



Titus #2 Elders Over Cretans

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Titus is an instructional guide written by Paul to Titus who is headed to Crete. There is much unfinished work there to establish the new believers there. Today we will talk about elders and their role in building a community that lasts and is counter-culture. If you are a follower of Jesus you are part of the counter culture: Paul is helping Titus to build this out.

At the Village we use the word “pastor” differently. We also have elders and the title “pastor” who shepherds. We also have a leadership team: all of us are ministers and leaders are helping people to do that. Leaders are essentially deacons and we call them this because it is a more understandable word than “deacon.”

The Situation

10 For there are many **rebellious people**, full of **meaningless talk** and **deception**, especially those of the **circumcision group**.

Instead of starting at the beginning of Titus 1, we want to jump ahead to the situation. There are rebellious people: an emotional resistance to authority, people who stir others up with meaningless talk. I think this means conversations about things you have no real power over and don't really care about. These people are also deceptive with their lives. The circumcised people are those who are saying “Jesus AND...not Jesus ONLY.”

The Disrupted Household

11 They **must be silenced**, because they are **disrupting whole households** by **teaching things** they **ought not to teach** – and that for the sake of **dishonest gain**.

Paul says these people must be silenced: not say a single word because they are disrupting whole households, the core of the community of God. We as a church are a household as well: we are a family made up of close and distant people. These rebellious people are disrupting and teaching things for personal gain: following? Finance? They are not building up the community. They must be silenced.

The Cretans

12 One of Crete's own prophets has said it: “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.”

13 This saying is true . . .

He quotes Ephemenenes in vs. 12. As an elder here at the Village, I realized that **we are all really Cretans!** Let's process how we might be this way as a community:

Always Liars

- We tell partial stories because full honesty feels risky.
- We know how to sound faithful without always being vulnerable.
- We confuse transparency with confession.

Evil Brutes

- We get sharp when we're tired.
- We talk over people instead of listening.
- We carry unprocessed anger into leadership and family life.

Lazy Gluttons

- We enjoy community but avoid discipline.
- We love conversation but resist structure.
- We say yes to everything, then disappear when it gets hard.
- We feed on content while neglecting prayer, rest, and obedience..

- We tell partial stories because full honesty feels risky.
- We make ourselves look a little better by leaving out part of the story.
 - We know how to sound faithful without being vulnerable: The longer we've been a Christian, the better we are at looking better than we are.
 - We might confuse total honesty with confession, making it all about me. Confession allows for honesty about the damage we have done.
 - We may not think of ourselves as a "Brute" but there is "Bruteness" when we come home and are tired and speak sharply with our kids.
 - We talk over people instead of listening. In fact we are really brutalizing people when we don't listen.
 - Also, all of us carry unprocessed anger to leadership and we end up steamrolling people. Or we might internalize our anger and it comes out in our physical bodies or in others whom we brutalize.
 - We like to talk about things but we refuse to do things.
 - We aren't present when we're needed.
 - We spiritualize the gaining of information but we are not disciplining ourselves to pray and rest and obey: we can't figure out why we are so tired and going nowhere.

At some level, ***we have all bought into the culture of the Cretan.***

Elders

5 The **reason** I left you in Crete was that you might **put in order what was left unfinished** and **appoint elders** in every town, as I directed you. 6 An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being **wild** and **disobedient**. 7 Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless . . .

Let's talk about a few things related to vv 5-7. If someone asks me what I do for work, I might say I'm an elder at the Village. But this is not what is happening in Crete.: I want you to see that Paul believes that an elder is an overseer and both a man and his wife were appointed together for this task in the first century. We know this because the elders, man and wife, were often buried together. An overseer is appointed over a family which includes both a mother and father. If a one-woman man is faithful to his wife, this also applies to the woman. She must be faithful to just her husband. This is what it takes to help a church become counter-cultural: they must be examples to their followers.

The “Not’s”

7 Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless – **not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.**

get out of leading someone: Praise can fall into that category. Seeking after these things makes me a dishonest leader.)

The children cannot be wild and disobedient: this is referring to adult children, not small children who are learning not to dump their drinks on the carpet. These adult children need to be people appointed toward, not away, from the Gospel.

Blameless means **blameless**: not overbearing, not hyper-controlling, not drinking and not violent and not pursuing dishonest gain (which means always asking what I’m going to

The “Rather’s”

8 Rather, he must **be hospitable**, one who **loves what is good**, who is **self-controlled, upright, holy** and **disciplined**.

This means the elder’s home should be open to the community and the stranger. They aren’t perfect but they love what is good. They are holy, self-controlled, and upright: these are all connected: the practice of being set apart.

The Gospel

9 He must **hold firmly** to the **trustworthy message** as it has been taught, so that he can **encourage** others by sound doctrine and **refute** those who oppose it.

HOLD FIRMLY is the most important part of an elder. Paul lays out what the Gospel is and what an elder should be holding onto. These are the key to countering the culture.

Titus 3:3-9

3:3 At one time we too were **foolish, disobedient, deceived** and **enslaved** by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in **malice and envy**, being **hated** and **hating** one another.

This is the key: you need to hear this from Mark and Eric: we are broken people that own this condition that we have chosen and have practiced.

Titus 3:3-9

4 But when the **kindness and love of God our Savior appeared**, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, **but because of his mercy**. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,

BUT when the kindness and love of God appeared...and received salvation and rebirth not because of what we’ve done.

Titus 3:3-9

7 so that, having been **justified** by his grace, we might become **heirs having** the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be **careful to devote themselves to doing what is good**. **These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.**

There are two things you need to hear from your pastors:

1. There is nothing you need to do to earn the love and grace of Jesus
2. You are an heir NOW to the kingdom of God.

This enables us to put off the NOTS and put on the RATHERS (see above).

13 This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them **sharply**, so that they will be **sound in the faith** 14 and will pay no attention to **Jewish myths** or to the **merely human commands** of those who **reject the truth**. 15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. 16 **They claim to know God**, but by **their actions they deny him**. They are **detestable, disobedient** and **unfit for doing anything good**.

This is the job of an elder (and this is Titus's job): to direct people and sometimes to do it sharply. If someone tells me STOP, it should direct us to sound faith. Paul doesn't want a community set on rules that tell us how to be right. He's also not saying to do the opposite. He is saying there is freedom in the Gospel to have a sabbath when you need a sabbath not to exclude others who have a different value system than you do.



Elders in your community are invited to be counter-cultural families who invite the entire community to do the same.

Titus 3:3-9

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These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

The focus is on the mercy and grace of God: that I feel the weight of what I've been saved from and am devoted to what is good.

Next week we will talk more about elders.