

## STUDY GUIDE

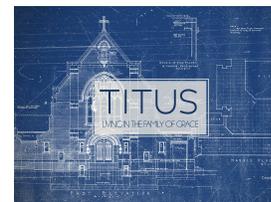
### **Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church**

**TITUS: LIVING IN THE FAMILY OF GRACE**

**IS CHRISTIANITY TRUE?**

**TITUS 1:10-16, CORINTHIANS 15:12-19**

**07/30/2017**



### MAIN POINT

Christianity is unique among all other world religions because it is testable and makes sense of our lives and our world.

### INTRODUCTION

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

**In your daily life, how do you determine if a claim someone makes is true? What steps do you consciously or subconsciously take to evaluate the truth?**

**What type of evidence makes you more likely to believe someone is telling the truth? Why?**

**ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ TITUS 1:10-16**

**Christians have a God-given duty to know and boldly defend the truth. If we are going to defend the truth and silence those who teach false doctrines, we must be confident that we can know the truth. Paul instructed Titus to silence the false teachers in Crete. Today, we will be given some tools we can use in our defense of the faith.**

Pastor and theologian A.W. Tozer once said: "What comes to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." Everyone who has ever lived thinks something about God. Among all the options to consider, how can you be sure Christianity is the truest and best choice? Scripture teaches that Christianity is unique among all world religions because it is testable and makes sense of our world. All other regions fail to meet this test.

### UNDERSTANDING

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

**ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-19.**

**How can we be sure the resurrection is true? What evidence do we have?**

**Glance back at 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. What evidence did Paul give in these verses to verify the truthfulness of the resurrection?**

**Why is it important that we view the resurrection as a matter of historical fact?**

All of the New Testament treats the resurrection of Jesus as a matter of historical fact. The resurrection of Jesus is the single most important event in all of human history because it verified all that Jesus said and did. Paul sets forth the proof of the resurrection by recounting the basic facts: Jesus died, was buried, and rose again. He knows this because Jesus appeared to hundreds of people many of whom were still alive when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians.

**Can Christianity be tested? Why or why not?**

**How should the world see Christians if the resurrection is not true? How should the world respond if it is?**

Christianity is testable because it is a matter of fact. The Bible is a true story reflecting the experiences of real people. If the resurrection were not true Christians should be pitied because we are hanging our hope on something that cannot save us. However if Christianity is true the world must respond in some way to its claims because eternity is at stake.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 2:8-10.**

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**What do you notice in these verses that makes Christianity different than all other world religions?**

**How do you receive salvation as a Christian? How do you acquire salvation in other world religions you are aware of? What is the difference between Christianity and other religions?**

**How does the free gift of grace level the playing field for all Christians?**

**What does the word “grace” mean? Why does the free gift of grace make Christianity attractive?**

Simply defined, grace is unmerited favor. Salvation for the Christian is only available by a free gift from God to hopeless sinners. In this, Christianity is unique. Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, each of these demand steps of obedience from their followers in the hopes their good works will tip the scales over their evil works. All other religions are about what you do to appease a god or gods. Christianity is about what God has done for you.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 119:159-160.**

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**How does Christianity make sense of our world? Are other worldviews capable of this? Why or why not?**

**What does it mean to say that Christianity is objectively true? Why is that important? Where can we verify the truth of Christianity?**

**Read Romans 1:20 and Psalm 19:1-4. What do these verses teach about the God of Christianity?**

Christianity is objectively true, meaning it is true for all people, in all places, at all times. Christianity alone makes sense of

our world. Only Christianity can explain the problems of evil, suffering, and pain. The Bible presents a cohesive and wholistic view of human life. No other book and no other system of beliefs make sense of the world we live in like Christianity, because Christianity is based on the One who created the world we live in and everything in it.

## APPLICATION

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

**Do you have any friends, family members, or coworkers who doubt the truthfulness of Christianity? How could you engage them with the truthfulness of the gospel?**

**In what ways does Christianity help you make sense of the way you experience the world? How does this help frame your conversations with people of other faiths?**

**What answers do Christian beliefs give to the problem of pain and suffering in the world? How could you share this hope with people around you who are going through a hard time?**

**How has the truthfulness of Christianity been a source of hope and comfort to you personally?**

## PRAY

Thank God for revealing a trustworthy and accurate account of Himself in the Scriptures. Praise God for the unconditional grace He offered through Jesus Christ and the way Christianity makes sense of our lives. Pray earnestly for opportunities to share what you learned on Sunday with your non-believing friends over the next few weeks.

## COMMENTARY

### **1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-19.**

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15:12. Though it is uncertain what caused some Corinthian believers to deny the resurrection of the dead, Greeks viewed bodily death as final, with some saying the spirit survived disembodied. This view likely influenced the church at Corinth.

15:13-15. If Christ were not raised, then apostolic preaching of the resurrection was without foundation, the Corinthians' faith was void, and the apostles were false witnesses. "Faith" here refers to the content of the gospel message, and is synonymous with "system of beliefs."

15:16. A restatement, in reverse order, of the implications of the Corinthian skepticism regarding resurrection.

15:19. Christians should be pitied more than anyone if there is no resurrection, for in that case we have placed all our hopes in a falsehood. Christianity is fundamentally a resurrection faith.

### **EPHESIANS 2:8-9.**

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2:8-9. The work of salvation is for God's glory and is not accomplished by human works. The whole process of salvation is not a human achievement, but is an act of God's goodness. The emphasis is always on Christ, the object of faith, not on the amount of faith. Salvation is by God's completely unmerited favor. In the Greek text, the grammatical construction of the entire phrase by grace through faith serves as the antecedent of the phrase, it is God's gift. We must not portray grace as God's part and faith as our part, for all of salvation is a gift from God. The work of reconciliation is not from yourselves and not from works so that no one can boast. This prevents the slightest self-congratulation or boasting in the believer. God alone saves.

2:10. One of the goals of salvation for us is the fruit of Christlike character and of good deeds. Grace can be compared to the power grid that extends to someone's house; faith is having the switch turned on to connect with the power; and good works

are like all the helpful equipment that springs to life when connected to the power supply with the switch turned on.

In eternity past God prepared ahead of time that His redeemed people would do these good works as evidence of His grace. Here is His power not only in giving us new life but also in helping us to walk in good works throughout this life and into eternity. We cannot do anything to earn salvation. Yet God means for us who have received salvation to produce good works. If we have been given new life, raised with Christ, and seated with Him, we will certainly do good works as evidence that we have received this great salvation.

### **PSALM 119:159-160.**

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Psalm 119 is an acrostic par excellence. The eight-verse sections are arranged according to the order of the Hebrew alphabet. Nearly every verse contains one of eight words for God's revelation: "instruction," "decree," "precept," "statute," "command," "judgment," "promise," and "word."

119:153-160. Realizing his utter dependence on God, the psalmist prayed that God would give him life (vv. 154,156, 159). The psalmist despised the way of the wicked (vv. 155, 158; cp. v. 53).

119:159-160. The psalmist recognizes three essential realities about God's Word: it is life-giving, true, and eternal.

### **TITUS 1:10-16**

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**1:10.** Paul transitioned easily from the false doctrine that must be opposed to the nature of those who were promoting such error. He began by categorizing them as **rebellious**. Paul then offered a clue about who these false teachers were. The harm sprang primarily from the **circumcision group**. These were probably people who had turned to Christianity from Judaism.

**1:11.** Paul was adamant. **They must be silenced.** They were **ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach.** We cannot be certain what these people were teaching. Whatever the particulars of their message, it is clear that its damaging effects penetrated deeply into social and relational structures. As if this were not enough, the spiritual damage from these teachers came out of a depraved desire for **dishonest gain**. Selfishness lay at the heart of the false teachers and their religious system.

**1:12–14.** Paul next refuted the false teachers by calling forth the testimony of **one of their own prophets** who said, "**Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.**" By restating the slanderous words of one of the false teachers' own prophets, Paul intended the slander to work back upon itself. The false teachers were guilty of the very wrongs for which they chastised others.

Paul's response to the duplicity of the false teachers and their followers is clear in the directive he gave Titus: **rebuke them sharply.** Sometimes the pastor or church leader must boldly confront those who wander from the truth. Though exhibiting gentleness and care, the leader must not shrink from using strong words. He needs to speak to the issue and clarify the wrong and evil into which the individual or group has fallen. The motive comes not from an enjoyment of confrontation, or from the heady position of pointing out faults, but from an earnest desire that people **will be sound in the faith.** Encouraging and promoting healthy faith—correct belief and righteous behavior—should remain the goal of all who lead within the church.

**1:15.** True purity resides not in the practice of ritual or in devotion to rules and regulations. Purity that God recognizes and commends comes from within, and person can attain this only through faith in Jesus Christ. Cleansed from within, that person becomes free to live in purity, washed of all selfishness. The mind, transformed by the truth, ignites the conscience to obey God willingly in all manner of living.

Those who refuse the truth—who stubbornly exalt themselves, who believe they can attain righteousness through self effort—are impure. Their minds continue in enslavement to false ideas, self-deceptions, and empty philosophies. In such a condition, their consciences remain damaged and dysfunctional. Both their minds and consciences are corrupted. For such individuals, nothing will ever be pure, right, or righteous because they remain defiled within.

**1:16.** The marks of a Christian are genuine relationship with God and conduct that grows in holiness. But the marks of the false teachers and their followers are the absence of these qualities: **They claim to know God** (have a relationship with him), **but by their actions they deny him** (their conduct remains selfish and worldly). These people do not just irritate church life; they threaten it. Dangerous men, they divide what God seeks to unify. They destroy grace through laws and commands. They confuse what Christ clarified through the gospel message. Therefore, Paul declared, **they are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.** While they appear to seek God, following rituals of outward purity, before the Almighty they are disgusting. While they demand strict obedience to rules and regulations, before God they remain defiant. Though they trumpet their actions, Christ declares them unfit and useless

Knut Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 345–348.