

Message #4
Titus: Being the Church in a Hostile Culture

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PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY BEGINS AT HOME
TITUS 2:1-5

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Harrison Butker is the kicker for the Kansas City Chiefs. (PROJECTOR ON--- HARRISON BUTKER 01) He is very good. He broke the Chiefs' record for the longest field goal kick by booting the ball through the goal posts from 62 yards away in 2022. In the Super Bowl last February he tied the game at the end of regulation by kicking a field goal, which enabled his team to go on and win in overtime.

Harrison Butker is a committed Catholic. He is married and has one child. He was invited to give the commencement address at a small Catholic college in Kansas in May. (HARRISON BUTKER 02) He spoke about the decline of morality in our culture. He promoted traditional values. He talked about the danger of current discussions of gender ideologies. He suggested that many women graduates were more excited by the prospect of marriage and having kids than in getting a diploma. He said that for his wife Isabella life **“really started when she began living her vocation as a wife and as a mother.”** He said that she had no regrets about giving up a career to focus on raising a family.

Harrison Butker got a standing ovation for his speech. But then he began getting some push back. A group of nuns at the college said that Butker's speech did not represent their views. The NFL issued a statement saying that his message did not represent the views of the NFL. An online petition drive was begun asking the Kansas City Chiefs to fire their kicker. Some 180,000 people signed on to the petition which charged Butker with being **“sexist, homophobic, anti-trans, anti-abortion and racist.”** Such is the state of our culture. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Part of the object of their ire is their objection to the traditional view of the family. Nobel and Pulitzer prize winning novelist Toni Morrison years ago said that the traditional family **“is a paradigm that just doesn't work... Why are we hanging on to it, I don't know.”** (Time magazine, 5/22/1989, p. 120) A couple of weeks ago in our study of Proverbs and its lessons about the family I quoted some of the statistics about so many of the ills of society which can be traced back to broken families. The traditional, Biblical view of the family works. It works because the Bible was written by our manufacturer. We would do well to follow His owner's manual.

The focus of our passage today is practical theology. The Apostle Paul is big on having right beliefs about God and the world and people. Right theology is practical theology. It has a positive effect on the world around us. Multnomah School of the Bible President Joe Aldridge says, **“The Christian family in a community is the ultimate evangelistic tool, assuming the home circle is an open one in which the beauty of**

the gospel is readily available. It's the old story: When love is seen, the message is heard." (*Life-Style Evangelism, Joseph Aldrich, p. 21*)

We have seen that the Apostle Paul was sending this letter to his coworker and disciple Titus. After his imprisonment in Rome Paul and Titus visited the island of Crete. (CRETE MAP) Paul left him there to build up the churches, which traced their origin to Jews who had been in Jerusalem at Pentecost. We have seen Paul stress the need for Titus to appoint elders in the various churches. We have looked at the qualifications which he laid out for them. Last week we looked at his instructions for how to deal with false teachers and with an often hostile culture. We saw that one of their own leaders called the Cretans liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. Today we shall look at the apostle's advice about how to have an impact upon this kind of society, a society which is perhaps not all that different from our own.

I.

So let's begin by looking at THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH LEADER (I. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH LEADER), which is described in v. 1. Paul writes, **"But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine."**

Titus had a unique role. He was not a pastor or an elder or a deacon or an apostle like one of the Twelve. He was a representative of Paul, who was an apostle. The apostle Paul charged him with the responsibility of appointing elders on the island of Crete and generally doing what he could to strengthen the new church congregations there.

What is foundational is sound doctrine. The original word for "sound" means healthy. The word appears five times in Titus, four times as a description of doctrine. That sound, healthy doctrine was centered upon the teaching of the apostles. What Paul says next is included in that. It is practical theology. It involves the proper way to live out theological beliefs.

After telling Timothy at Ephesus in a letter written about the same time as Titus to oppose false teaching, (1 TIMOTHY 1:5) he wrote, **"The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."** The point is the same as in our verse. Christian leaders are to teach sound doctrine based upon God's word. Transformed lives result from correct teaching.

II.

Then in v. 2 Paul describes THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OLDER MEN. (II. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OLDER MEN) God's truth should be brought to bear upon every demographic group: the old, the young, men, women, children. Churches over the centuries have found different ways in which to do that. There is not necessarily a right way or a wrong way. The methodology varies somewhat from culture to culture. It varies according to the demographics in each church. In our local church we have a women's group a men's breakfast, a widow's group, a youth group, various Bible studies, and Sunday children's programs for all ages.

In the situation in the churches on Crete there were a few obvious demographic categories. One group was older men. Thus in v. 2 the apostle writes, **“Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.”** The term “older men” is *presbuteros*, from which we get “Presbyterian.” The word is often translated as “elder,” and it is used in reference to the office of elder in the local church.

Hippocrates was the Greek philosopher of the fourth century after whom the Hippocratic Oath was named. He said that there were seven age categories of men. “Elder” was number six in his categorization of men. He also called them “gray beards.” He said that age 49 to 57 fell into this category. After this you were just an old man. As for the seven age categories of women there was infant, little girl, the miss, the young woman, the young woman, the young woman, the young woman.

So Paul proceeds to describe several positive characteristics which are worthy for anyone to emulate. The first is “sober-minded.” It is often used in Greek literature in regard to control of drinking wine. But it may be used of other lusts of the flesh, such as gluttony.

Next Paul uses the term “dignified.” It means “to be worthy of respect.” A commentator by the name of Barclay says that it describes **“one who lives in light of eternity, knowing we will stand before God soon.”** We older guys are more aware than most others that the deadline of our earthly lives is getting closer. This should prompt us to have a seriousness about life. It doesn’t mean that we have to avoid humor. Humor adds a certain joy to life. But older men ought to have a conscious realization that life is getting short and death is lurking.

Older men are also to be “self-controlled.” The cultural evaluation of the Cretans by some of their own people was that they generally lacked self-control. They were gluttons. They were lazy. They tended to avoid the truth.

Then also older men are to be “sound in faith.” Here perhaps the emphasis is not so much on the content of faith as it is upon the exercise of faith in the true God. This soundness, this healthiness is also to be applied to love and steadfastness.

The word for love is *agape*, which many of you know refers to the most committed form of love in the Greek language. There is much in our world which passes for love which is not the real item. Feelings pass for love. Lust passes for love. A taste for a particular kind of food passes as love. A writer by the name of P J O’Rourke says, **“Everybody wants to save the earth. Nobody wants to help mom do the dishes.”** (*World*, 9/2/2017) The best testing ground for many of these virtues is indeed the family.

Soundness, healthiness should not only extend to faith and love but also to “steadfastness.” Some translations have “perseverance.” This is not giving up in the face of adversity. In first century Crete new Christians no doubt faced adversity from their fellow countrymen. Greek religion was dominant. To turn away from it was not just

to change one's religion, it was to deny one's cultural heritage. It was to come across as unpatriotic.

Charles de Gaulle became a hero to many Frenchmen in World War II. He refused to join with the Vichy French who agreed to cooperate with the Nazis. He led the Free French fighting forces from his post in England. He irritated many Western leaders when he became the President in the post-war years.

On New Year's Day of 1928 Anne was born to Charles de Gaulle and his wife Yvonne. (CHARLES DE GAULLE AND ANNE) He referred to her as "un enfant pas comme les autres," "a child not like the others." She was born with Down Syndrome. Back in that day she was called a Mongoloid. Most of the French put children with major disabilities in hospitals for the rest of their lives. Those hospitals had a reputation for being very bad places in which to live.

Charles de Gaulle would have none of that. He was a religious Catholic and a God-fearing man. He declared, "**God has given her to us. We must take responsibility for her wherever she is and whatever she will be.**" Wife Yvonne focused on the logistics of caring for this daughter. Charles worked on the affection. He was sound in love, and in steadfastness. He sang to Anne, read her stories, and taught her how to pray. Each night Anne would slowly repeat her father's prayers.

In contrast to the treatment which the de Gaulles gave to their disabled daughter was the treatment which the Nazis in Germany gave to their disabled. An estimated 200,000 disabled people were killed in Germany between 1940 and 1945 because they interfered with Hitler's development of the master race.

Charles became aware of this, and it irritated him. He resented how the Nazis regarded health challenged individuals as subhuman. As he later said, "**Without Anne, I could never perhaps have done what I did. She gave me the heart and the inspiration.**" Part of his motivation in refusing to surrender to the Nazis was his desire to protect kids and adults with problems like his daughter had. After Anne's death He and his wife established a foundation, staffed by nuns, to care for people "who are not like the others." Such is the demonstration of what it means for older men "to be sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness." (Breakpoint, 5/15/2017)

III.

In v. 3 we come to Paul's description of THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OLDER WOMEN. (III. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OLDER WOMEN) The apostle writes, "**Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good...**" Likewise... Older women are to exhibit similar virtues as those to be exhibited among older men in the congregation. Praying moms and grandmas so often make a tremendous spiritual difference.

Paul proceeds to frame two negative characteristics with two positive virtues. The first positive virtue is reverence in behavior. This expression was originally used to describe

priestesses in pagan Greek temples. The idea is that the supposed holiness of priestesses was to be carried over into the daily behavior of Christian women, especially older women. Their lives were to be committed to religious service.

Then comes the negative characteristic: Older women are not to be slanderers. My observation is that women generally have more of a need to socialize and talk than we men do. There are exceptions to that. Then when they talk, the subject of conversation is often family and people and relationships. When we men get together, we often tend to talk about sports and politics and jobs. When people, often women, focus on relationships, there is a lot of temptation for gossip, in particular for slander, for attacking people. Paul perhaps has encountered women who have had difficulties in life and have developed bitterness. The temptation is to direct that bitterness toward other people.

The Greek word which he uses for "slanderer" is *diabolous*. In some places in the New Testament it is descriptive of, and translated as, "the devil." In Revelation #12 v. 10 (REVELATION 12:10) the Apostle John hears a voice declaring, "... **Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.**" Such is the work of the great slanderer. The encouragement of Paul is for older women not to fall into the trap of following the slanderous example of the evil one.

In v. 3 of our passage (PROJECTOR OFF) Paul also says that older women should not become "slaves to much wine." He doesn't say that they should drink no wine. They just should not drink much wine. But if they drink, it should be in moderation.

Perhaps Paul saw a connection between slander and drinking too much wine. Women usually had access to the food and drink stored away by the family. In Roman society wealthier women had a more active part in dinners and banquets and parties. Cretans seemed to have been influenced by these negative elements of wealthier Roman society.

Then positively older women were to use their experience and situation in life to teach what is good. The next two verses provide a description about the intended objects of that teaching.

IV.

Thus we come in vv. 4 & 5 to THE RESPONSIBILITY OF YOUNGER WOMEN. (PROJECTOR ON--- IV. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF YOUNGER WOMEN) The apostle tells the older women, "...**and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.**"

This view of the role of younger women seems archaic in our society. It certainly runs contrary to our current cultural values. Paul's values were consistent with much of the

thinking of Greek and Roman and even Jewish society. The historical evidence is that upper class women in Roman society were developing what we might call more feminist views. The Cretans were following some of these trends. The women in Crete had more legal protections and more freedom than the women in most other people groups did.

This relatively modern cultural trend led to more involvement by women in public meetings and parties, and it produced a lower standard of morality. A scholar by the name of Towner says, “...**the new morality they emphasized endorsed the freedom to pursue extramarital sexual liaisons and liberties normally open only to men, which would place marital fidelity and household management at risk.**” (Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, p. 726)

So what should be the role of younger women? The basic responsibility is to love one's husband and one's children. Jesus said that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love one's neighbor. For younger women the command to love one's neighbor begins with husband and children.

But how exactly is that to be worked out in the Christian family? Paul says in v. 5 that this requires self-control, which was the same responsibility charged to older men in v. 2.

It also means purity. This appears to be a reference to sexual standards. A young woman is supposed to be faithful to her husband. Christianity has high moral standards.

Then also Paul says that younger women are to be workers at home. In the first century women tended to have more kids. Cooking and cleaning tended to take much more time and energy. We tend to have fewer kids today, and we have a lot of modern conveniences unavailable to women in Crete in the first century. But perhaps Paul would say that the basic responsibility still remains, especially for younger wives with kids at home.

Then Paul encourages them to be kind, which is a virtue we all could appreciate. Then he speaks of wives being submissive to husbands. That is a big sore point to many women in our culture. It was no doubt a challenge to wealthier women in Crete who were influenced by new Roman values.

Sheila Cronan, a member of a group known as The Feminists, declares, “**Since marriage constitutes slavery for women, it is clear that the women's movement must concentrate on attacking this institution. Freedom for women cannot be won without the abolition of marriage.**” (*Notes from the Third Year*, p. 65)

This approach to marriage and the family was applied by the Communists to the people of Russia early in the administration of Joseph Stalin. According to Orlando Figes in his book *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia*, the Communists set out to create a “new kind of human being” who lived for the common good. This required, in their view,

the destruction of the traditional family. For the bourgeois family was regarded as the stronghold of religion, superstition, ignorance, and prejudice.

So the Communists removed the influence of the Church in marriage and divorce. They made divorce easy and gave cohabiting couples the same rights as married ones. Abortion was made easily available.

The result of these efforts was a “huge increase in casual marriage and the highest rate of divorce in the world.” Sexual standards were lowered. Abortion rates increased. Birth rates declined steeply, which left the Soviet Union short of workers and soldiers. Child abandonment became common. After twenty years of declaring war on the family the Soviet Communists recognized that they had created a disaster. So they did an about face. Marriage was promoted. Divorce was made more difficult. Abortion was outlawed. The “good” Stalinist was expected to be monogamous and “devoted to his family.” Some comrades were expelled from the Communist Party for being bad fathers or husbands.

Here in America the concern of so many feminists with traditional marriage is that this idea of submission to husbands leads to domestic abuse. Sometimes that happens. What women need in marriage is men who reflect Biblical values. A sociologist by the name of Bradford Wilcox from the University of Virginia says that men and women who attend church regularly enjoy higher quality marriages and greater happiness. Also men who attend church regularly are 72% less likely to abuse women than non church goers. (*Christianity Today*, 12/11/2017) In her recent book *The Toxic War on Masculinity* (p. 36), Nancy Pearcey says that regular church attendees who are men have the lowest levels of domestic abuse and violence of any demographic group.

It sounds great to have a committed Christian husband, but why should wives have to submit to them? Consider what female anthropologist Sherry Ortner from the University of Chicago has to say: **“On any or all of these counts, then, I would flatly assert that we find women subordinated to men in every known society. The search for a genuinely egalitarian, let alone matriarchal, culture has proved fruitless.”** (*Women, Culture and Society*, p. 70) So just maybe this all has something to do with how we were created.

Consider also what the Bible has to say in Ephesians #5. (EPHESIANS 5:22-23) In vv. 22 -24 we read, **“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. (EPHESIANS 5:24) Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.”** This relationship of a wife to her husband is intended to be a divine illustration of the relationship of the church to Jesus. This submission thing is not just some cultural idea that was intended to be limited to the first century.

In v. 33 of Ephesians #5 (EPHESIANS 5:33) the Apostle Paul writes, **“However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects**

her husband.” There is a Christian psychologist by the name of Larry Crabb who says that the two deepest psychological needs of every human being are for security and significance. He says that on average men have a greater need for significance. We men have bigger, yet more fragile, egos. We have an innate need to conquer and accomplish and do stuff.

Women also need a sense of significance. But he argues that usually their greater need is for security. They long to be loved and cherished and protected. They have babies, and the process of raising children entails certain vulnerabilities. It creates insecurities. So psychologist Larry Crabb says that it makes perfect sense that the husband's greatest responsibility is to love his wife. That is security. The wife's greatest responsibility is to submit to her husband. That encourages the male need for significance. This makes sense to me, and it seems to fit the Biblical model.
(PROJECTOR OFF)

The concern of Paul at the end of this verse in our passage is that the word of God not be reviled. People who claim to be Christians should follow God's owner's manual. Following the Bible generally produces successful lives. Christians who follow the divine directions for family life produce great families.

Harrison Butker received a lot of negatives for his commencement address. But he also received a lot of positives. His jersey quickly became the best selling jersey of all of the Kansas City Chiefs, including quarterback Patrick Mahomes and tight end Travis Kelce, the boy friend of Taylor Swift.

For those of you who are not familiar with it, “The Babylon Bee” is an online Christian satire magazine. This is how they framed the story about Harrison Butker: Their headline read “Feminists Warn Young Girls Against Marrying Rich, Muscular Football Stars Who Love Them And Take Care Of All Their Needs And Praise Them In Speeches.” This is how the story reads:

“In the wake of Harrison Butker's recent commencement speech encouraging college graduates to get married and start a family, feminists around the nation are cautioning young girls not to marry wealthy, successful Super Bowl champions like Butker.

“Can you imagine how terrible it would be to marry a ripped, non-feminist football star who loves you so much he gets choked up every time he honors you in a speech?’ Activist Margery Strecker exclaimed in a Tik-Tok short aimed at 13-year-old girls. ‘Imagine if you married a guy like that and he started sacrificially loving you and honoring you while taking care of your every need forever! It would be like *The Handmaid's Tale* all over again!’”

“‘Harrison Butker is disgusting!’ Jane Davis commented on X (formerly Twitter). ‘Young girls should avoid men like that at all costs and instead pursue corporate careers in the big city while going to clubs and sleeping with losers they meet on dating apps every weekend until they turn 38! Think of your careers, ladies!’”

“While Butker was unavailable for comment, sources close to the 3-time Super Bowl Champion claim that he was busy getting ready to surprise his wife with a romantic dinner after an afternoon spent throwing around a football with his son. At publishing time, all of the nation's girls were busy ignoring the feminists while replacing their Tim Tebow posters with framed Harrison Butker jerseys.”

The Biblical model for marriage and family life may not be so popular today. But it works in families who pursue it. Foundational to this is people who are truly Christians. The Bible says that we become Christians by recognizing that we are sinners in need of a Savior. We must believe that Jesus was God, that He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, and that he rose again from the dead. If we put our trust in this Jesus, the promise of the Bible is that we receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.