Living with Integrity

Believers are to live so that they bring honor to Jesus.

Titus 2:1-15

Most of us want our hometown to be represented well. We want to take pride in claiming ties to the city or area we consider home. A city is usually defined by its people more so than by its geography or other features. Even though we may no longer live in that city or area, we contribute to the identity of that city or area by the way we represent it to others. In the same way, we contribute to the way people perceive Christ by how we represent Him in this world.

What or who gives your city or region its identity? How did it get that identity and how does that identity impact your city or area now?
UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

TITUS 2:1-15
Followers of Christ are expected to be engaged in the world without being enslaved by the world. Paul urged Titus to teach believers at Crete that living with integrity was crucial to their witness for Christ.

Chapter 2 links orthodoxy (right beliefs) with orthopraxy (right living). Paul’s reference to sound teaching not only resonated in contrast to the false teachers but provided the foundation for personal conduct (vv. 1,7). Paul required Titus not only to teach believers to maintain consistent integrity, but also to illustrate this principle in his behavior.

Paul called on the older women to help the younger women learn proper conduct (vv. 3-5). Interestingly, while Paul did not task the older men with training the younger, he told Titus to encourage both regarding godly behavior. Paul gave similar instruction to Timothy (1 Tim. 5:1-2), but his guidance to Titus went into much more detail. The Cretan Christians might have needed extra guidance, while Timothy ministered to the more established church at Ephesus.

In all matters, the basis for requiring standards of Christian behavior was Jesus Christ. Because God extended His grace through Jesus, believers should live for His glory. Another motivation for godliness was their anticipation of Jesus’ return. The fact that first century Christians believed in Christ’s imminent return should not create doubt for modern readers who also await His Second Coming. Jesus instructed believers of every generation to be watchful, being constantly prepared for His appearing (Luke 21:29-36; Mark 13:31-37; Matt. 24:42).

Read Titus 2:1-15 in your Bible. Look for actions and attitudes called for by Paul. What do repeated actions and attitudes reveal about the importance of that specific action or attitude?
EXPLORE THE TEXT

SPOKEN (TITUS 2:1)

1 But you are to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching.

With the contrasting conjunction but, Paul referred to the previous chapter and highlighted the difference between Titus and the rebellious people who were “full of empty talk and deception” (1:10). Unlike their deception, Titus was to speak the truth of the gospel. Paul urged Titus to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching. Paul’s choice of the word proclaim can refer to preaching, but it also involves more informal speech.

Titus’s conversations, as well as his teaching and preaching were to be saturated with the truth of the gospel. By remaining faithful to gospel truth, Titus could speak with authority. In the same way, we are to testify to the truth of the gospel.

What is the danger of failing to verbally present the truth of the gospel, relying on actions alone to speak?

ACTED (TITUS 2:2-10)

2 Older men are to be self-controlled, worthy of respect, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and endurance. 3 In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking. They are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God’s word will not be slandered. 6 In the same way, encourage the young men to be self-controlled in everything. Make yourself an example of good works with integrity and dignity in your teaching. 8 Your message is to be sound beyond reproach, so that any opponent will be ashamed, because he doesn’t have anything bad to say about us. 9 Slaves are to submit to their masters in everything, and to be well-pleasing, not talking back or stealing, but demonstrating utter faithfulness, so that they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything.
Paul specified several behavioral qualities that should be evident in believers, regardless of their age, gender, or status. He instructed Titus to teach the older men four priorities. First, they were to be self-controlled. Their lives should reflect moderation and self-restraint. Second, they needed to be worthy of respect. This phrase translates a word meaning to be dignified and honorable. The term emphasizes the way a person generates respect.

Third, they should be sensible. Sometimes translated as “self-controlled,” this meant their speech and actions should demonstrate the spiritual wisdom expected of a mature believer. Fourth, they should be sound in faith, love, and endurance. The term sound expressed the idea of “healthy” in contrast to the diseased ideas of the false teachers. Paul wanted these elders to exemplify qualities others could follow.

Older women were expected to demonstrate similar virtues. First, these women should be reverent in behavior. Generally, one thinks of reverence in terms of attitude toward God. Their character and conduct ought to reflect holy lifestyles.

They must not be slanderers. Although malicious conversation may have been the norm in Cretan culture, older women who followed Christ were expected to shun disparaging talk. They must not be slaves to excessive drinking. Older women needed to be influenced by godliness rather than being controlled by drink so that they could teach what is good.

The godly living of older women would encourage the young women. The older women could motivate by example and help the younger women develop a cohesive Christian family in several ways. They could first encourage the young women to love their husbands and children. Loving relationships not only enabled a family unit to stay strong, but they helped the family bear witness to the presence of Christ. The home provided the training ground for learning to live the gospel.

Older women could also encourage younger women to be self-controlled and pure. They could apply clear thinking so that they may practice purity in all relationships.

The phrase workers at home emphasizes the important role of wives and mothers in the family. This idea complements the
admonition for them to be in submission to their husbands. Paul believed the way wives related to their husbands was a vital witness of the church. (See Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18.) Right relationships in the home were necessary so that God's word will not be slandered. If Christian husbands and wives could not model a godly marriage, unbelievers would have a basis for attacking the gospel.

VERSES 6-8

Young men were generally between twenty and forty years of age and likely married. Whether married or single, the plain teaching about virtuous behavior applied to all young men.

Sometimes the best explanation comes from an example. Therefore, Paul challenged Titus to not only make a difference by his good behavior but to be the difference as he taught other young men of Crete. Titus was urged to communicate the truth of the gospel in a serious and compelling manner so that unbelievers as well as believers would be inspired to listen.

Paul expected Titus to make sure that his message was sound beyond reproach. The term message referred to both the personal conversations of Titus and his public presentation of the gospel. The expression beyond approach carried the idea of something unassailable and beyond the reach of condemnation.

VERSES 9-10

The institution of slavery was widespread in the Roman Empire. Whenever the Roman military conquered a city or community, the prisoners of war became slaves. Consequently, many slaves were educated, racially diverse, and skilled individuals.

Paul did not endorse slavery but offered advice about how believing slaves could turn their cultural condition into a positive testimony for Christ. Paul encouraged them to submit to their masters. Not only would rebellion have put them in danger of being punished, but such action would reflect on Christ. Paul made similar statements in other epistles. (See Col. 3:22; 1 Tim. 6:1.) At the same time, he urged believing masters to treat their believing slaves as brothers instead of slaves, giving them what was right and fair. (See Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1.)
How can the way we live our lives and conduct our business be a means of advancing the gospel?

EMPOWERED (TITUS 2:11-14)

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. 14 He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works.

VERSES 11-13

The power to live righteously has its source in the grace of God, that has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. Grace is not simply an attitude of God but a saving activity of God. It was not God winking at sin, but God giving His Son as the perfect sacrifice to atone for sin. The demonstrative quality of God’s grace was twofold. First, it appeared with salvation, and second, it was made available to all people. The scope of His grace extends to all who exercise faith in Christ as Savior.

God’s grace instructs us how to live in the present age. The grace of God trains believers to deny godlessness and worldly lusts. To deny means to reject outright. The gospel instructs us not to toy with temptations or yield to desires associated with a sinful culture. Grace in no way offers a license to sin.

Paul used the phrase present age to highlight the adversarial nature of the society in which the Cretans and other believers lived. By maintaining Christlike lives, they bore witness of the transforming power of Jesus.

Maintaining godly lives prepares us for what is to come, and what is to come motivates us to maintain godly lives. We wait for something greater than whatever we experience in this world. Ever since Jesus was taken up into heaven, believers have anticipated the blessed hope. Such hope does not involve weak wishful thinking but is a firm expectation.
Our hope is blessed because it involves the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is the appearing of His glory, and it is a glorious appearing. First, Jesus’ return is one of glory. Jesus was received up into glory and will return in glory. When He appears, believers shall appear with Him in glory. The hope of His glory causes us to rejoice. (See Rom. 5:2.)

Second, this glory belongs to our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Previously, Paul referred to God as “our Savior” (Titus 1:3; 2:10), while also calling Jesus “our Savior” (1:4). In this verse, he described Jesus as our great God and Savior. Paul used these terms interchangeably because both are true. God the Father and Jesus the Son are equally God and Savior. The magnitude of this truth supersedes human reasoning, but on that great day we shall see our Lord in His glory and rejoice in His appearing.

VERSE 14
Paul affirmed that the Savior whose return is anticipated is the same one who gave himself for us. Jesus’ death on the cross was a voluntary sacrifice and a substitutionary event because it was on our behalf and for us. The object of Jesus’ death was first to redeem us from all lawlessness. The verb redeem referred to releasing a captive for a ransom. Christ’s death was the ransom that satisfied God’s justice and holiness and liberated believers from lawless deeds. A second object of Jesus’ death was to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works. The desire to live holy lives and pursue activities that please the Lord is because He cleansed us and set us apart to represent Him in this world.

How do you see evidence of Christ’s power in you for godly living?
**VERSE 15**

These things included all of Paul’s instructions to Titus. The verbs *proclaim ... encourage and rebuke* are all imperatives that emphasized a serious command under the authority of Paul, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was well aware of the criticism Titus could receive from false teachers and immature believers. Consequently, he reminded Titus to live and lead in such a manner that no one could *disregard* him.

*Why would it have been important for Paul to remind Titus of acting in God’s authority? Could these actions be carried out successfully outside of God’s authority? Explain.*
IN MY CONTEXT

• Believers are to testify in word to the truth of the gospel.
• Believers are to demonstrate godliness in their lives regardless of their age or station in life.
• Believers can live godly lives though the power of the gospel.
• Believers are to teach godliness boldly in the authority of Jesus.

Commit to representing Christ well each day this week. Ask that God give you an opportunity to boldly proclaim Christ to at least one person. Record how God answered that prayer.

Review the actions listed in these passages, identifying the ones in which you excel and the ones on which you need to give more attention. What steps can you take to increase in the actions you identified as needing more attention?

Discuss with your group ways of encouraging other generations to live godly lives. Include identifying ways for the group to be examples to other believers. List insights gained from the discussion.

Prayer Needs