

## 7 Studies on Titus

“Titus and his mates were not so different from us at all. They struggled with immorality and error among Christian leaders; they strived to live a consistently Christian life in a world hostile to the gospel; they needed encouraging about the basis and motivation of their lives as well as detailed teaching about behaviour. In other words, though their physical and cultural circumstances were quite different, their spiritual lives were very similar to our own.

The book of Titus lays before us a *path to godliness*. Though addressed to special circumstances, it gives us some general principles about what godliness is and how we can attain it.” From The Path to Godliness Titus by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne p 9.

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### Notes

1. In preparing these studies I've used the following sources: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus by John R. W. Stott, Paul for Everyone the Pastoral Letters 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus by Tom Wright, The Pastoral Epistles by Donald Guthrie (Tyndale Commentary), Bible Brief on Titus by Ross Blunden and Andrew Prince from The Briefing magazine # 355, “Changing People” by Tim Thorburn from The Briefing magazine # 143, the Matthias Media Interactive Bible Study booklet The Path to Godliness Titus by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne and the Lion Handbook to the Bible Second Revised Edition. Throughout the studies I've added paragraphs from these books to help people better understand the Biblical text.

3. In quoting the Bible I've used the New International Version in this booklet.

4. Your comments, good or bad, and ideas about future studies may help produce better Bible study booklets. Please write down any thoughts you have and send them to me at [edwardeoconor@hotmail.com](mailto:edwardeoconor@hotmail.com).

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## Study 1, Titus, Overview

### Introduction

“Titus is not mentioned in Acts, but it is clear from the letters that he was one of Paul’s trusted inner circle. As a Greek he was made a test case on the visit to Jerusalem, to clarify the position of non-Jewish converts (Gal 2:1-4). Later when, despite Timothy’s work, trouble flared up in Corinth, Paul chose Titus as the man for the job. He not only sorted things out, but established really good relations with the church – no small tribute to his tact and strength of character (2 Cor 2, 7, 8, 12). Some years later again, when Paul wrote this letter, Titus had been left to consolidate the apostle’s work in Crete. He faced a situation very similar to Timothy’s at Ephesus (see 1 Tim). The last mention of Titus is 2 Tim 4:10, when he was away (presumably still furthering the Christian cause) in Dalmatia (Yugoslavia).” From the Lion Handbook to the Bible Second Revised Edition p 623.

### Getting started

1. What was the last subject or topic you studied (other than the Bible)?
2. How is studying the Bible different from studying a subject at school, TAFE, Uni etc?

### Bible

3. Paul’s letter to Titus is only 3 chapters long. We need to get a feel for the whole letter before looking at specific details. So read the 3 chapters and write down the main ideas.
4. Is there anything in Titus that you are not clear about or don’t understand?
5. Why do you think Paul has written this letter to Titus?
6. Describe (a) the people who made up the church in Crete.

(b) the character of the Cretan people in general.

(c) the things that were threatening the church in Crete.

7. What do you think will be the most interesting aspect of studying Titus?

8. What do you think will be the most valuable aspect of studying Titus?

### **To finish**

Besides getting an overview of Titus, it might be helpful to have an overview of what we are doing in our Bible study groups, hence the following questions.

9. What is/are the purpose(s) of your Bible study group?

10. Have you any suggestions that would better achieve those purposes?

11. What is Christian fellowship?



## Study 2, Titus 1:1-4, The Main Game

### Getting started

1. Think of the different things that might motivate you (e.g. love, fear, gratitude, money, duty, guilt, passion, status, revenge etc.) and think of a recent task you were given. What motivated you to complete that task?
2. Out of all the different motivations which one would drive you the hardest?

### Bible

Read Titus 1:1-4

3. What is the purpose of Paul's ministry (v1)?
4. On a personal level (a) how is your faith and knowledge related to each other?  
  
(b) How do these two, faith and knowledge, foster godliness in your life?
5. What did God promise before the beginning of time (v2)?

### On hope and godliness

The English translations of verse 2 vary because the Greek original is ambiguous. The NIV repeats "a faith and knowledge" picking up these ideas from v1 but the Greek does not have this. More literally, as in the NASB and ESV, "godliness" is directly connected with "hope of eternal life". So, picking up at the end of v1, beginning v2, it could read "the knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness, which is (itself) based on the hope of eternal life."

6. Why is preaching so important (v3)?
7. What do you understand by (a) grace (v4)?

(b) peace (v4)?

**To finish**

8. Some people have been described as “strictly-no-fun-Christians”.  
(a) Is this an apt title for some Christians? Why/why not?

(b) Can you be godly and still have fun? Why/why not?

9. What would you say to a friend who says that he/she believes in Jesus but is not living a godly life?

10. What motivates you to be godly?

### Study 3, Titus 1:5-9, The One to Follow

#### Getting started

1. Who is the best leader you have known personally?
2. What qualities made that person such a good leader?

#### Bible

Read Titus 1:5-9

3. Why was Titus left in Crete?
4. (a) What qualities does Paul tell Titus to look for when appointing elders/overseers?
- (b) How does this compare to your answer to question 2?
- (c) What qualities, besides those on Paul's list, would you like to see in church leaders? Why?
- (d) What qualities do your church's leaders have that aren't on Paul's list?
- (e) Are we asking more of our leaders than is required biblically? Specify.
- (f) How can you encourage leadership at your church?

## Elders

"It is hard to read these words about 'appointing elders' without immediately thinking of our own church structures, with their elders, pastors, presbyters, bishops, priests, deacons or whatever. And certainly, Paul's words to Titus are very relevant to Christian leadership today. However, we must remember that what Paul meant by words like 'elder' or 'overseer' may be quite different from how we use the words. 'Elder' (v6) is a translation of the Greek word *presbuteros*, from which we also get the English words 'Presbyterian' and 'priest'. 'Overseer' (v7) is the Greek word *episcopos*, from which we get 'episcopal'. (Traditionally, *episcopos* has been translated as 'bishop'.)

In Paul's mind, there was no difference between an elder and an overseer; they were simply two different words to describe the same animal. (Note how he uses the two words interchangeably in vv 6 and 7.)

. . . In the face of opposition and threat, each congregation needed faithful and godly leaders who would stand firm against the opposition and encourage the church. This kind of function is conveyed in the very words 'elder' and 'overseer'. They were to be older, wiser, experienced Christians who were qualified to keep and eye on what was happening and act for the good of the congregation." From The Path to Godliness Titus by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne pp 13-14.

5. Read 1 Pet 5:1-3, John 13:12-17, 21:15-17.  
What other qualities for leadership are mentioned in these passages?

## To finish

6. Do you think leaders at St Faiths should be democratically elected? Why/why not?

7. How do people get to become church leaders? Is this a biblical process?

8. Who do you know at your church who you think would make a good leader?

What should you do to encourage them?



1. What things are you sure about, beyond a shadow of doubt?

2. Why are you so sure about those things?

## Read Titus 1:10-16

v 14: “Jewish myths” most likely refers to stories spun out of the Old Testament that claimed to impart special knowledge.”

From the Bible Brief on Titus p 29 by Ross Blunden and Andrew Prince from The Briefing magazine # 355.

3. What are the false teachers like?

4. What are the false teachers teaching?

5. What should be done about the false teachers according to Paul?

Read Galatians 6:12-16.

6. (a) What do we learn about the circumcision group?

- (b) How does Paul answer this false teaching?

7. Why is it so important for a church to have teachers who teach the right stuff?
8. What might happen if church leaders did not refute false teachers or if they taught false doctrine themselves?

### **False teachers**

“Speculation aside, the apostle Paul obviously thought that the false teachers were a very serious problem. He denounces them in the strongest possible terms (see v16!). Why did it matter so much to Paul? Here are three reasons.

#### **i. The consequences**

The first and most obvious reason for Paul’s concern was the havoc being wrought in the Cretan congregation. False teaching is rarely (if ever) an isolated, self-contained or purely intellectual phenomenon. Its consequences are almost always far-reaching and damaging to spiritual health. In this case, the urgent need to silence the false teachers is underscored by the consequences of their teaching – “they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach” (1:11). This had to stop.

#### **ii. The way to know God**

However, there is a more profound reason why false teaching must be firmly dealt with. . . .

We cannot come to know the true and living God by intuition or by rational thought or by running an experiment or by seeing him on the back of our eyelids. The Bible is quite clear on this – we can only know anything about God because he *reveals* himself to us. He parts the curtain and brings up the lights. Our knowledge of God is not something we have attained through great effort or cleverness – it is entirely on God’s initiative. We only know what he has chosen to tell us.

This way of thinking lies at the heart of the apostle Paul’s life and thought. And it is also the basis for his very stern attitude towards the false teachers in Crete. . . .

#### **iii. The significance of teachers**

. . . Our hope of eternal life is based on the promises of God – a set of promises that was revealed through the life and death of a first century Jew called Jesus and subsequently entrusted to his apostles. It is absolutely vital, therefore, that the promises of God are maintained from generation to generation. They must be defended and passed on faithfully, because our whole relationship with God (our faith and knowledge and godliness) are based on these promises. False teachers are *the* enemy because they destroy this true knowledge of God by distorting the given message. The true gospel must be safeguarded and used to encourage the brethren and refute error (Tit 1:9). . . .

If the gospel that has been entrusted to Paul leads to a life of godliness (v1), then we can also see why the *behaviour* of elders is so significant. Not only does it model the lifestyle which all Christians should pursue, but it demonstrates that the elders have truly understood the message that they are supposed to protect and proclaim. . . .

The ungodly behaviour of the false teachers damns their teaching, for behaviour and doctrine are inextricably bound together. Bad behaviour reveals an underlying ignorance of God; and bad behaviour also destroys the message, as we seek to rationalize and justify our lifestyle.” From The Path to Godliness Titus by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne pp 16-18.

### **To finish**

9. (a) How do you know if teaching is true or false?

(b) What should you do about it if you heard someone teaching falsely?

**Study 5, Titus 2:1-10, On for Young and Old****Getting started**

1. (a) Who do you look up to (besides Jesus)?

(b) Why do you look up to them?

2. (a) Who looks up to you?

(b) Why do they look up to you?

(c) What responsibilities does this put you under?

**Bible**

Read Titus 2:1-10

3. In Titus 2:1 Paul tells Titus to “teach what is in accord with sound doctrine”. Why does Paul remind Titus about this here?

4. “Right doctrine leads to right behaviour”. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

5. What does Paul say about (a) (i) older men (v2)?

(ii) What other things do the older men at your church need to learn?

(b) (i) older women (vv3-4)?

(ii) What other things do the older women at your church need to learn?

(c) (i) younger women (vv4-5)?

(ii) What other things do the younger women at your church need to learn?

(d) (i) young men (vv6-8)?

(ii) What other things do the younger men at your church need to learn?

(e) (i) slaves (vv9-10)?

(ii) What other things do we need to learn in relation to our work situations?

6. (a) Does any of this advice from Paul conflict with current social expectations?

(b) Is Paul's advice out of date (e.g. Paul's reference to slaves) or should we follow him to the letter?  
Why?

(c) How do we work out how God wants us to live?

### Slavery

“ . . . the commands to slaves in verses 9 and 10 is to be seen, of course, in the setting of ordinary daily life in the first century. Slavery was a fact of life and there was no point pretending it wasn't. You could no more abolish slavery overnight in the first century than you could invent space travel. . . . the early Christians worked within what was possible at the time, while constantly lodging protests against abuses within the system and, where they could, against the system itself (the letter to Philemon is the best example).

The vital thing was that slaves, having become Christians, shouldn't regard themselves as above the law. Some might think 'Because my master isn't a Christian, and I am, this gives me a right to tell him what's what – after all, I'm a servant of the King of the World and he isn't!' What message would that send to the watching world of Crete or anywhere else? It would indicate that this new cult was simply making trouble and ought to be stamped out. No: Christian slaves, like Christians in every walk of life, must be good advertisements, good ambassadors, for 'the teaching of God our saviour'." From Paul for Everyone the Pastoral Letters 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus by Tom Wright pp 152-153.

7. (a) What sort of example is set by the way Titus is to live and teach (vv7-8)?

(b) What effect will this example have?

(c) Are there people at your church whose example you should follow?

(d) Are people following your example?

(e) How can you encourage others in the example they set?

### To finish

8. Can people tell you are a Christian by the way you live? Why/why not?

**Study 6, Titus 2:11-15, Grace Unleashed****Getting started**

1. Think of an incident in your life when you were punished for doing the wrong thing.  
(a) What was it?

(b) What would you have felt like if you had been “let off” that punishment?

**Bible**

Read Titus 2:11-15

2. The word “for” links vv11-15 with the verses before it. Read Titus 2:1-10 and describe how the 2 sections are related to each other.
3. “Salvation” means “rescue”. What things in vv11-15 tell us what Christians have been rescued from?
4. We looked at the meaning of grace in Study 2.  
(a) What has the grace of God got to do with salvation and rescue?  
  
(b) What has the grace of God got to do with Jesus? Put together a couple of sentences explaining the grace of God through Jesus as if you were teaching (Titus 2:15) it to a 10 year old i.e. without using any Christian jargon.
5. Notice that the “It” at the beginning of v12 refers to the “grace of God” in v11. What things (mentioned in v12) does the grace of God teach us?

### Carrots and whips

"When we want to train people to be good, we humans have only two weapons in our arsenal: carrots and whips. Just like trying to get the proverbial donkey moving, we can offer people rewards (carrots) or we can threaten them with punishment (whips). . . .

Carrots and whips can never change people's hearts. They only change external behaviour, and even then only for as long as the carrot and whip are in force. Speeding fines can never change people into drivers who want to drive safely; they just keep people watching their rear view mirrors and their wallets. . . .

Most Australians see God as the master of the carrot and the whip."

From "Changing People" by Tim Thorburn from The Briefing magazine # 143.

6. (a) What would be the "carrot" for this view of God?

(b) What would be the "whip" for this view of God?

"Now it is true that one of the incentives God gives us for quitting our rebellion and becoming a Christian is the carrot and whip – to escape his righteous wrath and receive eternal life. But that is not how God continues to relate to us as Christians. . . .

God's grace means that no whip remains, because it has already fallen on Jesus. And, by God's grace, we have the carrot in our grasp, having already passed from death to life. We may not have tasted the whole carrot yet (just to push the metaphor!), but it is ours now. God doesn't stand over us, threatening to withdraw the carrot and get the whip back out if we don't quite come up to scratch." (Thorburn).

7. If, for a Christian, there is no longer a carrot or a whip, how then do Christians get taught (vv11-12)?

### To finish

8. How does the grace of God "teach us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives" (Titus 2:12)? (Have a go at answering this question before looking at Tim Thorburn's answer at the end of Study 7.)

9. How can you show grace to other people?

## Study 7, Titus 3:1-15, Born Again Christianity

### Getting started

1. What is humility?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is the difference between someone who is humble and someone who has low self-esteem?

### Bible

Read Titus 3:1-15

3. What were the people of the church in Crete like, before they were converted (v3)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What changed them (vv4-5a)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. They were saved, (a) not because of . . . (v5)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  

(b) but because of . . . (vv5-7)

  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What does "rebirth" (v5) mean (see also John 3:3-8 and Rom 6:1-11)?

### Salvation

"Verses 4-7 [of Titus ch 3] are a single long sentence, which he [Paul] may have taken from an early Christian creed. . . .

The whole sentence hinges upon the main verb *he saved us* (5). It is perhaps the fullest statement of salvation in the New Testament. Yet whenever the phraseology of salvation is dropped into a conversation



today, people's reactions are predictable. They will either blush, frown, snigger, or even laugh, as if it were a huge joke. Thus the devil, whose ambition is to destroy, not to save, succeeds in trivializing the most serious question we could ever ask ourselves or put to anybody else. For Christianity is essentially a religion of salvation. To prove this, it is enough to quote two biblical assertions: 'the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world' [1 John 4:14] and 'the Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost' [Luke 19:10]." From The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus by John R. W. Stott p 201.

7. Why does Paul want Titus to stress (v8) these things?
8. What else is Titus to tell the church (vv1-2, 14)?
9. What is to be avoided (v9)?
10. Paul links salvation with Christian conduct. What is the connection?
11. Why is Paul so hard on the person described in vv10-11?
12. Verse 2 says “show true humility towards all men”. How does this relate to the verses that follow?

## To finish

13. How should being re-born
- (a) minimise hypocrisy rather than promote it?
- (b) lead to morality rather than immorality?

## Additional Notes

### From Study 6, Question 8:

*How does the grace of God “teach us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives” (Titus 2:12)?*

### Answer from Tim Thorburn’s article:

“There are three main changes which grace brings about.

Firstly, grace gives us the **freedom** to do good because we want to. As long as I live under the carrot and the whip, I will always be behaving in order to avoid the whip and get the carrot. I will simply continue to be selfish. Even when I serve people, it will be for my benefit and so it won’t be genuine love. But if I know that God doesn’t relate by carrot and whip, I am free to serve others because they need it. I can do good simply because it is good.

Secondly, grace gives us the **incentive** to be good. There is a logical incentive that comes out of what Christ has done for us. He gave himself for us “to redeem us from all wickedness” (Titus 2:14). If Christ died to redeem me from wickedness, it is pretty illogical to jump back into wickedness. When I wake up to the destructive effect upon me of my wickedness (it brought me under God’s wrath in the first place) and on those who share this life with me, and realise that Christ died to rescue me from that whole destructive scene, why would I want to return to it? . . .

There is also the incentive of gratitude: gratitude to God for his amazing grace; gratitude to Christ for his willing sacrifice. They have worked as one in order to purify a people eager to do what is good. In gratitude, we’ll want to be good.

Thirdly, by God’s grace we have the **Holy Spirit** (Titus 3:5-6). The Spirit gives us rebirth and renews us, making us new people alive to God. Each of us is a new person who is being changed from the inside out, as God’s Spirit transforms us into people who are genuinely loving, patient, kind, gentle and self-controlled. Although our old nature is still alive and kicking, the power of the Spirit is at work creating a new nature in us, a nature like Christ’s.

At the heart of God’s way of changing us is his grace. Grace is not simply the way we come into God’s family; it is the way we live the totality of our lives as Christians. In Paul’s words, we live under the reign of grace (Rom 5:21). Without grace, sin reigns (aided and abetted by the law), but now grace reigns and it has robbed sin of its power over our lives. Sin can’t win against grace, for the more we sin, the more we receive God’s grace. Instead of driving a wedge between us and God and causing our death, our sin only makes us appreciate God’s grace all the more and we are filled with joy and gratitude to God. No wonder Paul talks about God lavishing the riches of his grace upon us (Eph 1:8).”

From “Changing People” by Tim Thorburn from The Briefing magazine # 143.