

## **Titus (Part 4) – Healthy Doctrine, Healthy Disciples**

Josh Patterson – August 24, 2014

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Church, how are we? Good to see y'all. My name is Josh Patterson. I'm one of the pastors here on staff. I have two quick notes for you before I jump into it. First, I did a little FaceTime with Chandler last night. He would covet your prayers, ask for your prayers, asking specifically... Today he's in Australia right now.

So he's 15 hours into the future from where we are. So Sunday begins for him what is 10 days of 17 speaking engagements. It's a lot. Thankfully, he's really gifted at that. He'll do a great job, but I know he would really covet your prayers in and around that as he's there on behalf of Acts 29, strengthening churches down under.

I also want to let you know this is promotion weekend. For some of you this is a big weekend. For some of you you have no idea what that means. Really, what it does mean is everyone moves up a grade. Everyone in our Next Generation ministry moves up a grade, so this week fourth grade is in fifth grade. Next week they'll be in fifth grade again.

What it means for us in here is really exciting. Those who were in fifth grade have now bumped up into sixth grade. So we have sixth graders in us and among us today. Are there any sixth graders in here? I know I see a couple. Awesome. It's a big deal you're in here, and we're thrilled about it. So you just need to know that. You guys are welcomed in here. We'll talk about that here in a little bit.

Several years ago I did something that's kind of cool. It's kind of stupid, but it was called the Whole30 challenge. Is anybody familiar with Whole30 or Whole9 Life? Basically, it's a way of eating. As you can guess, they're going to encourage you to eat a certain way, and they're challenging you to do this for 30 days. The 30-day challenge means you can basically eat any vegetables you want, so long as they're prepared a certain way, basically raw.

You can eat meat, and you can eat fruits and vegetables and nuts and all that kind of deal. You can't eat grains. You can't eat dairy. You can't eat breads or flour. You can't have alcohol. You can't have refined sugars, processed foods, treats. You're not allowed to smile, laugh, have fun at all for these 30 days. That's essentially what it is. I was this guy at the restaurant who when I was ordering would have to ask the waiter or waitress over and over just question after question.

"Can you tell me how this is prepared?"

"It's grilled."

"Okay, but are there any spices put on?"

"Yes, we put spices on it."

"Do you know what the spices are?"

"They make it spicy."

"Okay, but are there sugars in the spices?"

I was that guy for a month. So there was a part of me that it was really miserable. I think our grocery bill tripled. You're just eating and eating. I would just be ravenous because I just ate carrot sticks and I am starving. The thing is you can eat as much as you want, but you just have to continue to eat.

The cool thing was I felt awesome. I could literally tell a difference. I slept better. I recovered faster from workouts. I'm at that stage in my life where if I do a run I can feel it the next day. I recovered faster. I generally felt a level of clarity in thinking that was new and different. I had that sustained energy that was regulated. I didn't hit that afternoon lull for me, which lasts from about 1:30 to about 8:30. None of that was there for me, and I felt great.

That shouldn't be any surprise for me. I put healthy stuff in, and it impacted me. We all know this, and we can all agree to this. Healthy eating contributes to healthy living. Right? Yes? Eight people up here said yes. The rest of you are on your way down. There is this principle that what I put in is going to impact how I live.

In Titus, where we're going to be today... We've been in this series. The apostle Paul is going to talk about something similar along the same lines as that. He's going to talk about it spiritually. Whereas a healthy diet contributes to a healthy life, Paul is going to talk today about there's this healthy diet healthy disciples eat, they ingest, they consume. That healthy diet is a diet of healthy doctrine. Let me just give you this line.

*Healthy doctrine is the habitual diet of healthy disciples.* You think about the idea of a diet. It's not something that faddish. It's not something that is on-again, off-again for 30 days or 45 days or we try it for this or that. This is the ongoing ethic. This is what we consume. It's what we eat. That's why I said it's the *habitual* diet. It's the normal, regular way we live and we eat. So healthy doctrine is the habitual diet of healthy disciples.

Like I said, we've been in the book of Titus for the last several weeks. For some of you you're new. For some of you you've forgotten what Titus is all about. So I do want to review just briefly what the book is about as we launch into chapter 2 of the book of Titus, written by the apostle Paul to a guy named Titus whom he calls his true son in a common faith.

The book of Titus is in a collection of books known as the Pastoral Epistles. You have 1 and 2 Timothy and the book of Titus. Paul writes to his true son in the common faith, Titus. It's more than likely Paul led Titus to Christ and Paul had an impact in raising up Titus as a mature believer. These guys are different. Paul is an older Jew. Titus is a younger Greek.

As the Lord saw fit, he brought them together for such a time as this. Titus began to demonstrate some maturity and some ability. So Paul inserted him into some really delicate situations, particularly in the Corinthian church and now in the Cretan church. They went on a missionary journey to Crete. When they were at the island of Crete, they began to evangelize. People began to come to faith. A church was born, churches began to form, and this church began to grow.

As the missionary journeys continued to expand, Paul and Timothy left Crete to go to Ephesus. Titus remained. In their journeys, word got to Paul. As they had traveled, something had happened to the church in Crete. Namely, there were false teachers who had infiltrated the church and gotten into the ranks, and that healthy doctrine had begun to be tainted. They started to consume that which was not healthy, and it was impacting their lives.

You see in Titus 1:11 this teaching was disrupting whole households of the faith. With this great burden, care, and concern for the church, Paul writes this letter to Titus. The burden that was compelling Paul to write the letter was the church had become disordered and unhealthy. Due to the disorder and the unhealth in the church, Paul writes the letter and says to Titus, "I want you to put what remains into order, and I want you to reorder and reestablish health in the church. You're going to do that, Titus, through faithful gospel proclamation and faithful gospel application."

So that's the burden. That's the gist. That's why he writes this letter, and woven all throughout the letter is this theme. The theme that's woven throughout the letter is Paul is going to say this *gospel belief is going to be tethered to gospel behavior*. You can't really tear the two apart. Where one starts, it's going to continue down that train so a true gospel confession will look like a life that lives out a gospel commitment.

There's this inseparable link, and you really can't divide them apart. They're different, but they're connected. Paul is going to say *true, genuine faith is going to produce true, genuine fruit*. You're going to see that pretty clearly in the passage we're going to be in this morning, because Paul is going to begin talking about some fruit, the ways we are to live.

Know this. He always says first *the gospel takes root in a heart before the gospel produces fruit outside of the heart*. That's the purpose. That's the theme. That's what's going on in the book. So he launches in chapter 1, and he gives this kind of theological introduction. Then he says in verse 5, "Put what remains in order."

The first way he was to put what remained in order was to appoint qualified, faithful leaders. Zach Lee preached that message about elders and talked about how the establishing of order and health in the church starts with the leadership of the church. Then Mike Dsane preached the next message out of Titus 1:10-15 where he's talking about refuting the false teachers. You're going to push back, aggressively pushing back against what is false in the church, and we're going to pick up right there.

He has just talked about this false teaching that has infiltrated the church. He says, "I want you to push this back." This is where chapter 2 starts. Before we read chapter 2, I want to give you four things to look for as we read in it, four things for you to keep in mind as we read through chapter 2. The first one is there's a word Paul uses two times. It's the word *likewise*.

The word *likewise* is like connective tissue. It's going to connect ideas with each other. So there's going to be a general sense of what Paul is communicating in the entire chapter, and there are going to be specific points he gives to specific people. Over that general sense, that general sense is connected with these words *likewise*. He's going to pull them out, and it's going to be a thread that helps stitch things together.

The second thing I want you to keep in mind is not only the word *likewise* but the word *self-control*. He's going to use it four times in this chapter. The word *self-control* is an important fruit of a believer's life. He's going to use this word four times. We'll unpack what it looks like and what it means a little bit later.

Thirdly, I want you to look for this in verse 5, in verse 8, and in verse 10. He's going to say, "The reason I'm compelling you, charging you, urging you to live a godly life is for a faithful gospel witness." You see this gospel living doesn't terminate on ourselves, Paul is saying, but this faithful gospel living is to be a witness to a watching world.

So a healthy church is not just for the sake of a healthy church, but so that healthy church might be a faithful witness to a world that so desperately needs the message of Jesus Christ. *Gospel living leads to a gospel witness*. You'll see that in verses 5, 8, and 10, phrases like, "So the Word of God may not be reviled, so they may not have a charge against you, so you might adorn the good doctrine of God our Savior."

Finally, the last point I want you to look for throughout all of it is this. Here's a little phrase: *The ownership for discipleship falls on the membership*. Let me tell you what that means. Discipleship is a membership issue. Discipleship is not simply a pastoral/elder issue alone, although it is, but the ownership for the discipleship, the ownership for the maturation of the body, the ownership for all of us coming together and growing up in the faith is a collective, all-skins-in-the-game kind of issue.

So if you're a part of this congregation, you're a part of the maturation, development, and discipleship of this congregation. The ownership for discipleship falls on the membership. You're going to see that clearly through chapter 2. With all of those things in mind, let's read it. Notice the contrast.

**"But as for you [Titus], teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women**

likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.

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. 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, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 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. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you."

Right out of the gate, Paul contrasts the false teaching of chapter 1 where he launches into chapter 2, "**But as for you [Titus], teach what accords with sound doctrine.**" So this idea of sound doctrine, *doctrine* being a collection of teaching, the idea of the soundness of this doctrine connotes this sense.

It's healthy. It's right. It's without infirmity. It's true. It's pure. That's where I got the idea of healthy doctrine, healthy disciples, healthy habitual diet. The soundness he's going to talk about here, not only in this verse, but in verse 2 and throughout the rest of the chapter, carries the idea of a health. It's without infirmity.

This is the kind of doctrine he's holding up, what is true, what is right, what is good, what is pure, what is lovely, and he's going to unpack that doctrine in full at the end of chapter 2 and verses 11 through 14, namely this. He's going to talk about the past grace of God that rescued us, the present grace of God that currently renews us and reforms us, and the future grace of God that reassures us. We'll get to that shortly.

This is what he launches into. Before he launches into this idea of healthy disciples, he lays out the picture of healthy doctrine. He's about to start segmenting out different groups in the church and talking to them about being healthy disciples. Before I jump into that, let me talk to you just briefly about this idea of doctrine and progress and where we find ourselves in our culture and as a church.

What Paul is going to address is going to fly very contrary to the consistent messaging you and I hear, the consistent messaging we hear about older people. Their value is lessening, and we deify youth. You're going to hear messages about authority should be questioned and pushed apart. You're going to see messages to our culture and from our culture about rampant individualism: "Follow and do whatever you like."

In fact, I just listened to a message this past week that blatantly and unapologetically and shamelessly championed and said, "This is what you should be about: you." This will feel very contrary to that. This will fly in the face of that. Let me read this quote to you from C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*. He says this about progress.

"We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turning, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man."

Think about the wisdom in that. For us as a church, as we are consistently barraged with communications and messages from our culture about what is right and what is good, the Word of God stands today contrary to that and is speaking against the wind, inviting us to turn back. In fact, that turning may be what Lewis calls progress.

The apostle Paul is going to address a certain group first in this healthy disciples. The group he's going to address is the older men. Listen to what he says in verse 2. "**Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.**" The older men typically are the age of about 50 to 60 years old. The idea of this phrase here, "older man," doesn't connote an office, so it's not the word for elder. It's the word for older. It's an age, not an office.

These men probably have grown families. They are what we would call empty-nesters. They're not in the latter stages of life, but they're no longer young. If it was difficult for you to get up from the

kneeling position today or you just skipped that altogether, you may be in this category. This is the older man.

Look at what he says about the older men here. He's going to give three marks of maturity and three marks of godliness. The three marks of maturity for these older men are they are to be sober-minded. They are to be dignified and self-controlled. What Paul is saying in this is pretty important. He's going to say these men are to have a substance about them.

They are to have a way about their life. There's something that guides these men that's strong. There's a rudder that's true. There's an anchor that's secure. This idea of dignity, that in looking at these men they're dignified, carries this kind of thread. This dignity leads to respect, and this respect leads to an authority.

This authority, remember, is not authority that's attached to an office. It's authority that's attached to their character. These are the kind of men who when they walk into a room you notice them, not because of pomp and circumstance, because of the substance of who they are. When they speak, they give pearls of wisdom.

They're the men this church needs more and more of. May their tribe increase. There's something about this man. There's a substance to this guy. He has walked through life, in a sense. He has had his peaks, and he has had his valleys. He has walked through the difficult seasons. He has walked through family seasons. He has no doubt suffered loss, and he can say to this congregation, "Church, our God is faithful. Church, it's worth it."

What Paul is going to do is he's going to marry, he's going to complement, these three marks of maturity to these three virtues of godliness. There are the three primary virtues the apostle Paul uses, what some commentators call his cardinal virtues. It's the idea of faith, hope, and love. You hear it in 1 Corinthians. You see it in different pieces of 1 Timothy.

The idea of faith, love, and then the word he uses here is *steadfastness* again connotes this hope. We're longsuffering. We're actually going to persevere, and what is causing me to be steadfast is the hope I have, the blessed hope Paul speaks about later in the chapter. Again, men, there is a very true sense where we can have a congregation filled with mature men who are not godly.

You can be mature and not godly, but Paul is holding up a better ideal. Paul is calling us to a greater standard. Paul is lifting this up and says, "No. For a healthy church, we need both, wed into one man." You need to see he is dignified, worthy of respect, has an authority because of the kind of man he is. He's sober-minded, clear-headed, self-controlled, and he exudes and exhibits faith, love, and steadfastness.

Knowing this, that he is a guy you can look to and learn from this man that his God is dependable, that he says like the apostle Paul in Titus 1:4, "Our God who never lies." Looking back over their lives and all they've walked through, all they've borne, all the hardships and the challenges and the difficulties, they can say, "Our God is able. Our God is trustworthy. Our God is faithful. Stake your life on him. Lay it down for him."

It's not just faith but also love. What we're learning from you, men, is we're learning how to care. We're learning how to grow in compassion. We're learning how to have empathy. We're learning how to lead out in these things with affection and esteem and concern for others. It's this deep-seated, "We're learning how to be a friend because you're teaching us. We're learning how to care for and love others because you're showing us."

Finally, you are the picture for us of what it means to finish well. You're not flaming out at the end, but this blessed hope, which you are longing for in a way we are longing to long for it the way you do, but you're longing for it in such a way you say, "I will finish strong. I will finish this race." You men with an eye backward to this congregation are looking back at how you may sow good seeds because of your godliness and character, because of the blessed hope you know is yours in Christ Jesus.

As that weds together, men, this is who you are to be. If I could just summarize what it looks like, it looks like us as a congregation looking to you, and in looking to you, we're learning some things from you. We're learning what to value. We're learning what to pursue, what not to pursue. We're learning what to esteem, and we're learning this because you're clarifying it for us because of your life. You're speaking into us, saying, "No. That's a worthless pursuit. That's chasing the wind. You don't want that. I can tell you this winds up fruitless."

Notice where he goes from here. As he uses the word *likewise*, he begins to address the older women. Again, it's the connective tissue. The same sense, the same flavor, the same tone he just spoke to the older men about he's now speaking to the older women in verse 3. He says, "**Older**

**women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good..."**

So the sense that these older men have carries over to the older women. There's something about you, ladies. Again, you're in the same age category. It's about 50 to 60 years old. You have grown kids. You're empty-nesters. Where you find yourself in this season of life, it should be marked by the similar traits of godliness and maturity.

Paul summarizes it like this, that you would demonstrate the marks of reverence. Reverence here carries the word of like a priestess. You recognize the way you are going and living and doing gives off an air of sacredness, gives off an air of righteousness, of holiness. There's a depth to you, a substance to you. When you speak, you have pearls of wisdom. You know what is true and good and right and worthwhile, and you know what is not.

Again, you're marked by this. Listen to what Paul says here in this particular context in the Cretan church. These older ladies now had more discretionary time on their hands. Generally, as the kids leave the house, you typically have more time on your hands, both older men and older women. The way these older women were spending their time was more toward idle time.

What was happening is they were gathering around. They were going house to house apparently to get a cheese platter around, pop a cork, and have some wine. Then they just began to have these conversations. Hear me. They had earned this. They had deserved this. They had raised families. They were gone. They were finally like, "Yes, a little *me* time." Paul is going to kind of hold up a better ideal here.

He talks about the idea of slander. It's where we get the word *devil*. It's not a great word. It's the Greek word *diabolos*. The idea of a slanderer is someone who is speaking words that are attacking, speaking words that are accusatory, speaking words that cut down rather than build up. In their gatherings and in their conversations, their speaking was tied to their drinking.

The more they began to drink, the more they began to speak, and the more they began to drink and speak, the more that speaking began to kind of dissolve into what he called slander. Paul says, "Don't do this, but let me uphold something for you that's much better. You are to teach what is good." It's the only place in all of Scripture where this adjective is used, teaching what is good.

So he's holding up here something that's unique among you, ladies. He's holding up something here that is valuable among you, and he says, "You are to teach what is good." Notice what he's talking about here. He's talking about human flourishing. He's talking about what is beautiful, right, and true. He's esteeming something as worthwhile here, so in this discretionary time, he's saying, "This is how you are to use it. You are to teach what is good."

Look. He transitions. "**...and so train the young women...**" This idea of discipleship being a membership issue, the older ladies in the congregation were to pour in and invest into the younger ladies of the congregation. Discipleship is a membership issue. The older are esteemed in value and worthy to follow. Their example is good and right and righteous and holy. They're investing into the younger to draw us up.

So Paul says here, "Ladies, train the younger women." The word *train* here runs in contrast to *slander*, because the word *train* here means to advise, to encourage, to urge. He's saying, "Rather than using your words over here like this, use them like this. Come over into this context and invest to build up and to train up these women."

The young women he has in mind here are women who are of marriageable age, more than likely are married, and more than likely have kids according to this context, but not necessarily so. He's just saying the investment of the older women into the younger women. You're investing in those women who are right around the age of being married. This is the season of life for these young women, and your investment is deliberate and intentional and ongoing in them.

Hear this. This idea of teaching what is good is not the specific gift of teaching, although there are some women in here who are gifted teachers. Praise the Lord for you. That's not what Paul has in mind here. He does not have in mind specific, gifted teachers. He has in mind the general sense of teaching that happens in life-on-life relationships as you're passing along wisdom you have picked up throughout the years.

As you have grown in godliness, as you have raised your family, as you have picked up these things, you are now passing them on. So it's teaching in a very broad sense, not the specific sense. He says, "**...and so train the young women...**" Look at what he says about the young women. I'll read this here in verse 4.

**"...and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled."** Again, the content of this conversation is the young ladies, the young women, would first learn to keep their hearts and then learn to keep their homes.

The order here is important for the apostle Paul. He says, "First, order your hearts, ladies. Then order your home." The first order of your heart is learning to love your family, learning to love your husband and your children. This is of primary importance for Paul because if you don't begin to learn to love them in a way that is good and right and true, then everything else he's going to say doesn't make sense. He says, "First order your heart then order your home. Keep your hearts first then your home."

I'd say most of us in here, if not all of us, had the opportunity, if we're married, to spend some time with our girlfriend or boyfriend and then get engaged, and we had a choice in the matter. We had the opportunity to fall in love, but most people in this context did not have that. Most in this context had arranged marriages.

What Paul is saying is there is a learning to love that is unique among these people most of us did not have to experience, which in fact, I think it actually elevates our call. For them, how much more challenging could it have been? You didn't know this dude. Now you're married to him. "I have to learn to love him," which is a good word for us.

Let me say this. I recognize some people are difficult to love. You may be married to them. I realize some people present themselves as unlovable. I realize there are situations in here that are extremely painful and hard. What I'm wanting to uphold in our time together is what the apostle Paul was upholding, that it's good and right and beautiful.

I can say this as a husband. There is nothing more life-giving than my wife who loves me, knowing she is for me, respects me, cares for me, is not going anywhere, champions me, applauds me, speaks harshly to me at times. The way I would describe it with Natalie is she literally thinks I hung the moon, and she absolutely knows I didn't. She just thinks I'm it, and she knows I'm not. (Are you with me? Okay. You're a little slow on the uptake here.)

Men, you know as a man how empowering it is to have a wife who loves you, how life-giving it is to know you have a wife who loves you. You feel so full of courage, like you can just go out and do

anything. Why? Because this lady loves me. She is for me and with me. It's powerful. Young women are encouraged, first, to love their husbands and then love their children.

If you read this with discerning eyes, you may have begun to ask some questions I had, specifically around, "So am I in sin as a mom if I'm not a stay-at-home mom?" Paul talks here about working at the house. What is this idea? I'll tell you what the phrase means. The phrase means, ladies, you're to be the manager of the home. You're to be the guide of the house. Look up 1 Timothy 5:14. You are to be the steward of the home.

The context and the point of this is not that you can't do that while you work. Listen to this by John Stott, which I think is very helpful. "It would not be legitimate to base on this word either a stay-at-home stereotype for all women, or a prohibition of wives being also professional women. What is rather affirmed is that if a woman accepts the vocation of marriage, and has a husband and children, she will love them and not neglect them. [...] What he is opposing is not a wife's pursuit of a profession, but 'the habit of being idle and going about from house to house.'"

To further illustrate the point, consider Proverbs 31. You think about Proverbs 31 being held up as the ideal woman. In Proverbs 31 we see this about this woman. Her heart was first and foremost for her home, but do you know what she did in being first and foremost for her home? She worked outside of it. She traded. She engaged in commerce. She brought in income for their home so they would be clothed and warm through the cold seasons and so on and so forth.

Ladies, this is not about you working outside of the home or working inside of the home. What it is upholding is your heart would be first for your home. Sadly, we know the condition of our hearts, whether we're at the house or outside of the house, could not be for the house. If you're like me, I can find a thousand ways to escape. What Paul is saying is to avoid escapism. Avoid idle living and get back in focus on what's most valuable. Dr. Tony Evans says, "Whoever owns the family owns the future."

In my preparation and in my time of study over this week, the burden for this particular message for me fell on young moms. I want to just speak a couple of things to you, and I hope you hear my heart in this. First of all, I want to say to you, "Thank you." I don't say that tritely, and I don't say that lightly. I mean that with all sincerity. Thank you for what you do.

In unpacking that, I mean you are unique, and nobody can replace you. Nobody can do what you can do. The value you bring is immeasurable. The absolute profound mystery of a mom, the wonder it is, you cannot be replaced. I say this as a husband who's married to one. I think about her role and the significance she brings, not only to my children and to our home, but to me as a dad, how she's helping shape me and as it pertains to our home. She's lifting my eyes to have a certain perspective and to see certain things I would easily miss.

Moms, hear me say it a thousand times over. You should be championed for what you're doing. You should be applauded day in and day out for who you are and what you are about. The value you bring is eternal. It is legacy-building. It stretches beyond these years. Your investment multiplies. I can say this as a dad who is married to a mom. It's really hard. These kids, most of the time, are thankless.

More often than not they're requiring something of me I don't feel like I have the energy to give, and it's relentless. It doesn't stop. As a dad I can just say my kids are killing me. There is a part of me that's wasting away, and if I think about the guy I was 10 years ago, I am not that guy anymore. My wife is not the woman she was 10 years ago. There's a piece and a part of us that's just being whittled away.

I think about in *Back to the Future*... Some of you hopefully remember *Back to the Future*. He's playing the guitar on stage, and he has this picture that shows how much time he has left to save his family. Do you remember the picture of him just disappearing? This is what I feel like. I feel like there's a piece of me that's disappearing. Do you know what I did on Friday night? Nothing. I didn't do anything. I stayed at home, we ate, and we watched *The Muppet Movie*, again. That's what we did. This is my life. I drive a minivan. I'm tired all the time. It's relentless.

If we even dare to think to stay up late, 11:30-ish, I know at some point in the night somebody is going to climb on my face and wake me up. I will not get to sleep in, and neither will my wife. The food is never good enough. It's never enough. There's a snack that's needed and necessary 15 minutes after dinner. The crumbs multiply all over the floor. I have no idea how a Cheerio this size can produce crumbs this size, but it does it. It does it every single day.

Hear me when I say this. My wife feels that fifteen-fold. She feels the weight of that onslaught day in and day out. It's thankless. It's tiring. It's exhausting. I know that because when I get home the conversations are like, "I don't know if I can keep doing it." I'm like, "Well, baby, I don't know what

the options are." She'll say, "Do other kids fight like our kids fight?" Then I'll call, "Do your kids fight?" "Okay, the Bleeker boys fight." That's just so reassuring for us in those moments.

Moms, you think about the weight you carry. Think about the weight you feel. The days are long, but the years are short. Moms, what you are doing is an investment that goes beyond even what you know. There's a mystery to it. There's an investment that if God would just give us perspective... Is that not what we need at times, just those moments where we can get up a little bit and begin to see it differently and experience it anew, that you're reminded of the wonder you're called into?

Let me read this to you out of a book. Before, let me commend these books to you. One is a book called *Loving the Little Years* by . Please read it. It's written by a mom for moms. She has five kids, so the chapters are like three pages long. It's short like that on purpose. This one I'll quote out of is called *Fit to Burst: Abundance, Mayhem, and the Joys of Motherhood*. Listen to what she says.

"In our church, at the conclusion of each worship service, we sing the 'Gloria Patri' with our hands raised. We lift our hands in a gesture of lifting our worship up to God, but also a gesture of lifting the work of our hands up to Him. Asking Him to use the things that we do in the course of the week for the kingdom.

We lift up the hands that have been in the sink with the dishes, hands that have been fixing hair and buttoning pants, hands that have been wiping off the table and driving to school, hands that have been changing diapers and tickling tummies, hands that have been busy holding other hands. These hands, this work, Lord, take them.

And when I look down our row at church, I see that God has multiplied the work of our hands. All these little hands raised to Him. Offering up their coloring and schoolwork. Offering up their staying in bed at nap time. Offering up their laughter, their joy, and their lives. And I know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that there is nothing better or more powerful that I could be doing with my hands."

Moms, bless you. May the Lord bless you. May you right now sit in the wonder of God's grace for you and what he has called you to. It is a good, righteous, and noble gift. May the rhetoric and the discussion and the language of our church as we describe these little ones move from inconvenience, disrupting.

Let the language be on the other end of the spectrum of gift, joy, blessing. Do you know why? Because that's exactly how the Bible describes them. Every little one is a gift, whether you knew they were coming or not. They're a gift that's to be treasured and embraced and loved. Moms, you uniquely have a role in this.

I just want to pause here and just speak to some of those in our church who are struggling in this particular area, who long to be moms, who long to be dads. You have prayed for it. You have asked for it, and for whatever reason you have not been given the gift of children. I want to say a couple of things to you. One is what you desire is good, right, and noble. Keep upholding that as a good, right, and noble gift, and keep putting it before the Lord. We have seen him answer those prayers time and time again.

I would also say to you, secondly, in this church you are not alone. This church, sadly, is filled with men and women, couples who are struggling with infertility or struggling with just simply not having the ability to have children. Oftentimes what we see with these couples who are not able to have kids is eventually their heart begins to move toward adoption and foster to adopt. There are few things that are more beautiful than that.

May we be a church that upholds the gift of children. If they're in here and among us and they're squirming and they're yelling and they're screaming, I don't care. I love it. It may make you feel uncomfortable. It does when I'm out there and it's my kid. I get that, but there's life in here. There's the gift of life. We want to celebrate that. May God continue to weave into our story those moms and dads who are adopting into this family and their family little ones who didn't have one. Praise his name.

So we've talked about the older men. We've talked about the older women. We've talked about the younger women. Now Paul moves to talk about the younger men. The phrase *younger men* here carries the idea of young, new, novice. Listen to what he says. **"Likewise..."** He's connecting. **"...urge the younger men to be self-controlled."**

When I first read this, I thought, "Man, he just gave this whole big list to these young moms who are kind of juggling all this kind of stuff and have all these responsibilities. They're doing this, and he says to the young guys, 'Hey, one thing, guys. Just get it together. Just be self-controlled. Just focus on this one thing,'" but there's more to it than that.

He uses the word *likewise*. He's reaching back, and he's pulling in a lot of the same themes. He's pulling them right into this idea of younger men. So he says, "Younger men, you need to be self-controlled." Let me say this to you, young guys. It means if God did not expect it, then he would not have said it. He wouldn't have said it if it wasn't possible. By God's grace and through the power of the Holy Spirit, self-control actually is attainable and achievable.

You'll see it's woven throughout this text four different times. Let me say this about self-control. Self-control does not mean holding onto the rope tighter. Self-control does not mean exerting more of your will to kind of white-knuckle your way through this thing. Self-control, if you remember, is a fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

It is what flows out of a heart that's yielded unto the Spirit. A heart that is submitted unto Christ himself through his Spirit is a heart that will exhibit self-control for the young and for the old. Really, as Paul is talking about self-control for the older men, the older women, the younger men, the younger women, what he's saying is live a life that's dominated by the Spirit. May the mark of your life be one where you have yielded unto him.

He says your example in this particular case is Titus, and he says to Titus, "Hey, you are to be a model of good works. So in your teaching, teach with integrity. Teach with soundness of speech so no one can bring a charge against you." He's saying to this young man, Titus, "Young man, you be an example to other young men in the church."

I would say this to the young guys and the church: Rise up. It's not only the older people who have the opportunity to be an example, but to Titus right here he's saying, "Titus, you be an example." This idea of a model is like a heavy rock that's in the ground, it's lifted up, and it leaves an imprint you can see the form and the substance of what was there.

Paul is saying to Titus, "You be that kind of man," Titus, being a young man. Speaking to young men in this church, "You be that kind of man." By God's grace the older men would rise up, and young men, we would say, "I want to be like that." Having these little ones in here, these sixth graders in here, and some even younger in here... Why do we bring them in here? We bring them in here because we want to reestablish the heroes of the church. We want to reestablish who it is we should want to emulate, who we should want to be like.

Notice what is missing from this list so far as he has run all the way through the church. What's missing are talents and gifts. Do you see? That's not what's on display here. He's not saying, "Chase after this guy and want to be like this guy because he's really good at football. You want to be like this guy because he's really good at music or he's really good at this or that." No, that's not what any of this is talking about.

You want to be like this guy because he's godly. You want to be like this lady because she is worthy of respect. The reason these young guys and gals are in here, one of our hopes is when we are saying, "This is amazing grace," and we're reciting it and singing it and our hands are raised in overflow of worship, this little one looks up and says, "That's my dad. That's my mom. I want to learn from them," so the heroes will be the mom and the dad. The heroes will be the ones looking down the aisle and saying, "I want to be like that guy. I want to be like that lady."

Young and old across the church, these little ones are being raised up and disciplined by you. They want to emulate you. Why? Because you're worthy to follow, because your yes is your yes and your no is your no, and you know what is right and good to pursue and to chase. You're showing us what's most valuable, and you're showing it all the way down the line.

Finally, Paul ends here. He says in verse 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, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.**"

We're talking about bondservants. Let me give you a definition of what a bondservant is.

A *bondservant* is one who is owned by somebody else. All of his livelihood, all of her livelihood, all of her possessions were dictated by somebody else. They were slaves. When you and I hear the word *slaves*, we tend to conjure up images from the transatlantic colonial American slave trade, which was race-based. It's different in the New Testament. I'm not saying it's better.

The slaves in the New Testament typically were debt-induced slaves. They were people of all ages, all colors, and all varieties. The difference doesn't make it better. In fact, it's still deplorable. When we think about slavery and we think about the horror it is, I want to mention a couple of things. First, I do not have time in the next few minutes to address the topic in full, but the topic does deserve a full treatment, so I want to point you to three different resources.

First is a sermon Chandler did in August of 2010 out of the Colossians series. The title of the sermon is *Slavery and the Skeptic*. The entire message is about slavery. Another resource that's found on our website is an article called "Does the Bible Condone Slavery?" It's going to list out and explain slavery in the Bible. Thirdly, I commend a series to you Beau Hughes, our Denton Campus pastor, preached out of the book of Philemon. Philemon is written about a slave and addresses more of the institution of slavery.

Let me say this about it. It should be unbelievably apparent to us as a church with our eyes wide open that the issue of racial tension has not been put to rest in our country. If the last three weeks have not been yet again another unbelievably painful reminder, racial prejudice, racial hatred, racial enmity is still alive and well in this country, and it is something that as a church we should deplore, we should rise up and detest and speak prophetically into it.

As Matt talked about last week, both having calloused knees and calloused hands so our hearts should be provoked by this reality, we should feel it. We should recognize there is something systemically broken still, that there is still something that is perpetrating our brothers and sisters, that there are those in this congregation even now whose experiences are not like the majority in this congregation, who feel things differently, who have different situations they have to be mindful of that they should not have to be mindful of.

As a church we step into that space with the bold courage of the gospel of Jesus Christ and not faint from it but stand into it, prophetically and powerfully knowing the gospel of Jesus Christ is able to do far and above, immeasurably more than anything we could ask or imagine. So the context here, what Paul is saying is despite their circumstances...

Feel this, church. Despite the circumstance of bond service, what Paul is saying to these brothers and sisters is what should be evident in you is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Despite your hardship, despite your difficult situation, despite something you can't seem to get out of even if you want to, he says you are to be trustworthy. You are to not steal. You are to not be argumentative, not resist and oppose.

What should be evident in you is the gospel of Jesus Christ, that you're a changed man at the core, that you're a changed person at the core, and there's something fundamentally different about us. Then he moves. I wish I had time to preach it, and I don't. He moves into verses 11 through 14. What makes us different? What is in fact that healthy doctrine we're to digest and consume?

It's none other than the gospel of Jesus Christ. So he's going to point to the past grace that rescued us. He's going to talk about the present grace that redeems us, reforms us, and renews us. He's going to talk about the future grace that reassures us. This is our hope, church. This is what makes us distinctly different.

I'm going to pray. If you are serving Communion, if you would get up and go ahead and begin to hand out the elements... I know I went long. I just didn't know how to make it short. Let me say this as they're handing out the elements. If I could just kind of speak over you as we pray.

Father, I just bless these people, and I ask you'd be near to them, that you'd speak to their hearts, God. I don't know how a message like this hits them. I don't know what they're thinking, what they're beginning to kind of work through, but I pray for the older men in here, that they would see opportunity.

The wonder of the gospel is there's no perfect man in here, there are just forgiven men, and I pray that you would raise them up; for the older women to see the value of what they can invest and the value of what they bring, that they are needed and necessary in this congregation; for the younger women to see the incredible, unique gift they bring to a marriage, to a family, to a home, to legacy, to faithful multiplication; and for young men to walk as worthy examples.

God, as we receive the bread and as we receive the cup, I pray we would receive it with gladness and with a sobering reminder you have redeemed, rescued, and renewed us in Christ Jesus our Savior. It's in his name and for his sake we pray, amen.