Third Service Slide

Titus Series Slide

For the month of November- we're gonna go through a very short often overlooked little in the New Testament called Titus.

We talk a lot about planting church's here- and you should know that this is the only letter in the NT written BY a church planter TO a church planter.

(You might be wondering about Timothy- the 2 letters that come right before this, but Timothy goes to established churches in Ephesus). Titus is headed to the wild west.

Titus is a Greek, and he's going to plant a church in on the Greek island of Crete.

Crete was the Vegas of first Century Mediterranean. It was known for its rampant immorality. As an island, it was also a hub for piracy.

So Titus is basically planting a church with the cast of Pirates of the Caribbean.

Pic of Jack Sparrow stepping onto doc

Historians say that people stayed drunk in Crete. Yo Ho Ho and a bottle of rum.
You know the Greek form of the name "Titus" actually reads "Titos"…so he maybe that's why Paul was sending him to plant there- he is already synonymous with Vodka.

Crete was also known as the birthplace of the boss of the Greek gods- Zeus. And Zeus was no high moral god. Zeus himself lied and deceived to trick various women into sleeping with him.

That's a part of the reason why lying was a celebrated art form in Crete.

Titus 1:12-13
One of their very own prophets said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." 13 This testimony is true.

The historian Polybius said that nowhere in the ancient world were politicians more corrupt than in Crete.

Not an easy place for the church to flourish. And maybe this feels like your workplace, or your fraternity or sorority. Maybe for some of you this is the home you grew up in- or your neighborhood.

Not an easy place to be a Christian. This little letter is going to show you some truth, and beauty, and goodness.

Now- there is a major twist coming in this letter. That- I won't give away this week- you gotta come back next week for that- But I'll give you a little preview. Since Titus is planting in the Pirates of the Caribbean- look at something Capt Jack Sparrow says in the first Pirates movie.

"Me, I'm dishonest, and a dishonest man you can always trust to be dishonest. Honestly, it's the honest ones you want to watch out for because you can never predict when they're going to do something incredibly … stupid."- Captain Jack Sparrow

In this letter- there are 2 groups of people that Paul is preparing Titus to start a church among. The "honest" and the "dishonest".

The moral and the immoral.

The pagan…and the people saying they are Christians.

What Jack Sparrow says- is very similar to what Paul tells Titus in this letter. The Cretans- you always know what they're gonna do. They're liars, evil beasts and lazy gluttons." Its the people down there who are claiming they know who Jesus is that you need to watch out for.

Dylan Armstrong is leading a church planting team from our church to plant Clarity Church in Knoxville, TN next year. And as he heads to the UT- full of some of the same kind of Cretan living- he also has to watch out for a false form of following Jesus as he leads that team.

Pic of Jack & Orlando Bloom

So- for the remainder of his residency- I'll be speaking to him like Jack Sparrow. Savvy?

Title Slide- "It's the Honest Ones You Want to Watch Out For: The Calling of an Elder"- Titus 1:1-9

In fact- what you'll see right off the bat in this letter, is that Paul starts with instructions to build a strong team. He tells Titus- you need some men with you that as you go around Crete planting churches- that will be able to lead in the way I taught you…so they won't be taken in either by the rampant pagan debauchery of the Cretans…or of the twisted false Christianity being peddled by some of the religious folk on the island.

And that is where these first 9 verses come in…lets read them.

Titus 1:1-9
Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness,
2 in the hope of eternal life that God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.
3 In his own time he has revealed his word in the preaching with which I was entrusted by the command of God our Savior:

4 To Titus, my true son in our common faith.

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

5 The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town. 6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of one wife, with faithful children who are not accused of wildness or rebellion. 7 As an overseer of God's household, he must be blameless, not arrogant, not hot-tempered, not an excessive drinker, not a bully, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, righteous, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it.

1. Elders are blameless. v 6

- Blameless does not mean sinless.
- It means there are no overt signs of enslaving sin or dysfunction in this man's life.
- Very simply it means that when you think about an elder's life, that he is someone you would want your kids or your nieces and nephews, or yourself…to imitate.
- 1 Peter 5 says that Elders should be EXAMPLES to the church.
- Not perfect. Not sinless, but an elder's life should be characterized by beauty…not ugliness. By righteousness, not sin. By light, not darkness.
- Elders should NOT be men that are consistently giving into the temptation of evil, but rather giving testimony to the way the LORD has delivered them FROM EVIL.

2. Elders are one woman's man. v 6

- This is about the elder's disposition towards women.
- Current habitual viewing of pornography disqualifies you from being a one-woman man as much or more so than a having a divorce in your past…because it means that you are continually viewing women as simply tools for your pleasure…not respectable human beings made in God's image.

- Also, this doesn't mean you have to be married.
- This is an attitude toward women. It means you aren't flirtatious. It means you hold a view of marriage that is sacred.

- An elder is not the guy who winks at you when an attractive woman walks by and rambles off something about "Nothing wrong with window shopping"

3. Elders lead well-ordered homes. v 6

- Before an elder can lead the church, he has to lead his home well.
- This doesn't mean his wife is a Stepford wife.
- It doesn't mean his family is like the people in that movie Pleasantville. You know…all smiles all the time…everybody makes all the basketball shots they take and they NEVER say anything out of order in public.
- No. Look if that's the case…then I need to resign RIGHT NOW. Because sometimes my house looks more like a scene from the Exorcist than it does Pleasantville.

- See, This doesn't mean an elder's kids aren't selfish and disobedient. It means he disciplines and leads his kids in the way that God has disciplined and led him.
- And it means he treats his wife like Christ treated his church. Dying for her good. Laying down his life for her.

- It means the words, "I'm sorry. I was wrong. Will you forgive me?" are not strange company in his house.
- It means nobody in his home thinks "What is Dad doing?" when he lays his hands on his wife and kids and begins to pray for them…or when he starts talking about Jesus. Or quoting Scripture.
- In fact, it means its weird if he doesn't.

- Because Paul says in his letter to Timothy, If I an elder is not willing to serve and love my family, how can I be trusted with the family of God?
- The indication here, BTW, is not that these are like teenage or adult children, but young children. The idea has way more to do with the actions of the parent- not the actions of the kids. Discipline young kids.

4. Elders are sober-minded & self-controlled. v 7-8 (Bold Sensible & Self-Controlled)

Sensible = Sober-Minded & Prudent (the ability to weigh options thoughtfully and make wise choices.

Self-Control and Sober Mindedness two sides of the same coin.

- Sober-minded has to do with the way you look at the world.
- It means that no matter what is happening around you, good or bad, you don't let your affections get stolen away by your circumstances.
- It means you are level headed. It means nothing owns you.
- So an elder may like food, but he isn't a glutton.
- He may love football, but he doesn't become the incredible hulk when his team loses.
- He may enjoy golf, but if he never played another round…that would be ok.

- Sober-minded means when his circumstances are falling apart, that he isn't coming unglued. Instead, standing on solid ground, he's able to reach out to those who aren't.

- Sober-minded means that elders are dependent on God for their contentment…not on their circumstances being just right.
- They are a non-anxious presence.

- And while being sober-minded has to do with an elder knowing how to handle what the world throws at him, being self-controlled is knowing how to handle what his broken sinful soul throws at him.

Sober-minded means faithfully navigating outward pressures.
Self-control means faithfully navigating inward pressures.

- Being self-controlled means an elder has a sense of self-awareness.
- He doesn't allow his personal desires, feelings, and weaknesses to get in the way of making wise God-honoring decisions.

- Its not that an elder has No Weakness. Its that he ***knows*** his weaknesses….and does something about them.
- He knows where and how he is prone to sin, and he does what is necessary to prevent that sin. He is wise to the schemes of the devil. He knows he's not above falling for them…so he is especially vigilant of evil.

- Paul gives 2 negative examples of being Sober-minded and Self-controlled right here in this list in **v 7**
- Being an excessive drinker, and a lover of money.
- See if alcohol or money is the way you find contentment…if alcohol or money provides you with the security or the beauty you need to live….then you aren't qualified to be an elder.
- You don't know how to navigate the outward pressure of money and alcohol…or the inward temptation of the way you crave them.

- It doesn't mean you can't drink alcohol, and it doesn't mean you can't have money…even a lot of money.
- It means that your HOPE can't be in money…or even appear that way.
- It means that my hope at the end of a bad day is the God that died to adopt me and rose to empower me to live for him.
- My hope at the end of the day is not a weeknight pour or padded savings account.

5. Elders love what God loves. v 8

- Loving what is Good, Holy, Righteous
- Holy means set apart for God's purpose
- Righteous- means acting according to God's way.
- And Loving what is good means that they aren't longingly looking away from Truth, Beauty, and Goodness as God defines it wishing "if only I could have something different…but alas…I'm an elder".
- They are pointed at the Good the True and the Beautiful and want more of it.
- in 1 Timothy 3- there's another list there for elder qualifications and it says that they should be respected- or thought well of by outsiders or non-believers.
- You know what earns that kind of respect? Its not "you act like me" its when those outside the faith see loving sacrifice, its when they see how you treat them with honor.
- Its when they don't scorn those who believe differently or vote differently, rather they speak kindly- even where correction is involved.

6. Elders are hospitable.- v 8

- This means an elder loves opening himself up and his home up to welcome in those that are hurting and lost. To nourish them physically, emotionally, and especially to nourish their souls with the gospel of Jesus.
- It doesn't mean that they ALWAYS open their home up. It doesn't mean that you can go to these guys houses all the time.

- It means in the church and at home, I have to create an environment of help and healing to the sojourner, the widow, the orphan… the physically, and emotional hurting and the spiritually lost.
- It means I don't selfishly hoard my resources- but I'm willing to share them with people in need. Elders should be generous.

7. Elders aren't violent bullies, they are gentle. v 7

- This means an elder doesn't use his power to intimidate.
- He uses it shepherd.
- Rod & Staff from Psalm 23
- Rod used to prod, Staff used to guide.
- My 2 part counseling ministry- Prudence to know what to say when.
- But its not my emotions guiding me in those moments.

- An elder controls his power for the good of the church.
- He can't be a guy trying to stir the pot.
- He can't use his position to strong arm people.
- He doesn't use your weakness against you
- When you come confess your sin to an elder and ask for prayer…he doesn't then threaten you…but he **does** tell you truth about your sin in a way that shows he really cares about YOU….and that the LORD does too. He takes your sin seriously, and loves you in the middle of it.

- Additionally, violence cannot be his answer to every threat.
- He can't lose his temper easily.

- I'm not throwing my dukes up every time someone has a dispute with me. We'd never get anywhere in this church if every time our elders met we were fighting with one another.

- **[BREATHE]** You know what this is? This is a charge to be **tough and tender**. To be gritty and graceful.

- Toughness is perseverance. Toughness is your ability to get punched in the face, spit on, lied about, cynically questioned… Toughness is being able to stand firmly on the Word of God and the Love of Christ in a culture that would challenge both of those foundations…and still move forward undeterred from your goal…the glory of God and the good of his people.

- And being tender means that even though I might have the leverage to crush you, to end your career or your marriage…even though I might be so sure of my theological position….that I handle you gently. For your good. I'm compassionate.

- **"Oh, how rare are the Christians who speak with a tender heart and have a theological backbone of steel." - John Piper**

8.Elders are doctrinally sound and use their voice to encourage & refute.— v 9

- Elders should be able to help you find answers to your questions about God and your life from the Word of God. They should be able to paint an accurate picture of who God is, what he has done, and what he has promised to do.

- This does not mean they have to be DYNAMIC PUBLIC teachers. And it doesn't even mean they have to have a seminary degree.
- It simply means they should be able to help you connect the Bible to your life. They should be knowledgeable about the Scriptures and wise about how to obey them in our culture.

They don't under-pastor (fail to encourage or refute)
Nor do they over-pastor (try to control everyone's choices)

9. Elders are humble v7 a (end at arrogant)

- The ONE OVERARCHING characteristic that really encompasses and informs all the other qualifications of an elder is humility.
- Take a look at **1 Peter 5:5-6**
- Where Paul says to those who are who are younger in their faith, more resistant to authority…that they should submit to the elders, but then he says "ALL OF YOU, elders included" show humility toward one another. The whole church ought to be characterized by humility. By thinking of others above yourself.

- And then, this incredibly strong statement that's a quote from the Proverbs "God gives grace to the humble, but RESISTS the proud."
- That's strong!! God RESISTS the proud?!

- Do you see what that says?
- It says that EVERYONE's problem with God…it's the condition of our heart toward God.

- It means that you are rebelling against God…when you elevate yourself as more important than others...and more important than God.

- It doesn't take exterminating an entire population of people, or murdering innocent children to be evil. It only takes worshipping yourself.
- …and you can do that in one thought. You can do it in one word. In one small action. In fact, you've probably already done it this morning.

- Which is what leads me back to the cross. Listen to me. This is not just for elders. Its for everyone.
- In fact, there is nothing I've told you about an elder in these qualifications that the LORD doesn't want for you.

- These qualifications for elders are not met because some guys got really good at "not being a bad person."

- The only way you come into this character…is by seeing and believing that on the cross, Jesus Christ took all of your sin on him. That he died the death you deserved,, the death you deserved.

- You won't ever be able to avoid the snare of the devil without first realizing that Christ has already taken all that you deserve for your sin on him.
- Because you know what?…when you realize that, it undoes your pride. Has anyone ever done something for you that didn't deserve?

- How do you feel?
- 2 words. Small and Grateful.- earmarks of humility.
- **ILLUS-** Years ago, somebody I barely knew…the relative of a very good friend of my family, paid to have hardwood floors installed in my house.

- I talked to him on the phone the day before they went in. And I found that I felt so small when I talked to him. But at the same time, was oozing with gratitude.

- AND THAT WAS WITH HARDWOOD FLOORS!!!!
- Jesus took the sting out of death by separating you from your sin. By paying the price you deserved for your evil rebellion against God…
- And that's humbling. It leaves you grateful…and the humility that the cross creates in you is the basis for growing into the kind of character that these passages talk about.

- God's design for the whole church is that we are clothed in humility…and that only comes as we look at the cross.
- That's why every time we send you out of this worship gathering to be the church in the world, we tell you to remember the gospel. That means. Remember what Jesus did on the cross for you. It's the only hope to live a life like this.

But there is one more characteristic of an elder I haven't mentioned.

10. Elders are eager to be elders.

- Take a look at this

- **1 Tim 3:1 & 1 Peter 5:2a (stop after "would have you")**

- In both these texts, Paul and Peter emphasize an elder should WANT to do this.
- Now, why would you typically say a person wants a leadership position? What is the typical reason people want to be in power?
- They either want to have their worth validated… "Hey, look at me, I'm the captain of the football team, I'm the president of my company, I'm the leader of my study group"…whatever it is, people often desire positions of leadership to show they are worth something.
- OR…people desire to be in leadership because of the power they have to use over others.
- If I have power over you, I can use it to make decisions that benefit me at your expense.

- In fact, that's why a lot of you may have issue with an authority structure in the church…or even in the home. Because the only paradigm you have for authority is self-validation or abusive power.
- So if you see a guy that DESIRES to be an elder…you think "Oh, he just wants to be in control."

- But Jesus blows that away. See, first, through the cross, through his inescapable sacrificial love for us, he humbles us…leaving us small but grateful.
- But then he fills us with his Spirit and says, "Now, lead others".

- Not just elders…every one. Make disciples. Everyone…go lead people to Jesus.
- See, being an elder is scary. Let me show you why.
- **Hebrews 13:17**
- **Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.**

- As a leader in the church, an elder has to give an account for how we lead. …and you see that again? Do this with JOY.

- SO why in the WORLD would I want to be an elder? I have to watch over a group of people's SOULs? And then give an account for how I do that?
- And the cross eliminates me from wanting to do this for the selfish conventional reasons of abusing power or validating myself. SO why? What's left? Why be accountable for watching over someone's soul? I can barely do that to my own soul. That's a lot of responsibility. Why is this something I or any of these other men WANT to do?

- Here's why. Because of the Resurrection.
- **1 Peter 5:4, 10**
- The other part of the gospel…after the cross..is that Jesus rose.
- See, The gospel isn't just that Jesus died in my place for my sin… the gospel is also that the power that was in Jesus to raise him from the dead, is the power that is now working in me.
- The gospel is that Jesus, the CHIEF SHEPHERD…the REAL ELDER is coming back. That's good news.

- And he is going to make all the wrongs right, and fix all the things our sin has broken. In the meantime, he's called the church to show signs of that coming kingdom by loving like he loved us. Sacrificing for the good of people that don't deserve it. Helping the helpless. Ministering to the sick, both physically and spiritually. And he's called the elders of the church to equip you to do that.

- THAT's why I do what I do joyfully. Its not because I love getting into the depths of your sin, or because I really enjoy confrontation, or because I get some buzz off of authority. I'm eager, and so are these men, to be an elder because we know that Jesus climbed out of a grave and….through the church, is going to make the truth of his second coming and a beautiful new world come to light.

- And if he lets me in on helping YOU ALL to proclaim that good news….then I'm ALL IN. And so are all the elders of this church.

Now, Let me answer one more question you might have.
What exactly does an elder do?-
Elders Lead, Feed, & Protect.

- **Elders Lead.** In accordance with he Scripture- we set a vision and a direction for this church.
- We lead by shepherding personally. That just means we help you in your daily life to understand the application of the word of God. We want to help you make decisions that reflect your belief in the gospel…in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus.

- **Elders Feed.**
- We teach you the Word of God. Help you to understand the Scriptures so that you grow to maturity…and so that you aren't taken in by the devil's lies…or blown back and forth by every wind of doctrine.

- **Elders Protect.**
- Shepherding also means we try and keep you from spiritual danger.
- That means confrontation. It means church discipline. It means that sometimes we see where you are in your walk with God and try and fan that into a bigger flame…and sometimes we see you walking toward a spiritual cliff in your life and we do everything we can to turn you around before you fall into the Devil's snare.
- It also means we protect from false doctrines you might be believing or that might be sneaking into the church- pulling us away from the mission and vision God has called us to.

- Our elder team is not going to make decisions for exactly HOW ministry is done through our church, that's why we call and equip leaders who have particular gifts in those areas to do that.
- The job of our elder team is to encourage and resource those leaders…as we also make sure what they are doing is on mission with our church and in line with the truth of Scripture.

Titus 1:1b-2
knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness,
2 in the hope of eternal life that God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.

Gospel