

The Traits and Tasks of the Teacher

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[0 : 00] Well, Paul Brennan is preaching this evening and continuing the little study that he began last week in Titus. So if you'd like to turn with me, we're going to read from Titus chapter 1.

You'll find that if you have one of the visitor's Bibles on page 998, I think. If not, well, it's near the end of the New Testament, 1st and 2nd Timothy, and then Titus.

It's one of the letters that Paul the Apostle writes to younger men who are in his entourage, who he is handing over the baton of church leadership to, and delegating great responsibilities for these fledgling churches.

Now we're looking this evening particularly at the little middle section, verses 5 to 9 of chapter 1, but we'll read the whole of chapter 1 so as we get the context and the flavor.

So Titus 1 at verse 1. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge and truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began, and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior.

[1 : 32] To Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you may put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach.

He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

[2 : 44] For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families or whole households by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, has said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. Goodness, that's not very politically correct, is it? We wouldn't get away with that today. But Paul says, this testimony is true. I wonder what he'd say about Glaswegians. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure. But both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.

They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. Amen. May God bless to us this, his word.

[4 : 05] And very plain speaking it is. Amen. Please do turn to Titus chapter 1 there.

And we're going to be looking particularly, as Willie mentioned, at verses 5 to 9 of Titus chapter 1. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. As we turn, let me pray and come to our Heavenly Father. Father, we thank you so much for your word. Lord, we thank you that your word is living and active.

I pray that we might live out the faith which we profess. And I would ask that you would help us to teach faithfully what your word teaches.

Help us now. Speak to us, Lord. Change us. For your sake we ask it. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. The job interview.

[5 : 13] Dreaded things, aren't they? I know a fair number of folk who have been through job interviews in the last few weeks. And most of us, at some point in our lives, will have to face the job interview.

Or if you haven't, you will someday. And you know the sorts of questions you get in a job interview. Tell us about your skills, your experience.

How can you demonstrate that you're an effective team player? Tell us about that time when you dealt with a crisis and what was the outcome. And this one's for real. If you were a biscuit, what sort of biscuit would you be and why?

Job interviews. They're there to help employers get the right person for the job. But what about the church?

When thinking about looking for the next church leader, the next preacher or teacher, the next guy to train, what qualities, what skills, what criteria spring to mind?

[6 : 22] Perhaps you could mentally draw a job description in your mind of a church leader. What would be on that list? Do we look for what the world looks for in a good employee or a business leader?

Is that what we look for? We probably know that on some level we shouldn't just apply worldly criteria to the church leader. But in practice, it's really quite hard to do.

What are we to look for in the church leader? What is the future church leader to aspire to? That's what this section in Titus is all about.

The guys who lead the church. Now, perhaps you've mentally switched off at the start of this sermon. This isn't for me. I'm not a church leader.

I'm never going to be. This is all about church leaders. I'm not one of them. But this is a message for all of us. It really matters who leads the church.

[7 : 29] One day, you might be a church leader yourself. One day, you might be involved in choosing the next church leader, whether here or somewhere else. This is a church that identifies and trains future church leaders.

And that's something all of us are involved with in some way or other. One day, you might move to a new city. What sort of church are you going to look for?

What sort of church leader would you be happy to sit under? These few verses in Titus show us what to look for in Christian teachers and leaders.

They tell us what sort of men will teach truth that leads to godliness. And it's men that already demonstrate godliness and the power of the truth to transform.

Those are the sort of men to appoint to lead the church. Let's recap briefly of where we're at in Titus.

[8 : 37] Paul's great concern was to see a thriving and godly church on Crete. Just look back at chapter 1, verse 1. Here's Paul's mission statement for Crete.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. And he's writing for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with or leads to godliness.

That's what he wants to see on Crete. But Crete was a place rife with bad living.

The island, as it says in verse 12, is full of liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. It was not a promising place for a few church plants.

If we were assessing the world mission field, this would be pretty much at the bottom. Little hope of success. Crete was a disaster zone.

[9 : 37] How could the gospel possibly thrive on an island like Crete? But Paul is confident in the power of the truth transform.

He expected to see good, godly living on Crete through the preaching of the truth. And if the great need on Crete was the proclamation of the truth, which leads to godliness, then the big question is, who are to be the teachers?

Who are the teachers that are going to preach the truth? What sort of men is Titus to appoint as teachers? That is his great task. Look down again at verse 5.

Paul sets out his purpose for writing. His reason for leaving Titus there on Crete. And Paul says this, This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

Here is Titus' sole task. He is to appoint teachers. Now they're given various names and titles in these verses.

[10:54] In verse 5, they're called elders. In verse 7, overseers and stewards. But in verse 9, the key task to be undertaken by these men is that of teaching.

Just look down there at verse 9. Those who you appoint, Titus, they must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in our doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Paul's chief concern is to see churches established on Crete, which are marked by godly living. And that will only happen through the teaching of the truth.

So which men is Titus going to appoint to the task? There are Christians on Crete. That is obvious. That is the assumption in verse 5.

But which Christians is Titus going to appoint? Which men is Titus going to set apart as teachers, as leaders, as elders?

[12:03] And it is a vital question. It really does matter who is doing the teaching in the church. It is so vital that in this short letter, Paul devotes the whole of the first chapter to the topic.

What sort of men is Paul going to appoint to be teachers and leaders in the church? In our verses tonight, he outlines what to look for in the good teacher, the sort of man you want to be leading the church.

And then in the second half of chapter 1, verses 10 to the end, he deals with the bad teachers, those who are spreading untruth on Crete. It's so important because those who teach, those who are preachers and leaders in the church, determine the direction of the whole church.

It is the priority for the Cretan church. It is Titus' primary concern as he goes about his work there. It is his main task.

Who is he going to appoint as teachers? Now, I wonder what you or I would put in our list of things to look out for in the good teacher.

[13:22] If we are writing this letter to Titus, what sorts of things might we say? Here's a few things I came up with, the sort of things we might think about. Obviously, he's got to be well-educated.

Oxbridge, or a red brick university preferably. He's got to have an engaging personality. He's got to be a riveting communicator. He's got to be witty.

I could go on. Now, those sorts of things, the things that we naturally think about, those things are all to do with kind of skills and experience and that sort of thing.

But none of those find their place in Paul's list. The key things for Paul are character and an unwavering commitment to the truth.

Character and an unwavering commitment to the truth. Titus is to look for men who are above reproach and who will hold tenaciously to the truth.

[14:23] That's what he's looking for. So we'll look at these verses in two parts. Firstly, we're going to look at the traits of the teacher. The traits of the teacher in verses 6 to 8.

And then second in verse 9, the task of the teacher. So the traits of the teacher and the task. Firstly then, the traits of the teacher. They must be above reproach at home and in public.

The sort of men that Titus is to appoint as teachers, they're not to be perfect or sinless. There'll be nobody on that list. But they are to be above reproach.

That's the phrase that Paul uses a couple of times. They're to be above reproach. They are to be free from scandal. Mud can't stick. These sort of men are to be blameless.

In other words, he can't be open to accusations from people, both in terms of how he lives at home and how he lives in the public sphere. Let's look first at the domestic scene, the domestic life that Paul has in view.

[15:36] A trustworthy teacher, if he's married, is to be the husband of one wife. He is to be a one-woman man and to demonstrate faithfulness to her.

Now, this doesn't exclude single men from church leadership at all. But if he is married, this is what he is to be. He is to be faithful.

Faithful to his wife. The sort of man that is given to flirting with other women is not a wise choice in a church leader.

He must be demonstrably faithful to his wife. A man who looks at pornography privately on his mobile phone, he is not a one-woman man.

He is not the sort of man you want as a church leader. His children are to be believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

[16:37] And the word children here is implying those are younger children, and the word believers here means faithful, so they're not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

In other words, the children are wild and disobedient. They've been brought up in the instruction of the laws. The sort of man who is able to be a church leader is able to manage his home.

He is faithful to his wife and his children have been taught the truth and they're generally well behaved. Not perfect, but they're not wild.

An inability to manage the home life, the inability to manage the family household, means an inability to manage the household of God, the church family.

There's a link. The similar roles of headship, leading, exercising discipline, they're present in both. And a failure to do one in the home will be a failure to do it in the church.

[17:51] Family life really matters. Faithful to his wife and his children are a credit to him. Family life matters.

And this doesn't really compute in our society, does it? When did you ever come across a job description or an interview question about your home life?

It never crops up. I remember when I was applying to do Corn Hill, there's a question in there about your family or your marriage. And my boss at work had to give a reference for me.

And she could not believe that she was answering a question about the state of my marriage. She was baffled. She had never come across it ever and she was a human resources manager in the past.

She could not understand why it was relevant. But family life for the man who is going to lead the church really matters.

[18:53] If a man is not leading his family towards Christ-likeness, then he's not going to be able to do that with the church. The domestic scene.

And as I prepare this, I find this deeply challenging. And the public life matters too. Look again at verse 7. Not arrogant or quick tempers or drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable.

A lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. Is this how others see the man you're thinking about for church leadership?

Is it how others see you, I wonder? Imagine that the Tron is in the process of appointing a new elder. If you went to that guy's workplace and asked his colleagues about what sort of man he was, what would they say?

What would they say if it was you? If you asked them what they thought about him taking on responsibility at church, would they be shocked? Him?

[20:10] Really? He often has a few drinks too many after work on a Friday night. He's quite flirty with that girl in the other departments. Or would they say, yeah, he'd be good at that.

Even though they may not fully appreciate what it involves, they know that he is a lover of good, he's upright, he's disciplined, he's trustworthy. Above reproach in the home and in public.

These are the traits of the leaders of the church. These were the sort of men that Titus was to go around Crete appointing to the role of elder, steward, church leader, teacher.

They are also the traits that Paul is expecting to see in the church amongst regular believers. He expects to see good living on Crete in the church. If that's to happen on Crete, remember it's a disaster zone.

There's no hope for Crete. It's full of liars, evil beasts. If this sort of good living is to happen on Crete, then it must first be evidenced by those who are leading the churches, surely.

[21:29] The leaders must demonstrate that the truth does in fact lead to godliness. As one writer put it, the lives of church leaders must set the standard, and the work of moral transformation must be wrought and evidenced in them first.

If you're a leader in this church, is your life demonstrably in line with what Paul is outlining here in Titus?

Is your life full of the sort of good works that Paul expected to see? Remember what Paul says later in the letter after a brief yet rich outline of the gospel, he says to Titus, I want you to insist on these things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. Good works are the fruit of the gospel. Are you bearing fruit? Are you carefully devoting yourself to that?

maybe you are a future leader of the church. Here is what to focus on. Here are the sorts of traits that will equip you for the task above reproach in the home and in public.

[22 : 59] Such a man is to be trusted with the household of God, with the family church. Such a man is a trustworthy teacher. such a man is to be listened to.

And as a church there is an implication here about where we are to look for our future teachers, leaders, elders. All of what Paul sets out here is about character.

It's about the sort of men they are, life at home and in public. And you can only really assess that if you know somebody. Do you see them through the years?

How they live their life day by day? Through the ups and through the downs? This is surely a compelling reason to look for future leaders, future teachers of the church right here.

Where is the next generation of Tron elders and preachers going to come from? Well, we start right here, don't we? We start with the youth group.

[24 : 10] We start with the Sunday school. We start with the students. It's far less risky to choose men that you know, men whose lives you see week in, week out, than to bring in the guy you've met twice.

The first place to look for the future leaders of this church is right here. Men who are above reproach, both at home and in public, those are the traits to look for.

Not flashiness, not extrovert, but men who are above reproach. But what of their task?

What are they to do? you? This is our second point in verse 9. The task of teachers, they must hold firm to the word.

They must hold firm to the word. Let's look again at verse 9. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction and sound doctrine, and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

[25 : 27] So two things they are to do. One is able to instruct, and two they are to rebuke.

Instructing and rebuking. But instructing what exactly? Rebuking those who contradict what?

Is it some sort of free for all? You teach what you like and you rebuke those who disagree with you? No, not at all. The key is there at the start of verse 9.

A church leader is to be a man who holds firm to the trustworthy word as taught. It is, as we thought about last Sunday morning, the word as taught, the word taught by Paul through the preaching with which Paul had been entrusted by the command of God.

It's not any old ideas that they're to hold on to. It is the truth, the truth as passed down by the apostles. That is the truth that the church leader is to hold firm to.

[26 : 37] The truth as passed down by Paul, as passed down by the apostles. And they're to hold firm to it. They're to grasp it.

No matter which way the cultural winds are blowing, no matter how strong those winds are, the church leader is to hold firm to the truth.

And that will be deeply unpopular. You only have to think about the debates for one moment. The debates about euthanasia, debates about abortion, debates about homosexuality.

You only have to think about those for a moment to know that to hold firm to the truth in those issues is going to bring scorn, it will bring mockery, it will bring a real temptation to go with the flow.

Don't you feel that? I feel that, Tug. But we're to hold firm, tenaciously cling to what God has revealed as truth.

[27 : 51] Cling to it. Moral courage is required for that. And it's that sort of man, the man who holds firm no matter what, that sort of man is going to be able to instruct and to rebuke.

That is what the church leader is to do. Now, it's quite easy, I think, to focus on the first of those two tasks. I guess most of us wouldn't have too much trouble accepting the fact that the task of the church leader is to teach sound doctrine.

That's what we spend a lot of our time doing, isn't it? Sunday by Sunday, week by week in our small groups and the Sunday school and all sorts of activities through the week. Preaching, teaching, instructing, that's what we do.

And it is, as we saw last week, teaching of the truth that transforms. It's the truth that leads to godliness. And it must be our church's primary task, wasn't it?

If it's the truth that transforms, we must be committed to teaching it unwaveringly. Teaching the truth, driving home the implications and applications of the truth to our lives, allowing the truth to challenge our thinking, our resolves, our emotional attitudes, our motivations, our behaviours.

[29 : 14] and that happens from the pulpit. It happens in the teaching class, it happens in the small group as the word is pressed home.

And it's from here that the church is primarily led and pastored as the word is taught and pressed home. instructing in the truth.

But there is a necessary corollary to that and it is a rebuking of those who contradict that truth.

Crete was a place loaded with people teaching untruth.

Paul goes on to deal with that in verse 10 and onwards. Untruth would devastate the church on Crete. Paul knew that. Untruth does not lead to godliness.

It's the opposite. Untruth must be challenged. And Titus was to choose men who would not only teach the truth but rebuke those who opposed it.

[30 : 26] John Calvin in his commentary on Titus chapter one said that the church leader ought to have two voices one for gathering the sheep and another for warding off and driving away wolves and thieves.

Gathering the sheep warding off the wolves and that I think picks up the tone quite well of these two tasks the leader is to instruct the flock the NIV has it as encouraging the flock in sound doctrine there is the church leader gathering his people nurturing the flock on behalf of the great pastor the Lord Jesus Christ but on the other hand he is to oppose and rebuke strongly those who refute the truth and that rebuking will look very different depending on the error being dealt with and the nature of the church leader some will be dealt with direct from the pulpit perhaps a popular Christian book needs to be dismantled and tackled and critiqued perhaps a quiet word in private is what is required instructing and rebuking these are the tasks of the church leader they are the task because for the church on Crete to thrive for the church here in

Glasgow to thrive for the Tron to thrive transformation godliness only comes through the truth godliness comes from hearing the truth so who teaches the truth in church who leads the church is therefore of vital and primary importance as a church we are committed to see more and more gospel churches in Glasgow and gospel churches require these sorts of men to lead those churches above reproach at home and in public committed to holding firm to the truth are you the sort of man that Tron could call on to be a church leader are these areas that you are growing in perhaps you're a leaders the health of the church depends on it as a congregation we need to pray that men like this would be growing up in the church who will one day be able to be appointed as men to lead this church in the next generation what are we doing now to encourage the next generation of leaders and teachers as an older

Christian man are you reading the Bible one to one with a younger Christian man have you taken the initiative to pull them aside and say let's meet up let's study the word let's encourage the younger generations parents what is your great hope for your children is it that they would be future leaders in the church or is it a successful career in business a good salary we ought to pray for future leaders of the church so as you think about what sort of men are to lead the church let's not apply worldly criteria and standards if you do that you'll get the wrong man think in line of titus chapter one men who are above reproach men who demonstrate godliness and who will hold firm to the truth no matter what those are the men to trust to lead the church let me pray father we thank you that yours is a great and glorious gospel the gospel of the lord jesus christ it brings men from death to life it is powerful to transform lives from death to life if there's hope for crete there is hope for our city and i pray that as we are committed to the truth which leads to godliness i pray that you would raise up men who will be committed to teaching that truth men above reproach who will tenacity hold to the truth help us to identify men like that to encourage men like that to pray for those who lead our churches we ask this for the sake of the gospel in jesus name amen amen amen amen to us to to