

The Lifestyle Shaped by the Gospel

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn now, shall we, to God's Word and to our reading for this morning. Edward Lobb is in the midst of a series in the letter to Titus.

If you don't have a Bible, we have visitor Bibles scattered around the place, so do please grab a Bible if you need to. For Titus, and we're reading chapter 2 this morning.

So do please turn there to Titus. All the letters beginning with T come together. Thessalonians, Timothy, and then Titus.

Titus chapter 2, and reading from verse 1. The Apostle Paul writes, But, as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

[1 : 0 6] Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good.

And so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be reviled.

Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all regards to be a model of good works.

And in your teaching, show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

[2 : 1 4] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works.

Declare these things. Exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Amen.

May God bless to us his word this morning. Well, good morning, friends. Very good to see you all here. Let's open our Bibles, please, at Titus, Paul's letter to Titus, and we're looking at most of the passage that was read to us earlier.

In fact, Titus chapter 2, verses 1 to 10 is our passage for this morning. And my title is The Lifestyle Shaped by the Gospel.

Now, in this passage, Paul the Apostle is teaching Christian behavior, Christian ethics in the home, in the workplace, and in interpersonal relationships.

[3 : 48] It is a most stimulating passage, and any church that can learn to behave in line with this very high standard of conduct will be a delight to belong to.

And if we at the Tron can increasingly live like this, it will deepen our sense of how good it is to belong to each other. It's a passage about holiness or godliness in our behavior.

And in the Bible's teaching, holiness is always relational. In other words, it grows out of our relationship with God, and it shows itself in the way that we relate to each other.

Now, before we engage with the text, let's see how this passage fits into the development of Paul's instructions in this whole letter. This whole letter is, of course, a letter of instruction.

Paul is instructing Titus so that he can pass the instructions on to the churches on the island of Crete. And I want to leave chapter 3 out of this just for the moment. We'll come on to that in a couple of weeks' time.

[4 : 49] But I want us to see how chapters 1 and 2 fit together with each other. We have Paul's opening greetings to Titus in the first four verses of chapter 1.

And then in chapter 1, verses 5 to 9, Paul gives Titus a clear and detailed profile of the kind of men who are suited or qualified to be appointed as elders or leaders of the churches on Crete.

You see, Titus is only to be on Crete for a matter of months. He's then got to travel on to meet Paul at Nicopolis on the Adriatic coast. You'll see that Paul makes that clear in chapter 3, verse 12.

So he's only there for a short time. So in verses 5 to 9 of chapter 1, we have the qualities of the leaders that Titus is to appoint. And then, verses 10 to 16, chapter 1, give the main reason for the instructions of verses 5 to 9.

You see, why must Titus entrust local church leadership to the right kind of men? Because, verses 10 to 16, there are many people around who are keen to lead churches astray.

[5 : 58] People with a corrupt agenda, who are described in verse 10 as insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers. So Titus must appoint true teachers whose influence and leadership will subdue and destroy the influence of corrupt people.

So verses 10 to 16 are giving the reason for the instructions of verses 5 to 9. Now, we have just the same pattern in chapter 2.

We have instruction first, and then the reason for the instruction. So the instruction in Christian behavior runs from verse 1 to verse 10, and then Paul gives the reason behind the instruction.

That's what verses 11 to 14 are about. So what is that reason? We'll look at verse 11. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.

So the reason for living self-controlled and godly lives is that the grace of God has appeared, by which Paul means that Jesus has come, and through his death and resurrection and ascension has brought the grace of God to bear on our lives.

[7 : 13] So the logic of the passage, the chapter, is this. God's grace has come. Salvation is now gloriously available. Therefore, let us live accordingly.

And Paul is saying, Titus, you must teach the Cretan Christians to live like this. And what Titus had to teach the Cretans 2,000 years ago is the standard of Christian ethics that applies to all believers in all generations.

So what was originally intended for Crete in about 60 AD is equally applicable to Glasgow in 2023. But Paul is not only teaching us how to live, he's teaching us why we are to live this way.

You see, Christian ethics is never a set of arbitrary rules. It's a lifestyle based in and motivated by the grace of God. Now let me put this in a slightly different way.

It's the gospel indicatives that lead to the ethical imperatives. Now I'm thinking verbs here. Indicative verbs show what has happened.

[8 : 20] They are statements. Imperative verbs show what must happen. They are the commands. So the gospel indicatives, they're the great Bible statements about what God has done for us.

How he has sent a savior who's died for our sins, who has been raised from the dead and is now exalted at God's right hand. Those are statements of fact. Those are the indicatives.

That's the gospel. And because God has done all this, we must respond now by living a godly life. So the ethical imperatives follow on from the gospel indicatives.

God's gracious action demonstrated in his sending of Jesus now lays ethical obligations on us. Now once we've understood that pattern, we can see what Paul is getting at in chapter 2, verse 1.

He says to Titus, but as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Now the sound doctrine is the gospel. That's the indicatives.

[9 : 21] What accords with it is the ethical lifestyle, the imperatives. The lifestyle stems from the gospel, is motivated by the gospel, is shaped by the gospel.

So the lifestyle that Titus is now to teach accords with the gospel. And once we see this, it's a real help for us in our daily struggle with the darker side of our human nature.

That is our struggle with sin and temptation. Now let me give just a very practical, simple, low-level example first. Look at verse 2. Older men.

Older men. That definitely includes me. Now older men, says verse 2, are to be self-controlled. Self-controlled. Now picture me at home.

It's very late in the evening, and it's bedtime, and I'm very tired. I just want to drop into bed. You know that feeling, don't you? I just want to go straight to bed. But there are late-night chores that have to be done.

[10 : 18] In my case, there are dogs that have to be taken out for a final little run. And it's usually raining where we live. And then the dog's breakfast has to be prepared and got ready in bowls.

Then I've got to fill the kettle for my breakfast. Then I've got to set the dishwasher going. I'm just dropping with tiredness. I've even got to brush my teeth before I go to bed.

Now friends, these are very simple, low-level chores, but they require a certain self-discipline. And it's the grace of God, look at verse 11, that trains me to renounce ungodliness and to live a self-disciplined life.

So I think of the Lord Jesus dying for my sins, opening the gate of heaven for me, and that thought motivates me to renounce lazy, indisciplined, slobbish behavior.

Now that's a simple, very low-level example of ethical self-discipline. After all, taking the dogs out late at night is not really very hard. But the same principle applies with the more difficult and demanding aspects of living a godly life, our struggles with pride and envy and lust and greed.

[11 : 27] It's the grace of God that motivates our ethical compliance and shapes us and goes on reshaping us so that our lives become more as God wants them to be.

So it's a great help for us to get this pattern into our heads. We learn to live this disciplined and godly life because God has lavished his grace upon us and has opened the door to eternal life for us through the saving work of Jesus.

And gratitude is going to motivate us into godliness. We see what it cost Jesus to save us and we're filled with thankfulness. Thankfulness that he was prepared to bear in his own body the wrath of God against our sin.

That he was prepared to stand in for us, to take our place, to bear the punishment that should have fallen upon our own heads. Our response to this is gratitude and relief and joy.

And we begin to think if he has done all this for me it's only right that I should now live for him. That I should learn to turn my back on the unprincipled and rebellious way of life that I have followed in the past.

[12 : 36] I am now converted. It means I'm turned right around. And Paul is saying to Titus in verse 1 teach this lifestyle the lifestyle which accords with the sound and health-giving doctrine of the gospel.

The gospel lays out the glorious indicatives of what God has done. Now Titus press home the imperatives. So let's turn to the meat of the passage which runs from verse 2 to verse 10.

Now as you know most of the Bible's ethical teaching is aimed at all believers indiscriminately regardless of their age and sex. But in this passage Paul gives detailed and differentiated instruction to different groups within the churches.

And the effect of this differentiated instruction is to sharpen our perception of particular pitfalls particular temptations that men and women of different age groups can fall into.

Now if you're a young woman don't close your ears to what Paul is saying to the older women because you'll be one of them very soon sooner than you imagine. And if you're an older man don't turn a blind eye to Paul's instructions to the young men because although your youth has vanished never to return you know lots of younger men and you'll need to be able to encourage them in godly living.

[14 : 02] Now you'll see that Paul deals with six different categories of people here. Older men in verse 2 older women verses 3 and 4 younger women verses 4 and 5 young men in verse 6 then Titus himself in verses 7 and 8 and finally Christians who are slaves in verses 9 and 10.

And if you're asking which category of age you might fit into Paul's answer would be that you're young until you're 40 and you're old after the age of 40.

He doesn't seem to have a category for middle age. Now if you're in your early 40s if you're about 41 you probably think to yourself but I'm still young I've only got three grey hairs.

But Paul is saying to us don't deceive yourself it's always later than you think it is. Apparently research has shown that most adults think of themselves on average as being 17 years younger than they actually are.

Now if that's true there's a bit of self-deception that goes on inside us isn't there? So that means that if you're 45 you think of yourself as being 28. If you're 60 you imagine that you're about 43.

[15 : 17] But the truth is it is always later than we think it is. Now I've hinted at this already but let me say it more definitely. The central ingredient in Paul's ethical teaching is the importance of self-control.

In his famous passage on the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians chapter 5 Paul mentions nine ingredients. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and finally self-control.

And surely self-control is mentioned last because it's the quality which governs all the others. It's self-control that enables us to show love and patience and kindness and all the others.

Without self-control we would not be loving or kind or patient or gentle. If the self is out of control it's not interested in showing love and kindness to other people it's only interested in pleasing itself.

The self is full of unruly and demanding appetites for food for drink for money for sex for recognition for power over other people. The self is an evil beast.

[16 : 32] No wonder Jesus says if anyone would come after me let him deny himself. We have to do battle with self in order to control it. We have to treat it rather as you might treat a dangerous dog.

Lock it up in a strong cage and tell it to lie down. Lie down you beast. You're not going to have the master in this house. Just look at how often Paul uses this phrase self-controlled in this letter.

First of all at chapter 1 verse 8 the useful elder must be self-controlled and disciplined. Then chapter 2 verse 2 older men are to be self-controlled.

Chapter 2 verse 5 the young women are to be self-controlled. Chapter 2 verse 6 the younger men are to be self-controlled. Chapter 2 verse 12 the grace of God is training us to live dot dot dot self-controlled lives in the present age.

self-control needs to be exercised if we're to resist temptation even a tiny temptation like wanting to go to bed without brushing your teeth.

[17 : 43] But just think of those moments of serious moral temptation. The temptation to tell a lie. The temptation to be dishonest over some financial matter.

The temptation to engage in sexual activity outside marriage. the temptation to smear somebody's reputation with a few barbed words.

We have to say to the self lie down you beast. You're not going to be the master of this situation. Well let's turn now to our six categories and we'll listen to Paul as he instructs both Titus and us.

First of all then older men are to be sober minded dignified self-controlled sound in faith in love and in steadfastness.

Paul is describing here a man who is serious and dignified. Now that description doesn't rule out humor or a twinkle in the eye. Humor and laughter make all relationships sweeter and more enjoyable.

[18 : 47] In fact one of the best things that we can do for each other in this over anxious world is to make each other laugh. But the older men in the church need to be people that younger people can turn to for advice and support knowing that they will be listened to carefully and taken seriously.

Every church needs a body of senior men whose Christian character has been deepened by experience and by knowledge of the Bible. Men who know what it's like to face pressure and suffering.

And let's notice the second part of verse 2. Sound in faith in love and in steadfastness. Now doesn't that remind us of Paul's faith, hope and love in 1 Corinthians 13?

It's almost identical. Just think of these three qualities. Faith that's directed towards God himself. An older man needs to be known as somebody who exercises trust in the Lord.

Then secondly, love which is directed towards other people. The older man needs to be willing to serve others, willing to spend his energies and time in supporting others in the church.

[19 : 58] And then thirdly, steadfastness or endurance. That's the ability to keep going and persevering in good times and bad because he's waiting patiently for the promise of eternal life to be fulfilled.

Faith, love and steadfastness which is much the same as hope. The hope of future glory and joy. Now this is a challenging profile for us 41 plus year olds to live up to.

But, verse 11, by the grace of God it is possible to live like this and it brings warmth, strength and encouragement to the whole church if its older men show this kind of dignity and self-control.

Secondly, older women. Now Paul, you'll see, gives them three instructions in verse 3. There's something to cultivate, something to avoid and something to do.

First, something to cultivate. Paul says they are to be reverent in behavior. Reverent. Now when you meet a woman like this you sense that she knows the Lord and spends time with him and spends time with her Bible.

[21 : 10] her trust in the Lord is demonstrated by her demeanor. She's loving. She cares for others. She listens carefully to them especially when they're in need of support. She engages her ears more quickly than her mouth.

Secondly, something to avoid. Not slanderers or slaves to much wine. As you get older and your experience of human life and the world grows, you tend to notice faults and misdemeanors in other people more quickly than you do when you're young.

And it's possible as one gets older to develop a habit of constant criticism, frequently pointing out people's weaknesses and failings. And your character can become bitter.

You complain about this person or that person and eventually people shy away from talking to you because they don't want to hear streams of critical talk. Slander means speaking evilly about other people.

And a frequent slanderer can poison the atmosphere in a church. You'll see that Paul links slandering with heavy drinking perhaps because too much alcohol loosens the tongue in an unpleasant way.

[22 : 25] Too much alcohol is always an enemy to self-control. Well, sisters, just to read that phrase slanderers or slaves to much wine I think sends a shiver down one's spine.

It's designed to make the older women say, I do not want to end up like that. But thirdly, the older woman has something to do and this merges into Paul's instructions to the younger women.

The older women, end of verse 3, are to teach what is good and thus train the younger women. Now, many older women might read this and think, but I'm not a teacher or a trainer.

I've got no formal training in how to be a teacher. So how can I go about what Paul is asking me to do here? But Paul is surely not thinking here about formal training.

He's not envisaging some formal program whereby a senior Christian lady in the church announces that she'll be running classes in household management every Monday evening for the next six weeks and she wants all the young married women to be there, please.

[23 : 31] Now, that kind of formal arrangement might be appropriate occasionally in a church. But Paul is surely thinking of something much more natural, the way in which older and younger women in a church naturally talk together and exchange ideas and advice in a loving and supportive way.

And he's saying to the older women, take responsibility, sisters. Don't just talk to other older women over your cucumber sandwiches. Get to know the young women in the church as well because you have so much to give them.

It's very clear from verses 4 and 5 that Paul's main concern here is for the marriages and the home life and the raising of children of the younger women. Paul recognizes the great importance of harmony and happiness in the Christian home.

But just look at verse 4 because there's something quite surprising there. Train the young women, says Paul, to love their husbands and children. Now we might think, but surely a young woman somehow knows instinctively how to love her husband and children.

Does she really need to be trained to love them? Well, according to Paul, she does. Paul is assuming that an older woman who has been there and done all that knows a thing or two about marriage and has learned from hard-won experience, which she can then pass on to others.

[24 : 55] Imagine an older married woman, say about 50 years old, talking to a young woman who has been recently married. Well, dear, says the older woman, you've been married three months now.

How are you getting on? Is it a bed of roses? Well, says the younger one, he's very nice and he's very handsome. Do I hear a little but coming?

Well, yes, I don't like to be critical of him, but the thing is, he wants me to go with him every Saturday to watch Partick Thistle. And there he is, he just loves it.

He's jumping up and down, cheering, he cheers loudly every time Thistle scores a point. Is it a point? Anyway, and there am I, and I'm sitting in my chair and I'm shivering and it's a January afternoon, I just want to go home and have a cup of tea.

Well, sweetheart, says the older lady, my Sebastian, he was just like that when we were first married, but you know, I learned how to cope with him. Shall I tell you what I did? Oh, yes, please do.

[25 : 58] And then out comes the advice. Loving, kind, experienced, covering not just football, but anything that needs to be covered. Anything. There are many things that a young married woman might need help and advice with.

Paul's concern here in verses four and five is with marriage. Singleness was, of course, much rarer in Paul's day than it is in our modern society. But older women who are single are often shrewd observers of marriage and married life.

Sometimes those who are watching on the touchline can see what's going on on the field of play more clearly than the players on the field can. Older single women can be great supporters of younger women.

And look at Paul's concerns that they learn to love their husbands, verse four, and to be submissive to their husbands in verse five. In other words, not ruling the roost, but allowing and encouraging their husbands to be the leader at home.

And verse five, self-controlled. There's that central idea again. Self-control in speech and manner. Self-control in looking after money, not blowing lots of money.

[27 : 09] Self-control in the use of the tongue, not shouting angrily. And then pure, chaste, faithful to their marriage vows. Working at home.

Paul means by that looking after the home, doing the work necessary to create a comfortable, well-organized haven for the family. I think we can be sure that Paul did not mean that she must not work outside the home.

Paul would have read Proverbs chapter 31 carefully with its description of the godly wife who is a businesswoman as well as a homemaker. He's not confining the married woman to her home, but he would also have approved of the married woman who didn't need to earn money because her husband's income was sufficient and who therefore spent her time and energy at home with her family.

But let's notice Paul's further aim in this training of the younger women. It comes out at the end of verse 5. All these things so that the word of God may not be reviled.

Think of the Christian family on the island of Crete living close together with other families who were not Christians. As we know, neighbors watch each other, don't they?

[28 : 21] Listen to each other. If the neighbors who are not Christians look over the garden fence and they see an unruly family where the wife shouts angrily at her children and complains loudly to her husband, they're going to say, is that what Christianity does for you?

If the word of God makes you live like that, it must be a pretty pathetic message. I'm not going to read their Bible if that's the kind of life it produces. So the word of God is reviled.

But a Christian home and marriage characterized by love, kindness, and self-control commends the gospel beautifully and the neighbors notice. Let's never underestimate the evangelistic power of a united and loving Christian family and of a Christian marriage that is transparently sweet and well-ordered.

Although not married himself, Paul is a shrewd observer of what goes on behind people's front doors. Just look again at verses 3, 4, and 5.

I don't think that Paul is seeking to create groups of authorized female Bible teachers. Now it's good, of course, when women teach each other how to understand the Bible and how to live out its teaching.

[29 : 37] My own wife has been leading a women's Bible study group here at the Tron for many years and that's a thoroughly useful and supportive activity. But when you really think about these verses in their context, you're driven to the conclusion that Paul's big concern is to strengthen Christian marriage and family life.

And after all, that is the big need of our lost and floundering secular society today. to be able to see the grace of God expressed in happy, united Christian families where love and kindness prevail.

We know that marriage in society and family life is in meltdown in the modern world. We know that the lack of strong family life is the main cause of unhappiness and mental ill health in so many teenagers today.

Next, let's look at the young men. Verse 6. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled, says Paul. Now there's only one instruction for the young men here, just the one.

But Paul goes straight to the point of greatest weakness in the young man. The greatest need of the Christian young man is to learn self-control because self-control is the route to maturity.

[30 : 57] Paul would not have written this verse if self-mastery was impossible for young men. He knows that it's possible, not least because he had to learn it himself. In his own young manhood, he'd been fierce and violent.

He'd been a persecutor of Christians, but he'd left all that behind. So what are the main things in life where young men need to learn self-mastery?

I'll mention five. First, temper. Temper can be difficult to control, but it does need to be tamed. If you struggle with temper, try playing rugby or squash.

In fact, even half an hour's stiff walk can be a good way of letting off angry steam. Secondly, ambition. Now it's good to be ambitious for the gospel, as Paul was till his dying day, but selfish ambition, that's that desire to be recognized and praised and get to the top of some tree, that can become all-consuming.

Thirdly, vanity of personal appearance. Spending 20 minutes looking in the mirror at yourself. What a very fine chest I have.

[32 : 07] I like these pectoral muscles and these nicely cut sideburns. Nice angle there. Virile. Irresistible. Come on, boys.

Spend that 20 minutes reading the Bible and looking at the Lord Jesus rather than at yourself. His beauty will never fade, but yours certainly will. Fourth, sex.

Sex is good, it's God-given, but it needs to be kept for the only right place, which is marriage. Sex is rather like fire. It's lovely in the right place, in the stove, on the hearth, but if it gets out of there and gets into the curtains and the carpets and the floorboards, it is horribly destructive.

Remember, too, that pornography will hollow out a man's character. It's a bit like fire in the floorboards and the curtains. The only happy and satisfying sex is married sex.

Now, fifth, let me encourage a less obvious aspect of self-control in younger men, and that is the need to control the temptation to be only lightly engaged in the realities of human society, to sit on the edge.

[33 : 23] What I mean is this. Modern society is much less steady, much less solid, than it used to be when it was significantly influenced by the gospel and by Christian values.

Those great Bible values of truthfulness, honesty, hard work, and loyalty to other people, they've been deeply undermined in recent decades because the Bible's influence has waned so much, not in a church like ours, thank God, but in society in general.

And the consequence of all this is a growing sense of personal fragility in so many people. The great public anxiety that there is about mental ill health, in that public sense, it was unknown 40 or 50 years ago.

Of course, people were mentally unwell, but there wasn't that general sense of fearfulness about it. Everybody's talking about it these days. People are feeling disconnected and fragile, not knowing what life is for.

So this leads to people being less able, less willing, to commit themselves. There's a disengagement from work and from personal relationships. Social media can create a false sense of friendships.

[34 : 34] Or I put out a photograph of myself and it's been acknowledged by 279 friends. Well, that's not real friendship, is it? People don't want to get stuck in with a solid sense of long-term commitment and purpose.

So think of the workplace where jobs are drifted in and out of pretty quickly. And as for personal relationships, many young men hanker for the close company of a woman, but shrink from saying, will you marry me?

They want to say, come to bed with me, but will you marry me? That's too serious, too demanding, it's too long-term. So I would say, young men, be self-controlled.

Control this temptation to hang back. Don't stand on the edge of the swimming pool. Dive into it. The water will sustain you. Get a job, stick with it, and work hard.

Find something that suits your capacity and get stuck in with it. It may be something very humdrum and ordinary, but the world needs its office workers and plumbers and joiners, as well as its neurosurgeons and professors of ancient history.

[35 : 42] Accepting responsibility leads to male maturity. Be persevering. And, get married and raise a family.

You'll survive. It won't kill you. Of course, marriage is not for everybody. And the single Christian is much honored in the Bible because he or she is freed up from domestic concerns and can be a highly fruitful gospel worker.

But for most men, God's words in Genesis chapter 2 spell out the answer to our need. It is not good for a man to be alone. So I will make him a helper fit for him.

So young men, find a girl who is beautiful in your eyes. And then ask yourself two questions. Is she a keen Christian who loves the Lord and wants to keep growing as a Christian?

And, is she somebody who will prove to be my best friend? If the answer to those questions is yes, then you know what to do. Go for it.

[36 : 46] Just think of this in terms of Christian influence on wider society. The church, ever since God called Abraham back in Genesis chapter 12, is designed by God to bring blessing and salvation to the world.

The Christian way of life commends the gospel and our Savior Jesus. So if the unbelieving world sees Christian young men taking responsibility, people start to ask the right questions.

Think of the workplace. People will say, why is young George so cheerful and hardworking? Why doesn't he cut corners and just do the minimum required? Oh, says somebody, he's a Christian.

Oh, is it because he's a Christian and he's serving Christ? Hmm. Well, that's thought-provoking, isn't it? Oh, and here's another question about him. Why did he marry Eustacia and start having babies?

Well, George, why did you? Tell us. Well, says George, it's the Lord's way. Marriage and family life are the backbone of human society. It's the way to stability and good health and happiness in society.

[37 : 51] Really, George? Well, thank you for that. Thank you for being so honest. I must think about that. Well, Paul now moves from the young men in verse 6 to Titus himself in verses 7 and 8.

Titus, more than anybody, is to be an example to the young men. So Paul says to him in verse 7, show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, a model, an example of how to live the Christian life.

There's something in our human nature that looks up to examples, good role models. The Lord Jesus is, of course, the supreme role model, but Paul himself urges Christians to follow his, Paul's example, as he follows Christ's example.

And it's striking how in his letters to both Timothy and Titus, he encourages them to model the Christian life. And all of us who are Christians have a responsibility to exemplify the wholesome and delightful standards of real Christian ethics.

To be a model of Christian living hugely encourages others to follow the well-trodden pattern set for us by Jesus himself. But Titus is not to be a model only in his conduct, but also in his teaching.

[39 : 10] Verse 7, And in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame having nothing evil to say about us.

So what was Titus to teach? Well, Paul doesn't say explicitly, but we can be certain that Titus' message, his sound doctrine, was to be the same as Paul's, to teach the gospel, to teach Jesus as judge and Lord and Savior.

But Titus was also to teach the very things that we're studying here in verses 2 to 10, how to live the Christian life purposefully with love and self-control.

And so important is this teaching of gospel and lifestyle that Titus must do it, says Paul, with integrity, dignity, and sound speech.

That is to say, with seriousness. So important is this gospel, with people's eternal destiny hanging upon their response to it, that it must be presented with weight, with authority.

[40 : 17] As people listen to Titus, they need to know that his message is a life and death message. And this needs to be the same with all Christian preaching and teaching in every generation.

Now, of course, there can be lighter moments. We need lighter moments of relaxation and humor. After all, a little bit of humor helps to keep people listening to the preacher. But fundamentally, the message is deeply serious because it's about heaven and hell.

It's about salvation and judgment. If a church loses the seriousness of its teaching content, it loses everything. And as Paul puts it in verse 8, where the message is conveyed with integrity, dignity, and so on, opponents who hear it may still be hostile to the message, but they won't be able to condemn the messenger on the ground that he's frivolous or that he's playing with ideas.

They'll have to say, I don't very much like what he's saying, but I have to acknowledge that he's a man who deeply believes in the Savior that he's commending. Then finally, verses 9 and 10, Paul thinks of Christians who are slaves.

Now, remember, the Roman world ran on slavery much as the modern world runs on oil, gas, and electricity. You couldn't just remove slavery out of society, although Paul would gladly have seen the back of it.

[41 : 43] It was simply a fact of the ancient world, and many of the first century churches had plenty of slaves in their congregations. So although slavery is such a horrible thing and so demeaning to human beings, Paul shows to those who are enslaved a noble view of how to serve well.

Verses 9 and 10 show how slaves were often tempted to be insubordinate to their masters, wanting to argue back when they're asked to do some task, pilfering, which is petty theft, stealing food or money.

And you can understand those temptations and how frustrating and painful it must be to be bonded into service and deprived of your freedom. But Paul is saying to slaves here, serve your master.

Do as he asks without grumbling. Seek to please him. Show good faith to him. Show him that you're thoroughly trustworthy, that you're for him and not against him, that you honor him rather than resent him.

Why? So that, verse 10, in everything you may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. In other words, your master will look at you and he'll say, I like your behavior.

[42 : 57] You obey my orders promptly. You say please and thank you. You're kind to my family. Are you a Christian by any chance? Yes, sir, I am. I doubt if anybody here this morning is a slave in that first century sense.

But many of you are working for employers and you may sometimes feel that they've got you shackled and almost imprisoned in your jobs. Well, there's good advice to the weary employee here, isn't there?

Aim to please that not always nice boss. Say please and thank you. Work hard. Work a few extra minutes at the end of the day to show willing. Don't pinch biros or chocolate biscuits.

Now, friends, we're almost done. But let's finally notice how concerned Paul is for the way that Christians and the gospel are viewed by outsiders. His concern emerges at three points in this passage.

Verse 5, the young women are to cultivate happy and well-organized homes so that the word of God be not reviled by outsiders. Verse 8, the opponent may have nothing evil to say about us.

[44 : 09] And then here in verse 10, that slaves may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. Paul wants the gospel and the Christian lifestyle to commend itself to the world by its shining integrity and beauty.

The church, after all, is a little outpost of heaven. And for us to live in the pattern of verses 2 to 10 is a great challenge, but it's a very great honor.

Well, let's bow our heads and we'll pray together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our dear Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this wonderful and yet searching teaching of the Apostle Paul.

And we pray that you will give us grace to examine our own lives in the light of it and grace to adorn the doctrine of our Savior so that others may see the power of new life in us, your servants, and may be drawn to its heavenly source.

We ask it through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.