

# The Titus Edge



Scriptural Principles for Leadership Development  
From Paul's Letter to Titus

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July 4, 1776. The Declaration of Independence.

December 7, 1941. Pearl Harbor.

September 11, 2001. Terrorism.

These are dates that pushed American citizens to the cutting edge. They were dates destined for history – dates that called both men and women to get beyond themselves for the well-being of others and the world. They are dates that will always provide motivation to live life on the edge so that others may experience freedom.

In fact, this may very well be the call upon American citizens no matter which century they live: fighting for and maintaining the political, economic, and societal freedom of men and women, boys and girls across the globe. It is a destiny that calls freedom-loving people to walk a fine line. It is a mission that places liberty-minded people at the edge of adventure.

The same should be said for Christians since they too are engaged in an epic struggle. It is a struggle larger even than the American dream. It is a war against the "*spiritual forces of evil*" (Ephesians 6:12). It is not fought with physical force, but with Christ-like love. It is not fought from the safety of our earthly lifestyle, but from the cutting edge of spiritual transformation. It is this cutting edge that we need to be moving toward.

## **WHAT IS THE TITUS EDGE**

One of Webster's definitions for the word edge is "the line where an object or area begins..." We use a straight edge to mark boundaries. The "point man" in an infantry squad walks on the edge of combat. The first man in space was on the edge of the human frontier. A scientist on the verge of a great medical break-through is said to be on the cutting edge of technology. Breaking the 3:50 mile would put us on the cutting edge of world competition. Climbing the corporate ladder usually means being on the edge of leadership development. When the Apostle Paul and Titus proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ on the Island of Crete they served the Lord on the cutting edge. Theirs was a longing to initiate the beginning of great things for God. So too could a willingness to get busy for Jesus on our part be described in terms of the cutting edge. The Titus Edge is a nudge in that direction.

The Titus Edge is simply a section-by-section study of the Apostle Paul's letter to Titus. The overall impact of this letter was designed to help Titus as he set about the task of equipping the Church on the Island of Crete. Within the letter is a perfect methodology for working the Great Commission of proclaiming the gospel and making disciples for the Lord Jesus.

This method begins with the development of mature and capable leadership -- issues addressed by Paul in the first chapter of the letter to Titus and the subject matter of Study Guide One in the "The Titus Edge." The method further includes the development of maturity among the entire church -- i.e. older men and women, younger men and women, and servants. These issues are addressed by Paul in the second chapter of his letter to Titus and are the subject matter of Study Guides Two through Six of The Titus Edge. These two areas of discipleship

ensure that the church is growing in its commitment to and love for the Lord Jesus.

The culmination of discipleship within the context of the church arises when believers begin to reproduce their faith in others. When believers begin to impact those around them with the gospel of Jesus Christ, when they begin to allow God to use them in evangelistic efforts, then a cycle of ministry known as the Great Commission has been enacted. This really is nothing more than following our Lord Jesus' instructions given in Matthew 28:18-20: *"Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen."* The cycle of this ministry can easily be charted:

**GO > MAKE DISCIPLES > BAPTIZE > TEACH > GO**

Paul helped Titus with this endeavor when, in chapter three of his letter, he told him what to teach the Cretan Church concerning their part in impacting their surrounding culture. The godliness and maturity discussed in Titus chapters one and two was meant to produce grown-up citizens of the Kingdom of God who could and would be ambassadors for their King in the midst of a *"foolish, disobedient, deceived"* world. Strategies for accountability and evangelism, then, are found in Titus 2:11 - 3:11 and are the subject of Study Guides Seven and Eight of The Titus Edge.

## **FORMAT FOR THIS STUDY**

The Apostle Paul and those who served with him certainly were on the cutting edge of the Great Commission. His letter to Titus reveals much of the what, how, and why of this process. We, too, should desire to be on the cutting edge of the Great Commission. The Titus Edge is a small attempt to move us toward the edge.

You will get the most out of it if you understand how it works. This study interprets Paul's instructions to Titus into principles beneficial to the development of the church. Each section of his letter has been outlined to demonstrate the main thought and the supportive ideas. The outline consists of both the biblical text (NKJV) and the principles. It will be necessary, then, to be diligent in your reading of Paul's Letter to Titus: read it from opening to closing; read it often; read it carefully; read it contextually; and read it prayerfully.

Next study the outline as presented in each section of The Titus Edge. Consider carefully the principles and the accompanying commentary. Upon completion of your study and contemplation of major outline sections your attention will be shifted to an IMPLICATIONS segment. This portion of each section is nothing more than an encouragement and exhortation segment designed to stimulate you toward attitudinal and behavioral appropriation of the truth contained in the PRINCIPLES and OUTLINE section.

## PURPOSE FOR STUDY GUIDE ONE

This study is designed to supplement the work of discipleship in the lives of Christian men. We are assuming that men of God naturally desire to move forward in their Christian maturity -- even to the point of leadership. Thus, it is a logical step to consider the Apostle Paul's Letter to Titus, since this letter contains much that is critical to New Testament Leadership.

Paul confirmed this notion when he said to Titus, "*For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you*" (Titus 1:5 NKJV). In the brief passage of scripture to follow (Titus 1:6-16), Paul detailed two broad aspects of Church Leadership: the Pastoral and Prophetic functions. In 1:6-9, Paul gave Titus — and us — a list of leadership qualities that, when taken together, point toward the role of shepherding the flock of God. We'll call this the Pastoral Role. In 1:10-16, Paul explained the necessity for and means of confronting heresy which, when taken together, point toward the role of speaking forth the word of God for the purpose of bringing about repentance and restoration in those "*whose mouths must be stopped.*" We'll call this the Prophetic Role. Both of these functions are required of the man of God who is given the responsibility of leading the church.

Therefore, our hope should be that we learn to appropriate the principles of New Testament Leadership found in Paul's Letter to Titus. Remember though, it will not do to simply fill our heads with the knowledge; we must go on to make these principles living realities in our lives.

## INTRODUCTION

Paul's intention in this section of Titus revolved around the need for developing a beautiful, working church on the Island of Crete. The first step necessary in such a work was the equipping of servant-leaders who could support, supplement, enhance, and continue the work accomplished by Paul and Titus.

This step was of primary importance since the entire church on the Island of Crete also needed development. When Paul passed into the second section of his letter (Titus 2:1-10), he instructed Titus to also teach the greater population of the church, in order that it too might develop. To this end, it could well be assumed that, just as Titus helped Paul, the elders would help Titus to "*set in order the things that are lacking*" (Titus 1:5).

Crete was an island filled with social chaos. Sin exploded across the land — as in every other center of population. Prostitution needed little, or no advertising. Mercenary soldiers were easily hired. Families suffered under cruel lordship by the heads of households. In such a climate, people receiving Christ came face to face with an altogether new lifestyle. This new lifestyle required teaching and training. Not only was holiness expected in terms of ridding oneself of sinful practices, but also in covering oneself in godly character.

Behavior and attitudes would change as the thought processes changed. Therefore, these new Christians needed the guidance of not only Paul and Titus, but of other godly men whom all could respect and follow. The necessity, then, for trained leaders could not have been more urgent. It is not too difficult to gather from this a natural progression for ministry:

The Island of Crete (which needed the gospel)  
The Church (which needed direction)  
The Elders (who needed to be men of godliness)  
The Members (who needed teaching and leadership).

To accomplish the whole, it would be the first task of Titus to appoint and develop leaders.

The qualities necessary for such leaders have not changed. What fit their historical situation fits our present situation. Principles do not change. So...

## PART ONE: THE PASTORAL ROLE, TITUS 1:5-9

**Theme: If we desire to play a part in the development of a beautiful church we must be committed to enhancing our leadership qualities.**

*"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you..."*

Comment: An "elder" is one whose tasks involve the shepherding, teaching, and leading of the church. The effectiveness of the "elder" cannot be measured by "official" capacity, but rather by a willingness and desire to serve the family of God (John 13:1-16; Acts 20:17-38; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

The word translated as "elder" in this text is *presbuteros*. It applies both to older men and to leaders among men. The context usually indicates how it should be considered. For example, in Titus 2:2, the meaning is clearly "older men", since the context also deals with older women (Titus 2:3), younger women (Titus 2:4), and younger men (Titus 2:6). Yet, in our present context, the meaning must be elder in the sense of leadership, since these same men are referred to as "bishops" in 1:7 and the unfolding of the context deals specifically with qualities and responsibilities belonging to church leaders.

These men, in a nut-shell, were to be consistently progressing in their Christian maturity as they developed Christ-like character. Of course they could not be perfect, rather they were to assimilate the godliness and maturity that comes as one remains committed to growing up in faith. Paul offers some of the qualities necessary in the acquisition of such character in verses six through nine. They involve our home life, our personal life, and our thought life. Together they reflect a pastoral aspect of leadership: guiding, teaching, mentoring, counseling, encouraging, helping, serving, etc.

**I. If we are committed to enhancing our leadership qualities we will give close attention to our home life. 1:6**

**A. Giving close attention to our home life necessitates the development of an irreproachable reputation.**

*"if a man is blameless"*

Comment: The word "blameless" is a general term recognizing, in this context, a man of character, a man of sound moral reputation. Paul used the term inclusively to encompass the full range of one's life.

**B. Giving close attention to our home life requires a devout desire and willingness to be and remain a "one woman man".**

*"the husband of one wife"*

Comment: This phrase has occasioned many different interpretations. Some of which are easily stated:

1. The "*wife*" is the church (Catholic view);
2. The "*husband*" must be married (not single);
3. The "*husband*" can never have been divorced (before or after conversion);
4. The "*husband*" cannot have been divorced after conversion;
5. The "*husband*" cannot be a bigamist;
6. The "*husband*" cannot have been remarried upon the death of his first wife;
7. The "*husband*" must be totally and irrevocably committed to his wife.

The literal rendition of the phrase is simply "*one wife husband*" or "*one woman man*". Without speculating as to the cultural and historical circumstances of the first century Jewish and Roman background, we can still insist upon meaningful application. Given the current trends on divorce, both in and out of the church, need we say too much? Men, you must not, must not leave or give up on your wives! Men, you must, you must be entirely Christ-like in your love for your wives! A "*one woman man*" will not simply be committed in the negative sense, in that he will not even consider divorce, but he must also be committed in the positive sense, in that he will love without reservation, he will love with sacrifice, he will love with his heart, his head, and his strength. He will seek always to fulfill his wife's needs and desires rather than looking to her for his. He will listen to her. He will spend time in conversation. He will not do all the talking, but he will share his thoughts, feelings, and dreams with her. He will honor what she honors and accept and respect her right to disagree. He will woo her with romance just as he did before the wedding. He will protect her. He will intercept the possible anger of creditors and extended family members. He will share the household burdens with her – that means diapers, dishes, dirty clothes, and details. He will, as the Apostle Paul said elsewhere, love his wife "*just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it*" (Ephesians 5:25). Now if you can translate all that Jesus Christ did in his teaching, his life and his death into the practical implications of what that means to be a husband, you can begin to see that a "*one woman man*" is a high call, honor, and privilege. It is greater than your career. It is greater than your hobbies. It is greater than your family of origin. It is greater than your "male needs." It is greater than your pride. It is greater than your tendency toward either laziness or hyperactivity. It is greater than buddies. It is greater than your pet peeves. It is greater than your loss of passion. It is greater than anything that might keep you from being all that you can be for her. God gives a man a gift that no man really deserves — the handiwork of his own creation, a wife. Next to himself, he can give you nothing greater. You will do well to uphold the dignity and worth of God's princess. Blow it with her and you blow it with God. In fact, the Bible says that if you hurt the heart of your wife God will not even pay attention to your prayers. Check it out in 1 Peter 3:7!

**C. Giving close attention to our home life requires a commitment to reproducing our faith in our children.**

*"having faithful children, not accused of dissipation or insubordination"*

Comment: "*Faithful children*" are grown children who believe. The Greek word translated as

"*faithful*" is descriptive of one whose belief in something reflects true trust and confidence in the object of belief. Obviously, in this case, the implication is faith in Christ. The Greek word translated as "*children*" clearly does not refer to a small child since believing and trusting in Jesus Christ is not within a small child's grasp. Those terrible two's and three's (4's, 5's, 6's, ?) are not what Paul had in mind. Instead, the Apostle was referring to children with the cognitive capacity to choose between eternal rights and wrongs. These are children who "should know better."

The terms "*dissipation*" and "*insubordination*" are important to break down as well. The New International Version (NIV) renders "*dissipation*" as "*wild*." This helps a little, but still fails to convey the impact of what Paul had in mind. Another term that could be used is profligacy. Webster's defines a profligate as one who is completely given over to dissipation, licentiousness, and a wildly extravagant life style. It would seem that we're running in circles — but hang on. Webster's helps us with "*dissipation*" through the use of the following phrases:

"to expend aimlessly or foolishly,"

"to be extravagant in the pursuit of pleasure,"

"wasteful expenditure,"

"intemperate living,"

and "idle diversion."

Where the word licentiousness is concerned the dictionary uses the following:

"lacking legal or moral restraint"

and "marked by disregard for rules."

So, whether we utilize the NKJV ("*dissipation*") or the NIV ("*wild*"), what we are really talking about here is reckless and loose living.

The term "*insubordination*" is not quite as difficult to track down. The NIV renders it "*disobedient*." The New American Standard Version (NASV) uses the word "*rebellion*." All three English terms translate the Greek quite well. Insubordination, disobedience, and rebellion describe the life style of someone who consistently refuses to submit to rules, order, and authority.

But before we get carried away, listen to the words of Dr. Gene Getz: "One word of caution! The fact that some grown Christian children go astray from God's will does not always mean a man has not been a good father. The home is not an island. The world's influences are sometimes felt, no matter how effective the Christian environment in the home. ...So, be careful! Paul is establishing a general principle. A well-ordered household usually reflects maturity in parents. But a 'black sheep' in a family is not always a disqualifying factor by which

we may determine that a Christian will not make a good spiritual leader in the church" (Gene Getz, "The Measure of a Christian": Regal Books; Ventura, Ca.; 1978; ch. 3, p.47).

We can add to Dr. Getz's warning by also indicating that there will inevitably be times when an elder's children will disobey. They will sometimes talk back. They will sometimes fail to respond as Dad desires. This is normal since they, like anyone else, are subject to sin. We cannot allow ourselves to go beyond the Apostle Paul's intentions. He is, as Getz points out, describing a pattern. An elder's household will, all things being equal, be well managed. His children will follow him. They will demonstrate normal and age-appropriate faithfulness to Jesus Christ and obedience to Mom and Dad.

### **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. If you were to ask your neighbors and co-workers about your reputation, what might they say? Would you be willing to put this to the test?

Your response:

If you were to put it to the test, how might you go about it?

2. If you are married and have children, would you be willing to hear a truly honest appraisal of your qualities as a husband and father? Would you be willing to put this to the test, also?

Your response:

If you were to put this one to the test, how might you go about it?

**II. If we are committed to enhancing our leadership qualities we will give close attention to our personal life. 1:7,8**

**A. Giving close attention to our personal life means acquiring the ability to manage ourselves impeccably.**

*"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God"*

Comment: In verse five Paul referred to these leaders as "elders" (*presbuteros*). He now refers to the leaders with the term "bishop" (*episkopos*). A bishop is an overseer. The word is used interchangeably with the term elder. It may be inferred that elder may have a closer connection to the actual spiritual maturity of church leaders, while bishop has a closer connection to the actual functions of church leaders.

*"Blameless"* is the same word we looked at in verse six. It here has reference to one's general character.

The phrase *"steward of God"* (NIV: *"entrusted with God's work"*) refers to one's ability to manage. A faithful steward is one who takes care of another's possessions or interests: in this case, our Lord's church.

The bishop/overseer/elder/leader needs to be a man with a clean reputation inside and outside the church. His business and work dealings must be above reproach. His social standing must be very respectable. Family members, close friends, associates, and acquaintances must see him as a man of integrity.

**B. Giving close attention to our personal life means acquiring the desire and willingness to consider others more important than self.**

*"not self-willed"*

Comment: To be *"self-willed"* (NIV: *"overbearing"*) is to be pushy with one's own expectations and desires. A self-willed individual cannot handle the tension that develops in the face of disagreements and, subsequently, forces his opinion upon others.

**C. Giving close attention to our personal life means acquiring the ability to remain level-headed.**

*"not quick-tempered"*

Comment: These words speak for themselves. A hot-head is not ready for servant-leadership.

**D. Giving close attention to our personal life means being free from any need for alcohol.**

*"not given to wine"*

Comment: This phrase expresses the need for church leaders to be men who are free from any entanglements with alcohol. If one were to make the comment, "Well, since the Bible does not strictly forbid the consumption of any alcohol whatsoever, I am entitled to exercise my Christian liberty in this matter," he would be technically correct. However, he would need to seriously consider whether or not he is mature enough for servant-leadership due to two outstanding issues. The first concerns the demand about exercising personal liberty. While, yes, many things are not of themselves sinful or wrong, it does not follow that they must be utilized. They can just as easily be given up for the greater good. If they cannot be easily given up, there is a problem. The Apostle Paul said it this way: *"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful; all things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify"* (1 Corinthians 10:23).

The second concerns our contemporary state of affairs. No other drug comes close to the correlation numbers observed between alcohol and social dysfunction. The cost to individuals, families, businesses, and communities is staggering. Any use of alcohol at least runs the risk of any of the following problems:

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. Alcoholism     | 3. Causing Someone Else to Stumble            |
| 2. Poor Testimony | 4. Supporting a Socially Detrimental Industry |

**E. Giving close attention to our personal life means overcoming any tendency to fight.**

*"not violent"*

Comment: That's easy enough. Christian leaders are gentle, kind, and peaceful — like Jesus. This does not imply weakness in the sense of being a wimp. Men, you must be men; but you cannot be violent men. You cannot strike out at people.

**F. Giving close attention to our personal life means not being motivated by money.**

*"not greedy for money"*

Comment: *"Greedy for money"* (NIV: *"not pursuing dishonest gain"*) is a simple phrase telling us that if our desire for church leadership stems from a motivation to advance our financial capabilities than we are off track. One who would use church position to increase his portfolio is not too far from a charlatan.

**G. Giving close attention to our personal life means opening our lives up to others.**

*"but hospitable"*

Comment: To be *"hospitable"* is to enjoy sharing ourselves, our homes, and our families with others. The word literally means *"to love a stranger."* It is the willingness to entertain others — even should it require going out of our way to do so.

**H. Giving close attention to our personal life means having a true desire for all that is good.**

*"a lover of what is good"*

Comment: "*A lover of what is good*" might best be understood by contrasting this person with his opposite — "a lover of evil." The Christian leader's thoughts and actions must be motivated not by the darkness, but by the light. This is seriously easy to comprehend. What do you think about? What do you watch? What do you read? What do you discuss with your friends? What flows across the screen of your internet search?

**I. Giving close attention to our personal life means bearing ourselves with an attitude of seriousness.**

*"sober-minded"*

Comment: "*Sober-minded*" (NIV: "*self-controlled*") means to be serious, sensible, or self-restrained. This seriousness carries with it an aspect of self-control having to do with one's ability to handle one's sin tendencies. It is being in control of oneself spiritually. An elder must be serious about his spiritual growth.

**J. Giving close attention to our personal life means always seeking justice.**

*"just"*

Comment: This quality of spiritual maturity enables us to be fair and equitable in our treatment of others. The NIV uses the word "*upright*." The "*just*" man will always endeavor to give others a fair hearing. He will remain loyal in the face of controversy. He will be moved only by truth.

**K. Giving close attention to our personal life means cultivating our pursuit of holiness.**

*"holy"*

Comment: To be "*holy*" does not imply perfection. Neither does it mean to be self-righteous. Striving for perfection, with humility and grace, comes close to the meaning of "*holy*." The term, as it is used here, describes the character of the man of God who is seriously grown up in his faith. Though present-perfection is not in mind, certainly the word describes the condition of a man who has decreased sin and increased righteousness in his life. This will remain his normal life-style or pattern of life.

**L. Giving close attention to our personal life means being a self-disciplined man.**

*"self-controlled"*

Comment: The man who remains "*self-controlled*" (NIV: "*disciplined*") keeps the compartments of his life under the watchful eye of his own scrutiny. This man is quick to correct his deficiencies. He attempts to be proactive rather than reactive. He thinks before he does. He considers sound counsel. He looks through the lenses of wisdom before moving forward. When he starts to slip into dysfunctional patterns he quickly looks for ways to arrest the fall.

### **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Look again at the list just outlined:

- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| blameless_____            | hospitable_____            |
| steward of God_____       | lover of what is good_____ |
| not self-willed_____      | sober-minded_____          |
| not quick-tempered_____   | just_____                  |
| not given to wine_____    | holy_____                  |
| not violent_____          | self-controlled_____       |
| not greedy for money_____ |                            |

Now on a scale of one to five (with one being low and five being high), rate yourself on each of these qualities. Clearly this will not be a perfect test since we are not always the best judge of our own character. So, you might ask yourself if there is someone else, who knows you well enough, that you could ask to rate you on the same scale. A comparison and serious consideration of the two ratings may prove very helpful.

2. If you are already in a leadership position within the body of Christ how might you continue to develop and enhance these qualities in your life? Have you considered the need for maintaining some accountability in your life? Are you willing to submit yourself to a gentle, yet firm discipleship relationship with another man of God? If not, why? If so, who?

Your response:

If you have decided to take the challenge, write down the name of one or two men that you could begin meeting with on a regular basis.

3. If you are a new believer or a believer who is not yet ready for elder-like responsibilities

how might you go about seriously developing these qualities in your life? The Apostle Paul, when addressing the Church in Philippi, said, "*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern*" (Phil. 3:17). Paul wrote these words on the heels of sixteen verses in which he described his desire and commitment for giving up sin and living for Jesus Christ. To the extent that he followed hard after Jesus, he wanted others to follow him.

This principle is still valid today. There will always be someone else with a greater degree of Christian maturity. Find him. Ask him to help you in your leadership development. Make specific plans. Will you?

Your response:

If you have decided to take the challenge, perhaps the following strategy will help:

- A. Think about and pray about whom you might ask to assist you in your development.
- B. Take the initiative. Go to a man of God that, first, is spoken well of within the circles you both move, and that, second, captivates your respect. Ask him to begin meeting with you for prayer and Bible study intended to foster your servant-leader character.
- C. If this man cannot meet with you, do not give up. He is not the only one. Try again.
- D. When you have finalized an agreement with someone, make specific plans:
  - pick a specific day to meet each week;
  - choose a specific and consistent time for that day;
  - determine a specific number of weeks for your first series of meetings (on the week before your final meeting reevaluate and negotiate further plans);
  - agree to make contact by phone at least one time each week apart from your prayer and study time.

**III. If we are committed to enhancing our leadership qualities we will give close attention to our thought life. 1:9**

**A. Giving close attention to our thought life demands a strong commitment to God's word.**

*"holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught"*

Comment: *"Holding fast"* (NIV: *"hold firmly"*) means to grasp firmly, to clench tightly. It means that we are to hold onto God's truth in spite of any and all opposition. The *"faithful word"* (NIV: *"trustworthy message"*) is the solid, valid, reliable, factual, historical, trustworthy source of truth — the Bible. A commitment to the Bible as the inspired word of God must involve a complete adherence to its reliability. The Bible's reliability is intact on every subject, topic, and historical event to which it speaks.

*"As he has been taught"* refers to the elders agreement with Apostolic teaching. The apostles spoke forth the revelation of God. In so doing, they not only supplied us with the New Testament, but also gave God's stamp of approval on the Old Testament. Anything less than our total agreement to the apostolic body of truth is an infringement upon the quality of New Testament leadership described in the phrase *"holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught."*

**B. Giving close attention to our thought life enables us to both encourage and confront others with the word of God.**

*"that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict"*

Comment: The phrase *"those who contradict"* refers to those who, either ignorantly or knowingly, oppose the truth of God's word. An elder needs to be able to recognize and deal with those who are in error. Some will need to be encouraged. Others will need to be confronted.

*"To exhort"* (NIV: *"encourage"*) means to call upon, to beseech, or to entreat someone. It is the act of directing, through sound biblical counsel, someone to follow a better path of knowledge and behavior.

*"To convict"* (NIV: *"refute"*) is far stronger than *"to exhort."* This is a strong rebuke through confrontation in the face of heretical views. In some cases there are those who are not simply ignorant of *"sound doctrine,"* but are, in fact, truly opposed to the *"sound doctrine"* of scripture. When an elder is required to deal with a person of this nature, so long as he is competent with God's word, he can stand with confidence.

However, notice the tool that we use to handle this opposition is not our feelings or subjective opinions on a matter. Rather the tool we will use is *"sound doctrine."* An elder is a fair, gentle, loving man who knows and articulates the word of God well. He must be competent with the

books of the Bible. He should know what each of them teaches. He should know why they were authored. He should know the intention of the writer and what the writer desired from the original audience. He should be able to apply that original intention to our contemporary world. He should be competent, also, with the systematic theology of the Bible. Such things as salvation by grace, heaven and hell, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the attributes of God, the humanity and divinity of Christ, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, and much more, should be within the elders reach. If he is not yet fully equipped in these matters, he should know how and where to find them.

### **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Have you ever asked yourself the question, "Am I convinced that God's word is true truth?"

Your response:

Perhaps you should do some extracurricular reading. Check out the following titles:

McDowell, Josh. Evidence That Demands A Verdict. Here's Life Publishers, Inc.; San Bernardino, Ca., 1972, 1979.

Packer, J.I God Has Spoken. Intervarsity Press; Downers Grove, Ill., 1979.

2. How well do you know the Bible? Do you know the books of the Bible? Do you know the themes of the Bible? Do you know the history of the Bible? Do you know how to study the Bible?

Your response:

Again, perhaps a few titles will be of assistance:

Archer, Gleason L. A Survey of Old Testament Introduction. Moody Press; Chicago, 1964, 1974.

Gundry, Robert H. A Survey of the New Testament. Zondervan Pub. House; Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970, 1981.

Sterrett, T. Norton. How To Understand Your Bible. Intervarsity Press; Downers Grove, Ill., 1973, 1974.

3. How deeply committed are you to the study of God's word? Do you read it once a day? Is your reading sporadic? Do you look to the Bible only during Sunday School, church services, or small group studies?

Do you need to work on this area of your life?

Your response:

## PART TWO: THE PROPHETIC ROLE, TITUS 1:10-16

**Theme: If we desire to play a part in the development of a beautiful church we must be willing to protect her from "church assassins."**

*"For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain."*

Comment: The last quality of an elder mentioned by Paul in the 1:5-9 list speaks of the necessity for rebuking those who oppose sound doctrine. That quality serves as a springboard for detailing the who, what, and why of doctrinal deception and what to do about it. This is a prophetic role in that it requires the leader to say, "Thus says the Lord!" It does not mean the leader is receiving any special revelation from God. It does not mean the leader is seeing into the future. It means that the leader can stand upon the truth of the Bible and proclaim God's eternal counsel in the face of false teaching.

The passage before us does not reveal completely the picture of heresy as it occurred on the Island of Crete. However, rarely did the apostles give us precise explanations of heretical views. We do know that some element of Jewish teaching was present and that there were "many" who were teaching deceptive views. Beyond this Paul is quite silent. This is not surprising since the important matter at hand is not the details of the false system, but, rather, the general character of the opposition and the "know how" to confront it.

Our task is no different. The emphasis for an elder, as he confronts a "church assassin", is

1. a solid grasp of the Bible, and
2. an understanding of the character and methods of heretics in general.

If one should ask, "Is this necessary today," the answer must be, "Yes!" Much of the church during the past century and these opening years of the 21st century, has fallen prey to the temptation of accepting the norms of the surrounding culture, rather than standing upon the solid rock of scripture and reaching the culture on behalf of God.

In fact, some famous theologians have preferred the way of contemporary philosophies to the way of biblical faith...

Paul Tillich and Rudolph Bultmann preferred the way of "existentialism" to the way of the Bible.

Alfred North Whitehead, and his followers, preferred the way of evolution to the way of the Bible; and, thus developed what is known as Process Theology — an aberrant system that teaches us that God is still evolving.

Many Catholic theologians, and a growing number of Protestants, have preferred the

way of Karl Marx to the way of the Bible; and, thus have developed what they call Liberation Theology — another aberrant system which, in this case, gives far more emphasis to the liberation of poverty than it does to the liberation of sinners from Satan.

Robert Schuller, and his peers, prefer the way of humanism to the way of the Bible; and, thus imply that salvation occurs when one comes to terms with oneself by reaching the full potential of one's innate self-worth.

Joseph Fletcher would claim that the basis for Christianity is "Situation Ethics." He would reject all absolute truth and standards for a system determined by the state of affairs at any one given time. In such a system one must conclude that Christ Jesus may well have erred when he went to the cross; and, given different historical circumstances, salvation may well have been had through other measures.

However, laying aside all these semi-famous names, let's turn to even more serious problems for the Church. Many have concluded their theological suppositions upon the work of Sigmund Freud and Jean-Paul Sarte — without even knowing it.

Freud is a problem because his attempt to eradicate man's sense of guilt has penetrated the Church in a large way.

Sarte is a problem because his attempt to eradicate objectivity in favor of subjectivity has also penetrated the Church in a large way.

Freud hated religion. He correctly surmised that the problem with people is their overwhelming sense of guilt. He incorrectly surmised that organized religion was the culprit behind this guilt. Therefore, in his thinking, religion had to go. He then figured the only way to rid mankind of religion was to somehow convert man's sense of guilt into an understanding of mental and emotional impairment. In other words, people must quit thinking in terms of sin and start thinking in terms of mental inadequacy. To a very great extent he succeeded. Much of the western church long ago gave up on the notion of sin. Rather than following the biblical pattern of healing the soul through regeneration and sanctification, many Christians prefer the modern method of getting in touch with the past, so that a reason can be had for one's guilt. This is not absolutely without merit, but if used in the absence of sound biblical theology it is spiritual — as well as emotional, mental and social — death.

Sarte hated the notion of objective truth: truth that remains truth regardless of our perception or existence. Instead, he advocated for truth relative to our place and space in time. For Sarte, truth was determined through the filter of one's personal experience. We call this moral relativism. It is directly opposed to the God given revelation found in the Bible. Yet, many Christians follow hard after this man's theory — some without any knowledge of their doing so. When push comes to shove, the absolute standard of God's word falls a distant second to one's personal experience. The Church of America has especially been over-run with this kind of thinking. In many an instance, Sarte has proved more likable than Christ. The tragedy of this can be seen in the huge increase in divorce, church splits, child neglect and abuse, dishonesty, and so on and so on and so on.

The point of all this is simply to introduce the great need of our day for doctrinal purity. Yes, we recognize that we are not perfect. Before the throne of God we too will see our misguided notions exposed. Yet, so far as we are able, we must be servant-leaders who are men of the Book. Jesus Christ gave to his disciples, through the Holy Spirit, the eternal truth of his Father. We must not grow slack in our acceptance of it. Like the prophets in the Old Testament, elders are required to speak forth the word of God.

**I. To protect the church from assassins a leader must be able to recognize them.  
1:10-12**

Comment: The Apostle Paul provided Titus with a list of seven traits that, when one or more are present, may reveal the true nature of someone who teaches heresy. It is not the person with a lack of biblical understanding with which we are here concerned, but with the person or persons who clearly teach heretical views. They can be recognized by the following characteristics.

**A. Church assassins may be recognized by their rebellion toward any constraints within the church.**

*"for there are many insubordinate"*

Comment: The word *"insubordinate"* (NIV: *"rebellious"*) indicates an open rebellion. There is nothing subtle about the false teachers to which Paul directed Titus' thinking. These folks were without regard for the church and clearly had it in mind to have their say and their way.

**B. Church assassins may be recognized by their ability to articulate fanciful hog-wash.**

*"both idle -talkers"*

Comment: The meaning of *"idle -talkers"* (NIV: *"mere talkers"*) is "someone who speaks without substance." These people had much to say — and they said it well and often — but their words were empty, without content, without truth. Though what they taught may have sounded good (fanciful), it was still mere empty speech (hog-wash).

**C. Church assassins may be recognized by their deceptive motives.**

*"and deceivers"*

Comment: *"Deceivers"* is an explicit term for those who deliberately mislead others. The people in mind here move within the circles of subversive motives. These are not ignorant people, but people who knowingly teach Christians items of belief that fall outside the body of biblical faith.

**D. Church assassins may be recognized by their inordinate preoccupation with their religious beliefs.**

*"especially those of the circumcision"*

Comment: *"Those of the circumcision"* certainly refers to some element of Judaistic tendencies, but we cannot be absolutely sure whether Paul had in mind Jewish Christians, Jews, or Jews who had also bought into other religious systems. Of this we can be sure: they were more concerned with their own peculiar beliefs than they were with sound doctrine.

Circumcision was the Old Testament sign of God's covenant with the Jewish people. Observing circumcision had become a matter of paramount importance. According to the religious practice of those who were of *"the circumcision"* one could not be in good standing with God if he had not been circumcised. This, of course, is not right. Faith in Christ, not works, makes us right with God

**E. Church assassins may be recognized by their incessant proselytizing.**

*"whose mouths must be stopped"*

Comment: These folks were about their business on a full time basis. Shortly we will read of their subversion, through false teaching, of entire families. Since they were good at what they did, and since they were busy doing it, their mouths needed to be stopped. Or, said another way, they needed to be silenced.

**F. Church assassins may be recognized by their tendency to disrupt entire families.**

*"who subvert whole households"*

Comment: *"Subvert"* (NIV: *"ruining"*) means to ruin, pervert, upset, or destroy. The tendency of these false teachers was to actually win whole families to their way of thinking. In doing so they led these families down the road of spiritual destruction.

**G. Church assassins may be recognized by their greed.**

*"teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain"*

Comment: Paul declared to Titus that these deceivers were not at all out to help anyone, but were instead only interested in what they could get. They were fixed on perpetuating their own interests.

The same could be said for many false teachers of our own day. Beware the man with a new answer! Beware the man who will cure all the ills of the whole church! Beware the man with a dogmatic answer to absolutely every question or problem!

## **Paul's Illustration**

*"one of them, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.'"*

Comment: The quote that Paul borrowed has been attributed to Epimenides, a native Cretan who was born in 659 B.C. Here was a Cretan who for once spoke true, but notice that Paul lumped him with the false teachers under his present scrutiny. The phrase *"one of them"* does not refer simply to Cretans, but to *"those who contradict"* (1:9), and those who are *"insubordinate...idle talkers...and deceivers"* (1:10). Paul was using very strong language to drive home his point. To quote such a text, with its awful implications, Paul must surely have wanted to indicate the seriousness of the situation. This is a very important consideration. His point is simple: these folks were not to be trusted and they were without merit! Titus had to deal with them accordingly.

## **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Have you asked yourself the question, "Am I prepared to protect the church from assassins?" This is not an easy question. Neither does it have an easy answer. Perhaps the following scenario may give you some food for thought.

Sunday. The Lord's day...and you have gathered with others for Sunday School. It has been your custom, for the last two years, to begin your class period with prayer. As an Adult Sunday School teacher, you take great delight in helping your students develop not only in their Bible knowledge, but also in the full circle of Christian discipleship. Without hesitation, you know that prayer is vital to the development of each student as well as the entire class as a whole.

After several people have shared their prayer requests, Elizabeth offers something that catches you by surprise. Elizabeth has been coming to church for about six months now and, to your chagrin, you realize that you really do not know her very well at all. As she relates her story, the wheels begin to turn in your head.

"Last Thursday afternoon," she said, "a man and two women stopped by my house. They were so sweet. They told me how concerned they were for people and how much they desired that everyone would turn to God. I invited them in for coffee, so that we might be able to share together at greater length. We talked about God. We read from the Bible...and, well, we just really enjoyed our visit together. I would like all of you to pray for me, because I invited them to come back and lead my family in a study. I never knew that people could be so friendly and kind. Anyway, pray that I will be a good host. Oh, yes, the subject of the study will be Jehovah and His Kingdom."

Red flags go up, but you decide to talk to Elizabeth in private. After class you approach Elizabeth and share with her your concerns that she is about to allow a cult into her home. You tell her a little about the group that she has come in contact with and how you truly wish that she would reconsider. She doesn't take your advice very well.

"Well, I just cannot believe how narrow-minded you are," she explodes. "For six months I've been coming here and not once has anyone come to visit, let alone offered to lead a study in my home. I think I am perfectly capable of making my own decisions, if you don't mind!"

With that, she leaves.

Of course, you are stunned. Yet, you know you must do something. Elizabeth definitely knows the Lord Jesus as her Savior. You've learned that from her class-room conversation. So, while praying along the way, you go to the church secretary from whom you can get Elizabeth's address and phone number. Beyond that you are not sure what your next tactic will be.

Consider the past: What was missing in Elizabeth's life?

Consider the present: What should you do now?

Consider the future: What should you do about this whole situation?

2. Is this subject something new for you? Have you ever talked with your church leaders about what would be done should a scenario like the one we've just looked at actually occur within your fellowship? Do you think you should?

Your responses:

**II. To protect the church from assassins a leader must be willing to follow through on doctrinal confrontation. 1:13,14**

*"This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply."*

Comment: Having just described the character and present condition of opposition facing Titus and the Church of Crete, Paul turned his attention toward what to do with the false teachers. Paul's use of the word "*rebuke*" is given as a command, not a suggestion. Titus, and other church leaders, must do this. If they do not, those who contradict sound doctrine will make the church ineffective.

Likewise, the word "*rebuke*" means to confront, to refute in such a way as to bring about conviction on the part of the one being rebuked. "*Sharply*" means suddenly and bluntly with severity. Paul saw blatant false teaching as a tremendous hazard. It must be dealt with.

**A. A willingness to follow through on doctrinal confrontation must be accompanied by a desire to turn deceivers to the truth.**

*"that they may be sound in the faith"*

Comment: The word for "*sound*" actually refers to health, as in a medical sense. It is used here metaphorically of Paul's desire to see the false teachers cured of their spiritual disease. He wants them to be healthy "*in the faith.*"

*"The faith"* has reference to the body of truth that makes up "*sound doctrine*" (1:9). Paul looked not simply for intellectual victory, but for spiritual redemption of the deceivers.

**B. A willingness to follow through on doctrinal confrontation must be accompanied by a desire to prevent deceivers from falling further into error.**

*"not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth"*

Comment: It would seem the deceivers, which Titus and the elders of the Cretan Church had to confront, taught an eclectic system of religious beliefs that combined Jewish myths and pagan rules (cf. Colossians 2:1-23, especially verses 13, 14, and 22). The Apostle Paul would like to have seen these opponents saved from "*giving heed*" (NIV: "*pay no attention*") to such false systems. It is no different today. Should they become "*sound in the faith*" they will be freed from "*giving heed*" any longer to "*Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth*" (NIV: "*Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth*").

**IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Have you given much thought about your attitudes when it comes to false teachers?

What is necessary, a stubborn will or a deep love, when it comes time to follow through on doctrinal confrontation?

Your response:

2. Why do you suppose a strong, frank, curt rebuke and love for the one being rebuked go hand in hand? Could it be otherwise?

Your response:

### **III. To protect the church from assassins a leader must temper his response with a careful consideration of the reasons behind the doctrinal error. 1:15,16**

Comment: It will not do for the church leader to go off willy-nilly in search of doctrinal error simply that he might show himself competent. We do not tear down the ignorant for fear that we may miss some charlatans. Instead, we must be careful to weigh every situation in the balance, so that we can respond with an appropriate counter-weight, rather than coming off as either too light or too heavy.

#### **A. A careful consideration of the reasons behind doctrinal error will help us differentiate between wicked motives and simple confusion.**

*"to the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled"*

Comment: Under much of the eclectic Judaistic teachings of the first century, people were taught that "defiled foods", when consumed, brought about defilement for the consumer. Many commentators believe that Paul had this fiction in mind when he wrote, *"to the pure all things are pure."* In other words, for the one who is right with God through Jesus Christ, there are no defiled foods. However, for those who had given themselves over to the legalistic tendencies of the religious smorgasbord on the Island of Crete, everything is defiled. It was to such a person as this that Paul directed such harsh and scathing words. These folks had completely sold themselves into their false systems; so much so that Paul declared even their minds and consciences to be *"defiled"* (NIV: *"corrupted"*). As a result, these false teachers were compelled by evil motives and wanton desires (1:11,12). To such as these a strong and definite rebuke must be given.

#### **B. A careful consideration of the reasons behind doctrinal error will help to uncover intentional deception.**

*"they profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work"*

Comment: If we keep an eye on a person teaching doctrinal fallacies, we will soon learn whether or not their teaching is intentional. The proof will ring loud and clear through their character and actions. One who is simply confused will continue to live as holy as possible, but one who is anchored in his or her heresies will soon prove his or her disqualification.

Though the people in question claim to know God, they are in fact *"abominable"* (NIV: *"detestable"*). The meaning here is disgusting. They are also *"disobedient."* Their rebellion runs deep. These people had truly convinced themselves that they were right. They were determined to stay the course, which, in their case, lead them deeper into a valley of darkness. And, finally, they are *"disqualified for every good work"* (NIV: *"unfit for doing anything good"*). Paul meant that if these people were put to a test, if they were examined carefully, they would be repudiated.

Hence, it should follow that we make every attempt to understand the nature of any specific doctrinal opposition. Our prophetic role is to uncover intentional deception, to expose it, and to defeat it. When we speak prophetically to the deceiver, we protect the church and call the deceiver to repentance.

**IMPLICATIONS:**

1. What safeguards might you develop within a church to prevent the dissemination of heresy?

A.

B.

C.

2. Besides a stern rebuke, do you think other measures should be taken against a teacher of deception?

Your response:

Look at the following passages:

Matthew 18

Romans 16:17,18

Galatians 6:1

1 Timothy 1:18-20

1 Timothy 5:19

2 Timothy 2:14-18

1 John 3:24 - 4:6

2 John 7-11

List three things you have learned from these passages:

A.

B.

C.

What differences, if any, might these truths bring about in your life?

## SUMMARY

Part One: The Pastoral Role, Titus 1:5-9

Theme: If we desire to play a part in the development of a beautiful church we must be committed to enhancing our leadership qualities.

I. If we are committed to enhancing our leadership qualities we will give close attention to our home life. 1:6

II. If we are committed to enhancing our leadership qualities we will give close attention to our personal life. 1:7,8

III. If we are committed to enhancing our leadership qualities we will give close attention to our thought life. 1:9

Part Two: The Prophetic Role, Titus 1:10-16

Theme: If we desire to play a part in the development of a beautiful church we must be willing to protect her from "church assassins."

I. To protect the church from assassins a leader must be able to recognize them. 1:10-12

II. To protect the church from assassins a leader must be willing to follow through on doctrinal confrontation. 1:13,14

III. To protect the church from assassins a leader must temper his response with a careful consideration of the reasons behind the doctrinal error. 1:15,16

## **CONCLUSION**

It is with the sincere hope that this small study has proved helpful in your development of New Testament Leadership that we draw to a close. However, it should go without saying, there remains much more to learn concerning servant leadership both from the Old and New Testaments. Should this study-guide spur you on to greater reading, study, and development, then a primary goal will have been fulfilled.

Serving with you,

Ricki Lee Brooks



