



*Bruce Butler*

This week's devotions are based on Paul's letter to Titus, who disciplined new Christians on the island of Crete. They were a rag-tag bunch of believers who faced opposition from false teachers. Titus's job was to help disciples stay close to sound doctrine while maintaining a posture of personal godliness and good works as witness to a watching world.

I live and pastor in Glendora, California, in the shadow of the city of Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Mountains. I neighbor at the coffee shop, work on handyman projects, read books, watch English mysteries, and hang out with folks while I look for ways I can join God's work around me.

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*BIBLE READING: Titus 1:1–4*

When I was in second grade, I was born again when I believed the basic knowledge of the truth of Jesus' love for me. After that, I discovered that each decision, large or small, was an opportunity to display godliness.

What is godliness? It's lived truth as we express Christ in our everyday world. As we grow in our discipleship, the truth of Christ begins to bear fruit in the choices we make. Godliness is the internal reverence we have for God translated into outward attitudes and behaviors. The more we understand what God has done for us in Christ, the more we will love God and live for God—and our faith will bear the fruit of godly living.

In today's text, Paul reveals his own response to the knowledge of the truth of Jesus Christ. He was saved for the purpose of being God's servant and doing the work of an apostle, proclaiming the hope of eternal life. You are to be like Paul and display godliness in your attitudes and actions. You are God's servant, doing God's work as an agent of Christ for the sake of others. You now live in relationship to God in every aspect of your life—born again in order to bear fruit in godly living. God's word has been entrusted to you, just as it was to Paul and Titus. You must share it with others, for this is the world's only hope of eternal life. This is God's eternal plan.

*SONG: So Send I You*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, I was born again for the purpose of living a godly life. Today may every decision I make display the fruit of godliness. Amen.*

—Bruce Butler

*BIBLE READING: Titus 1:5–9*

The greatest influencers in my life have been people of integrity: family, teachers, employers, church folks. They have taught me to be an influence myself through good choices. Now I'm able to influence others for the cause of Christ.

Titus's task on Crete was to appoint Christian influencers who had blameless reputations. Christian influencers were faithful in marriage, bringing up their children in Christian faith and having a blameless reputation amid a watching world. Instead of finding themselves falling prey to common moral blind spots like arrogance, addiction, anger, greed, and misuse of power, Christian influencers were to be gracious in hospitality, love the good, and exercise self-control, uprightness, holiness, and discipline. Finally, Christian influencers led others well because they themselves were faithful to the "knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness" (1:1), through faith in Jesus Christ. Doctrinal faithfulness influences not only believers but also, amazingly, opponents of the gospel of Christ.

Allow me to suggest some actions that fuel your Christian integrity to influence others. First, take responsibility to influence your home for Christ, including your marriage, your children, and your grandchildren. Second, seek to uncover your moral blind spots, confess them, and develop consistent Christlikeness in all your contexts. Finally, saturate your mind with Scripture so you will know Christ's truth that leads to personal godliness and recognition of error when you see it.

*SONG: Channels Only*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, I seek to be your channel of godly integrity. Help me influence others toward faith in you. Amen.*

—Bruce Butler

*BIBLE READING: Titus 1:10–16*

My son Drew has a friend who shares tales from his everyday life that are believable, relatable, and accessible. He effectively draws in listeners until they slowly begin to realize that his stories are actually personalized versions of popular movie plots. You feel fooled, but it's harmless fun.

After telling Titus what to look for in genuine Christian influencers (1:5–9), Paul now warns about other influencers who are bent on telling believable tales of false doctrine. Christians on Crete were being fooled, and it was not harmless fun. In fact, these false teachers were upsetting whole families (v. 11) and were a serious threat to Christian belief and practice.

We have our fair share of believable tales of false doctrine in our own day. How do you protect yourself from being fooled? By focusing on the truth of Christian doctrine so you can discern error. Christians influence by integrity, so let your attitudes and actions preach the gospel. Discipline yourself toward maturing faith. You need a plan, because maturity doesn't happen automatically; you make choices that deepen your maturity. Soak yourself in Scripture through regular study and reflection. Feed your heart and mind with truth by regularly checking in with God in prayer. Serve and give locally through Christ's church for the sake of others. Share your faith, because as you do, you will actually increase your faith.

To live 24/7 as a genuine Christian is our goal and prevents us from being fooled by false doctrinal narratives. Be so full of Jesus that you have no room for deception.

*SONG: Who Is on the Lord's Side?*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, you gave everything for your people at great cost. In response I give everything to you. Amen.*

—Bruce Butler

*BIBLE READING: Titus 2:1–10*

My grandma was short in stature. She lived in a compact house located in a small town, didn't travel much, and found joy in simple pleasures of family and church. But since she was a person who lived sound Christian doctrine, she was a powerful example to me of the life of Jesus.

Paul indicated to Titus that he was never so insignificant or powerless that he couldn't be a good example of Jesus on the island of Crete. He was to teach sound doctrine and life principles to Christians so they too could be examples of Jesus, not only to one another in Christian discipleship, but also to other islanders who were watching them closely. Crete was full of hostile opportunists who wanted nothing more than an easy excuse to discredit and censure Christians. Titus was to teach sound doctrine, so Christian behavior would reflect well on the cause of the gospel of Christ. Titus himself was to model good works and demonstrate integrity, seriousness, and sound speech (vv. 7–8 RSV).

Others around you see Jesus in you. Understand that sound doctrine leads to solid witness. Genuine belief and integrity are compelling. Disciple one another through your example. Behaviors, attitudes, and teachability demonstrate the soundness of the gospel message in your life. Good behavior brings honor to Christ. Living for others and doing good are always commended by a watching world. You are never powerless to be a good example. Let them see Jesus in you!

*SONG: Make Me a Blessing*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, fill my heart and mind with your truth and a desire to pursue sound doctrine. I want my life to be an example of Christlikeness. Amen.*

—Bruce Butler

*BIBLE READING: Titus 2:11–15 (NRSV)*

Years ago we took annual car trips from California to see family in Oklahoma. Three small kids packed in a compact car with enough to get us by for two weeks while driving nearly four thousand miles was quite a logistical feat. Time spent in the cramped car between home and fun with extended family required plenty of stops, a profusion of drinks and snacks, the promise of hotel swimming pools—and prolific grace for one another.

Having instructed the Christians on Crete on how to live for Christ amid a watching world (2:1–10), Paul comes to the theological heart of his letter: Christians are to live by God’s grace in light of Christ’s glorious appearing. Christians are on a journey to glory but must endure the trip through everyday life by God’s grace. Grace is present and active, teaching us “to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions” (v. 12). We live between grace and glory and must live differently because salvation and grace are currently at work in us. Christ redeems us “from all wickedness” so that he might “purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (v. 14). God does not pull us out of the world, but, like Titus and the Cretan church, calls us into the messiness to bring light into darkness and the hope of heaven to earth by doing good. Grace actively sustains us as “we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (v. 13).

*SONG: Grace Greater Than Our Sin*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, I am inspired by anticipation of your glorious appearing. Help me cooperate with your grace at work in me. Amen.*

—Bruce Butler

*BIBLE READING: Titus 3:1–11 (NRSV)*

My high school chemistry teacher made a difference in my life. Mr. Meyers wore wingtip shoes and was soft-spoken, but he taught with intensity. As a working chemist at a local oil refinery, he brought real-world experience to our lessons. But living as an open and devoted disciple to Jesus Christ was his real passion. Observing his gospel ways in class made a big difference to me. We all want to make a difference in our world through our work, our volunteer activities, our parenting and grandparenting, and our mission together as local churches.

Paul reminds Titus that Christ's salvation makes all the difference. Though sin deceives us into foolish selfishness, causing us to hurt ourselves and others, the "love of God our Savior appeared" (v. 4), and through "rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (v. 5) we were saved. Submission to authority also makes a difference as we are "peaceable and considerate, and always...gentle toward everyone" (v. 2) for the sake of our gospel witness. Doing good makes a difference. Christians are "ready to do whatever is good" (v. 1) and "to devote themselves to doing what is good" (v. 8). Often the bedrock of mission in today's world is doing good in everyday life. Finally, being gospel-focused makes a difference. This may go without saying, but we sometimes dissolve into "foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels...[which] are unprofitable and useless" (v. 9). Ask God to remove divisive pettiness from your heart and replace it with the centrality of the gospel.

*SONG: Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, I worship you for the difference your salvation makes in me and in others. Amen.*

—Bruce Butler

*BIBLE READING: Titus 3:12–15 (NRSV)*

For the last several years, our church has been involved in a ministry called the Compton Initiative ([www.justdogood.org](http://www.justdogood.org)). Known for gang violence, the city of Compton, California, has for over ten years been the recipient of Christ's love through acts of service and kindness by local Christians. It's having a gospel impact as homes, schools, churches, and neighborhoods undergo a renovation of hope as Christians just do good around them.

As Paul concludes his letter to Titus, he encourages Crete's Christians to "learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives" (v. 14). Eight times in this short letter Paul focuses on doing or teaching or being an example of good works. Why? Doing good is exemplified in Jesus' life and teaching: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). What happens when you do good? You help to change the world around you. Early Friends discovered the gospel impact that doing good in everyday life can make on others. As you do good, the gospel message is made alive in and through you. Jesus is good news for the world, so we evangelize and support missions and do good works.

Get involved in your community and just do good. Take someone a meal, foster a child, shop for a shut-in, mow a neighbor's lawn, babysit for a single mom, or volunteer at a food pantry. When done in Jesus' name, good works make a gospel impact.

*SONG: All for Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord Jesus, show me the good I am to do today in your name, and may it be a witness of your goodness and love. Amen.*

—Bruce Butler