

Titus 2:1-10 Discipleship in the Church

Good Morning everyone, its good to be with you this morning as we come to the end of our series on Discipleship. I hope this series has been helpful for you as you reflect on what steps you can take in your own walk as well as how you can be active in discipleing others. Today we are going to end our series by thinking about this within this concept of community that we have here that we call Church. Hopefully we will see how important the Church is and how important it is that we are intentional with our discipleship of one another.

Let me pray.

When I was in yr 9 I had a huge cohort at youth group. On our middle of year youth camp this was the group of boys we had...
...The world we are in promised them instant joys, happiness, fulfilment for their individualism.

Trouble in Paradise – The Setting in Crete

Its important as we start to understand what is going on in Titus.

Titus is a disciple of Paul, just like Timothy and he has been sent to the island of Crete to lead and teach the church there. He might be a little bit older than Timothy but we wouldn't call him an older man.

In Titus 1 we learn that the teaching in Crete aside from Titus isn't particularly crash hot.

Let me give you a brief summary of what Paul has talked about in chapter 1...

This is an attack on all the people of Crete but is particularly geared at the leaders, the circumcision group are a group of Christians that were trying to get people to continue to follow some elements of covenant law, such as circumcision. Paul is saying that the people of Crete, even those who claim to be Christians, even their leaders, are being corrupt and are not fit for good works and that this is an unacceptable state for the church to be in because it will not be

sustainable. A heavy attack but an important one as we consider our passage today. We have strong reason to believe that the culture in Crete was hugely hedonistic. Full of sexual sin, idolatry, abuse of alcohol.

Our passage is in the context of a place and time when Christians, are in an environment that it not only opposed to their way of life and beliefs, but is also very attractive to them. They are tempted, especially the young people, to indulge in false teaching that lines up with what they desire rather than what they know to be true in the teachings of Jesus. They are at risk of one at a time, walking away from church, giving into personal temptation, and leaving.

It is in this context that Paul writes to Titus.

A Web of Relationships.

You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. So he is now going to talk to the church in contrast to what he has just said about the Cretans and the churches that are behaving poorly.

Paul goes on to discuss specific characteristics of different groups in the church community that he thinks are best practice in their context. What I want us to notice is how reliant the system seems to be on each part. I'm going to go through these briefly and clarify a few things, and then I'll reflect on why we should care.

Older Men. Temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

In this situation we are talking about men who have a lot of power and authority in the society. These guys can change everything if they feel like it they have complete control of their households and influence a lot of people and so they are addressed first. Called to use this power wisely, to be protectors of the church, protectors of the people there, to be men of respect not because of their impressiveness but because of their faith, love and endurance. At the top, with the most influence, they are charged with being rocks.

Older women. the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.

There is important context here. And Paul brings up the issue with alcohol with every different type of person throughout his letters. It seems that alcohol was of a particular issue in Crete and that this was able to have an impact on the church. These were certainly behaviours that these women's counterparts in Cretan society were known for and it is likely that it was a culture they were moving out of. They are called to be different to their pagan counterparts. Paul is affirming this and affirming the character of those who he would seek for to be examples and to teach what is good because, of the next part. There is a direct connection between them and the younger women.

⁴Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

Ooft. How many people stopped in the Bible reading and could only see this verse for the rest of it? It is soooooo important to remember that Paul is speaking to the values of the time. We are not in 1 century Crete. This is not a direct command to young women to be busy at home, its talking about good behaviour in what is a patriarchal society. Self controlled, pure, kind. These are all directly applicable. The others are for a bigger discussion that we don't have time for but I want to be clear this is not a command to be housewives, don't take this and put me in the Sydney Morning Herald. This is the point that we can see that Paul is not trying to solve all the problems of the ancient world. He's trying to bring people into a knowledge of Jesus.

Paul to the young women but really to everyone is comparing them to the society around them and saying, be better than that. Live a life that shows your goodness, your commitment to what is right. Be pure, be kind, be self controlled. Resist the temptations of Cretan women to abandon sexual monogamy to your husband, to indulge in much wine and gossip about other people. Be better than them. Live a life that is worthy of Christ seeking to resist all that would tempt you for the sake of the gospel and for your Church.

Which is why when we get to young men Paul just has one thing to say. BE SELF CONTROLLED. They are clearly at high risk, reckless, tempted by all that is going on. If anything they are the ones Paul trusts the least. See how everyone else, even slaves that will look at in a moment have all these things they are called to as members of the church. Young men, sit there and try not to burn the house down. This reminds Paul to turn back to the young man he is writing to, Titus, as a teacher you are called to more than that, you need to

have integrity, teach soundly because if there are cracks in you then the rest of this will count for nothing.

Lastly slaves. Also a hard one. subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them,¹⁰ and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted

First, the modern day word slave is not the best for understanding the relationship. But all the same there is a group of people who are in servitude and that is difficult for us to digest. Paul is often criticized for not condemning slavery in the Bible. Most discussion of this is conjecture but usually comes back to Paul was more focused on his task of spreading the Gospel than he was with overturning a major social situation at the time that was prevalent throughout the ancient world. Interestingly it would be Christians later who would fight to abolish slavery in the western world, so that is a Christian ethic, but not one Paul pursues here. What I think is important to point out is that he is addressing these people as members of the

church. He is in fact profoundly crossing social barriers and treating them as a part of the church regardless of their social status and this is a very good thing.

Overall, Paul is far more interested in the behaviour of those in servitude and the impact that has on the church and on the people who they engage with. Paul calls on all people in the church to be people of remarkable character no matter who they are or their situation, or their social status for the sake of the gospel, so that people will see the church and not bring it into disrepute, so the message can go forth. For some he asks a lot more than others and I recognise that. But he calls on them all to be better than those around them, to stand as those of sound doctrine and behaviour, to be different. He sees that there is a reliance on one another. For the church to be strong, for the gospel to go forth, each person must work towards personal Godliness for the benefit of others and as is seen between the old and young women there is a direct

responsibility to teach and train one another towards this aim and that applies to the men too.

Why does this all matter to us now? – Application.

In a passage as highly contextual as this one it can be easy to pass over and think. This doesn't really have much relevance for my church, the world is just so different now. But that misses the point. There are some important principles here that challenge not only us as individuals but us as a church.

We must be different

A similarity between us and them is that the world around us is full of attack on the Christian faith but also that it is full of temptations for individuals to fall into and then be swept away. Sexual temptation, pornography, infidelity, alcoholism. This is what we really need to get our heads around. The problem of the struggling individual not only has an effect on the whole church, but is also the whole's responsibility. The answer to individual struggles is

communal effort because when separated we are just a bunch of struggling individuals. It isn't that one Christian needs to be different to the world it is that the collection of individual Christians in the church need to be different in support of one another.

People will see the faithful teaching of Jesus and they will see the church living for Christ being different to the world, As Paul puts it so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. Not because it means you can do whatever you want, but because people will see that being a follower of Jesus and a member of his church changes people. That you enter a community of love and care. They choose to follow him not because it is easy but because it is the truth. And they see that the church stands as a unity supporting, teaching, and protecting one another.

Discipleship in the Church

So how do we be that Church? A church that holds to sound doctrine, that is different to the world, whose members live their

lives for Jesus? Surprise surprise, as we end this series, its discipleship. See discipleship isn't just something we might start doing. Its who we are as a church. Paul shows us an interconnected inter-reliant web of people who are only protected as a church when they support one another, helping one another, teaching one another, pursuing personal godliness for not just their benefit but that of everyone else.

Being a part of church is an other person centred calling. When you resist temptation when you strive to be more like Christ that isn't just for you its for everyone else, that you would be an example and a help to them. When you push through tiredness and get yourself to church that isn't just for you its for the person sat next to you.

Can you imagine the feeling when someone builds up the confidence or courage to get themselves to church or youth group knowing you will be there to talk to them, but then you aren't there because you were too tired.

Why do we push intergenerational relationships? Because that is a clear element of Titus 2. Notice how it doesn't use the word parent. Fathers? Mothers? Paul gives them commands elsewhere. Here he puts the charge of the young on everyone. The older care for the younger, teach them, engage with them, set an example for them. They need you. The whole Church is responsible for the care and discipleship of the Church.

Our Hospitality invites should go across generations because we know the importance of engaging across those gaps in intentional ways, developing relationships that provide for the sharing of wisdom but also just support. Don't underestimate the impact you can have on a younger person by being intentionally hospitable with them.

Can you see why we have worked hard at having intergenerational church services in the holidays. Because there is a true biblical value to them that is worth pushing through putting up with the natural

difficulty of having everyone together. Its why we have put into action our youth and young adult discipleship pathway. Because these relationships are so important and should continue after that. We have a formalised system up until the end of uni but after that it should be naturally happening, the older should be reaching out to the younger and the younger to the older to mentor. Older married couples with younger. Older singles with younger, of the same gender of course.

New people, fresh Christians, or people who are struggling hard, wrestling with their faith. Engage with them, care for them. The Church is only as strong as its most vulnerable member and each of us has a responsibility to care for people, for their sake and for the sake of the church as we seek to bring people into a knowledge of Christ. That we know he died for us, that he rose again. That as the Church we worship him, we stand on sound doctrine that we will not change for the world no matter how much they challenge or degrade us. But we can only achieve that if each of us commits to the body,

commits to personal godliness, and commits to discipleship of one another. Doing this intentionally, not waiting for guidance or a formally organised event can be the difference between people being held in or slipping away one at a time like my year group.

I've seen this in action, this is happening. When families at our church are struggling meal plans happen. When someone is walking in mental difficulties people support, pray and care. People are being mentored. But of course this doesn't happen for everyone, people are missed and we must strive to fix that. We must strive to be the community Paul envisions in Titus 2, that is internally reliant and supportive of one another.

Older Men, stand strong in faith, endure, protect. Older women set an example for others, teach what is good and right. Younger women pursue purity, self control, kindness, try your hardest to be patient with young men. And Young men, try not to burn the whole thing down. We rely on each other, we need each other, we need to

think first about each other before ourselves, to protect, to support,
and to disciple. Let me pray that Jesus will help us do that.