

Community Church of Issaquah  
Sunday, October 27, 2024

Behaving as Christians, Part Two  
*A Message by Rev. Vincent Lachina*

Last week we talked about a young man named Titus whom Paul had mentored and who was at the center of confronting two regional churches concerning Paul's previous work. The churches in Corinth and now the churches in Crete were being misguided about the message Paul had preached about Jesus Christ and how the believers should behave and honor him as followers. It was Titus who was sent to deliver Paul's letter to the churches in Corinth after Timothy had been there and reported to Paul the dangers of false teachers. Titus became Paul's favorite administrator and messenger after his remarkable work there in Corinth.

When the churches that Paul had founded on the Island of Crete, were in need of elders and leaders, it seemed only natural that Paul would appoint Titus to go there and give the churches instruction about the need for adhering to the doctrine he had preached, the qualifications for selecting their leaders, and even instruction about how the believers should be living their lives as disciples and believers. Last week we focused on the qualifications for the elders and today we focus on the ways for behaving as Christians. First, a reminder about the check-off sheet for those specific qualifications for leaders in the church. Do you remember them? Let me repeat them for you.

What are the required qualifications of an appointed elder or church leader? Keep in mind that at the time of Paul and Titus, all elders and leaders were men. That is not true today, thank goodness. Now, here is the list:

- ❖ He must be blameless
- ❖ He must be faithful to his wife
- ❖ His children must be believers and not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient
- ❖ He must not be overbearing
- ❖ He must not be quick-tempered
- ❖ He must not be given to drunkenness
- ❖ He must not be violent
- ❖ He must not pursue dishonest gain
- ❖ He must be hospitable
- ❖ He must be one who loves what is good
- ❖ He must be self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined
- ❖ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message that is taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

There was a solid reason that Paul was so specific in his instructions. It was simply that many Cretans were the exact opposite of what Titus was given on his check list. Paul says that many were liars, evil, lazy and had corrupt minds and consciences. Some claimed that they knew God, but the way they chose to live said that was not true. They could not be leaders in the church. We would not want that quality of individuals in our churches as our leaders either. But there are more instructions for Titus and for those from the churches in Crete.

The second chapter of Titus which was read for us today begins with a single verse directed to Titus, and then moves on to bigger and more demanding instructions. It begins with, "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." Those words are for Titus. Paul wants him to be sure he is keeping in line with the doctrine Paul preached while he was there starting the churches. We would word it something like this today, "Stick to what I told you." This second chapter concerns various groups in the congregations. We can begin with the instructions to different groups, primarily age groups. The first is older men.

Older men are to be:

- Temperate
- Dignified
- Sensible
- Sound in faith, love and perseverance

Older women are to be:

- Reverent in behavior
- Not malicious gossips
- Not enslaved to much wine
- Teaching what is good so they might encourage young women

Young women are to:

- love their husbands
- love their children
- to be sensible, pure, workers at home
- to be kind
- to be subject to their own husbands
- all of this so the word of God might not be dishonored

Young men are to be:

- Sensible
- In all things to show to be an example of good deeds
- Have purity in doctrine that is dignified
- Have sound speech that is beyond reproach so that those in opposition are put to shame
- Have nothing bad to say about other believers

There are also some instructions for the enslaved to follow since that was the prevalent society at the time Paul wrote this personal letter. Primarily, however, the instructions were directed toward family members who were within the congregations. Perhaps we should spend a minute deciding which of those specified groups we are a part of. For me, I am long past the young man stage, so I think it wise to move myself down to the older men category. I wish I could measure up to Paul's desire that I be sensible and dignified. It's something I will need to work on as I reach the edge of "really old men." You will have to pick your own group as well.

Accompanying these specific instructions on how believers should behave is the foundation for Christian living that we find in verses 11 to 14. Let me read those again for you:

*"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."*

Each of us has undoubtedly been given much advice about how to behave in our lives. Our parents likely spent a good bit of time telling us what was right or wrong, good or bad, and we were supposed to follow those instructions. That type of character building was an integral part of our education by teachers and others as we made our way through schools and universities. If we were a part of a congregation as we were growing up, a barrage of behavioral mandates was poured over us from Sunday School teachers, youth directors, pastors and others who felt it their duty to help us walk the straight and narrow. If we were married, we were likely gifted with a voice of our chosen mate aimed at making us the perfect partner. Do you see the complexities of our lives with the influx of individuals from every corner of life whose mission was to tell us how to behave.

Paul's epistle to Titus was designed to give him the instruction he needed to assist the congregational members of the Cretan churches in understanding what it meant to be a Christ follower. It established for the believers a path of life that would bring honor to the Christ they worshipped. On my first reading and study of this particular letter from Paul, I could not help but smile at the circumstances related to the content of the epistle. So many questions flooded my mind, questions I dared not ask my religion professors. Here are some:

- Why does Paul talk about how children are to behave when we don't know if he even had children?
- Was Paul's instruction to older women a reflection of what he wanted to tell his own mother?

- What was Paul's fixation about telling early followers to stay away from wine?

The bottom line for this small epistle or letter to Paul's favorite helper, Titus, was simply this: When we have chosen to follow Jesus Christ, our lives should change. Our behavior should reflect more of the teachings of Jesus than of the worldly leaders who do not know or practice the faith in Christ. Summed up, I would say this: Believe in Christ? Behave like Jesus. That's as simple as I can make it. Now may we all practice what Paul told Titus to tell us.