

# The Titus Edge



Scriptural Principles for Developing Maturity  
Among Older Men From Paul's Letter to Titus

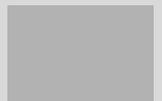
Ricki Lee Brooks

# The Titus Edge

## Study Guide Two

Scriptural Principles for Developing Maturity  
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## WHAT IS THE TITUS EDGE

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.

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 particular study interprets Paul's instructions for older men into principles beneficial for practical Christian discipleship. As with each section of his letter, this section 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. 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 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 TWO**

The Apostle Paul instructed Titus that older men, as well as older women, younger women, and younger men, were to be taught "*things which are proper for sound doctrine*" (Titus 2:1). These "*things*" were not, as one might guess, deep theological constructions concerning what we believe, but rather they were traits of Christian living that go hand in hand with "*sound doctrine.*" We should assume then that theology alone will not combat a world of darkness; but

theology plus proper living combine to explode the message of the gospel throughout any culture.

It is our purpose, then, to look carefully at those Christian character traits the Apostle Paul outlined for Titus. Assuming that each Christian man desires to be the very best witness possible for his Lord Jesus, it seems reasonable that we study what Paul deemed necessary for older men.

However, our target involves far more than simple head knowledge. The whole point of Paul's instructions for Titus is not mental assent, but behavioral and attitudinal change. True wisdom does not end with knowledge gained, but with knowledge lived. Our second purpose, then, is to find practical ways through which we might cultivate "*things which are proper for sound doctrine*" in the furrows of our lives.

## INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul spent the bulk of his opening teaching section — 1:5-16 — dealing with the necessity for solid, mature leaders (elders, bishops [overseers]). This was necessary for producing a beautiful, working church on the Island of Crete. When he moved into his next teaching section — 2:1-10 — he dealt with the necessity of producing beautiful, working members within the church.

We see than 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 these members the Apostle Paul, through Titus and, presumably, the Elders, desired to impart truth that would lead to godliness in their personal and relational lives. It was important that they not lead lives of desperation but lives of inspiration. In this way they could “*adorn the doctrine of God our Savior*” (2:10). In other words, their practice of godliness would evidence their comprehension of doctrine.

The first group Paul addressed in this section was that of the “*older men*” (2:2). Though the term translated “*older men*” is related to the term translated “*elders*” in 1:5, they are to be distinguished by their respective contexts. In 1:5 the context clearly relates to church leadership, while in 2:2 the context relates to the wider membership of the church. Hence, the meaning in our present passage refers to the older or aged men of the church. These men were separated by some generally accepted age gap from Titus and the younger men (2:6,7). Contrary to some modern day thinking, Titus was not to avoid teaching those who were older than himself, but was, instead, directed to instruct them in the way of Christian godliness.

This creates an interesting development. How does a younger man teach an older man anything? Perhaps it would be best to keep in mind the historical situation in which Titus labored. The Church of Crete was yet young. New believers were being added to the fold. As is the case everywhere, the older men who would have been won out of their pagan surroundings were in actual need of character transformation. Like today, some of those men would bring many problems into their Christian lives, while others would be relatively free from besetting problems. In either case, each needed to see himself as a new person in Christ; and that new person in Christ needed to exhibit certain characteristics of godliness. For Titus, the younger man, to teach the older men such things was not only possible, but positively essential. Hence...

**Theme: If we want to foster maturity and godliness among older men we must teach and learn a Christ-like lifestyle.**

*“But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience”*

Comment: The two word phrase “*sound doctrine*” refers to healthy, correct, accurate apostolic truth. The “*sound doctrine*” of the church is true truth as opposed to the false teachings of deceptive teachers (1:9-16). The phrase “*the things which are proper*” refers to the specific

qualities to be addressed in verses two through ten. These are simply the logical manifestations of the truth harbored in the souls of born-again believers.

### **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Let's begin with a personal evaluation. Answer the following questions:

As an older man, are you relatively new to the Lord Jesus?

As an older man, have you been a Christian for a long time?

If you have been a Christian for a long time, have you possibly neglected to concentrate on Bible-centered growth?

In either case, whether new to the Lord or not, do you recognize a need for further growth and maturity?

If you recognize a need for further growth and maturity, are you willing to work at it?

2. Let's move on to an interpersonal evaluation. Are you willing to hear a truly honest appraisal of your Christian lifestyle from another person?

Yes or No

If you responded by saying, "Yes," are you willing to ask your pastor or another church leader for such an evaluation? Will you do it?

If you responded by saying, "No," why?

3. Now let's consider a step that will move us each in the right direction. If you have decided to follow through on the suggestions in #2, perhaps the following will help:

A. Think about and pray about who you might ask for an honest appraisal of your present spiritual condition. Yes, this is a very difficult prospect, but it may prove exceptionally worthwhile.

B. Take the initiative. Go to a person you have decided upon and make the request. Ask for a few hours of his time during which the two of you can spend time in prayer, Bible study, and reflection upon your Christian character.

C. When you get together with this man, look up most of these passages:

Matthew 5:3-16, 27-30;

Mark 1:40,41;

Romans 12:9-21;

Galatians 5:16-26;

Ephesians 5:25-33;

Philippians 3:3-11;

and Hebrews 10:19-25.

- D. Try not to be defensive. You are asking for honesty, so consider your brother's concerns and suggestions.
- E. Finally, if the first fellow you ask cannot meet with you, do not give up. Try again. He is not the only one available.

A Personal Note:

*If you have decided to follow the above suggestions, let me commend you. You and I know that this is no easy assignment. We live in a world that crushes the man who would admit to his inadequacies. We cannot help but feel compelled to follow hard after the big screen image of the rugged individualist. And, to a certain degree, this is not all bad. Men must be men, not wimps. Yet, time and again, God's word spells out the weaknesses of great men in history. This never diminishes them, but, to the contrary, it increases their impact upon those they affect.*

*There was, of course, Adam, who hated to admit his guilt, so he blamed Eve. Or what about King David who poured his heart out before God when he recognized his sinfulness and smallness. And then there was Peter who denied his Lord not once, but three times. But, if these fail to impress our modern world, perhaps we should consider Jesus.*

*Jesus lived his life authentically. When he wept, he demonstrated strength and character, not weakness. As he lived in complete dependence upon his Father in heaven, he demonstrated commitment, not weakness. Yet, the world would have us mock such traits. Jesus, however, was not encumbered by the standards of this world. Do you remember his heart-wrenching words as he contemplated his impending death: to his disciples he said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death;" and to his Father he said, "Abba (Daddy), Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." Read the account in Mark 14. Will anyone say this is a weak man speaking?*

*Jesus could have avoided this. He is not like you and I. He is the Lord of creation. He is God. Yet, he humbled himself, even unto death. If the Lord of glory would condescend to live among the weak, should not we? So, friend, again let me commend you if you have decided to humble yourself.*

## PRINCIPLES/OUTLINE

### I. A Christ-like lifestyle includes a clear Christian world-view.

*“that the older men be sober”*

Comment: The word “*sober*,” in its most precise definition, originally meant to be free from intoxicants. However, in the New Testament, this word often takes on broader implications. For example, both Paul and Peter use the word to describe the manner in which believers should keep their attention focused on the return of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:6,8 and 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7). Our responsibility, in this regard, is to keep our minds alert and attentive, rather than dull and disinterested. As well, Paul told Timothy to be diligent in his preaching of the word, because there will come a time when people will no longer heed biblical truth. In this process Timothy needed to “*be watchful (sober) in all things*” (2 Timothy 4:1-5). We can see, then, that the broader meaning of the word involves the ability to keep a clear and accurate mind. It is to see things without confusion, without bewilderment. The “*older men*” are not to be drunk literally or figuratively. In either case, were they “drunk” their ability to perceive anything accurately would be diminished.

Paul's desire was for the “*older men*” to see things clearly. They needed to put behind them their old grids, their old ways of viewing life. What they needed instead was a clear, biblical, Christian mind-set. They needed a world-view unencumbered by faulty or worldly thinking and enhanced by the truth of sound doctrine.

### IMPLICATIONS:

1. Have you ever considered our penchant for holding onto our opinions? Really, it's our right, is it not? But how often do we ask ourselves, “What informs my opinion?” Is it through a clear understanding of the Bible or is it through some vague, generally conceived notion?

For example, ask yourself if you can truly support your views on the following subjects by using the Bible as your basis for authority:

...abortion, birth-control, capital punishment, divorce, death, discrimination, ethics, euthanasia, evangelism, faith-healing, fantasy, gun-control, gambling, hell, hatred, homosexuality, hunger, homelessness, indebtedness, justice, K.K.K., liberty, leisure, money, materialism, marriage, nuclear weapons, oppression, obesity, pornography, poverty, racism, war...

Well, as you can see, we could go on and on with this list, but it's not necessary. The point of the exercise is to determine whether or not we truly look at life with a biblical world-view.

What is your response?

2. If you think you could use some further stimulation along these lines, let me suggest a few good readings:

Boa, Kenneth and Moody, Larry. *I'm Glad You Asked: In-Depth Answers To Difficult Questions About Christianity*. Victor Books: SP Publications; Wheaton, Ill., 1982.

Schaeffer, Francis A. The God Who Is There. Found in Vol. 1 of "The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview." Crossway Books; Westchester, Ill., 1982.

Varghese, Roy Abraham, editor. The Intellectuals Speak Out About God. Regenery Gateway, Inc.; Chicago, Ill., 1984.

## II. A Christ-like lifestyle includes an admirable Christian reputation.

*“reverent”*

Comment: The word “reverent” (King James: grave; NASB: dignified; NEB: high-principled; NIV: worthy of respect) deals with those character qualities that present a man respectable before others. It is that character once found in men of moral integrity. It is the moral integrity our mothers and fathers use to talk about, but now quite rare in western culture. When a man is reverent in this sense you can trust him, you can take him at his word, you can accept his handshake as binding.

For men to develop this admirable Christian reputation, they will need to follow hard after Jesus Christ. His example must become our pattern. His honesty, his charity, his compassion, his concern were all born from perfect and pure motives. There was never any question about his integrity. Such must be the case with us.

### IMPLICATIONS:

1. Have you asked yourself lately whether or not you possess an admirable Christian reputation? Perhaps some of the following questions will help you evaluate your integrity?

How do people view you in general? Do they believe you are a man of integrity?

What about those closest to you: your wife, your children, your parents, your siblings, your best friends, your co-workers? Do these folk ever have reason to believe that your walk and your talk don't add up?

What about your neighbors and community? Do they see you running red lights and stop signs? Are they concerned that your residence is decreasing the value of theirs?

What about your business transactions? Are your bills paid on time? Is your home and workshop free of articles that belong at your place of employment? Do you sometimes catch yourself saying, “Well, everyone does it; besides it's expected?” Is Uncle Sam getting his fare share or is it possible that from time to time you've said, “What the IRS doesn't know won't hurt them?”

What about the church? Can people count on you to do as you say? Do you follow through with ministry obligations? Have you pledged anything and then failed to come through?

Well, you get the picture. Now let's not get this wrong. None of us are perfect — that's a known fact. Yet, we are capable of possessing fine, upstanding reputations. The big question that should come from all the above questions is “What is the normal pattern of our lives?” Are we men of reputation or are we just fooling ourselves and others?

2. In the spaces on the next page list areas of your life that you believe could stand some improvement. You may want to confine yourself to those areas that have public dimensions, since these will usually determine the state of our reputations.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

If your slate is clean, praise the Lord and keep on keeping on. If your slate has one or more items, take them to God in prayer.

### III. A Christ-like lifestyle includes the ability to be free from the flesh.

*“temperate”*

Comment: “Temperate” can also be verbalized with “self-controlled” (as in the NIV) or with “sensible” (as in the NASB). The problem, of course, is that each of these English translations offers us a somewhat distinctive nuance. So what exactly is the meaning?

The word underlying these English translations is combined from two words: the first meaning to save or safe, the second meaning the mind. Taken together we get the simple meaning safe-mindedness. It refers to the ability to utilize our mind in the process of self-government. The outcome is self-discipline. It is the Christian's ability to override the passions of the flesh; to place truth and holiness before *“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”* (1 John 2:16).

One can see, then, that each of the three English translations — NKJV, NIV, NASB — correctly render the original, but together they really do justice to the meaning. Notice how Webster's defines these terms:

Temperate: “marked by moderation.”

Self-controlled: “restraint exercised over one's own impulses, emotions, or desires.”

Sensible: “having or containing good sense or reason.”

Clearly, the older man of God is being asked to live as Jesus lived, not in bondage to the flesh, but in control of the flesh.

#### IMPLICATIONS:

1. It is all fine and well to talk about being free from the flesh, it is another thing to succeed at it. So, it would not be wrong for us to ask the question “HOW?” when we approach this issue. Fortunately, we are not left to ourselves as we attempt to fight the flesh. In fact, unlike the lost, the Christian has received every resource needed in his or her struggle to be in control of the flesh. Primary of which is God himself. Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul: *“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin”* (Romans 7:24,25). The apostle was just like you and I in his struggle for holiness. However, in Romans 6,7, and 8, he revealed his method of success in this struggle. Essentially, what one learns in this great passage of scripture is that the Christian is no longer the same person as he or she was before salvation. Before we were saved the best we could do was to simply exercise willpower; but upon salvation everything changed — we passed from old life to new life. Through Jesus Christ we are no longer slaves to sin, but to God. Whereas in our former state we were bound to sin, we are now bound to God. Before Christ, it was our character to sin; but after receiving him as our Lord and Savior, our character is to be like him. But again, “HOW?” Consider the truths Paul gives us:

First: we are dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:1-14). The lost are alive to sin and dead to God. This tells us one thing — before being saved there was no chance to free ourselves from the flesh, now there is every chance.

Second: therefore, we can now choose to present ourselves to God in holiness rather than to sin (Romans 6:11-23). The bondage is now broken and the prison door is opened wide. Our responsibility is to walk free.

Third: but, we still carry the scars of the chains of our sin. The shadow of sin still lingers in our body. The new man or woman in Christ stands outside the prison walls, but his or her body still feels the terrible burden of that time spent in bondage. Although, we choose to be free — and we are — we still feel the effects of sin enslavement (Romans 7).

Fourth: however, we are not alone. We did not escape that terrible bondage through any effort of our own and we do not now stand alone as we attempt to live as free people. In our effort to rid ourselves of the effects of sin's enslavement we will be gently helped along the way by God himself (Romans 8). Notice that as a Christian you have the Spirit of God within you (8:9), you have Christ within you (8:10), and you have the promise of God that he will accomplish his complete work in you (8:28-30).

2. How then do we appropriate all of this? Is it enough to simply know these things? No, but knowing them is part of the solution. Is it enough to choose to be different than we used to be? No, but choosing to be different is also part of the solution. What then is the rest of the solution? The rest of the solution — and the key — is complete dependence upon God. Call this a commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, call this being led by the Holy Spirit, or call this offering yourself a living sacrifice to God the Father — the Bible uses all three — the outcome is the same, total dependence. We might look at the process like this:

Knowing the truth  
+ Choosing to do the truth  
+ Depending upon God for the strength to do  
Doing the truth

The question everyone struggles with, of course, is “how do I depend upon God?” The answer might best be answered first in the negative and then in the positive. By the phrase “depend upon God” we do not mean that the Christian can depend upon some shining experience. The Bible does not teach us that maturity comes to the Christian in a moment. Likewise, it cannot fully be explained by the phrase “let go and let God” since nowhere in the Bible does God tell us not to be a part of our own spiritual growth. Each of these false concepts of spirituality give themselves over to an unhealthy mind-set in which spiritual growth is divorced from the will and thinking of the believer. Such is not biblical.

Jesus said, “If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:31,32). And to the disciples, as he instructed on the Great Commission, he said, “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” (Matthew 28:19,20). Likewise, he said of the Holy Spirit, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13,14).

James said, “*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does*” (James 1:21-25).

Peter said, “*Therefore, laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious*” (1 Peter 2:1-3).

John said, “*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him*” (1 John 2:3-5).

The point is that spiritual growth — positive in the sense of becoming more like Jesus and negative in the sense that we rid ourselves of sin — is not an instant happening, but a process over time.

As we steep ourselves in the word of God, we learn more of what the Lord would have of us.

As we steep ourselves in the word of God, we learn more about our Lord and his love for us.

And as we steep ourselves in the word of God, we fall more in love with our Lord — and from love comes obedience, and from obedience comes maturity.

This process of knowing the truth is exactly what Paul is doing both in his letter to Titus and his letter to the Romans. Our study of Titus and Romans 6-8 bears this out.

The second reason we know that spirituality is not an instant experience is on account of the many warnings to constantly give ourselves over to God found in the Bible. For example Paul, in Romans 6:13, says, “*And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*” When Paul said, “*present yourselves to God,*” he used a form of the verb present that expressed his strong desire to see his readers consistently giving themselves into the control of God. The implication is simple: believers must continually choose to give themselves completely to God for the purpose of righteousness.

While delivering his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, in teaching on the problem of worrying, said, “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*” (Matthew 6:33). The verb seek is, again, in the present aspect. We are to keep on seeking the “*kingdom of God and his righteousness.*” Again, we see the function of our will. We have a choice to make — constantly and consistently.

The third reason we know that spirituality is not an instant experience is because we are instructed from God's word to constantly give ourselves into the leading of the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul said, “*be filled with the Spirit.*” Once again, we see the present tense condition of this command. The application here is that we are to keep on being filled with the Spirit. This can especially be seen when one notices the contrast that exists in this verse: “*And*

*do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.*” The contrast is quite vivid. Paul is saying, “when you are drunk, you are under the control of the intoxicant (“*dissipation*” implies both lack of control and squandering), but when you are “*filled with the Spirit*” you are under the control of God. The question remains, “which will we choose moment to moment?” (See also Romans 8:14 and Galatians 5:16.)

Thus, we see once again, that being free from the flesh is a process in which God and we team up. By knowing the truth of the Bible, by choosing to live in that truth, and by depending upon God for success we gain the victory.

3. There is still the very practical question about how to depend fully upon God. Remember, you have instant access to him through prayer. When facing temptation, we must instantly go to him for help. We must cultivate this habit. Too often we fail to give ourselves to diligent prayer. Too often we ignore God when in the heat of battle. Too often we depend more upon ourselves for fighting the flesh than we do upon God. Praying “without ceasing” is the key to dependence.

#### **IV. A Christ-like lifestyle includes the exercise of a solid, active faith.**

*“sound in faith”*

Comment: The word “*sound*” is a medical term meaning “good health.” “*Faith*” refers to one's relationship to God. “Faith” is the noun form of “believe.” Thus, Paul desired to see the older men in the Church of Crete living out a healthy relationship of trust and confidence in God. On this the Apostles Paul and James do not disagree (as some have thought). James said, “*Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead*” (James 2:17). Paul said, be “*sound in faith.*” It is by faith that we are saved. However, it is through works that we demonstrate that salvation. When our faith is made active and public, others see it. Paul and James agree. So must we.

#### **IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Is your faith healthy? Is it sound? Is your faith solid and active enough that others are convinced? Or might those who know you best call you a “secret Christian” (if such a phrase is not a contradiction in terms)?

Your response:

2. Is your faith evident for believers only? Do unbelievers know what you believe? Are they aware of your faith? Do they recognize your love for Jesus Christ? Do your Christian convictions color all that you do and say?

Your response:

3. If your answers to the questions in #2 were in the negative, how might you go about correcting the situation?

Your response:

If your answers to the questions in #2 were in the positive, how might you excel even further?

Your response:

## V. A Christ-like lifestyle includes self-sacrificing love.

*“in love”*

Comment: The word “love” found here is the well known Greek word *agape*. This is love that always seeks the best for the object being loved. Its greatest example was Christ on the cross. In fact, there was never an instance in which Jesus did not act out of this kind of love. If we then ask ourselves “what kind of love did Jesus possess,” we immediately realize it was a love that kept the interests of others ahead of himself. This is what it means to be “*sound...in love.*”

### IMPLICATIONS:

1. Have you sorted through the distinction between *agape* love and our contemporary images of love? Almost always when our world talks of love it refers to the emotional ties that bind people together. Now such love is absolutely good and necessary; it implies that we not only love another, but like them as well. However, *agape* love goes a step further — it will enable us to act in love even in violation of our feelings. The world would call this hypocrisy. Christ would call it doing what's right. Love is not only a noun, but also a verb.

2. Consider the following scenario:

You are stopped at a red light. A driver approaches from behind. Without warning, the approaching vehicle slams into your car. What's more, you only just purchased your beautiful, red convertible last week. You collect your wits. Apparently you are not injured. Suddenly, frustration, anger, and hostility begin to turn your face bright red. You grab the door handle, fling open the door, swing your legs out, stand up, stomp to the back of your car, take your first look at the damage, and begin to feel that sick, tight feeling in the pit of your stomach. The next thing you know is that the driver who rammed you from behind is at your side.

Will you respond according to your emotional state?

If so, what might your conversation sound like?

If so, what might be the results?

If so, how might the other person respond to you?

Will you respond with Christian love regardless of how you feel?

If so, what might your conversation sound like?

If so, what might be the results?

If so, how might the other person respond to you?

**VI. A Christ-like lifestyle includes an ability to live according to our beliefs even during difficult times.**

*“in patience”*

Comment: To be *“sound...in patience”* is to possess an endurance that enables us to bear up through trying circumstances. The word *“patience”* or *“endurance”* means *remaining under*. It is a willingness to continue on with Christian character and belief in the face of trials, rather than railing about them and caving into the flesh during them. Patience is a kissing cousin to love. Whereas *agape* love enables us to respond toward another as Jesus would, patience enables us to remain calm as Jesus would.

**IMPLICATIONS:**

1. Have you ever experienced a weariness in the face of another's relentless behavior? You know, a person who seems to have it in for you? A boss? A relative? A neighbor? A church member? Perhaps, no matter what you say or do, this person continues to give you a hard time. Have you experienced this?

Yes or no?

2. If so, how have you dealt with the problem?

Your response:

Was the patience Paul spoke of a part of your attitude and behavior?

Yes or no?

If no, can you recall what happened (both to you and to the relationship)? Did a lack of biblical endurance bring about negative effects?

Your response:

If yes, can you recall what happened (both to you and to the relationship)? Did your biblical endurance bring about positive effects?

Your response:

3. How might we go about increasing our ability to live in accordance to our Christian beliefs even during difficult times?

## **SUMMARY:**

Theme: If we want to foster maturity and godliness among older men we must teach and learn a Christ-like lifestyle.

*“But as for you speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine:”*

I. A Christlike lifestyle includes a clear Christian world-view.

*“that the older men be sober”*

II. A Christ-like lifestyle includes an admirable Christian reputation.

*“reverent”*

III. A Christ-like lifestyle includes the ability to be free from the flesh.

*“temperate”*

IV. A Christ-like lifestyle includes the exercise of a solid, active faith.

*“sound in faith”*

V. A Christ-like lifestyle includes self-sacrificing love.

*“in love”*

VI. A Christ-like lifestyle includes the ability to live according to our beliefs even during difficult times.

*“in patience”*

## **CONCLUSION:**

It is with the sincere hope that this small study has proved helpful in your pursuit of holiness that we draw to a close. It goes without saying there remains much more to learn about the Christian life. Paul's instructions for the older man given to Titus are not exhaustive, but suggestive. Thus, should this study spur the reader on to greater reading and development the author will be well pleased.

Serving with you,

Ricki Lee Brooks