

STUDY GUIDE

PLEASANT RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH
TITUS: LIVING IN THE FAMILY OF GRACE
THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS
TITUS 1:1-9
07/23/2017



MAIN POINT

The leaders of a congregation model the Christian life for the church.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Have you ever had a job where the job description and the actual work didn't align? Did that bother you or excite you? Explain.

In addition to competency in your job, what else is required in order for you to be successful in your work?

We have good days and bad days when it comes to our jobs, but there is more to a great work experience than simply being competent or skillful. We need to fit into the culture of the company, get along well with other team members, and also be people of good character. It's no surprise, then, that when Paul wrote Titus about the need to raise up leaders for the church in Crete, he included not only their work, but also their character. Congregational leaders model the Christian life for the church.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Paul had been released from Rome. He probably then went to the island of Crete, as well as to Ephesus and Macedonia. Titus, Paul's colleague in ministry, was left behind to work. The letter to Titus was written later to offer him advice and encouragement to a group of believers who required more formal and established leaders. These leaders had to model for others what it meant to be a Christian to a watching pagan world.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ TITUS 1:1-4.

Paul referred to himself as a "slave," or "a servant of God." What are both the negative and positive connotations of what it means for someone to be enslaved?

According to verse one, what was Paul's purpose for writing to Titus?

Paul referred to Titus as a son in the faith. Who has been a spiritual mentor in your life? How did that person impact your life?

Paul began the letter by identifying himself as “a servant of God.” Only here did Paul use this phrase. Elsewhere he used “servant of Christ” (see Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Phil. 1:1). The phrase emphasizes Paul’s willing submission to Jesus, who willingly submitted His life on Paul’s behalf. Paul served the One who served him. The designation of Titus as a son points to the endearing and intimate relationship between the two. This special relationship assured that in Crete, Titus rightly represented the aging and persecuted apostle, but also likely served to encourage Titus personally. Notably Titus was a Gentile, which clearly demonstrates that the gospel is for all people.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ TITUS 1:5-9.

What competencies or skills did Paul say a church elder must have?

What is the relationship between those skills and the character traits Paul said elders must have?

Paul’s “job description” is not complete, but more general in nature. What other competencies and character traits should be included in the job description of a church leader?

Think about your church. What qualities do you look for in a spiritual leader? How do you know if a person is qualified to be a spiritual leader?

Titus was to appoint leaders in every place where there was a group of believers. Probably the entire congregation selected these leaders with the encouragement of Titus. He had the official responsibility, as a representative of Paul, to appoint them to office. Spiritual leaders are to be well grounded, holding to the faithful message. They are not so much innovators as they are transmitters of the gospel as taught to them. Obviously, this implies that new converts should not serve as church leaders.

Both positive and negative functions of a church’s spiritual leaders are described. Those equipped with the truth are to encourage others in the congregation through good teaching. They also are to refute those who are opposed to the truth. Paul expected the leaders of Crete’s churches to meet certain qualifications as they fulfilled their God-given responsibilities. Today, we will be able to trust spiritual leaders who are biblically qualified and faithful in their responsibilities.

How can a man’s example of family leadership give a window into his potential as a church leader?

Apply these verses to your own spiritual growth. What negative behavior do you need to give up? What positive behavior do you need to be more intentional about developing in your life?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Which seems to be emphasized more strongly in the church today—character or function? Which should be emphasized, and why?

What should be the relationship between the way a person lives and the message that person declares to be the foundation of his or her life?

Discuss how your group can affirm your church’s spiritual leaders for their faithfulness in their responsibilities.

PRAY

Thank God for the elders and spiritual leaders of your church. Ask for God's wisdom and discernment for the elders and spiritual leaders in your church.

COMMENTARY

TITUS 1:1-9

Who was Titus? Titus is mentioned by name in the New Testament only in 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Timothy, and Titus. Personal facts known about Titus are not extensive. He was a "Greek" (Gal 2:3), probably one of Paul's own converts (Titus 1:4) and subsequently one of Paul's "co-workers" (2 Cor 8:23). Although the personal data are limited, Titus's role as Paul's coworker in the missionary endeavors of the early church is impressive. Even though Titus is not mentioned by name in Acts, all the evidence strongly indicates that Paul presented Titus to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 as living proof that the Jewish rite of circumcision was not necessary for salvation (see Paul's account in Gal 2:1–10, especially noting v. 3). This indicates that Titus had received the Holy Spirit and that this fact was clearly and undeniably evident to others. Second Corinthians, containing the most direct references to Titus, offers a portrait of a devoted and trusted associate of Paul. Titus is seen working in difficult and sensitive situations within the troubled Corinthian church. His duties with regard to that church included delivering Paul's "severe letter" (2 Cor 7:6–7) and taking the leadership role in encouraging and administering the church's contribution to the collection for the Jerusalem church (2 Cor 8:6–24). We can reasonably infer from 2 Corinthians that Titus possessed considerable people skills (naturally acquired or Holy Spirit given) and that he was a man of unquestioned integrity, especially with regard to financial resources. (Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, vol. 34, The New American Commentary, 272–273)

1:1-4 Paul had been released from Rome. He probably then went to the island of Crete, as well as to Ephesus and Macedonia. Titus, Paul's colleague in ministry, was left behind to work. The letter to Titus was written later to offer him advice and encouragement. Paul began the letter by identifying himself as "a servant of God." Only here did Paul use this phrase. Elsewhere he used "servant of Christ" (see Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Phil. 1:1). Paul's salutation is quite long for such a short letter. In the salutation Paul emphasized the purpose of his letter. Titus is identified as "my true son in our common faith." This designation points to the endearing and intimate relationship between writer and reader. This special relationship assured that in Crete, Titus rightly represented the aged apostle.

1:5. Paul got to the purpose of the letter by reaffirming Titus's purpose for staying on the island of Crete. There is no mystery here: I left you in Crete that you might straighten out what was left unfinished. The churches there were young, fledgling congregations without proper organization, leadership, or strong teaching. Titus was assigned the task of forming these gatherings into balanced, functioning churches.

Paul told Titus to appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. Perhaps he had told him the necessity of this before. But, for whatever reason, Titus had not done it yet, so Paul mentioned it again. Without sound leadership, the church would flounder and become susceptible to perverted doctrines.

1:6. Paul told Titus the characteristics a person should have in order to assume leadership within the church. The standards for church leadership are consistently high; they do not change based on location or time. Paul wrote almost identical instructions to Timothy. (For a more detailed explanation, see the Commentary for 1 Timothy 3.) The same basic principles hold true in any circumstance. The inner spirit and outward life must be consistent, ethically pure, and morally innocent.

Though Paul did not insist on perfection, he did require that the leader live above blame, or beyond accusation. The elder must be blameless. The Greek word here, *presbuteros*, is translated variously as "bishop" or "elder." These words point to those men within the church with official leadership roles. Such a person keeps his accounts settled with God and others. He confesses his sin, makes restitution when needed, and commits to purity in all areas of life.

He must also be the husband of but one wife. Literally, he must be a "one-woman man." In addition, he must be a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. In other words, the church leader must exhibit a dedication to family life. More of a person's character and inner qualities are revealed at home than at work or in public. Paul implied that those who do a good job at home possess the ability to do well in other arenas of leadership as well. The parent's ability to secure the obedience of his children reflects his own faithfulness, commitment, and leadership capability.

1:7. The standard for leadership remains high, because the overseer (leader, pastor, elder, bishop) is entrusted with God's

work. Paul understood that church leadership is a position of trust given from God to those official guides of his church. Such a trust required faithfulness in every corner of a person's life: he must be blameless.

As has been noted before (1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23), blamelessness refers not to perfection but to a pattern of life against which no charge of wrong can be brought. Such a person, having committed a sin, immediately seeks forgiveness and enacts restitution, if needed. Sinful behavior in a blameless person is recognized as an aberration, not a normalcy.

Paul refined his definition of blamelessness by first highlighting five negative characteristics, none of which can reside in the qualified church leader. The presence of any of these traits betray a person as lacking self-control and, more seriously, lacking the strength of God's Spirit upon his life.

Not overbearing. An overbearing disposition comes from arrogance or insecurity, resulting in a domineering, despotic manner of leadership which crushes the spirit and extinguishes the gifts and abilities of others. Leadership by control quickly divides a group into factions and arguments, taking away the spirit of unity and cooperation.

Not quick-tempered. Anger typically finds its root in pride. A person's temper flares when, set upon a certain course or determined in his opinions, he is thwarted or interrupted. Such a person "knows" he is right and disallows any other opinions. In those who do not get their own way, anger spits its fire quickly. They demonstrate emotional immaturity, lack of Spirit-control, and an inflated view of their own agenda. In any case, such behavior in a leader will not prove a good model for others, nor will it promote unity, love, and the development of spiritual life in others.

Not given to drunkenness. This is another reference to control. People who abdicate the control of their actions to substances such as alcohol or drugs cannot be considered fit for exercising guidance or authority over others.

Not pursuing dishonest gain. Financial integrity, or its lack, exposes a great deal about a person's inner character. The pursuit of money, and the fascination and absorption which it generates, pulls a person's affections away from legitimate loves and service. Add to that a person whose greed pushes him into dishonesty, and you have a leader controlled by money. Such a person will make decisions not from wisdom but for personal advantage. He will barter away his faith for gain. Obviously, such a person is unqualified as God's representative in the community of faith.

1:8. He must be hospitable. This became a hallmark of Christian life. First-century hospitality involved vulnerability and sacrificial giving, in contrast to modern hospitality, which centers around entertainment, parties, and potluck suppers. The church leader was to have a reputation for welcoming others into his home, especially believers in need. This meant identifying openly with the cause of Christ and his oppressed people. In addition, it typically meant giving from one's poverty, rather than from wealth. Most Christians lived in humble homes, with food adequate to meet only their own needs. Hospitality required them to open their personal belongings and supplies for the welfare of others.

One who loves what is good. A leader must bear the quality not only of doing good but of devotion to any moral and ethical acts that result in good and benefit others.

Who is self-controlled. Here again is the flip side of those unqualified to lead. Self-control reveals itself in a myriad of ways—through patience, gentleness, sobriety, faithfulness, financial integrity. It is through God's Holy spirit within a life that the self can be harnessed and brought under control. Such a person is proof of God's divine life within. He is qualified to lead others into spiritual growth.

Upright. This refers to pure conduct before other people.

Holy. Holiness refers to a cleansed heart and relationship with God.

Disciplined. This covers the entirety of life—a person exercising control in his thoughts, attitudes, actions, and speech.

1:9. Having described the personal qualities of a person fit for church leadership, Paul finished with one more necessity. The leader must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught. Those who presume to lead must embrace the traditional teachings which came through Christ and the apostles. Leaders must not come from among those who flirt with new doctrines. Not only must their behavior be open to observable goodness; they must also remain unwavering in their commitment to the faithful message of truth.

Paul offered two reasons for this requirement in leaders. First, dedication to the true gospel message would qualify them to encourage others by sound doctrine. Only truth brings change, encouragement, and actual spiritual development. False teachings can offer only temporary gratification or intrigue. They can never satisfy. Secondly, knowledge and adherence to sound doctrine will equip a person to refute those who oppose it. False teachings, human inventions and philosophies create confusion and bring destruction upon the thinking and faith of many.