

Titus 2:1-10 Adorning the Doctrine of God in the Body of Christ

Jesus' command to his church before he ascended into heaven is this: **“Go and Make Disciples . . . teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.”** Through the years you have often heard me say, “We want to create an environment where making disciples is normal.” Well, this is one of those passages that shows us what “making disciples” looks like in the body of Christ. And let me say, these words are not suggestions, either from Jesus or Paul. They are commands. In our context with Titus, Paul says in 2:1: **“Teach what accords with sound doctrine.”** And then, down in v. 10, he says that when Titus teaches these things and they are put into practice, the church **“in everything adorns the doctrine of God our savior.”** To adorn means to enhance the beauty of something through decoration. I think of putting precious gems and stones into a crown. When we do these things in the church, we make God more beautiful to ourselves and the world. So, what does it look like in the local church? I want to highlight three truths from this passage: 1) Leadership, 2) Sanctification, and 3) Community of Teachers.

1. We adorn the doctrine of God through our leadership. This is the reason for the letter to Titus. In 1:5: **“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.”** The truth is clear. If we want to ADORN the doctrine of God in the church, there must be clear and effective leadership. If we want to put beautiful ornaments in the crown of the doctrine of God in the church, if we want the truth of God to be displayed in this world, we must begin with leadership. Look at v. 1. Paul begins, **“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.”** The word for “teach” in the Greek is “speak,” but the context is clearly teaching. Look at v. 3, speaking to the older women: They are to **“teach what is good.”** And then in v. 7: **“and in your teaching show integrity . . .”**

Now, we've already spent ample time in past sermons emphasizing that an elder/pastor/overseer must “hold on to the gospel,” which Paul calls in 1:9, **“the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine.”** And we spent a lot of time on the qualifications of the elder concerning his character (1:6-10). Today, I want to emphasize the responsibility of the elder to lead the body in such a way that creates a disciple making environment. Notice the emphasis to Titus. V. 1: **“As for YOU, teach what accords with sound doctrine.”** And then down in v. 6: You Titus, **“Urge the younger men to be self-controlled.”** And then in v. 7: **“Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity . . .”** etc. Here, we see the necessity of direct oversight in the teaching ministry of the church. And we get this, at a particular level, namely in the preaching of the Word on Sunday mornings and even in our Sunday School classes, and to some extent our home groups. And I think we all agree: the primary means of following Paul's command to the elder is through the public preaching and teaching of the Word.

And, I agree. THIS is primary. However, this passage goes beyond the public ministry of the Word by the elder, and it clearly involves everyone . . . ALL OF YOU. Here we see this ministry move to particularly the **“Older women,”** and the **“Older men.”** Then, we see the involvement of the **“younger men,”** the **“young women,”** and in their context **“slaves.”** This is EVERYONE, which is the focus of truth #3 below. But, here, I want to emphasize the responsibility of the elder to make sure that everyone is involved. Eph. 4:11-12 sum up what I think we see in this

passage: **“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ . . .”**

As elders, this is our responsibility (not yours). Now, it is your responsibility to be godly, to hold onto the gospel, to make disciples yourselves, etc. and to make sure you call elders who understand and will do their best to equip the body for the work of the ministry. This week in our elder meeting we invited Josiah to come and give us an update on his upcoming work and overseas trip. And he brought all his friends (Jeremiah, Zameer, and even big brother Caleb). And we asked them what they think Titus 2:10-16 looks like in the body. We had a great conversation.

But, let me say from an elders’ perspective, we fall short! Why do I say this? Well, many folks in the church have been Christians for many, many, years, and still the mindset is to come and receive a sermon, and a little bit of fellowship, and then go home and week after week after week, after month, after year after year, not be concerned with some type of teaching ministry in their own lives . . . “Older men . . . teach the younger men” and “Older women teach the younger women,” etc. This means we have to be involved in one another’s lives with the purpose of teaching one another, making disciples of one another in the local body. So, how are we doing?

Now, part of the problem is that our elders and our elders’ wives don’t know what this looks like because all we’ve known is the public preaching of the word from our pastors! We’ve missed the private ministry of the Word in our day to day lives. No one has ever invested time in our lives in the ways I think Paul describes here in this passage, which we will see more in a moment. But, from an elder perspective, I think we must re – evaluate why this is so in the church! And, if we are to “adorn the doctrine of God our savior” we, especially as elders, we must be willing to take a close look at how we create such an environment.

2. We adorn the doctrine of God as a sanctified people. Though I am not preaching vv. 11-15 today, I get this truth from v. 14, which cannot be separated from vv. 1-10. Look with me. **“who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”** As the Church of Christ, we are set apart as a special possession of God. And we are set apart for godliness; we are set apart for good works.

I have already applied much of these character qualities in vv. 5-9, and don’t want to be repetitive. As with the qualification of elders, the same character qualities are commanded for every believer (except the gift of teaching). And, I believe Paul is merely highlighting some qualities that were lacking in particular regards to Cretan cultural sins. So, let me read through these verses and make some comments. Starting in v. 2: **“Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.”** This word for “older men” is used only twice in the NT. First, with Zechariah the priest, the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:18). And the 2nd time, Paul used this word of himself when he was around 60 years of age (Philemon 9). The probable age is 40 and above. So, he addresses the older men in the congregation telling them to be godly in all things. They are to be sober-minded, or temperate in all they do, not being swayed from the sins that lead to excess.

Next, “dignified,” which means “worthy of respect.” When you look at this man and his life, he commands respect. You know you can trust this person. Next, self-controlled, which is the same word used in the qualification of elders. One theologian says, “*Fickleness, rash passion, and impulsiveness should be things of the past for men in this stage of life,*” especially since they have made a Christian profession and are now engaged in the work of the gospel.

The next word is “sound” or “healthy.” And this “soundness” is described by faith, love, and endurance. Now, we must remember that Paul’s aim in the church at Crete was order. And this began with Titus, who would appoint elders, and then move to the old men. As you know, we lived in Russia for many years. And Russian society was considered to be a matriarchal society. This means, the women led the way, especially the grandmothers. The men were often engaged in excessive drinking and other activities with their friends, neglecting the important moral necessities needed at home. Paul may have said something similar if he were writing to them. 1:8: “*liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.*” (Now, this is a general statement. There are certainly men who did not fit this mold.) But, the point for Paul was for the older men to be reliable, to be the anchors against the issues of the day.

By way of application, I believe the state of godliness of the older men in a congregation such as ours goes a long way to preserving order and stability in the church. So, if you are over 40, and you have been a Christian for a long time, we must ask ourselves, “*Is this us?*” If not, we should repent, knowing that it’s not how we begin the race, but how we finish it. And, God is a God of grace!

Next, Paul addresses the older women in respect to their moral qualities. In v. 3, they must be “reverent in behavior.” The literal translation here is “fit for the temple” which means she must always live as if she were in the temple, in the very presence of God. Next, he says she must not be a slanderer. She must be able to control her tongue in truth, not being a gossip, always using her speech in a godly manner. Next, she must not be a slave of alcohol. The abuse of alcohol was prominent in Crete. And these older women must set an example to the younger women.

Then, in v. 4 he says, “**They are to teach what is good.**” The best teachers are those who practice what they preach. And the focus of their teaching is the young women in the congregation. Notice what this “good” teaching involves: “**so train the young women to love their husbands.**” I can imagine how difficult this must be, especially if the husband were an unbeliever that fell into the category of a “lying, evil, lazy glutton” (1:8). Next, teach them to love their children, which seems to be an easier task. Next, teach them to be “**self-controlled,**” “**pure,**” “**working at home,**” “**kind,**” and even “**submissive to their own husbands.**” Now, there is much to be said here, and not enough time to say it this morning. But simply notice Paul’s emphasis is the family. Remember back in 1:19 the false teachers were upsetting “**whole families.**” Paul is concerned for the home and the relationships in the family. Brothers and sisters, one of the reasons he singles out older women is that they are equipped to train the younger women to be godly and sanctified in the ways they live their lives at home.

Next, Paul turns to Titus as he is to “urge” the young men to be “self-controlled.” I think we get this, especially the men. Youth and male hormones are not good for a sinful lack of self-control. I will spare you the stories from my own life. But, by the grace of God. One long-standing

faithful pastor was asked what is the key to a healthy church. And he says, *“Brother, pour your life into 18-25 year-old men. No matter how old you are, always be about this business. And this will lead to a healthy congregation in the years to come.”*

Next, Paul addresses Titus saying in vv. 7-8: **“Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.”**

Finally, Paul speaks to slaves saying in v. 9: **“Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith . . .”** Now, this one’s doesn’t apply directly because we don’t have slaves as such. But, the principle applies as we submit under the authority of another whether it be God, government, bosses, parents, etc. In the end, when we act in such ways, we **“adorn the doctrine of God our savior.”**

Application: Here is the reason to practice and teach such godliness: Verse 5: **“that the word of God may not be reviled.”** The literal translation is “blasphemed.” We must not give the word of God any reason to be spoken ill of in the world.

3. We adorn the doctrine of God as a community of teachers. I get this truth from the entire passage. Titus teaches. The older women teach. By implication the older men teach. Here we see an entire community of teachers. Should we think otherwise? Jeremiah spoke of a coming day, a “NEW” covenant for the people of God when He will write his law on their hearts and put his Spirit with them, and all of them will know the Lord (Jer. 31). Yes, we have gifted teachers and elders, but all of us are teachers in Titus 2. This is a disciple making community. This is the church. Let me end with some applications as to what I think this looks like for us.

Application: This must begin in the home. This is the most natural place for such character and teaching. What an opportunity! Fathers, Mothers, older siblings, teach one another. Make disciples of one another. Teach one another to obey the commands of Christ. The responsibility is not the church . . . primarily. As we talked in our elder meeting this week, this application must be our greatest concern.

With this in mind, let me make an observation that I believe to be true. The congregation in Crete in some regards was very different from us. The gospel hadn’t been around very long. And these gospel applications in morality were probably not prominent. Now, they were a pagan, sinful, culture. So are we! BUT, I can look around the room and say with great confidence that virtually just about every person here grew up in a home that at least called itself “Christian.” And if we are not a church that looks like THIS, how do we “adorn the doctrine of God our savior” in this world. And if we do not look like THIS, then we must ask, “Why not?” This is a good question for your elders, and for all of us.

Frankly, the reason some of you have not seen real changes in your sanctification for many years is because you’ve never been converted. You are not a Christian. You love your sins. You love the darkness. But, I assume most of us are Christians. We have the Holy Spirit. We genuinely want to follow the commands of Christ. But, we’ve never seen this Titus 2 environment modeled

in our lives. As elders, we are responsible to equip the body for the work of the ministry. But, at the same time, all of us are responsible to do these things, live godly, teach one another. And in this way, we adorn the doctrine of God. We say to ourselves and the world, “The Gospel of God is true; it is powerful; it is the source of goodness and hope in this world.”

Application: Everyone in the body is involved in making disciples. Let me ask, “Concerning those who teach others in the local body, which of us is excluded?” You are either a teacher, or you are a student aspiring to be a teacher. This means we have to be involved in one another’s lives outside of Sunday mornings. Older men, if you are to teacher the younger men, you have to be proactive and intentional. If you are older, seek out a younger man, invite him to lunch, invite him to your house. Older women, the same applies. You must be intentional. Elders, little by little, we have to do the same. As good as Sunday school is in teaching the word, it doesn’t create this kind of environment. And let me say also that this kind of environment is messy. We all have sins. And, as a culture, we are very individualistic. Honestly, we don’t want people in our lives. But, if we are going to adorn the doctrine of God in the way we make disciples of one another, this must change.

At the end of the day, Where else do we see such an environment than in the church of the living God? 1) Responsible leadership; 2) Godly living; and 3) A Community of teachers. All these things we do because of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

These things are the gems and the ornaments in the crown. Let’s fill them all up!