Living with Integrity

Believers are to live so that they bring honor to Jesus.

A long-time church member disagreed with a teaching that his pastor asserted in a sermon. In the church member’s view, the pastor’s statement was not consistent with what the Scriptures taught about the matter. So the church member made an appointment to speak privately with his pastor about the statement. On the day of the meeting, the pastor welcomed the church member into his office, and the two men began to talk. The church member summarized what he had understood the pastor to teach and then referred to several Bible passages that in his view contradicted the pastor’s interpretation. The pastor listened respectfully and fully to the church member’s explanation. At the end, however, the pastor stood and with a stern look suggested that perhaps it was time for the church member to find another church to join. Evidently, the pastor believed that the church member had inappropriately questioned his authority as the church’s spiritual leader and teacher.

On the other hand, stories can also be told of church members who stubbornly refuse to follow their God-called leader’s pastoral authority. In doing so they can damage the church’s fellowship and reputation in the community. This session’s Bible passage focuses on the responsibility of all generations of believers, both leaders and followers, to consistently live in such a way as to bring honor to Jesus.

Understand the Context

Titus 2:1-15

After dealing with the expectations of church leaders and the problem of the false teachers in chapter one, Paul turned his attention to the behavior of believers. He addressed believers in five groups as defined by age, gender,
and social status (older men, older women, young women, young men, and slaves). The overlaps in instruction among these five groups as well as between the groups and their leaders indicate Paul’s high expectations for all believers. The goal of his instruction was for believers to be above reproach (2:5), to preempt opponents from having reasons to accuse believers (2:8), and to make the gospel inviting to the world (2:10).

Paul grounded his call for moral behavior in the grace of God. Jesus redeemed and cleansed believers by His death and resurrection. As His people, Christians are to be eager to live a life of good works. Titus was to encourage godly behavior and rebuke anyone who rejected sound teaching.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

SPOKEN (Titus 2:1)

VERSE 1

But you are to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching.

Paul had characterized the false teachers of Crete as those who “claim to know God, but ... deny him by their works” (Titus 1:16). In stark contrast, Titus was to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching. Paul expected pure, holy behavior from Titus. The Greek word rendered proclaim can also mean “speak,” “say,” or “teach.” Titus’s speech, whether in conversation or teaching, was to be a consistent demonstration of the gospel. As such, it would contrast sharply with the words and works of the false teachers. The type of teaching advocated by Paul would produce spiritually healthy believers; the empty talk of the false teachers would produce spiritually ill and corrupt followers.

ACTED (Titus 2:2-10)

In these verses, Paul detailed what he meant in verse 1 by the phrase “things consistent with sound teaching.” The behavior expected from spiritually healthy followers was structured around five groups of people, factoring in age, gender, and social status.

VERSE 2

Older men are to be self-controlled, worthy of respect, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and endurance.

Paul began his instructions by focusing on Christian older men. The Greek term rendered older men, although similar to the term in 1:5 that refers to
a church leadership role, here emphasizes males of advanced age. Philo [FIGH
loh], a first-century Jewish philosopher, used the word to describe men over
sixty years old. Most of the church leaders Titus was to appoint probably fell
into this age group, which may explain the reason the expected character
traits for both groups are similar (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).

The Greek word rendered self-controlled refers to avoiding drunkenness.
Figuratively, the term could describe keeping one’s thoughts, speech, and
conduct under control. For the Christian, self-control is not human grit and
determination but part of the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:18).
A self-controlled believer is one who lives by the Spirit. The same word describes
expectations for overseers (see 1 Tim. 3:2) and wives of deacons (see 3:11).

Next, Paul exhorted Christian older men to be worthy of respect (“grave,”
KJV; “dignified,” ESV). The term refers to a Christian man’s being genuinely
deserving of respect because both his character and actions are consistent
with his faith in Christ. He is no pretender; his reputation is authentically
Christlike. This term also was used in connection with deacons (see
1 Tim. 3:8) and their wives (see 3:11).

The Greek term rendered sensible (“temperate,” KJV; “self-controlled,”
ESV; NIV) can also mean “of sound mind,” “modest,” or “chaste.” The sensible
Christian gives careful consideration to issues and makes responsible, God-
honoring decisions. Paul expected Christian older men to set the example of
responsible, godly behavior in the pagan surroundings in which they lived.

Finally, Christian older men were to be sound in faith, love, and
endurance. This trio of Christlike qualities is similar to another trio of
words Paul used elsewhere (see 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 5:8). Paul wanted
Christians to consistently demonstrate faith in God, love for one another,
and endurance in all circumstances until the end.

VERSE 3

In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior,
not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking. They are to teach
what is good,

The phrase in the same way indicates that Paul had no less holy expectations
for older Christian women in the churches as he had for older men. He urged
Titus to instruct the older women to be reverent in behavior. The Greek word
rendered reverent originally described conduct befitting someone devoted to
serving in a temple. The word came to be used of all behavior that was holy or
godly. Paul may have anticipated that a number of Cretan women in this age
group were widows who depended to some degree on the churches for their
basic support (see 1 Tim. 5:5-7).
Reverent behavior in general included avoiding two specific irreverent activities, hurtful speech and drunkenness. First, older Christian women must not be **slanderers**. The Greek root word rendered *slanderers* (“false accusers,” KJV) became the basis of the English term *diabolical*, literally meaning “of the devil, devilish.” Because the devil was recognized as “a liar and the father of lies” (see John 8:44), the terms *slanderers* referred to those who habitually engaged in malicious gossip. Second, Christian women must not be **slaves to excessive drinking** (“addicted to much wine,” NIV). Addiction to alcohol (or other drugs) leads to a loss of self-control, which almost invariably results in reckless, unholy conduct such as false, hurtful speech.

The last part of Titus 2:3 shifts back to a positive command that continues into verses 4-5 as instruction not only for older women but also for younger Christian women as well. Paul directed Titus to instruct the older women to **teach what is good**. Perhaps Paul had in mind the kinds of informal, woman-to-woman instruction that occurred primarily in private settings. Certainly the content of his instructions is relevant as well in the contexts of today’s Christian women’s meetings and Bible study groups.

**VERSE 4**

**so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children,**

Paul expected mature Christian women to take the initiative in mentoring the next generations of women in holy living. They were to **encourage the young women**. The Greek word rendered *encourage* (“teach,” KJV; “train,” ESV; “urge,” NIV) emphasizes advising, admonishing, or training someone in the kinds of behavior that produce good judgment and God-honoring decisions. The term is a related form of the Greek word rendered “sensible” in Titus 2:2.

Paul knew that most **young women** in his day would marry and have children. He also knew that the Scriptures placed family relationships as second only to the believer’s relationship with God. In fact, Paul had outlined Christian family relationship principles in two of his epistles (see Eph. 5:22–6:4; Col. 3:18-21; compare 1 Pet. 3:1-7) and had emphasized the importance of the family in other writings, including here in the Letter to Titus where young wives were urged to **love their husbands and to love their children**. These two phrases are not verbal phrases in the Greek text. The first one is a compound noun that literally means “lover of [one’s] husband.” The second is a compound adjective that literally means “loving of [one’s] children.” In both cases, the part of the compound words rendered *love* (or “lover”/“loving”) is the Greek term *philos* [FIH lahss], which describes deep, meaningful, self-giving companionship.
to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God’s word will not be slandered.

Maintaining loving family relationships required that young women likewise be characterized by God-honoring qualities and conduct. As with other categories of believers, young women must be self-controlled (see 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; 2:2). For the believer, self-control is really a matter of submitting to the Holy Spirit’s control (Gal. 5:23; Eph. 5:18). The Greek word rendered pure (“chaste,” KJV) is a form of the term that means “holy.” Together, the two words self-controlled and pure describe a young married woman who maintains a holy lifestyle, never immodest or undignified and never unfaithful or unloving to her husband and children.

Next, the mature Christian women were to train their young counterparts to be workers at home (“keepers at home,” KJV; “busy at home,” NIV), keeping the household in order. The Greek word translated kind can also mean “good” and may have been intended as a descriptor of the young woman’s management of household responsibilities. In other words, she was to strive to perform her work well.

Finally, young wives were to be in submission to their husbands. In the Christian family structure, God assigned husbands the weighty responsibility of giving leadership to the family and directed wives to respectfully follow that leadership just as the church willingly submits to Christ’s lordship (see Eph. 5:22-24). It is important to note that a Christian wife is expected to submit to her husband, not to men in general. Moreover, submission does not mean that a wife is in any way inferior to her husband either as a person or as a believer. The apostle Peter reminded Christian husbands that their wives are “coheirs of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7).

A young Christian woman’s modest and holy lifestyle serves as a powerful witness of the gospel. It gives an unbelieving, unholy world no cause for maligning God’s word. The Greek word rendered slandered (“blasphemed,” KJV “reviled,” ESV) refers to speaking in a disrespectful or demeaning way. When our lifestyles as believers fail to match what the Scriptures teach, we have given the world an opening to accuse us of hypocrisy and to slander the Bible as irrelevant.

In the same way, encourage the young men to be self-controlled in everything. Make yourself an example of good works with integrity and dignity in your teaching.
Paul directed Titus to personally instruct older men and older women in the churches of Crete. However, Titus was to train the older women to serve as mentors of the younger women, probably as a safeguard against any real or perceived impropriety on Titus’s part (compare 1 Tim. 5:2). In the case of the young men, Titus was to personally encourage (“exhort,” KJV; “urge,” ESV) them in the same way as he had instructed older believers—both men and women.

Like all believers, young Christian men needed to be self-controlled in everything. The term refers to keeping one’s thoughts, speech, and conduct under control. Again, for the Christian this means living under the Holy Spirit’s control; self-control is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:23). Because of the threat of false teachers on Crete, the churches’ future leaders needed to be clear headed, making right decisions.

The words in everything could refer either to the scope of Christian young men’s self-control (see v. 6 in CSB) or to the scope of Titus’s exemplary actions (see v. 7 in KJV, ESV, NIV). Both options are valid interpretations.

Probably a young man himself, Titus was to set an example (“a pattern,” KJV; “a model,” ESV) of good works with integrity and dignity in his teaching. The phrase rendered good works was broad enough to cover many aspects of Christian life and service, but Paul urged Titus to focus especially on setting an example of sound teaching. The Greek word translated integrity described something that was not corrupt and therefore was pure. Given the impure motives of the false teachers (1:11), integrity in teaching was of utmost importance. The word rendered dignity also can mean “seriousness,” “honor,” or “gravity.” The privilege of teaching God’s Word must never be taken lightly; it is an honor that deserves a teacher’s utmost integrity.

VERSE 8

Your message is to be sound beyond reproach, so that any opponent will be ashamed, because he doesn’t have anything bad to say about us.

The Greek word translated message (“speech,” KJV; ESV; NIV) could refer to Titus’s speech in general or to the gospel message he proclaimed. In other words, Paul may have been urging Titus to have a reasoned, persuasive presentation of the gospel or to be sure that his teaching never strayed from the sound gospel message he had learned from Paul. In either case, Titus’s teaching was to be beyond reproach. The reason for setting such a high standard was clear. If Titus consistently taught (and lived) God’s Word with soundness, integrity, and dignity, then no opponent would ever have a good basis to accuse him of anything bad.
The phrase **about us** indicates that opponents of Christianity often have no qualms about criticizing an entire church congregation for the bad actions of one disobedient believer—especially if that disobedient believer is a church leader. Thus, the lifestyle of every believer ought to be such that it gives no ammunition to opponents who would attack the gospel or Christ’s churches.

**VERSES 9-10**

**Slaves are to submit to their masters in everything, and to be well-pleasing, not talking back or stealing, but demonstrating utter faithfulness, so that they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything.**

Greco-Roman culture dominated the first century AD. In that culture, slavery in various forms was the rule, not the exception. In fact, slaves were considered a legal part of a household even though their personal freedoms were limited. Paul did not often address the moral question of slavery, although in Philemon 1:8-16 he recommended that a runaway Christian slave be set free, in Galatians 3:28 he declared that in the body of Christ “there is no ... slave or free,” and in 1 Timothy 1:10 he condemned slave traders. Still, Paul knew that many slaves had heard the gospel and had become Christians. Thus, in several letters he gave slaves instructions on living out their faith as brothers and sisters in the Lord, and he admonished masters to treat their slaves with fairness and compassion (see Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22–4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1-2).

Through Titus, Paul instructed believing **slaves** on the island of Crete to **submit to their masters in everything**. For Paul, submitting to authority in various areas of life was a proper Christian response. A Christian wife, for example, was to submit to her husband’s authority in family leadership (Titus 2:5; see also Eph. 5:22). Further, all believers were to submit to the established governing authorities, since human government was a divinely ordained institution (see Rom. 13:1). In the same way, it was proper for Christian slaves to submit to rather than rebel against the head of the household.

Then Paul asked slaves to go beyond mere submission to authority. He challenged them to demonstrate the genuine transformation of attitudes and actions that their Divine Master had given them. Paul exhorted them first of all to **be well-pleasing** (“try to please [their masters],” NIV). The Greek term rendered **well-pleasing** often was used to describe the believer’s desire to please God by doing His will (see Rom. 12:2). Similarly, Paul urged Christian slaves to make a concerted effort to render pleasing service to their human masters. Moreover, if an assigned task was menial or difficult, the servant would show Christian character by **not talking back** (“not argumentative,”
ESV). Paul used this same Greek word previously in describing how false teachers “contradict” sound doctrine (Titus 1:9).

Next, Paul urged Christian slaves not to steal from their masters but rather to always demonstrate *utter faithfulness* (“not pilfering, but showing all good faith,” ESV; “show that they can be fully trusted,” NIV). Some household slaves proved by their honesty and integrity to be wise and trustworthy managers; at times they were put in charge of the household when the master went away on business or travel (see Gen. 39:4-5; Luke 12:42-44).

Paul’s message to Christian slaves provides a strong admonition to Christian workers in every generation: do not steal from your employer in any manner; always be trustworthy in your work. Why? Because doing so will **adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything**. It is no small thing for an unbelieving world to read portions of the Bible or occasionally hear the *teaching of God our Savior* in a sermon. How much more compelling the gospel is, however, when unbelievers also see it demonstrated in life’s most challenging circumstances by those who name the name of Christ!

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**EXPLORE FURTHER**

Which of Paul’s areas of instruction in this section is especially relevant to you at this point in your life? Explain your response. How does the Christian response of submission to authority “adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything”? What are some practical ways that believers today can submit to divinely ordained authority?

**EMPOWERED** (Titus 2:11-14)

**VERSE 11**

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,*

In the Greek text, verses 11-14 comprise one long sentence built on the premise that **the grace of God has appeared.** The word *for* indicates that these verses provide the theological basis for the ethical commands Paul had given in Titus 2:2-10.

God is eternally gracious; He always acts consistently with His eternal nature. To say, then, that His grace *has appeared* does not mean God suddenly acted in a way in which He had never acted before. Rather, it means that at a certain point in history God fulfilled a new, specific act of redeeming grace: **bringing salvation for all people.** Although not everyone will accept God’s
provision of salvation, it is made available to all. God had in mind not just one group but all people.

**VERSE 12**

instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age,

The Greek word translated *instructing* described the process by which a person developed the ability to make responsible decisions, often involving correction and even punishment (see 2 Tim. 2:25). Paul reminded Titus that God’s grace instructed the believer in two directions, one negative and one positive. Believers must first say no to godlessness and worldly lusts. The salvation brought by God’s grace is incompatible with a worldly, self-centered lifestyle, and believers must consciously reject this type of behavior. Positively, believers are to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age. Paul later counseled Timothy to avoid people who advocated a lifestyle that had a form of godliness but denied its power (see 2 Tim. 3:5).

**VERSE 13**

while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

While living godly in the present age, believers are also to be looking to the future. Paul described the second coming of Christ with two phrases: the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. In Romans 8:18-25, Paul reminded believers that the suffering in this world does not compare with the glory to be revealed when Christ returns. Until that time, Christians are to live morally sound lives in view of the blessed hope that is to come. It is not certain whether Paul was referring separately to both God the Father and the Son Jesus Christ or was simply acknowledging Jesus’ deity as well as His role as Savior. In the end, both options arrive at the same conclusion, that all the Persons of the Godhead are united as One in their redemptive plan.

**VERSE 14**

He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works.

Paul concluded his extended sentence by referring to Jesus’ sacrificial death on our behalf: he gave himself for us. Paul pointed out two things that
were accomplished by Jesus’ death. First, Jesus delivered believers from all lawlessness. The Greek word translated redeem means “set free by the payment of a price.”

Second, by His death on the cross Jesus cleansed for himself a people for his own possession. Here again, Paul drew upon covenant language (see Ex. 19:5; Deut. 14:2). Jesus’ death cleanses believers from all sin (1 John 1:7,9) and results in their becoming God’s own possession (see 1 Pet. 2:9). Salvation in Christ, which is available to all, results in believers’ rescue and purification from sin so that they can eagerly live for Him (do good works) as they wait patiently for His return.

**EXPLORE FURTHER**

Read the article titled “Redeem, Redemption, Redeemer” on page 1339 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. How does being redeemed from sin in Christ motivate you to live for Him and serve Him? How does the promise of His return motivate you?

**AUTHORITY** (Titus 2:15)

**VERSE 15**

Proclaim these things; encourage and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

In this verse Paul circled back to the same theme with which he began chapter 2: proclaim these things. Titus’s primary role in the churches of Crete was to preach the true gospel and train other leaders also to take up the gospel mantle so that false teachers would be silenced.

To fulfill this task, Titus needed to encourage and rebuke with all authority. These same two commands were used earlier in the letter to describe how Titus was to address the problem of the false teachers (see 1:9). The situation was urgent, and the stakes were high. Titus was to let no one disregard him but was to exercise spiritual authority with boldness.

**EXPLORE FURTHER**

Read the article titled “Authority, Divine Authority” on pages 148–149 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. How have you seen ministers encourage with authority? Rebuke with authority?