



Biblical Foundations Teaching That Sticks

by Chuck Gianotti

Studies in Titus —Part 6 (2:2-10 NASB)

The purpose of the letter to Titus seems to be threefold (besides the opening salutation and closing personal comments):

1. to inform Titus about the need for qualified elders in the local churches under his influence (1:5-9)
2. to warn Titus about false teachers and the need to remain faithful to sound doctrine (1:10-2:1).
3. to encourage Titus to instruct people in how to behave Christianly (2:2-3:11)

Elders do well to study these things closely. This letter, along with the two to Timothy, are often called the pastoral epistles because of their teaching for church leaders. So when Paul writes to Timothy, we take it that he also is writing to church leaders, particularly elders.

Having looked at the first two purposes, we now turn to the third. Titus, and by extension elders, should instruct people in how to behave Christianly. The stereotype of preaching sees a man behind a pulpit telling people how to live their lives. The opposite picture is that of lectures in dry, boring doctrine. Neither is the biblical view of teaching, in that both of those excludes the other. Biblical preaching and teaching includes both doctrine *and* behavior! Both are necessary; neither is complete without the other. We must get this right or we miss the thrust of Paul's letter.

To preach doctrine only is like pulling the wagons into a circle (to use an old cliché from Western movies) and defend the turf. To preach behavior only, on the other hand, is subjective moralizing, even manipulation, without any foundation in truth.

Paul, in his inspired communication with Titus, conveys the principle of teaching appropriately according to your audience. The Apostle John does this when, in the middle of writing to Christians in general, he breaks out into specific teaching to "little children", "fathers" and "young men" (I John 2:12-14).

To be sure, there is much teaching that is universal to all Christians. Yet elders must make sure that each person is receiving teaching suitable to his or her specific situation or need. Paul mentions specific demographic groups, though obviously the principles are not limited to these examples—they were the ones specifically needed in Titus' circumstances.

Older men

These are men advanced in age (*presbutes*), not to be confused with those who hold the office of "elder" (*presbuteros*). Listed are six traits that should be common to this stage of life for men: temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, love, and perseverance. All these certainly are found in the qualifications for elders, who should be "down the road farther" in terms of spiritual maturity than the others. But older men should be challenged to show that kind of spiritual maturity.

Of particular interest is the trait of being sensible (also translated "prudent"), which is also found in the instructions to younger men and women as well. Older men should have developed moderation in their lives, particularly in their interpretation and application of Scripture. This is nothing more than normal Christianity, as it ought to be. The mature Christian life is a moderated life, not given to extremes. Elders must instruct people to be balanced in their application of Scripture.

Of course, we can all recognize an extremity of application, as when, for example, one attempts to pluck one's eyes out because of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18:9. A sensible application of that is not to see it as a literal action, but as a principle of removing whatever it is in your life that hinders your spiritual life. Of course, what is sensible can be a highly subjective thing, but nonetheless, the instruction stands on its own—older men must be sensible.

Older women (and younger women)

Titus, and by extension elders, should not neglect teaching what is appropriate to older women. Too many times, my wife and I have heard women say, "The elders are totally unaware or show no interest in what the ladies in our church are doing." One woman said, "After our big women's conference, not one mention of it was made on Sundays nor did any elder ask me how it went." Elders are to shepherd *all* the people!

In addition to the general teaching in the church, older women have special needs. Paul points out the need for the following traits: reverence, not gossips, not enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good to younger women.

Far be it from me, a man, to say all women have the tendency toward gossip and alcoholism.

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Practical Ministry

The Critical Teenage Years

by Jack Spender

John, the beloved apostle, once wrote words that Christian parents cherish: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). Over the years in Christian work, I have heard the testimony of parents as to how their children are doing as they approach adulthood. Sometimes the report is satisfying; many times it is otherwise. The story often goes something like this: “Johnnie is a good boy and is doing well in college. We had hoped that he would share the same values as we [his parents] have about the assembly, but at least he’s saved and attending a nice church . . .” Often the words are spoken wistfully with a sort of bitter-sweetness. During the formative years, Johnnie apparently absorbed enough truth to bring him to Christ, but not too much more. One wonders why not?

As to children walking in the truth, the question itself suggests: How much truth and what sort of truth? Admittedly, it is not the church but the home that has the primary responsibility for the training of children. But the church can support the parents, and have a life-changing impact on the family. What can church elders do to make sure the critical teenage years are actively building into teens the lifelong desire to “walk in truth?”

Some Disclaimers

Obviously the church is limited by the scruples and values of the parents. Small churches have limited budgets and can’t provide extensive (expensive) opportunities for things like parenting classes, and the elders’ time is limited. Then too, worldly attractions like sports and electronic technology exert a powerful influence, and peer pressure at school can be intense. As one elder lamented: “We can’t compete, and I’m not even sure we’re supposed to try.”

When we factor in the differences in the personalities and temperaments of kids, the socio-economic backgrounds from which they come, the values and influences of the extended family and close friends, etc., many leaders retreat into what seems the safest answer: “We just do what we can, and hope for the best.”

Now the purpose of this article is not to take issue with any of this, much less to imply that a child who is “saved

and attending a Christian church” is not praiseworthy. But glance back at the words of the parents: “We had hoped that he would share the same values . . .” There’s the rub. Is the best that parents can expect in this matter of walking in truth a hope, even a praying hope? I think not.

Biblical Principles

A famous proverb says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Prov. 22:6). General guidelines cannot be pressed into guarantees, but they do shed light.

For one thing, the word “train” means, “To coach in, or accustom to a

teaching through a book like Romans, so that the believers will understand salvation truth: the doctrines of God, sin, salvation, sanctification, security and obedience. Books like Acts or Ephesians can provide wonderful studies in matters of church truth.

So much for profitable teaching, but what about the training? Paul reminds Titus that the Christians are to be “zealous of good works,” (2:14), and to “maintain good works, to meet urgent needs.” (3:14). Thus the church must be a place where older, gifted believers work toward “the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry . . .” (Eph. 4:12). And it is right here that elders must make wise and sometimes difficult decisions.

Getting Practical

The following questions are offered to stimulate discussion and hopefully action. I’ll also point out where some hard choices may be required.

First, take a look at the quality of Bible teaching provided weekly, a big part of the spiritual diet of the flock. Are the major doctrines of the faith being taught? Are young believers developing a grasp of

the content of the Bible and a growing knowledge of the individual books? Is there a good balance of interpretation and application? Is there a “down to earth” quality of the ministry so that young minds can follow the reasoning?

The answers to these questions may call for changes in ministry subjects. Additionally, elders may need to place greater emphasis on the ability, experience and credibility of invited speakers—and less on who has open calendar dates. In some places, large amounts of money flow out to distant works and workers while local ministry is mediocre, because “there can be costs to securing truly qualified speakers.”

Second, take a look at who is receiving the teaching. Are families (*especially teens*) hearing the Word together and are they being challenged to discuss it at home and in small groups if available? Few things can be more disappointing to a speaker who has labored long and hard in preparing a message that is needed by the church, only to have much of the congregation (and often *all* of the teens) dismissed for Sunday School just before the message. There’s nothing wrong with Christian education for children, but elders

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mode of behavior or performance.” Coaches don’t just lecture, they involve the players in practice in order to “accustom” them to the desired mode of behavior. Is the church involved in *training* young people in this sense? It should be!

Also, the text does not say, “in the way he *would* go,” but “in the way he *should* go.” Those involved in the training process must be convinced from Scripture of two facts; that left to himself, the natural man will neither seek nor follow the truth, and that God has given a revelation of the truth, the way that we ought to go. Is the regular Bible teaching in the church not only faithful to God but also relevant to the needs of the people? Are there opportunities to discuss and practice truth under the watchful eye of “coaches?”

Elders are charged with the feeding of God’s flock (Acts 20:28). This involves both the theoretical (teaching) and the practical (training), and the Scriptures are filled with instruction about both. Consider the two great lines of truth developed throughout the New Testament: individual or salvation truth, and corporate or church truth. On the information side, elders can provide

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I had to stop and ask myself this question as I considered this article: Am I my husband's cheerleader? It is often difficult to access our own performance. We need to see things in light of the Lord's eternal perspective.

Have you ever been to a sporting event? Often there are cheerleaders present. They are not there to pass or to kick the ball. They are there to encourage their team on to victory. So it should be for us in the spiritual realm.

Paul tells us to fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12). We are to press on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:13-14). A lot is at stake in this spiritual venture. The Lord has put us together, husband and wife, as life long partners so we can help and enable one another in the mission at hand. This is not just another athletic event. As a wife, I have a vital role to play in cheering our team on to the finish line. What we do here and now has huge ramifications for

all eternity.

Just last night at a Bible study, a young woman who hosts a large weekly gathering in her home, made a statement for everyone to hear. The Lord had revealed to her that she needed to stop doing the things she thought would be a help to her husband. Instead, she needed

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to find out from him what his true needs really were. Oh how blest our Christian fellowships would be if more women followed the example of this dear sister. Each of us needs to study our husband and ask how we might be a true help to him. This is the person who will make an effective cheerleader.

Often our men are out late dealing with the needs of the flock. They come home tired and weary. They need a refuge, a safe haven. Are we willing to be there for our man with meaningful support and encouragement? Are we as wives willing to put his needs ahead of our own so that the Lord's work can move forward? I know I can only do this for my husband as I pray for him day by day.

Scripture admonishes us to set our affections on things above and not on the things on the earth (Col 3:2). We are all building something while we are here. What will our legacy be? Will it be one we are proud of in light of eternity? Now is the time when we

make these critical decisions.

We all desire to hear His commendation, "Well done thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." With this in mind let's go for the gold (1 Cor 3:12-13). When we get to glory, we will be glad we did!

The Critical Teenage Years (continued from page 2)

need to consider that while parents discuss the morning message on the way home from church or at the dinner table, the children (especially the teens) are left out and therefore disinterested.

For this reason, in some assemblies (our own included), as a child reaches the threshold of the teenage years, they will be sitting with their parents to hear the message, and opportunities will be provided later to discuss it. The elders want at least 6 to 8 years for children to be hearing what we believe, and why we believe it - both in salvation truth and in church truth - before they head off to college.

Finally, ask what opportunities are available in the church for practical service and living out the truths being learned. This need not be expensive or complicated. Involving young people in setup and serving at chapel functions, giving testimonies or devotionals on informal occasions; sitting in on leadership discussions, opportunities to assist in visits to sick folks, or shut-ins, are all golden opportunities to talk over Scriptures and how they are being applied. Just yesterday a father told me about a

letter his daughter had written to someone in the public arena protesting a distortion of Scripture, and sharing her faith. That father is rejoicing that his child is walking in the truth. She is 12 years old.

Conclusion

As training of teens progresses, both in the home and in the assembly, parents should be replacing hope for their children with solid evidence that a child is sharing their values in spiritual matters.

also towards himself. The true Leader must always be able to disillusion. It is just this that is his responsibility and his real object. He must lead his following away from the authority of his person to the recognition of the real authority of orders and offices...He must radically refuse to become the appeal, the idol, i.e. the ultimate authority of those whom he leads."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* by Eric Metaxas

From the Q-File

On the Nature of true Leadership: "If he understands his function in any other way than as it is rooted in fact, if he does not continually tell his followers quite clearly of the limited nature of his task and of their own responsibility, if he allows himself to surrender to the wishes of his followers, who would always make him their idol—then the image of the Leader will pass over into the image of the misleader, and he will be acting in a criminal way not only towards those he leads, but

On knowing yourself: "If you want to learn something that will really help you, learn to see yourself as God sees you and not as you see yourself in the distorted mirror of your own self-importance. This is the greatest and most useful lesson we can learn: to know ourselves for what we truly are, to admit freely our weaknesses and failings, and to hold a humble opinion of ourselves because of them."

Unknown author

Teaching That Sticks (cont. from page 1)

Suffice it to say that the women Titus was to teach needed to hear those things. I might add that there are also other needs specific to older women in our fellowships: loneliness, financial and practical needs (see 1 Timothy 5 where Paul addresses this issue). Elders need to be aware of, to intentionally find out and address the needs of older women.

Younger women

Notice Titus is not instructed to teach younger women directly. Rather, he is to direct the older women to do that job, particularly in areas specific to the needs of younger women: love their husbands, love their children, be sensible, pure, workers at home and subject to husbands. Some of these, as mentioned above, are true of everyone. But, the older women were tasked with the primary responsibility for passing these truths on. It may be that Paul was aware of the inherent temptations or even conflict of interest that a younger man like Titus might have had in interacting with the young women. At any rate, elders should be constantly encouraging the older women to take on the responsibility for teaching these things to the younger ones. The goal is that the Word of God will not be dishonored through women disregarding these things.

Young men

The instruction to younger men sounds very much like that to older men: be sensible, be good examples in purity of

doctrine, dignified, sound in speech that is unassailable by detractors. It has been said, “Let someone disagree with your ideas, but do not give them ammunition for questioning your character.” Nothing will neutralize a man’s influence and fellowship more than serious character flaws, especially as reflected in what he says. Young men, full of energy and vitality, need to be vigilant in guarding their mouths. Elders, remind them of that!

Those under authority

Paul finally turns to the last grouping, those under authority. Specifically he addresses slaves. Some have tried to soften this by translating it “servant,” for fear that Paul may be endorsing slavery. While the Greek word translated here (doulos) can be applied to a wide range of servitude, slavery as we know it from our history books is certainly included. That was the general word used in the first century for our concept of “slave.”

We must be quick to point out that Paul was not endorsing slavery as a legitimate institution, nor was it his purpose to revolutionize the injustice involved in what many have called an economic institution and disregard for life. His purpose, rather, was to revolutionize lives within those structures (see the book of Philemon for a demonstration of this in action).

Paul tells Titus that Christians who happen to be slaves are no less expected

to live Christianly, despite their circumstances. Their situation in life does not give them license to give in to self-centered attitudes, but to live in godliness and submission. And if it is possible for slaves to live out a Christ-like character and response in the midst of slavery, then it is possible for *anyone* to live out their Christianity, regardless of any oppressive situation in which they may find themselves. So we can legitimately apply this teaching to employer-employee relationships or to any situation where one is under the authority of another. The instruction is the same, namely, to be subject, well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, showing good faith. This should be the goal for everyone under authority. Elders must continually remind Christian of this, for in fact we all are under authority in some part of our lives.

Our goal in this series of articles is not a full-fledged commentary on the book of Titus. Rather, we are looking for practical teaching for elders on how to shepherd the church. From this section, we learn that elders must teach the Word of God and apply it appropriately to the various groups of people under their care. In other words, the doctrines of Scripture must be presented and applied in ways that fit with people’s life circumstances. This is all part of being effective shepherds of the flock of God. This is teaching that sticks.



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