must be involved in. We must touch each other's lives.

Also, Paul's illustration points out the fundamental *differentiation* on the body. Knees and elbows are both important. But they are not identical. None of the parts of your body are interchangeable.

All of this is being considered Paul's words to Titus. So the questions immediately come up: "*Where's the map for this kind of ministry? What is the role of each part of the body in Christ? Who is to do what? How do we know if we're on track in the kind of things we do with each other in our church?*"

In our last teaching in this series we saw the key role Paul had in mind for the older generation in a healthy church. Paul outlined the kind of character he wanted to see formed in the older men in the congregation (**verse 2**). You can read verse two out loud in any church and everyone will say, "Amen!"

But then you come to **verses 3 to 5**. These aren't very popular concepts anymore. But Paul urges Titus not to shun his responsibility to call each group in the church to actively fulfill a divinely ordered plan for their calling to ministry in Jesus' Name. And that call is based on this foundational understanding and conviction: *If God calls me to it, it's good for me. The best thing I can do with any area of my life is discover my Creator's intention. He never diminishes anything about my life.* He gives life abundant, but only and always on His terms.

And now we pause and remember. Certain key truths must be digested *first - before* other truths can be deeply received. There is a certain *order* in divine revelation. Certain truths open the door for others. Certain principles form the *operating system* for everything else that will be learned and used in the Christian life.

Here's the bedrock conviction that *prepares* the church to hear a text like today's. Here is the conviction that pushes back against the cultural mind-set that would turn many women against Paul's words by telling them God's Word is cheating them. Can you think of another time in history when Satan came with that very same message?

Here's the truth that must be digested *before* other key truths will be embraced. Let this principle regulate everything about how you respond to God's Word for your life - **Psalm 84:11** - "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly." Church, God's plan always brings *favor* and *honor*.

Let me stay with this for just a moment longer. It's the forgotten idea behind Paul's words in **Philippians 4:4-9** - "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I

will say, Rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [8] Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. [9] What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Notice the phrase, “....the peace of God will....guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”(7). This is not usually thought through. This guarding isn't like a mystical peace of meditation. It's not peace like a tranquilizer or sleeping pill. Let your whole being rest down on God's revealed truth. Let it **rule every other voice in the media and your own mind**. Let it regulate your thinking. It's not just for **forgiveness**. Let it regulate your thinking. It will protect your whole life!

It's with that understanding that we turn to Paul's instruction to Titus regarding the women in the church at Crete:

1) **THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTINUED TO PRESS THE DEVELOPMENT OF GODLY CHARACTER IN THESE WOMEN EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE ALREADY OLDER IN AGE**

I had a woman in our church tell me she didn't like reading the Apostle Paul because he was a male chauvinist. She said his teaching had no relevance for women in the church today.

Of course, what she really demonstrated was the fact that she had no understanding of the nature of the Scriptures. Paul isn't giving us his **opinion** on the ministry of these women when he writes to Titus. Nor are any of the other writers of the New Testament - on **any** subject.

Peter says these writers are carrying on the words of the Holy Spirit: **2 Peter 1:20-21** - “....**knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. [21] For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**”

Don't miss the basic point. These are **God's** ideas. These are **God's** instructions. You can't do anything else right in the Christian life until you understand the **source** of your belief and practice. There are **two bedrock ideas** without which no true Christian faith can survive: First, **if God says it, it's true, no matter how many secular minds may disagree with it**. And second, **if God says it, it's the best way to live, no matter how much more freeing other options may appear in comparison**.

Paul writes to Titus of the godliness of these older women. Like their male counterparts in **verse one**, they are to be **reverent** and **not slaves to much wine** (3). Then Paul says they are not to be **malicious gossips** (3). I've actually heard people who take these words to enforce the idea that while men may have certain sins more natural to their gender, women are cited by Paul as having a more natural inclination toward the sins of slander and gossip. I think that's a terrible way to use this verse.

As in each of the other congregational sub-groups, Paul singles out virtues and instructions that suit the kind of ministry he lays out for them. In other words, Paul is about to underscore the importance of these older women maintaining a **teaching relationship** with the younger.

The very nature of that kind of **relational, hands on instruction** will require a great deal of **one on one** personal time investment. And in those kinds of personal settings there would be the greatest opportunity to spread gossip (whether those involved were men or women) and say things that would be damaging to the rest of the body of Christ. Gossip always appears **consequence free** when it's done in secret. And because these things would be said in **private**, there might be added boldness to gossip and speak in ways that were totally ungodly, simply because the threat of **being caught** was so vastly reduced.

So it's because of their **ministry** rather than their **gender** that Paul cautions so strongly about the need to have these older women be free from the sin of gossip and slander. They were to resist the temptation to use their time with these younger women for anything other than godly, practical instruction in the matters of marriage and home.

This is such practical instruction. For men and women, for young and old, nothing measures your spirituality like the character of your **private speech**. Jesus said **'out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.'**

2) **IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT, IN THE MIND OF THE APOSTLE, THAT THE OLDER WOMEN CONTINUE TO BE IN TOUCH WITH THE YOUNGER**

The reason Paul instructs Titus so specifically about this is obvious. Every natural inclination of these women would be to separate themselves from their younger counterparts. And everything in **our** culture **splits the older from the younger**. Fashions are different. Musical tastes are different. Energy levels are different. Worship styles are different. Activities and schedules are different. In fact, **what in the world could possibly motivate bringing these two groups together?**

Only **God** would bring them together. Paul assumes both of these groups would be so anxious to please their Lord they would put aside whatever divisions their own respective cultures would erect. Paul assumes these older women would be so hungry to fulfill their ministry in the church they would **seek out** younger women in need. They would **cross over** any personal hang-up about the foolishness

of the younger generation. They would **set aside** their own tastes and agendas to compassionately encourage their younger sisters in Christ.

And because Paul assumes the greater maturity of the older women he naturally puts the primary responsibility on them to take the initiative, to seek out the younger. They aren't to wait for the younger women to **come to them**. The younger women may or may not yet be that responsible and wise. The older are to take it to the younger.

3) WHAT THE OLDER WOMEN ARE TO TEACH THE YOUNGER

Titus 2:4-5 - "...and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, [5] to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled."

a) **Older women must teach the younger women to love their husbands (4).**

We'll only look at this first specific train today. Obviously, Paul is thinking of **married** younger women here. And the important point is younger women don't **naturally** know how to love their husbands. Let's face it - most husbands aren't **easy** to love. **Romance** may come naturally. But New Testament **love** is very difficult. It's an art. It's a growing fruit and grace of the Holy Spirit.

And therein lies the tricky part. Because, like all the fruits of the Spirit, love's growth in our heart - and in our marriage - doesn't depend merely on our **physical development**. The growth of love - and every other fruit of the Spirit - depends on our **crucifixion of self**:

Galatians 5:24-25 - "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. [25] If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

The walk of genuine Christian love, especially in a marriage, is a very **costly, disciplined venture**. We need all the help we can get. The fascination of **romance** can quickly fade in the rough experiences of life. Young wives need encouragement. They need godly advice and correction and instruction. And their young husbands are probably not even close to knowing how to help them with this.

Where do young women learn to be good wives? In three sessions in a pastor's office before the wedding? Not all young women have the blessing of a godly mother. Increasingly, young women are growing up in homes where marriages have fallen apart. They've lived in a home with only one parent. And however faithful that one parent may have been (and those parents certainly need our prayer and support) that young daughter can't possibly learn the rigors and blessings of the marriage relationship without the living example of two married parents.

There are wonderful older women in this church who have been down the road of marriage. They have learned from years of prayer and experience. They have learned how to weather storms, how to face trials, how to face both prosperity and poverty, how to endure through sickness and health.

There's a whole generation of young women who need to learn those things. Find a young mother and give her your time. Take the time to fortify some trendy young mom against the rampant, rotting, fruitless counsel of the ungodly. She won't discover that beautiful way of life on her own until it's too late.

We'll have more on these verses next week. But here's the wrap-up thought. This whole passage - and more yet to come - underscores a vital principle. The deepest of Biblical principles aren't likely to be learned **just** by seeing them in print on the pages of the Bible. They are so counter-intuitive to our fallen nature and media educated culture that we require **proof** of their life-changing, joy-producing potential. Of the surface, many of the most precious Biblical principles appear **life-diminishing** rather than **life-engendering**.

God's plan for overcoming this debilitating natural blindness to what actually produces life is to **flesh out** the freeing potential of His Word in the lives of others who have already discovered it's power.

So yes, you and I desperately need God's Word to replace darkness with absolute light. And we **also** need - **more than most Christians know** - the body of Christ - **all** of it - to see the **beauty** of God's Word played out before our very eyes.