

Leading That Accords with Godliness

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[0 : 00] Okay, Titus chapter 1. I'm going to read the whole lot out again and we're going to spend our time looking at verses 5 to 16. My plan is that we'll have a question time afterwards as well, so please jot down questions you might have or ask on the way through.

I won't be able to cover everything well, but we'll do the best we can. And I might raise stuff that you want to talk to and we'll discuss things together afterwards.

Alright, so let's hear God's Word now. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised before the age began and at the proper time manifested in His Word through the preaching with which I've been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour.

To Titus, my true child in a common faith, grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour. This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained in order and to 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.

[1 : 33] 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. 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 by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and commandments 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.

[2 : 45] They detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. Now before I preach, let's pray. Our Father, if we hear your word, we humble ourselves before it, before you.

Who is able to live up to these standards? Please have mercy upon us, we pray. And give us ears to hear, hearts to soft and minds to obey.

And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. One of the things about gathering people from lots of backgrounds is that backgrounds we come from heavily influenced the way that we think things should be done.

which raises the question of authority and where it comes from and what it is. Now we've all got some cultural background, haven't we?

A family of origin, a religious background, a denominational background. And we grow up with that and we think that what I've grown up with is normal. And so, if you're from Papua New Guinea, for instance, there's a strong culture of family first.

[4 : 01] And my loyalty is first and foremost to my family. If you're from a place which is not Western, there's a strong culture of submitting to authorities, right?

Respecting those who are older than you and especially your parents. You'll do what they say. If you're from a Western culture, there's a strong culture of individualism and not submitting to any

authority, but you, I am the king of my world, thank you very much, and no one will tell me what to do.

Not only this, but those of us who have been in a church for a while will have picked up the language and the ways things are done and many are good and helpful.

But sometimes we can assume that they are all right, without knowing that the Bible might be against some of those things. Or for them, absolutely for them, or silent about them, you know, not saying anything at all about that matter.

So, the important thing is that we let the Scriptures teach us, right, what the Scriptures want to teach us. And to be willing to be taught and be willing to be corrected and to be willing to be rebuked and willing to be trained by them because that's why God gave us His Word.

[5 : 25] Now, some of you will have seen the authority quadrilateral, the Brie diagram. I'm sure most of you have seen this, but I want to go over it again just quickly with you. Charles Wesley is understood to be the one who gave it to us.

It's a really helpful way of understanding where we sit when it comes to who or what ultimately has the final authority in our thinking. So, it's got a quadrilateral.

I hope the slide comes up, you'll see. There's four parts to it. Now, if you think reason is the final authority, the one that really has the final trump card, you may consider the Bible as just good literature, right, but our reason, right, will do away with parts we find hard to believe.

I like that bit there. I can work it out myself. Thank you very much. I like the resurrected dead and men and women and all that kind of sexuality. You just think, oh, that's not right.

So, reason trumps the Scriptures. If you think that institution has the final authority, well, then you'll consider that religious authorities will tell us how to understand the Scriptures.

[6 : 35] You can't understand it well yourself, so what you need is someone to tell you what it says and how to understand it. If the institution says something, even if it's different to what the Bible says, well, the institution's got to be right, hasn't it?

It will inform us and tell us what the Bible says. If you have experience as your final authority, it looks like people saying that it's clear the Bible says this, right, but my experience is different, so my experience must be right and the Bible be wrong, right?

Love is love after all, said and done. So I can fall out of love with one person, leave my marriage because I love another. That's one way it gets expressed.

Or I had such an emotional high, it must have been the Holy Spirit, I don't need the Word of God here, I can just go by my feelings here. They've got to be right. Now, if you hold that the Bible is the final authority, is God's holy and true and living Word, it will mean that when the Scriptures challenge what I think, or what the institution says, or what my experience is, right, I will change what I think and align my life with what God says in His Word, even when it doesn't necessarily feel good to do so.

Now, just so you know where we stand, right, St. Lucia Bible Church, we want to be Bible people, right, so we have the Bible rule our church, rule our lives, challenge our culture, shape our understanding, we want the Scriptures to be the final authority.

[8 : 27] Now, for some, what we hear today from God's Word might not be that confronting, which is totally good, we've got it, but for others, what we hear from God's Word could be quite challenging and I've given the series overall, what we're talking about, order in the church, because of verse 5 in Titus, all right, chapter 1.

Titus was left in Crete so that he might put what remained into order and the primary way he used to do that was to appoint overseers in every city, in every town in Crete who would order things according to God's Word, right, so here's a bit of a map, you'll be able to see where Crete is, Crete's a real place in the Mediterranean Sea on the way to Rome between Jerusalem, that's where it is, there's a place called Nicopa, up where Paul is going to winter, you'll read that later on in chapter 3, and there's the island of Crete and all over that place the Gospel of Jesus is gone, not quite sure how it got there, people from, in Acts chapter 2 might have taken the Gospel there, Paul would have brought the Gospel there, not quite sure when, but the Gospels got there.

Okay, so let's have a look at verse 5, 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.

As Josh said, God is the God of order and not chaos, He made order in creation out of chaos, in the beginning God created the heavens and the sky and the earth and the sea and then He filled the heavens and the sky and the sea with things.

He appointed mankind to rule the creation under the way that God would have us rule the world under His authority, that's how He set things up. When we have no recognised authority, you have anarchy, which is bad for everybody, it really is.

[10:30] authority is given so that order might be established. I don't know what your experience of authority is. When it's exercised well, it's good for everyone.

When it's exercised badly, well, it's bad for everyone. A father who exercises authority in the family well will have a good and healthy and orderly family.

A father who exercises authority in a family badly will have and make life a misery for him and everybody else in it. There'll be chaos and crying all around.

Unfortunately, at times, I've been guilty of exercising authority poorly in my family and I'm trying to do better, just so you know. It's been to the detriment of Karen and Jessica, which I'm sorry for doing and I'm seeking to actually be a better father, husband and leader.

Now, Paul has appointed Titus to a task, a task that's not easy and is destined to cause conflict with those who actually live in opposition to God.

[11:41] Titus is to establish some kind of order, some government, so there can be some discipline in the church. Now, a great problem that God had with his people in the past has been that everyone was doing what they thought was right in their own eyes, anarchy.

In the time of judges, it led to great suffering and crying out for a saviour who would save them, to lead them, to rescue them, to rule them. And Paul has established the churches in the towns of Crete, but there needs to be suitable people recognised to lead them.

People who know that there's a right and that there's a wrong teaching, that there's a right and a wrong lifestyle, that there is right and wrong doctrine, that is teaching.

And notice, Paul is the apostle of God who is under the authority of God, has delegated authority to Titus to appoint leaders in each town that must meet certain standards.

Overseers who oversee the good order in the churches in the town. Titus has been entrusted with examining and appointing.

[13:08] it's his call who he appoints. And then we see the overseers then for the churches in verses 5 to 9.

The way there will be orderliness is that there will be suitably qualified overseers. Now we need to pay close attention here to what the scriptures say. I want you to pay close attention, right?

Because I know that each one of us is listening to this with a particular denominational heritage.

and I want you to try to spend that for a while while we spend time in the word. First of all, older men who are male, strangely enough.

Verse 5. The first thing to notice is overseer is a male. Now that may not be controversial to you because it's as clear as what it says in the scriptures. The word, verse 5, elder, is presbyteros.

Presbyter is masculine. And the word simply means older man. So, a bit of a slide up here, a bit of fun, right? Just like my contact lenses I wear, just so you know, my eye-nick glasses, is for my presbyopia, right?

[14:21] My old eyes. Presbyter simply means older man. Right? And note the overwhelming references to being male.

Verse 6. Husband of one wife. His children. Verse 7. He must. Verse 9. He must. He must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine.

It's clear that those who are given the responsibility to lead the household of God are to be men and not women. Now this is a big issue which means one thing.

We need to raise up more and more men who will step up to the task of leadership. So I'll let you in on a secret. When men don't, women do.

Because men, we are typically lazy and it isn't good for our families and it isn't good for our churches. oversight is never easy.

[15:30] It means someone is looking out, looking out over the church, like a shepherd looks out over the sheep. It's something that's exercised we're told in 1 Peter chapter 5.

It's something that we do. Primary through the guarding and the gathering of God's people around by through His Word.

That's how it happens. Feeding the sheep, feeding the flock, entrusted to your care with the Word of God. And we'll see that very soon in verse 9.

Overseers are to be old men. But not all older men are cut out to be overseers. Did you see there?

Overseers are older men, elders, who have a particular character. Coming down to verse 7, I'm tying together the idea of elder and overseer here.

[16:30] See verse 7? For an overseer as God's steward. So back in verse 5, appoint elders in every town. And in verse 7, for an overseer as God's stewards must be above reproach.

So overseers are to be older men who have a particular character. You can't disappoint anyone to be an overseer. Titus, you must appoint appropriate people.

The position has certain tasks. Now, I'll let you be on a secret here. It makes sense, doesn't it, when I say it to you, you get it right, right?

You can't appoint someone to be older, right? Okay. I can't say to Lachlan, could you please be 50 now? He's only lived 25 years, right?

Someone is the age that they are. older. Some people are older and some people are younger. Now, we're not told here in verse 5 about any particular church governance style that's right.

[17:42] Having older men appointed as overseers doesn't tell us that there was one, two, three or thirty elders in each church.

It doesn't tell us that. It depends on whether there's anyone qualified, whether you have anyone to be an overseer in a church. There might have been twenty churches with twenty different towns and so twenty churches with one overseer in each one of them.

There may have been ten churches in all of Crete with ten overseers in each. We just don't know. we do know that the goal is to have good order in the church though.

And here are the essential characteristics that the overseer is a daunting list. Have a look at it with me. Above reproach.

There you go. If anyone is above reproach there in verse six. Some translations have blameless.

[18:59] It can't mean, can it, free from any sin, perfect. It can't mean that because that would banish every man from ever having oversight.

I am not perfect. I am not sinless. Just ask my wife or my daughter and I'll tell you. 1 Timothy, sorry, Titus is telling us we've got to be blameless, but 1 Timothy chapter four, Paul tells Timothy that is to set an example by this progress in the faith.

So what this blameless means is his character is not undermined by some disgraceful action that will bring about dishonour to the Lord Jesus.

Some sin that continues to beset them and when people become beware of it, are turned away from Jesus. Some wickedness that they have done since they've come to Christ which would bring shame upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

some way of life that is morally bankrupt that doesn't cause them to blush. Some way of life that can be called out as defiantly opposed to God's word.

[20:20] That's the idea of blameless. He's to be a husband of just one wife, still in verse 6. That is, he's not polygamous having one or two or three more wives which strangely enough is not that uncommon in many parts of the world today.

Overseers have one wife, his children are to be believers or better faithful. His heart's desire is his children will be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But ultimately it's 100% his work and 100% God's work in anyone being saved. Faithful is better for it picks up the idea of being respectful to leadership.

They are like him, not being debauched and insubordinate. Debauched is living in reckless abandon. The scriptures about drunkenness is being described as debauchery in Ephesians chapter 5.

A child given to debauchery and insubordination is not faithful to anyone or anything. Now there's lots of heartache over this verse.

[21:30] But there's much more to say but we'll press on. Bottom line charges or accusations against his family cannot be sustained. His family needs to be a Christian family first because verse 7 he himself is God's steward.

That is he's a manager of God's family, God's household. Like the apostles were stewards of the mysteries of God, he's the one who looks after the affairs of God's household ensuring that things are in order and not in disarray.

Which is why his house must be in order and the list goes on. Not arrogant. That is thinking that you're of higher status than you really are.

Looking down at others. Not quick tempered, that is emotionally stable. Not hot under the collar, easily angered and showing it. Not a drunken.

He's sober, he's not under the influence of alcohol but the Spirit of God is working him. It's hard to be disciplined isn't it if you're drunk. You can't care for anybody else if you're drunk. Not violent.

[22 : 41] The nature of men is to use power to get their way. Violent in language, violent with their right arm.

Not greedy for gain. It's a position of trust and we mustn't use trust and power for what we can get out of it. Not to be arrogant, that is to think you're someone that you're not, thinking you're better than others around about you and your status in some way, looking down at others.

Instead, here's the list, hospitable, that is, friend or stranger, looking out for the lost, someone who is on the outer of things.

Someone who loves good, someone who's devoted to kindness is the idea, lives among people without harming them. Self-controlled, is in control of himself, able to say no to indulging in things that might seem fun to do, but are actually inappropriate to do.

Upright, holy. this is the character of life we require of God's overseers, because they're going to be leading other men to be like them, as they raise up other qualified people to be overseers.

[24 : 10] Which brings us to verse 9, and courage. courage. It also takes courage to be an overseer, because oversight doesn't mean just sitting on a mountain and enjoying the view of what's going on below you.

That's not oversight. It means gathering, guiding, guarding the flock under your care.

And this is all done as the overseer holds firmly to the trustworthy teaching, the firm teaching, the trustworthy word of God.

Notice, hold firm, verse 9, have a look at it with me, verse 9, he must, right, not an optional extra, he must, hold firm to the trustworthy word is taught, so he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

This is what we are to expect from overseers. Hold firm, don't budge, don't be moved, don't change, don't give in to pressure, don't be cowered into doubting, hold firm, hang on, hang on to what you've been given by the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostle.

[25 : 33] will, that takes courage. The teaching of the trustworthy word, the overseer doesn't make up the word that is taught, it is God's trustworthy word, because God does not lie, which the overseer has to teach God's word, true, trustworthy word, and what is that word, that teaching?

It's the word of God, right, the message that Jesus is Lord, that Jesus is the Christ, it's the whole Bible, the whole Old Testament, the whole New Testament, it's God's word is truth, and it's trustworthy, because God doesn't lie, and neither will his word lead us astray, it's only by holding on to this word, that the overseer can give instruction in sound doctrine, solid teaching, true doctrine, healthy doctrine, true body of truth, true teaching, and notice, refute, rebuke those who speak against true doctrine, object to sound doctrine, deny healthy doctrine, being an overseer takes courage, to stand against, false, and to stand up for truth, when it's under threat, it takes courage because it's costly personally, costly emotionally, and at times, can be physical,

I know of people who've had to leave their churches because the church has moved and they've stood firm. As Calvin the former said, the overseer needs two voices, here's the two voices that the overseer needs, and Calvin as usual is right, one voice is to gather, guard, and feed God's sheep, God's pure word, right, the gathering voice, the other voice is to drive away wolves and thieves who would harm the sheep, so that the sheep don't get fleeced.

the word of God teaches the teachable and is a way to break down stubborn opposition to those who oppose it, which is why the overseer always needs to be a student of God's word, so we will encourage those who aspire to be overseers to be deep in God's word, serious students of God's word, that's who they will be.

Now this is not academic for Titus, at all, right? This is not academic for any overseer. For the reason we need these suitably qualified older male overseers is this, is to establish and to maintain order in the churches.

[29 : 09] And you see the disorder in the church in verses 10 to 16, the ungodly influences it around. Listen again to the situation that faced Titus verse 10. 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 by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. Now I don't normally do this and I don't encourage you to do it all the time, but you might want to take out your pencil and put a line through party.

You don't have to, right? But really it's not helpful to have the word party there, it's just circumcision. Okay? And we'll get to that in a minute.

Now I'm not saying this is the case at all in St. Lucia Bible Church, right? At all. I'm not saying that at all about our church. But in Crete, at the time, there was ungodly influence.

There were many who were insubordinate. That is, they do not submit to the authority God places over them. Refusing to submit to authority, disobedient and rebellious is the nature.

[30 : 25] They will not submit to authority and will not submit to God's word. The first instinct is to say, no, I won't. Now you can't have people in positions of influence in your church who are insubordinate, not submitting to authority in the first place.

Basically, they're like your average Australian. There you go. People who do not want to submit to anyone over them. People who want to live as the rules of their own life and not according to how God would have them live.

To have order in the church requires that there's submission to authority. Primarily submission to God as we submit to His word. His word is the final authority and legitimate authority and all authority is then delegated from him.

And notice that Titus has authority to act commanded to him by the Apostle Paul. Titus is to silence those who are upsetting whole households, whole families and the way he will silence them is to rebuke them sharply, rebuke them severely, rebuke them rigorously is the idea.

And he will do that by giving instruction in sound doctrine, verse 9. He will show them their error as he correctly handles the word of God, bringing the word of God to bear on the situation.

[31 : 56] He won't do it by having a year or two of quietly listening to what's going on. He won't do it by political manoeuvring so that he can then compromise what he really believes until such times gets the voice at the table to be able to say nothing.

It won't be by ignoring error and hoping it will go away. No, it's by giving instruction in sound doctrine from God's trustworthy word then and there.

Now let me tell you the way to prevent false empty talkers and deceivers gaining traction in any church is by having a church with members who are hungry to hear God's word and to feed on it and love it.

People who love God's word by submitting to it, submitting to what he has to say to us. It's by having a diet of sound doctrine, of sound teaching, so we're fed on God's pure word.

you've heard it said that churches who have sermonettes have Christianettes, right? We don't have five minute sermons here.

[33 : 11] We don't have myths and speculations. In Paul's day there was empty talkers and deceivers who were both Jews and Gentiles and he points out those especially of the Jews, that is the circumcision, right?

That is who the circumcision were. Notice they were teaching for shameful gain what they should not teach, right? Teaching people what is not true and charging people for it.

Making a lot of money from teaching what they ought not to teach. Jewish myths, right? That is stories made up by Jews and fancy speculation and commands by people who turn away from the truth.

The Gentiles as well do that. In some religions, right? In some religions, lots of money has been made by selling lies, like paying for various things so that you could have less time in purgatory to make it to heaven.

In some religions today it's preached that the more you give, the more you will get. The more you give, the more God will bless you. With wealth and health and safety in his word, in this world, sorry, in this world, contrary to his word.

[34 : 29] And those who teach these things and many like them are hypocritical liars. Harsh words but true.

And as you hear how Paul speaks of the Cretans there, the Cretans and their culture, quoting from one of their own likely bloke named Epimenides, there's generalities and there's stereotypes.

Generalities are generally true and generalities can be made but are not necessarily true for each individual. So here you go, generally men are taller than women, generally.

but not always, not always. There's lots of other generalities we could make but it doesn't mean that all men are always taller than women.

That would be a stereotype. So, to paint all old white males as a problem with society is an unfair stereotype that some hold.

[35 : 43] Now, generalities could also be made about cultures. This culture is like this so it's okay. Don't worry about it.

But the reality is not all cultures are good. And here I'm going to step on a few toes hopefully. not all cultures should be preserved.

Right. A cult, let me tell you why. Okay. A culture that practices child sacrifice to the gods like Moloch in the Old Testament, is that good?

Ah, good, you like it? No, it's not good is it? Alright. Alright, I'll give you another one. A cult that practices sati or sati, same kind of, same word basically, where the wife jumps on the funeral pyre of her husband leading to her emoliation, good or bad?

Can't be good, can it? But it's good for their culture. They think it's good. A culture, let me push it a bit closer to home, a culture that promotes greed as good, is that culture healthy or unhealthy?

[37 : 17] Come on. Unhealthy. Alright. you can't have a culture that promotes lies seem as good to have anything good going for it.

See, Satan is the father of lies and if you want to live in hell, that's one thing, but there's nothing good, there's no trust, there's just hate and hatred in a culture of lies.

The God we worship is the God who come on, never lies. Right. And to live among his people means that we do not tolerate lies.

It's evident that generally speaking, Cretans were liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons. They're not saying that every one, each individual of them was, that would be to stereotype them.

But generally that was the culture of Crete and it's not good. Those who call themselves Christians in Crete need to rid themselves of that aspect of their culture and let me tell you, everyone who calls themselves a Christian in Australia, we need to rid ourselves of anything in our culture that is of lies and against the scriptures.

[38 : 55] Just like all cultures are to rid themselves of that which is incompatible with how God would have us live. Now what overseas are to do is to promote the truth and to preach against sin, to rebuke where rebuke is necessary and Paul is commanding Titus to do this.

If Titus doesn't do this, he himself is being insubordinate which means call out the lies, call out the evil, call out the lazy gluttony and that will cause necessary conflict, won't it?

And nobody in the right mind likes conflict, especially me. I don't thrive on it, I run away from it and that's one of my great faults.

I need to man up with a bit more courage in that area. And yet this is what the faithful overseer is called to do when necessary.

And the aim of this rebuke, notice the aim of this rebuke, is not to make Titus happy, it's ultimately love. The aim is to bring these teachers back to being sound in the faith and back from the errors they have taught.

[40 : 27] You see that in verse 13? This testament is true, therefore rebuke them sharply. Why? That they may be sound in the faith, not devote themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

No, we want to actually bring people back to sound, healthy, wholesome truth, even those who speak falsely.

And that's good for everyone, it's a mercy from God for them that Titus will bring this word of God, showing them clearly where they've got it wrong.

And Titus is going to need courage to do it as he faces the insubordinate teachers of error. And that takes courage from everyone who would aspire to be an overseer.

Now, these insubordinate empty talkers and deceivers profess to know God, verse 16, but their deeds speak a different story. It might look like they're doing good things, they profess to know God, verse 16, but they deny him by their works, they're detestable, disobedient, unfit, any good work.

[41 : 51] They might look like they're doing good things, but God sees the heart. Well, let's pull things together now. Let's think about order in the church, and we'll talk about this question in Thomas Moore as well.

So, to have order then in the church requires that there be good and godly leadership, that's basic. Overseers who teach what is in accordance with the truth.

And to have order in the church means recognising a few things. Firstly, that God is the ultimate ruler of his church by his trustworthy word.

That's of first instance. Then it requires us submitting to the apostle Paul who has been entrusted with God's trustworthy true word and brought the word of God to the churches and been preserved in his word down the ages.

And thirdly, it requires overseers will then hold firmly to the trustworthy word of God so that we can exercise oversight as we hold on to this trustworthy word of God.

[43 : 08] God's word will apply in every area of life and doctrine. Gathering God's people, rescuing them from the kingdom of darkness, bringing them into the kingdom of light.

Guiding God's people as we lead by his word to bring every person safely home to the Lord Jesus Christ. God's people from those who would seek to fleece and to take away and to bring about damage to God's church.

Guarding God's people from insubordinate empty talkers and deceivers. And here's the word that we need to hear today. It was lovely hearing Judy pray.

When you see overseers doing what overseers are told to do, then we need to thank God for them and encourage them to keep doing it.

For as they do it, God is establishing and maintaining order for the good of us all in his church. So do keep praying, please pray, for overseers of God's church to be who God wants and to be.

[44 : 29] And secondly, pray that overseers would do what God calls overseers to do.

Yeah? Let's pray. Now Father, we thank you for giving us your life giving word and we pray that you'd help us that we would be a church who loves you, loves your word, loves one another, and loves the lost.

And we pray that you would entrust many people to us and raise up from us many people who would be servant leaders in your church, here, in places all over Australia, and all over the world. thank you that you've done this and we pray that you continue to do it. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.