

Titus Introduction and Chapter 1- John Karmelich

1. Since I just finished a monster of a book (I just finished teaching Isaiah), I thought it was time for a much easier challenge, so I'm taking on the three-chapter book of Titus. Like studying any book of the bible, there are no easy projects, just easier in length. It's now been about 15 years since I've last taught the other pastoral epistles, which is 1st and 2nd Timothy, that means I'm way overdue to take on Titus in order to finish the series.
2. Let me start with the important question: Why should we care? The best description I read of the book is Chapter 1 focuses on Christian leadership; Chapter 2 focuses on how we should act in our church gatherings and Chapter 3 focuses on how we as Christians should act when we interact in settings outside of the church. (My gratitude to John MacArthur for that breakdown). Therefore, this little three-chapter book is a very tightly written manual on how we as Christians should act as we interact with others around us. If you believe Jesus is God, this should affect your life!
3. Let me also address the issue that's hanging over Chapter 1. If this 15-verse chapter explains what is required in church leadership, why should I care if I'm not a leader or an elder in my church? I am so glad you asked. The easy answer is to make sure you're in the right church. Whenever I'm asked "am I in the right church", here's my standard answer: 1) Are people carrying bibles as they go into church 2) Do the pastors of that church take the bible seriously from the pulpit and 3) Are they teaching God's word as if our salvation and growth as Christians depend upon it? If you did say yes to all three of those answers, they're indications that you're in a good Christian church.
 - a) All of that leads back to Chapter 1. Even if we've got the right church for us and those we love, how do we know the leaders are the right people for the job? That's what Chapter 1 of the book of Titus is all about. While it doesn't solve every problem and there'll always be issues we disagree with our pastors about, it's a great guideline for how the leaders in our church should act. That alone is a great reason to study chapter 1.
 - b) Another reason to study this chapter is that if we accept that Paul was given "God given" messages from God to communicate to us, then this letter is included among the bible for a good reason: So we can learn how church leadership is to be structured. I've now had the great privilege of being involved in four churches of four different denominations so I've seen a few things about how church structure does and doesn't work well. Let's just say that different churches have different structure styles for a reason. Most churches do have a leadership style that does follow "a" biblical model, the fact that different churches have different styles tells us that there's more than one style and pro's and con's to each of the different ways a church can be organized.
 - c) The interesting thing is that Paul's letter to Titus doesn't solve that debate. It's more about what's important in picking our leaders and how that process should be done. I'm amazed at what I've learned about that process and again I've been a part of Christian churches for a good while now. So with that said, I welcome you to join me through a 3-week study of this book to help us understand what it takes to have some sort of leadership role within a group of believers be it large or small.
4. As I usually do, I'd like to start by giving a little background on this book. It's written by Paul the Apostle to a man named Titus. There has been little debate in early church history over this book, as it has been accepted from the earliest days of putting together the New Testament. Titus is not mentioned in the book of Acts, but he's mentioned a bunch of times in Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians. In Paul's last letter before he died (2nd Timothy), Paul said that Titus went off to the Dalmatian area (Croatian coastline, where my family is from by the way). My point is Titus didn't live out the rest of his life in Crete, (coming up) where Paul sent him, but worked at that place for some unknown time period before moving on. My point is that Paul sent Titus work at a specific place for a specific time-period. Which leads to the question, where is that place?

- a) Chapter 1 (Verse 5) tells us that Paul sent Titus to the island of Crete. That's the 5th largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. It is 120 miles long and 37 miles wide at its widest point. Today it's part of Greece and its population today is about 600,000. I suspect in Paul's day it had a good size population with towns all over the island. The island has its own water sources as they could be self sufficient and live of it's own economy even without tourism.
- 5. To explain the "when", I need to give a little background on the author Paul. He came on the bible scene shortly after Jesus rose from the dead. He started his "Christian background" by having the Christians he found put to death or at least in jail. After Jesus told Paul in a vision that Jesus is the Messiah and He is God, Paul then focused the rest of his life on being a traveling missionary as a Christian working in the Roman Empire helping churches start and grow. The Book of Acts tells us much of Paul's story but not all of it. (Luke wrote Acts). The book doesn't end at Paul's death, but at the end of his third missionary journey. Most likely this letter was sent after the time Paul finished that third journey as described in Acts. Apparently later he then had a fourth journey to set up more churches. Christian historians speculated that the Gospel spread to Crete during that fourth journey, and Paul needed someone to go to that large island of Crete to put the churches in order that were set up there. Paul wrote this letter to Titus as authority to set up leadership in the churches on that island, so there could be accountability among the churches there.
 - a) Bottom line time: Paul wanted the churches to have godly leaders that were accountable to more godly leaders, so that together we can make a difference for Jesus.
 - b) Most historians date this letter around 62 to 64 AD given those circumstances.
- 6. Coming back to the "where" question, I've always been amazed how fast the Christian church did spread in the first hundred years after Jesus death and resurrection. One of the reasons that Jesus came when He did, was that most of the world surrounding Israel was united under the Romans. That meant that one can travel fairly freely within that Empire. Rome's two "key" rules were that one had to pay taxes to Rome and not rebel against them. After that many can do what they want to do. My point is the political climate of that day allowed Paul to spread the Gospel message to a lot of places in a relatively short time period. Even though there was much persecution of people who became Christians at that time, the Gospel spread quickly and less than a century after Jesus rose from the dead, Christians were all over the vast Roman Empire. The point being that there's a need for church leadership in places as far away from Israel as the island of Crete soon after the church was born. The churches in Crete were not more special than other places, but this letter is a good example of how Paul desired Christians to live and gather as believers as the church grew and spread all over the known world at that time.
- 7. Of all things, that speech leads me back to Chapter 1 of the book of Titus. The first three verses of that letter state Paul's authority for writing it. What kept crossing my mind was if Titus did know Paul well, why did Paul have to go into such detail about his credentials as a church leader? That is when it occurred to me that the letter wasn't just for Titus alone, but it was for the churches he's setting up to realize that this letter was God-ordained with authority for Titus to pick leaders for all those churches. My point is this letter has been accepted by the early church as a model for us on how the Christian life is to be lived compacted into a fairly short chapter.
- 8. The basic purpose of the letter is that Paul was sending Titus to this island to set up leaders in all the home churches (there were no church buildings in those days) that can then be accountable to the church in general. Think of Titus as being a "bishop" in charge of the churches that existed all over that island and Titus had the authority to set up the leadership that was under his authority.
- 9. At this point, let me stop and review: We've covered the who (Paul to Titus). We've covered the "where" as being the island of Crete. We've talked about the "when", after Paul's third missionary journey, probably around 62-64 AD. The "how" is Paul was probably elsewhere in Greece and he disposed a messenger to send this letter to Titus who was working in Crete at that time. The last question is "why". The reason this letter is accepted as worthy as being part of the bible is the fact it teaches us how Christians are to live as witnesses for Jesus. It's not the specific location that we should focus upon as much as it is instructions on how we're to make a difference for Jesus.

10. With that said, time for Verse 1: Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness--
- a) The first thing to remember is that we are reading a letter from Paul the Apostle to a Titus, who is a Christian traveling companion of Paul. The purpose of this letter is Paul wanted Titus to set up leadership in the many home churches that existed on the Island of Crete, which as I said is in the Mediterranean Sea, near Greece. Titus was already in Crete when this letter was written as indicated in Verse 5. This letter is Titus's authority to set up the leadership of the churches on this island.
 - b) That surprisingly leads us back to Verse 1. Realize that Titus and Paul already knew each other pretty well. Paul could have started this letter with, "Hey, it's Paul and here is what I want you to do in Crete." Instead we get a three-verse introduction describing who Paul is as well as his authority to be sending this letter. Think about the letter this way, if Titus just went from town to town saying you're the leader here, why would anyone take Titus seriously? That's why Paul gives a three-verse statement about his credentials. It wasn't to brag about who he was. It's so that the Christians living there would accept Paul as a source they could trust to execute this plan for how Christians should live and interact.
 - c) In fact I wouldn't be surprised if this letter was then used all over the Christian world as a source of how churches should be set up, but that's just speculation.
 - d) OK, now that we know why this section of the letter was written, why is it we should care about all of these details about Paul's breakdown (and don't say because it's in the bible!).
 - i) The short answer is it teaches us a few things about how God desires we act as His witnesses to the world.
 - ii) Therefore, bear with me as I go through the first four verses of Titus 1 to see if can learn a few things about God wants us to act as believers. Here we go.
 - e) The first thing is that Paul said is that he was a servant of God. I consider it important to understand what a "servant" means. The Greek word can be transliterated "bondservant". Think of it is voluntary slavery. The reason I'm sharing this with you, is in effect that's the type of relationship God desires of us. It's the idea that based on gratitude for what God has done for us we choose to live as He desires. Of course, none of us are perfect, but that should be the goal of all Christians to live as God desires and do His will. The Holy Spirit is our guide on seeking His will and relying upon His power to perform God's will. That doesn't mean we stand still and wait for God to move us from point A to point B. What it does mean we make the best decisions we can living under biblical principals. My point's that if Paul can consider himself a servant of God, so can we.
 - f) The next thing Paul says is that he is an Apostle. A classic debate in Christianity is, would Paul be considered one of the 12 apostles? For my newcomers, Paul was not one of the 12 as stated in the Gospels. Some argue that God "made" Paul #12 when Judas "fell down on the job". I'm not here to solve that debate. The word "apostle" just means "sent one". All I am saying is Paul believes (and correctly so) that he was called by Jesus Himself to be His witness to the world and go from place to place teaching the Gospel message and helping to set up churches wherever he went. It's Paul's interpretation of the "Great Commission". All I'm saying is that as Paul was called to be witness for Jesus ("sent one") so we're called to be a witness for Him in our lives as well. I'm not saying you have to go to distant lands for Jesus like Paul did. Most of us are called to be a witness right where we are. There's a sign by the exit of my former church that reads, "You are now entering your mission field" and I think that sign expresses well what Jesus calls us to do as His "sent ones." The really good news is we can move on now!
11. The next thing Paul says he was sent " for the faith of God's elect". In other words, Paul believes he was called to make a difference in the life of other believers and people who may also become believers in Jesus. It doesn't mean we have to make everyone "perfect" Christians. It just means we should make other people's lives priority over our own lives.

- a) In the Greek language, there are several words that can be translated "love": The strongest of those words is "agape". It has nothing to do with sexuality or physical affection. It's the idea of giving of ourselves for others. It's the idea of putting the needs of others before we take care of our own needs. Of course we still have to take care of our needs, but the idea is we look for opportunities where we can be helpful to others.
- b) As a simple example, I was telling my youngest daughter last Sunday that I think the ten minutes before or after a church serve to be the most important: That's because that's the time when we can be helpful to someone else in that church. One never knows if a smile to a stranger is the only one they get that week. One never knows if holding a door for a person may be the only act of kindness they get that week. Of course there are multitudes of other examples, but that's a simple example of how one puts other's needs as priority in front of our own needs. It was also my motivation to get my daughter to church on time!
- c) I say all of this not so much because I want you to arrive early at church or do something for a neighbor. I want you to understand what the "faith of God's elect" is all about. Think about it this way: How did Jesus say that people would recognize us as His disciples? By our love for others. That's what Paul meant when he said he's called for the faith of God's elect. It doesn't mean we have to be a "Super saint". It just means that Paul wanted to use his life as God desires as a witness for Him by putting the needs of others before His own.
- d) The really good news is we're almost done with Verse 1. In the final phrase, Paul says "the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness". Remember why we're going through each phrase in this verse: Not to kill time or understand who Paul was. It is so we can live like God has called each of us to live, as a witness for Him. My point is this four verse greeting by Paul is full of phrases that teach us how it is God desires we live. With that statement out of my system, let me talk about "the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness":
 - i) First, what's the "truth" that Paul is talking about here? To paraphrase a Pontius Pilate quote in the bible, "Truth is an army conquering a city. Truth is power and control of a situation." (My expanded paraphrase of John 18:38.) When Paul says "truth", it's the truth that Jesus is God and through His power than the world is the way it is and we have to deal with it and not any force here on earth!
 - ii) I'm not saying once we know Jesus is God there is nothing else truthful to learn of life. The idea of the truth is simply that when it comes to who it is we worship, all of that begins with the knowledge that Jesus is God. Yes, that's the basis of what it is we believe, but remember we're still on Verse 1 of the book. Speaking of Verse 1 let's finish it.
 - iii) Again Paul states here that the "The knowledge of truth leads to godliness". What it doesn't mean is "We believe Jesus is God, now we're saved and we're free to die as soon as we learn it." As I used to joke, Christian churches do not have people to execute us as soon as we're saved. We're saved for a purpose. That purpose is for us to use our lives as a witness for Him. That's the "Godliness" that Paul is talking about here. It doesn't mean we'll never sin. It means we are perfectly forgiven of all sins that we've ever committed or ever will commit. "Godliness" simply means we now have the power to live as God wants us to live and use our lives to make a difference for Jesus.
- e) Finally, I want you to know that I'm not going to go through the whole chapter this way. I just want each of us to understand why Paul is going into such details to give his resume here in the first few verses. By thinking about these details, hopefully it'll help us to think about our own relationship with Jesus and what that should look like. With that said, we are ready for Verse 2 that continues that line of thinking.
- f) For those of you new to my studies, my style is to get into details as I start a lesson and I'll speed up the pace one we all get a flavor for what God's trying to communicate to us. Ok, enough of that, time for Verse 2 itself.

12. Verse 2: a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,³ and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,
- a) Here's the rest of Paul's "resume". We can see that Verse 1 through Verse 3 is not only one big sentence, but a guide for us to understand a little of who God is and what it is He does want in a relationship with us.
 - b) To begin Verse 2, let's start with a standard question that most of us ponder at some point in our lives: How long do we plan on living? As I reminded my oldest daughter recently, I hope she lives a very long and productive life, but one has to realize there's always some possibility we can die tomorrow. We discussed that as we were discussing a "Bucket list" of things we each want to accomplish in our lives. OK, why am I getting into all of this?
 - i) Because Verse 2 states that the faith (Of Jesus) is our hope for eternal life.
 - ii) To answer the question of how long will we live? The correct answer is forever. That leads us back to Verse 2. It's because of our faith in who Jesus is and what He did for us that we have the hope of eternal life. With that said, it's important here to discuss "faith versus evidence". God never says we're to just have "blind" faith that He is real. He wants us to study the evidence, be convicted by that evidence. Based on that evidence we have the faith that all of this is real.
 - iii) Let me explain it another way. Has Jesus ever physically manifested Himself right in front of me? Of course not. However, I have studied the bible from the point of verifiable evidence. Archeology supports the bible. So do the statistical odds of all of the events about Jesus First coming being exactly as it occurred. I've also done a little homework on the history of bible manuscripts. The point is if we want some evidence for our faith, it's in our bible and on the internet now too. Based on what we read the answer is Jesus' existence is the best explanation for how our world is and why it is we should live forever.
 - iv) While I'm in the neighborhood, let's discuss the important question of how do we know we'll be resurrected? Have I ever seen anyone resurrected? Of course not. I do read in the bible of Jesus resurrecting people and He too being resurrected. The evidence of His resurrection is enough to convince me that all of this is true. I like to explain it using the computer ideas of "hardware and software": For example, if I just bought a new computer, and I could weigh it, it'd weigh "x" pounds. If I put a whole bunch of software programs on the hard drive, the weight doesn't change. My point is the "real us" is like software. It doesn't have any weight, but it's there as we can run those programs on a computer. Since our "software" is there, I'd say that we must be transferred into a new "computer" when we're resurrected that is not capable of wearing out with age, so that we can live forever.
 - v) Anyway, Paul didn't have all of this, but he did believe he would live forever. He had the advantage of having Jesus somehow speak to Him, and Paul had a vision of heaven itself one time in his life. I don't know how all that worked. I just know Paul had faith that Jesus was real, and Jesus "manifested" Himself to Paul as he did use his life to glorify God by spreading the Gospel message around the Empire. So why didn't Paul speak out about say, the corruption of the Roman government or say, the evils of slavery? My answer is Paul "had bigger fish to fry" as he like us is called to spread the Gospel message and teach others how we can all live forever as we trust in Jesus as being God, the price for all our sins, and being in charge of our lives.
 - c) Now that I've beaten to death the point we'll live forever (love the joke of beating to death the idea of living forever!) that leads to the next important question: Can we trust God in that act? That's why Paul says next, that God cannot lie. If He was even capable of lying, then we can't trust God, so that statement is important to add here by Paul.

- i) One of my favorite little topics to bring up in bible studies is, "Things God can not do". People believe that if God is God by definition He should be able to do what He wants to do when he wants to do it. As true as that is, there are a few things I will argue that God cannot do (because if He did, we can't trust Him). Therefore it is better to say here are a few things God will never do.
 - a) The first is what Paul just said that God can't lie. Let's face it, if there was a lie in the bible, then the book couldn't be trusted. Obviously some things in the bible are "word pictures". My view is I take the book "seriously". What is obviously a word picture (e.g., God gathering his children like a bird will gather her young beneath her wings) is to be treated as such. But when the book says we shouldn't steal or murder, obviously I take it literally.
 - b) The second thing God can't do is "learn". If God is perfect by definition, He must know all things. If I trip and fall down later, it may be a shock to me, but if God knows the future, He must know all things. That's why 30% of the bible is predictions, to validate that God knows the future. One expert counted about 2,500 predictions in the bible, of which 2,000 have now come true and the rest have to do with Jesus' return events. My point is the bible is reliable as it tells the future as dictated from a God who knows all things.
 - c) The final thing God can't do is "force us to love Him". God decided to give us free will. He doesn't make us into a bunch of robots forced to obey Him. He wants us to freely choose to love Him just as He chose to love us.
- ii) The really good news is after several pages, we're now close to wrapping up all of this section about what Paul wants us to know about God and how He wants us to live as a witness for Him. Let's remember the purpose of this letter for a moment: To teach Christians how we're to act in 1) choosing church leaders , 2) act as we do gather with other believers and 3) act as we interact with nonbelievers. That's the book of Titus in a few thoughts. The reason I'm going into such detail about what Paul says to start this letter is it gives us understand as to why it is we should live the way Paul wants us to live so we can then accomplish #1 through #3 on the list.
- iii) All of that leads to Paul's next phrase: That God "promised this before time began." To state the obvious, none of us were there when time began, so how do we know God "cooked up this plan" before the world began? If we accept the idea that if He is perfect, He cannot learn nor can He lie, then He must have had this whole plan in "mind" before the world started. Like I said, I view Christianity as simply being the best explanation for how the world "is". It explains how it's possible for us to be with a perfect God, by that perfect God paying the price Himself for our sins. It explains the worldwide hatred of Israel as a nation, because there are dark forces that don't want a Jewish God to come and literally rule from Israel over the world. I'm just saying I believe it because it's the best explanation for how things "are".
- d) Speaking of how things "are", that leads to the final part of this verse. To paraphrase, just at the "right time", God sent Jesus into our world to die for our sins. I like to ask every so often, why didn't Jesus come die for our sins right after Adam and Eve blew it? Why did He wait until the time of worldwide satellites so the event can be broadcast everywhere? Why that time? I could tell you of some Old Testament predictions that give pretty much the exact time Jesus was going to come! The short version is God wanted to show that we can't be perfect by keeping the law, which is why the history of the Jewish people is given in such detail. Another reason was so that the Gospel could be spread the fast, it occurred when the Roman Empire was at its peak. All I'm saying is God picked that specific time in history for this event to occur, so "deal with it".
- e) Paul's final thought here is simply that God called Paul to spread the word about Jesus as Paul was convinced all of this is true, so "let's do something about it!"

13. Verse 4: To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.
- a) In case you've forgotten, we're studying a letter. This letter was from Paul to Titus. We got three verses explaining the "from" and here we get one verse explaining the "to". We don't get a lot of flattery here about either who Paul was or who Titus was. For example, it doesn't say, "I'm Paul, I was called to preach the Gospel, so hand me a big trophy based on what I called to do!" Paul simply explained who God was, and what He was called to do "because that's what God wants us to do, so go do it". The same with Titus. While I'm sure Titus was younger than Paul, I don't think Paul saw Titus as an inferior. Paul looked at Titus as a "fellow worker" in the same cause.
 - b) I need to pause for a moment and discuss how people view "priests and pastors". It does fascinate me to watch people walk up to such people as somehow they're more holy than every other believer is. I still remember as a child, my mother had a first cousin from the country of Yugoslavia (Croatia today) who was the Roman Catholic Bishop (arch-bishop) for that part of the world. When he came to visit America, I remember what a big deal it was in my hometown when he came to visit. Let's just say there were huge dinners in his honor when he was here. I told that story not to impress you, but to realize that God has called each of us Christians to be a witness for Him, and those who have been called into the "Professional Ministry" are no more or less important than those of us who are called to "just be a witness for Jesus" in our daily live. I suppose I want each of us to realize how that we too are "true son's our common faith if we accept the Gospel Message and do use our lives to glorify Him, we're in that same category as Paul and Titus.
 - c) It's probably be smart here to remind us again a little of who is Titus. He is not mentioned by name in the book of Acts. He's mentioned a bunch of times in 2nd Corinthians as Paul had Titus work in that place to spread the gospel and strengthen the church. Most likely this trip to Crete occurred after the third and final missionary journey that was recorded in the book of Acts. The point being that the book of Acts does not record Paul's death as he went on to do more Christian missionary work after the events of Acts ends. Anyway the story here is that Titus worked with Paul and "for Paul" and now Paul wants Titus to go to the large island of Crete and work in that town to set home-churches in order.
 - d) Remember that Paul was writing a letter to Titus, and not talking to him face to face. I'm saying that because this verse is a greeting as if to say, "Hey Titus, old friend, may God be with you as go about the mission that I've called you to perform!" That's my paraphrase of "may God's grace and peace be upon you" as you perform the work I've asked you to do.
 - e) A few words on God's "grace and peace". Some other bible translations say God's grace, mercy and peace", but I won't debate that here. If you read what I wrote on 1st Timothy, I get into the "mercy" issue. The point here is we rely upon His power in order to make the type of difference God wants us to make in the world. Let me expand upon that:
 - i) The idea of "grace" is getting something we don't deserve. I like to think of that as the fact God doesn't strike us dead on the spot for our sins. Instead he lets us live a life so we can use it for His glory! He works "behind the scenes" so we can work to make a difference for Him. I hold the view that God won't do for us what we're capable of doing ourselves. However, what we can't do for ourselves, He'll make a way for us to accomplish His will, His way on His timing. I've now heard many a story from many a missionary of how God has worked in ways we can't explain to make it possible for the Gospel message to be spread. All I'm saying is God will work in our lives just as He worked through Titus to accomplish the job of setting up churches all over the area of Crete.
 - ii) The idea of "peace" is no matter how well or how bad life may be going right now, we can always have a peace of knowing that we can't blow it if we tried as long as we're trusting in Jesus as God and Lord of our lives.

- a) It's also the peace of knowing God's will, will be done no matter what will occur in the mission we've set out to accomplish. A veteran of missionary work as well as most professionals will tell you that things don't always go as planned. Part of the challenge in life is figuring out what's the best way to proceed in any given situation given what's at hand. My point is we can have God's peace within us despite those change in plans and despite what is the circumstances of the moment.
 - iii) The point is Titus can have God's grace and peace upon him even as he sets out to go accomplish this task that Paul asked Titus to complete. So what's the task? We find out in Verse 5. Speaking of which:
14. Verse 5: The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.
- a) What verse 5 implies, is that Paul was in Crete with Titus at one time. Paul left to go on to other business and Paul left Titus there to accomplish the goals as laid out in this letter.
 - b) Keep in mind a few things I said about the island of Crete when I stated this lesson. Crete is a good size island that's about 120 miles long and 37 miles wide at its widest point. The island has its own water source and it can be self-sufficient for its population. It has many cities and it appears the Gospel message has spread all over Crete by this point in history.
 - i) We don't know how the Gospel message first came there. We do know that near the end of the book of Acts, Paul stopped there on the way to Rome. However the Gospel message spread here, the point is it's here and now Paul needed someone to go all over the island and organize churches so that those who accept the Gospel can get together in order to grow in their faith.
 - c) Remember why we have "churches" in the first place. It's for Christians to gather together with other Christians to grow in their faith, learn more about Jesus, worship God and then go into our own mission fields to make a difference for Him. Like the sign said at my old church as one was leaving, "You are now entering your mission fields!"
 - d) OK then, onto the important topic of how does Paul want Titus and us, to pick leaders for our churches? That's what the next four verses talk about.
15. Verse 6: An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless--not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.
- a) The first thing I wanted each of us to see is all four verses in context. Notice that the only thing required of elders to do is to be able to teach. It's as if the verses are saying, "First pick people whose qualities are x, y, and z. If they have a good reputation in town for having a good ability to live "x, y and z" then and only then should you allow them to be leaders in your church." Notice there's nothing here about how well they know their bible. This list doesn't say how old they should be, but does give us some clues because whoever Titus is to pick, should be married and have a good reputation for raising their children.
 - b) That leads to the controversial topic of having male leaders versus female leaders. A few Christian denominations allow women to be priests. More conservative ones do not. I'm a big believer that if a church doesn't allow women to get involved in working in churches there is little that would get done. It would probably help to explain terms Christians use like bishops, elders and deacons. For some churches those words are interchangeable. In other churches they are defined roles. For most denominations, bishops and elders can be used interchangeably. I think of bishops as those who oversee a group of churches while elders oversee a particular church. Different denominations use those terms differently.

- i) To finish the point, I think of deacons as those who help under the leadership of the elders to help run a church organization. Realize that the bible refers to both men and women as deacons. Elder's were strictly men in the bible.
- ii) Realize what I'm about to say is just my view on this issue and different Christian groups see it differently. God set up a structure of accountability. Jesus is inferior to God the Father only in that if there are "two or three", someone has to be leader. God wants men (males) to lead. Therefore, He desires men to be the leaders of the church organizations. I don't think of it as wrong, but just as God's desire for how He wants churches to be organized. When no men step up to the plate to lead, it's easy to see how many churches have female leaders again if no men are willing to lead as such. Of the "Are you a Christian or not" issues, this is not one of them. It's just how most conservative churches and I interpret the issue of male leadership in the church. I definitely believe women should be a part of the involvement within a church organization, but I do believe men are called to lead.
- c) OK, now that I've ticked off a lot of people, let me walk back on safer ground and discuss some of the other issues of how to pick church leaders. Before I start, remember that even if you have zero interest in leading at church, it's important to understand this, so all of us can know if the church we're at has the type of leaders God desires. It's also important to state the no one is perfect. One should see these qualities as things our leaders should try to emulate as they go through their roles as leaders of our church groups. Think of this list as ideas every church leader should ask themselves every now and then as they take on a role in overseeing anything from a home church to a leader over a group of churches. All I'm saying is here are qualities to shoot for as one takes on that responsibility.
- d) With that said, let's look at Verse 6 again: An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.
 - i) Keep in mind that these are "new Christians" that Paul and Titus are working with on this island. My point is the issue is not whether or not one has been a Christian for a long time, but what is one's reputation in town. If one asks the locals of what they think of a certain person, that's the essential idea. If we hear, "He's a good guy who works hard, doesn't get drunk at night or beat his wife", that's the idea behind being blameless. It's not about being perfect, but just having a good reputation.
 - ii) When the text says "one wife", it doesn't mean divorced men are excluded or those who are widows. I think of it as "only married to one person" and not a bigamist. If one is divorced, issues about it, should be discussed before putting one in a role of leadership. Again, the issue is a person's reputation in town and how others are to see that person .
 - iii) The third issue here is "whose children believe". It's not about "perfect children". It is about the fact that the potential candidate is making a serious effort to teach their children about Jesus based on what they know about Him.
 - iv) The final issue I've already touched upon: Not being "wild or disobedient". Again the key issue is does this potential person have a good reputation in town? Would others in the area respect this potential leader as one we can look up to? To me, it's not about being perfect or even a bible expert, but about having a good reputation as one people can trust and respect.
- e) Now let's try Verse 7: Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless--not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.
 - i) As we go through this, keep in mind the key issue is accountability. The bad news of knowing one's bible is we're accountable for what we know. The bad news for a person involved in a church is one must be accountable for that position!

- ii) To state the obvious, it's better to know our bible and be accountable for what we learn from studying it than to never study the book at all. The same applies to any job or role we may have in church. There are blessings we can get from doing that job. There are blessings based on being accountable to others in our churches and having a good standing in one's community before taking on that job.
- iii) That little lecture leads me perfectly to Verse 7. It starts by saying since we've been called to some sort of leadership role, we must be blameless. That doesn't mean we have to be perfect, just that we have a good reputation for trying to do what's right in any given situation.
- iv) Next is "overbearing": A good leader does not say, "It's my way or the highway". A good leader learns what are people's gifts and talents and helps them to see how they can use those talents to make a difference for God. Of course leaders have to encourage others and correct them at times. At the same time, leaders don't have a reputation for always saying you must do it my way or walk out that door!
- v) The rest of the verse is "not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.
 - a) I could go through each of these, but one gets the idea. It doesn't mean an elder won't get mad at something every now and then. It doesn't mean an elder can never have a drink. Again, the idea is our reputation. To me, I'm the kind of person that leans on the "safe side" on these issues. Am I not in any way perfect. I make mistakes and try to apologize when I do. Think of these items as something to shoot for as a church leader. If one has a role as a leader, consider playing on the "safe side" and think about our reputation before we indulge in drinking or any physically aggressive behavior.
 - b) Finally here, let me discuss "dishonest gain". The issue is not working for a living. The issue is one who cares more about money than one's reputation before God and people. Jesus did not say money is the root of evil, but the love of money as the root of evil. Of course we all have to support our self and our families. The issue is, do we have a reputation for making money honestly and do we consider it less important than our relationship with God and our families?
- f) Verse 8: Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.
 - i) The idea of hospitable is that we're willing to spend time with others to help them grow in their faith and be willing to work with others.
 - ii) The idea of "one who loves what is good" is simply the idea that we care about the church and want to see others grow in their relationship with God.
 - iii) "Self controlled" again, doesn't mean perfect. It means we have enough discipline in our lives that we don't go out "carousing with the wrong crowd" all the time. In order to win "sinners" don't we need to go where sinners go? Yes and no. To use a simple example, if we have a weakness for drinking, don't go where we know it is easy to stumble. My point is we should use settings that are mutually beneficial to the people we are talking to. Since God's always watching us, wouldn't that mean we are always "on trial" and we want to use our time wisely.
 - iv) The idea of "upright" is again, about having a good reputation.
 - v) "Holy" does not mean we're perfect. It just means we made the decision to use our lives as a witness for Jesus. The illustration I use for holy is to consider having one particular plate in one's kitchen that only one person can use. The point is it's been separated from the other plates for a particular purpose. That's sort of the idea of being "holy". It just means we've been separated for God's use.

- vi) I've sort of already hinted at disciplined so I won't go on. What I want you to see as the big picture is the issue is not how wealthy one is, or how many bible verses does one know, but an issue to have a good reputation that people can respect as a leader in one's community. That's the idea behind a "disciplined" elder.
- g) Verse 9: He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.
 - i) After pages of thought on one's reputation, we only now get into doctrine. All this verse is saying is "we practice what we preach" as a church leader. For example, if we believe Jesus is God, we act like it and teach it to others. I don't think of elders as being walking bible encyclopedia's, but they should know enough of the basics to be able to teach what they do know to others and refute those who oppose it.
 - ii) Some of the classic rebukes to Christianity include the questions of "Who created God" or where did Adam and Eve's children get their wives?" If we don't know an answer to a tough question, we can always say, "I'll get back to you". This verse is not saying leaders have to be experts in the field of "apologetics" which is simply the idea of explaining one's faith. However, an elder should believe the bible well enough that they're willing to help others answer those tough questions.
 - iii) While I'm in the neighborhood, let me answer those two questions. If one believed in multiple gods, somebody must have created them. Sooner or later, one gets to a point where one gets to a supreme entity that wasn't created. That's why we argue that there is one God who always was and was not created. As to where did Adam and Eve's sons get their wives, the answer is they lived at least 900 years and since the gene-pool wasn't corrupted yet, they married their siblings. (See Genesis 5.)
- 16. Verse 10: For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.
 - a) Paul's going to use the last seven verses of this chapter to talk about those who should not be elders. Part of picking the right people, is about knowing who to avoid. Therefore the list continues in the "negative" as to avoid these types of people as leaders in the church.
 - b) Let me discuss "rebellious" for the moment. Are there things I don't like about the leaders of my church? There are things I'd do differently, but I accept authority. The reason that I've changed churches in my life had to do with other circumstances and specific needs for my family and myself. For the married, we learn it's not always about what's best for me, but what's best for us, or what's best for our families. That's why we (my family and me) changed churches a few times. If I see someone from a church I used to attend, I say hello and talk about whatever comes up, but I hold no ill will toward any believer I know of. I think of all believers as part of "one church", but then I also think that for me or my family this is what's best for us at this moment.
 - c) All of that leads me back to "rebellious". Times come when we have to remember that not all people see things the way we see them and we have to accept that "they're in charge so deal with it!" I've seen elders and boards make tough decisions that require hurting those who disagree with them, but they make the best decisions they can and we have to accept the decisions that were made and move on from it.
 - d) The idea of "talkers and deceivers" is about those who talk and talk and talk and don't let anyone else get a word in edgewise! Deceives is about those who have alternative motives other than what's to do best for that church organization.
 - e) All that leads to "circumcision group". Think of them as Jewish converts to Christianity as people who insist one must keep the law in order to be saved. It's like saying, "God is not impressed with your "works". If you really want to live as He desires you should be doing this or that." I'm not against doing good works. I'm just saying we live as God desires out of gratitude for what He's done for us and not to try to earn His love. That's what's behind what Paul calls the "circumcision group": those who falsely say we must earn His love!

17. Verse 11: They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach--and that for the sake of dishonest gain.
- a) Notice that Christian churches are not to be democracies of giving people what they want to hear. My point is churches, be it in the home or large buildings are places where those of us who are Christians should come to hear the Gospel message and grow in our faith in Jesus. I state what should be obvious as Titus is commanded to silence those who teach of things that were not meant to be taught. The idea is to avoid false teaching and to beware of those preaching a false gospel for the sake of money.
 - b) To give an example, you can find large "churches" where they teach all sorts of things that promise us riches or fulfillment in this lifetime if we just give them money. A key reason I don't charge people money for these lessons is I don't want people thinking I do this stuff in order to get rich. The purpose of preaching the Gospel is strictly because we get eternal life if we believe it as well as spiritual satisfaction by using our lives for God's glory. I've got a healthy hatred of the "wealth, health and prosperity" teachers who claim that we can be financially rich in this lifetime if we promise to send money to those teachers. That isn't the Gospel message and may I never preach that type of false message. I preach the gospel because our salvation depends upon it and nothing more.
18. Verse 12: Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." ¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith ¹⁴ and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.
- a) Paul quotes a famous philosopher from Crete who lived many centuries before Paul. We know the source of this (Epimenides who lived around 600BC, if you care). My point here is simply that this man and his quote were famous in that culture. It doesn't mean that all people living in Crete were liars or evil. It just means because this man made that quote, it became the reputation of those living there. Paul's point is many of the locals lived up to that reputation. Paul's concern wasn't about the reputation of the locals as much as it was that false teaching be avoided in churches.
 - b) As I said earlier, Christian churches are not to be "democracies" where we tell people what they may want to hear. A speaker may be popular, but if they're not preaching biblically based messages, they shouldn't be allowed on the "pulpit". That's the underlying point of this section. Paul's just using this famous philosopher as an example of someone who can preach a powerful message, but it's not truth. The truth is we can never please God by our efforts. We do good works out of gratitude for what He's done for us, and nothing more. The false message of "do this and that" in order to make God happy is a false teaching as much as the "health, wealth and prosperity" message is.
 - c) Speaking of making efforts to please God, consider Verse 14. Paul condemns whatever is "Jewish myths". Remember that Paul was Jewish. Those who were devout Jewish people had a set of "oral" laws that were not written down. The idea is that in order to win God's favor, we had to work extra hard at doing "this or that" or avoid doing "this or that" just to be pleasing in God's sight. The simple point is it goes against the Gospel Message that we cannot earn His love by our efforts. Christianity teaches we are to live by God's rules not to earn His love but to show gratitude for what He's done for us and simply because if we live as God desires, we become a living witness for Him and it's the best way to live out a life as that witness. That's living the Christian life in one thought. Paul indirectly teaches it by saying what and who to avoid in these verses.
19. Verse 15: To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶ They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.
- a) Remember that this isn't the end of the book, just the end of "Chapter 1".

- b) As my regulars know the chapter breaks were added a millennium after Paul wrote this.
 - c) My point is Paul ends this speech about picking leaders in the church with the reminder that one must separate believers from non-believers in the Gospel message. Paul's point is it's pretty easy to tell them apart. If one is only interested in teaching for the money as opposed to helping people grow in their faith, that's a sign someone isn't qualified to be an elder. If someone claims to know God but says that in order to please God we must do "a, b, and c" to earn our salvation or really get close to Him, that's an obvious indication of a person who shouldn't be a leader in the church.
 - d) The bottom line here is we can't read people's minds, but we can judge their actions. That is why Paul is telling Titus as he goes from place to place to pick leaders for churches, he's to judge people's actions and attitudes before naming the leaders.
20. Let's step back from the 2,000-year old letter to see the point for you and me. God desires that we spend time together with other believers. Christianity was never meant to be solo acts. We're to find churches to help us grow in our faith, help build the faith of others around us, and go make a difference for Jesus in the lives of other believers as well as those around us. Chapter 1 teaches us how to recognize if our leaders are the type of people God wants in our church.
- a) Let me end this letter another way: What if there's something "not right" about our pastor of our church? Remember there is the gospel and there is "debate". We will not always be agreeing with everything everyone says. A good pastor to me is one who teaches from the bible, encourages us to grow in our faith and lives as Jesus desires him to live. If you have an issue where one disagrees with your church leaders and you think you need to bring it up to them, first try to find a second witness. There's a biblical concept that if two or more agree on a point, bring it up to them privately or to a board of directors. I've been a part of that a few times in my life. Sometimes things change and sometimes it doesn't. My point is once I make my case, I let it go and say, "They've heard my case, accept their decision as a church leader and move on." As the old saying goes, "There is no such thing as a perfect church and if it was perfect, it is no longer perfect when we joined it!"
 - b) With that said, time to close in prayer:
21. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, first we thank You that You have chosen us to be with You forever, and that we have the opportunity to glorify You with our lives. We ask your blessing upon our churches that we belong to. Pray for our leaders that they do Your will and lead us as You desire they do. For those of us called to a position of church leadership, help us to live by Your grace as we continue to use our lives for Your glory. Give our churches the boldness to stand up for You in a world around us that denies our salvation solely depends upon Your grace as well as Your complete payment for our sins. May we continue to live in gratitude for what You've done for us as we work as a "family" to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.