



NG Study Guide: Titus 3:1-15 :: “Gospel Centered Good Works” [2.25.24]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Regularly review the notes at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: The Church is designed to reflect God’s goodness to the world. As part of the Church, we must each ensure that our actions, attitudes, and behaviors are filled with good works that represent the beauty of God and His Church to the world around us.

Subject: The actions of a godly example

Object: Demonstrate good works to represent God

Context: The book of Titus is a letter written by Paul to Titus. Titus was a Gentile believer who traveled and served with Paul, was trained by Paul, and was instructed by Paul to stay in Crete (the southern island of Greece) to serve and minister. He was stationed there to appoint godly leaders and encourage believers to live counter-culturally to ensure the beauty and purity of the Church (God’s people) to the culture around them.

A. Good works in the Church (1-3)

1. Proper behavior (1-2)

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

The first word we see in verse 1 is “remind.” This indicates that this was not a new command for them, but instead a reminder of something that they already knew. This is important because as believers, we often know what God has called us, but we greatly benefit from being reminded and encouraged to live it out. Paul’s reminder is first that they ought to be subject to rulers and authorities (1). Again, there is a cultural struggle in Crete with laziness, evil behavior, and lying (1:12). These were common behaviors amongst the people of Crete, which would’ve included those in governmental authority as well as your typical citizens. It is important for us to understand that we are called to submit to the authorities that God has established. “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (Romans 13:1). This is a challenging concept for us to understand, but we must grasp that Jesus did not come to rule and reign in our kingdoms, but He came to establish His ultimate and eternal kingdom. It’s shifting our focus from the things of this material world to the things of the spiritual world. The Cretan believers, and we today, are being reminded to be subject to rulers and authorities as model citizens to demonstrate the proper behavior of believers to represent the purity and beauty of the church.

The second command is to obey (1). Certainly, this can be applied to the governing authorities, but it should be understood on a broader level as well. Throughout this letter, Paul has addressed the ideas of authority: obedience to God, obedience to spiritual authority, and obedience to governing authority. Authority in and of itself is not a bad thing, it gets a bad reputation when that authority is abused. This is why Titus was in Crete, to ensure the sincerity of godly leaders within the church, and to ensure the Church lived out proper behavior as representatives of the Gospel.

The third command is to be ready for every good work (1). This encouragement carries the idea of preparedness. The command is not to simply perform good work, but to be ready or prepared for every good work (1). Therefore proper behavior for believers is to be prepared and equipped in all situations with attitudes, actions, and behaviors that are good, and properly represent God as His Church.

"To speak evil of no one" (2). Certainly, this can related back to the governing authorities but it is expanded beyond that to everyone. Believers are to speak evil of no one; not just the people that they love, not just the people that they have relationships, but of no one. Gossip and slander are of the devil, and there is no place for it in the Church. We are to properly represent God and His church with our behavior and our words. We should be different than the culture around us.

"To be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men" (2). These are to be defining characteristics of God's people. All of these good works are counter-cultural. It takes so much more effort, emotional and physical effort, to be peaceable, gentle, and humble. But that's exactly what the Church is commanded to do. Again, these attributes are things that are desirable to be around, which is intentional. The contrast would be divisive, harsh, and egotistical.

2. Improper behavior (3)

³ For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

Paul then shares actions, attitudes, and behaviors that we improper or inappropriate in the lives of believers. Paul contrasts that prior to knowing Jesus, these are the behaviors that we exhibited, and that they shouldn't be present in the Church. We're commanded to be neither foolish nor deceived (3). As followers of Jesus we are to use the God-given wisdom and intellect that He's provided to us. We should be diligent to know the truth of God's word. The Cretan culture was full of liars, so this is an encouragement to not be deceived by them. We are not to be disobedient, in direct contrast with obedience in verse 1 (3). We are not to serve the various lusts and pleasures (3). Again, how counter-cultural? The Cretans were lazy gluttons indulging in the things that would satisfy their material desires temporarily. But God's people are to serve Him, and when we do so we will be much for content and satisfied than if we serve our lusts and pleasure that always leave us wanting more. We are not to be living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another (3). "Living in" is synonymous with possessing the "lifestyle of" malice (wickedness or depravity) and envy (jealousy) (3). Again these are things that should not be characteristics of believers and would be off-putting behaviors to those who do not follow Jesus. The final command is to be void of hatefulness or hating one another (3). We are commanded to love one another. We are to be recognized by our love (John 13:35), and to consider others as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). Paul's encouragement to Titus is to ensure that these good works are evident within the culture of the churches in Crete, but each individual plays a role. Therefore, we must each pursue these good works in our own lives to contribute to the overall health of the Church. _

B. God's love for the Church (4-8)

⁴ But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

Here we see the picture of Christ's love for the church. We see clearly in these verses the actions, attitudes, and behaviors that Christ modeled for us. God's posture towards His Church is one of kindness and love (4). He demonstrated that by the sending of our Savior, His Son Jesus Christ (4). Christ was the perfect example of proper behavior in that He demonstrated His kindness, love and mercy to us, not because of our good works or righteousness (5), but because of His love. He saved us (5) from the improper behaviors that we demonstrate that constantly fall short of the glory of God. Romans 5:8 states that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." He didn't save us *because* of our good works, but so that we could be regenerated and renewed to actually participate in those good works. God saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Spirit that He poured out abundantly through Jesus Christ (5-6). Regeneration carries the idea of rebirth or being built back up. Something that is whole cannot be regenerated, it is the very idea that something has been broken down to nothing and then reborn, reestablished, or rebuilt

back into something that is new. It's communicated clearly in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." And this act of regeneration or renewing is done by the work of the Holy Spirit (5). But how did this regeneration and renewing happen? Through the grace and mercy that was poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior (6). We were justified or made right before God exclusively by His grace (7). This justification is conceptually in complete contrast to our underservedness through our works or righteousness. We were justified before God because of the gift of God's love in Christ, not as a result of our actions. We have not earned regeneration, renewal, or justification, but it has been extended to us by the grace of our Savior Jesus Christ. And what did this justification and regeneration provide to us? That we would become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (7). We then become heirs of the one-true and living God. We are gifted the inheritance that only Christ deserves as the Son of God, but it is extended to us. Eternal life with Christ in heaven. All of this is simply a gift that is made available to you and I, and all of mankind because of God's great love for us. God loves the church. (Verse 6-7 display clearly the Triune nature of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit.)

In verse 8 Paul instructs all who believe in God to maintain good works, for these things are good and profitable to men (8). We see this encouragement to live out the good works that God has called us to as a response to the incredible gift that God is given us, salvation in Christ. We've received the best gift imaginable, new creations in Christ because of Christ, who are gifted an eternal inheritance with God. This should then motivate us to live in a manner worthy of the gospel (Philippians 1:27). Not only just it motivate us, but we must also recognize that these good works are truly only possible because of the love of God and the justification we've received through Jesus. God's good work, motivates our good works.

C. Unity in the Church (9-15)

1. Avoid division (9-11)

⁹ But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰ Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

The division is not acceptable within the church. The church is the bride of Christ, and we are to reflect her beauty in unity to the world around us. Paul commands believers to avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law (9). Paul is commanding Titus to avoid entering into foolish disputes but to stay focused on the gospel and living out the gospel through good works. It's not helpful to the goal of loving God, loving neighbors, and making disciples if the leaders and believers within the church are spending their time arguing about issues that are not at all central to the mission. These disputes were an attempt to read between the lines of the Old Testament, trying to assume genealogies and nuances of the law (9). These disputes were a waste of time, would cause others to question godly authority, and was a poor representation to the culture around them. Therefore, Titus is commanded to reject the divisive man after going to them two times (10). This is a biblical approach to dealing with division within the church: confront the issue with the individual, if it happens again confront them a second time. If it happens a third time, reject them. They are warped and sinning. This is clearly an important issue because they are stirring up division within the church which is creating a poor testimony and reflection of God to the culture around them. Rather than division within the church, there is supposed to be unity and genuine love for one another.

2. Build genuine relationships (12-15)

¹² When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³ Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing. ¹⁴ And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. ¹⁵ All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Godly relationships are so important for leaders in the church and for believers in general. Paul and Titus has genuine relationships with other believers, some of which are listed in verses 12-13. Titus has been stationed in Crete to take a messy church situation, with messy leaders, raise up godly leaders, and ensure purity within the body of Christ. This will represent the gospel to the culture accurately. However, that was not Titus' long-term role. He would eventually be replaced by another leader either Artemas or Tychicus (12), who would be coming to take over the leadership

of the Cretan churches. We know that in 2 Timothy 4:12 that Tychicus was sent Ephesus to lead, therefore we can assume that Artemas was eventually sent to Crete to replace Titus. Titus was then instructed to meet Paul at Nicopolis (on the western coast of Greece). We then see that Titus is instructed to lovingly care and provide for Zenas and Apollos (13). They are the ones who were sent to Titus to deliver this letter from Paul, and he is instructed to meet their needs, but send them on the way quickly (13). It is our responsibility to genuinely care for other believers, this is how we demonstrate God's love and build genuine relationships. These relationships are so important for us to encourage, empower, and build one another up, as well as be encouraged, empowered, and built up by others. It's the beauty of the church.

This final encouragement for Titus is to let our (plural, representing the unity within the church) people maintain good works (a major emphasis of the letter) to meet the urgent needs of others inside and outside the church, so that they may bear good fruit (14). As followers of Jesus we are required to extend genuine love, and build genuine relationships with those around us, where we live, work, study, play, and worship. This produces unity within the church.

"All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in faith. Grace be with you all. Amen" (15). There is a recognition of the beauty of genuine relationships within the global Church. Those who are with Paul greet Titus and the believers in Crete, and the instruction to greet others in the faith. Paul's desire is for grace to be with them all. Genuine relationships and unity within the church are so important to maintaining the beauty of the Church. Therefore, with our understanding of the grace and love that has been shown to us by God, we then extend that love to those around us in good works, demonstrating the beauty of the love of God and the church.

Study Guide Qs:

Q1. Why might good works be important for believers individually and for the Church as a whole?

Q2. What are some ways that God's love for us motivates us to live out the good works He's called us to?

Q3. Why is unity within the church important? And how does it reflect God's love to the world around us?

Q4. What are some ways we can actively pursue genuine relationships with other believers? Why is this important?

"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. David Guzik's commentary on Titus 3: https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/titus/titus-3.cfm

2. A deeper look into regeneration: <https://www.gotquestions.org/regeneration-Bible.html>

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?

2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

Intentionally extend loving hospitality to a neighbor where you live, work, study, play or worship.

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Notes:

1. Preparation and participation: Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. The "Love your neighbors" section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better. As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

5. The "Disciples who make disciples" section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples. Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.

Next week we start a new series on "Family Life"
Deuteronomy 6:4-6 :: "Flourishing in Relationship with God"