

Titus' Call to Women – The Great Canadian Bible Study for 2022

By Faye Reynolds for Canadian Baptist Women

This study looks at the ways that we can encourage and mentor one another as guided by this exhortation in the letter to Titus and the church in Crete. You may want to break it into two sessions for Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, or use the entire study in one session.

Begin with an opening prayer. In silence lay before your loving Father and Best Friend the desire of your heart for this study. Join together in the following poem from the Northumbria Community *Celtic Daily Prayer*:

There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24)

God is my best friend.

He cares about the things I care about

He loves me even when I'm unlovable

He is always there to listen and advise

When I need to talk things over

God is my heavenly Father

He holds me in the palm of His Hand

He watches over me as the apple of His eye

He wants me to grow up to be like Him

God is my rock.

He is my refuge when I'm afraid

My strength when I am weak,

My sure footing when I stumble.

God is my shepherd.

He finds me when I'm lost.

He gives me rest when I'm tired.

He leads me when I don't know

which way to go.

Sally Jo Shelton

Paul's Letter to Titus

We do not know exactly when the Gentile, Titus became a follower of Christ under Paul's ministry, but it was likely early on during Paul's first missionary journey. Titus is mentioned 9 times in II Corinthians indicating his strong connection to Paul's ministry and we see that Titus has become a trusted leader as Paul mentored him in faith and ministry. At some point Paul and Titus go to Crete to establish a ministry there and Titus is left behind to help the churches identify and establish leaders from among the believers.

This letter is not directed only to Titus, as the greeting is rather formal, and Paul did not need to establish his credentials with Titus as he has been mentoring him all along in ministry. Paul's

intention is to establish the authority of Titus to the churches in Crete that they would heed the directions of Titus without question. Paul is endorsing the ministry of Titus as he states his own ministry calling, thus the important words in Chapter 1, verse 4: *my loyal child in the faith we share* and 2 Corinthians 8:23 - *As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker among you.* Women are often encouraged to be “Titus 2 Women” and many a book and church ministry has been based upon this chapter of Scripture for women. Perhaps because Paul specifically mentions older women and younger women, we can see a clear mandate to come along side and mentor the next generation. It is important to keep in mind that this chapter is not directed only to women, but to men as well as slaves. It will be helpful to look at the broader scope of Paul’s instructions as we look to deepen our relationships and build the body of Christ, his Church.

READ Chapter 2 of Titus

1. Why is it so important to mentor the next generation and to have friendships that span age categories? What is the value of inter-generational connections? What are the ways your church encourages and fosters the cross-connection of children, youth, adults and seniors?
2. Look up and read the following: Psalms 145:4; 48:12 - 14; 71:18 and 78:4. What is one story of God’s faithfulness that you long to pass on to a new generation – whether in your family or in the church family?
3. Perhaps the first thing to note is Paul’s emphasis on behaviour. What characteristics or behaviours are the same for men and women and what differences do you note? What significance might you draw from the differences?
 - a. Greek words for men from verse 2: *nephalious* (not intoxicated but clear-minded); *semnous* (dignified, reverend, serious); *sophronas* (of sound mind, modest, chaste) *hugiaino* (sound, healthy) in *pistei* (faith) in *agape* (love) in *hypomone* (endurance – a patient waiting)
 - b. Greek words for women from verse 3: *hieroprepeis* (reverent, sacred character) not *diabolous* (accusing falsely) not *doulou* (enslaved) to much wine; *kalodidaskalous* (teacher of good things)
 - c. Greek words for young men from verses 6 – 8: *sophronas* (of sound mind, modest, chaste)
4. Why is behaviour so important in our spiritual journeys? Paul tells Titus to teach what is consistent with sound doctrine, and then goes on to describe what the life of a believer ought to look like. How does our doctrine and beliefs inform our behaviours? In what ways, if any, might these lists of behaviors be in contrast or conflict with today’s societal expectations?
5. Paul’s instruction to the woman is placed within a marital context. What is the responsibility of the husband and what of a wife? If you could offer some helpful marriage advice to a newlywed, what would be some things you would say? Together brainstorm creative ways that couples with marriage experience could connect with younger couples in mentoring or friendship capacity.

6. In this 21st century, how would you apply the list in verses 4 - 5 that Paul has created for teaching and encouraging younger women? Are there things on the list that are less important today and those that are timeless? [NOTE: submission: *hypotasso* – (under the arrangement of) their *idiosis* (own) husband. Faye’s take on this is that the relationship between husband and wife is a mutually agreed upon arrangement of responsibilities and not subject to any other household’s arrangements.] Any pushback on this?
7. Verse 6 - 8 now speaks to how we are to teach or model to the younger generation. We are not all given the spiritual gift of teaching, and yet when we take on a role as a mentor or mature friend there is a teaching aspect to it. From Paul’s perspective, what is the most important quality of a teacher/mentor?
8. Interpreting Scripture from its original audience into the church can sometimes be a challenge as we see in verses 9 – 10 where we know that this is not an endorsement for keeping slaves. We most often think of it now as how we relate to our employers or leaders of ministries under which we volunteer. Whether we are in charge, or a servant, we are to be people of integrity, honesty and respect. If you were working with someone who was having difficulties in their work place, how might you help them and what have you experienced that you could draw upon as helpful?
9. Think of one or two close Christian friends as you again read verses 11 – 15 of chapter 2. How can spiritual friendship help you to live according to Paul’s standard here? How does your faith in Jesus and his imminent return offer incentive to live a holy life? What role does your community of faith play in your faith journey?
10. *Most of us fear community because we think it will call us away from ourselves. We are afraid that in community our sense of self will be overpowered by the identity of the group. We pit individuality and community against one another, as if a choice had to be made, and increasingly we choose the former. But what a curious conception of self we have! We have forgotten that the self is a moving intersection of many other selves. We are formed by the lives that intersect with ours. The larger and richer our community the larger and richer is the content of self. There is no individuality without community. (Parker Palmer)¹* Discuss this quote and if you agree or disagree and why.

(You may close the study here or carry on through Chapter 3)

Paul’s instructions continue regarding the lessons Titus is to pass along to those he is mentoring in the Churches of Crete. We see more lists of behaviours, both the positive and negative attitudes and actions that we need to become more conscious of in our Christian walk and Paul “insists” we adopt what is “excellent and profitable for everyone”. (Titus 3:8) There is always a strong emphasis on community over individualism. Paul is concerned about the church as a body of believers who get along and support one another. Note particularly the role of the Holy Spirit in working to strengthen each believer as part of the greater whole.

¹ Madeline L’Engle quotes this from Parker Palmer in her book “A Stone for a Pillow”, page 99 but she does not give the reference for the quote.

fREAD Chapter 3 of Titus

1. Most of us do not struggle with being law-abiding citizens. This became much more challenging during the COVID crisis when churches were inhibited from their normal gathering for worship. It was a struggle to be “obedient and ready for every good work”. How did your church navigate the restrictions as a community of faith?
2. Paul says to never slander or *to speak evil of another and to avoid quarreling* (NRSV). How does this hurt our witness? What are signs of “true humility” in a Christian?
3. Paul states a “before and after” scenario. What was he like before receiving Christ and what attitudes and behaviors have changed? Do you have a “before and after” testimony of your own that could be an encouragement to another? What has been one primary area of growth for you in your faith journey and how might this help encourage another in their journey?
4. Paul gives a description of Baptism in verse 5. If you have been baptized, what did that experience mean to you? If you were to encourage another to be baptized or mentor them toward that decision, what would be some reasons and blessings for a believer to experience baptism by immersion out of your own experience?
5. In what ways are you conscious of the Holy Spirit guiding and directing your life? Do you sense the Holy Spirit’s presence in your friendships? Why or why not? What might you share with another who was struggling to sense the leading of the Spirit?
6. Paul insists that our actions and attitudes be *excellent and profitable to everyone*. He cautions against stupid controversies and quarrels. How is this causing division in our churches now? Paul mentions genealogies as a source of contention which may not be a relevant issue for us, but what are the issues that do divide us?
7. What is the difference between “discussion” and “quarrel”? It is important in friendships to feel safe with freedom to ask questions and so it is important to encourage discussion and interaction, raising questions that may not have easy answers or any answers at all. There are many things that fall into the category of “mystery” in our faith. These are still worthy of discussion and to offer any friend a safe place to raise doubts or struggles is a wonderful gift. How would you discern when the discussions are helpful and when they are less helpful for a person’s growth?
8. Paul recommends two warnings to be given if you believe that the discussions are not helpful, or even divisive. His language is strong, but what characteristics of a person would make it difficult for you to carry on in the relationship or discussion?
9. Paul’s final thoughts in this letter again give insight into his love and trust of Titus. He is hoping to send either Artemas or Tychicus to take the place of Titus in Crete so that he can join Paul in Nikopolis. Paul wants Titus to leave a good foundation so that he can then pass the mantel onto another. We see two levels of relationship here. Titus and his relationship to the church are for a season. He is to bless and encourage them and establish good leadership among them, and upon completion another will take the place of Titus. However, Paul and Titus have a strong working relationship that is meant to

continue on into a new circumstance. In our friendships, some are for a special season and naturally come to an end, and some last a lifetime, though our settings change. Name a few of these friendships that you have experienced and why some were for a season in your life and why others have lasted.

In summary, Paul mentored Titus in how to find good leaders and how to encourage a church to good works and holy attitudes. These chapters offer many good reminders of how we are to live holy lives and how to encourage one another along that path of right living through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Paul expects community to be community and to work together in living well, rather than trying to live out our Christian life in isolation from each other. In some ways it is easier to work alone and other times, it hard to carry the burden on our own. Committing to community is difficult because there are always those that we appreciate and respect as role models and others that try our patience. Paul has a balance of encouragement and exhortation along with warnings of what should not be tolerated within the community of believers. Always remember that we represent Jesus Christ to those outside the community of faith and this is a very high calling! Be encouraged to seek support and to walk along side others as Paul has modeled for us here.

Close in a time of prayer, reflecting on Paul's exhortation to teach one another, woman to woman or friend to friend. Ask of God what experiences He would have you share with another and who might that be? Give thanks for those that have touched your life and spiritual friends that have encouraged your journey.

God called forth a people
And we responded to His call,
Rebuild this ancient ruin,
Restore My city walls

He has led us day by day
And we listened to his voice
And we were fed on the finest wheat
And manna from the skies.

When we started we were strangers,
We hardly knew each other's names
Now we are brothers and sisters,
And we will never be the same.

Gerry Tuohy