

Titus 2:6-10

⁶ Likewise urge the young men to be **sensible**;

⁷ in all things show yourself to be an **example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified,**

⁸ **sound in speech** which is **beyond reproach**, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

⁹ Urge bondslaves to be **subject** to their own masters in everything, to be **well-pleasing, not argumentative,**

¹⁰ **not pilfering**, but showing all **good faith** so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

Since the Bible is written by God, every passage has multiple themes and layers that can be studied.

Some ways to study this passage are:

- 1) Take each phrase (“sensible,” “example of good deeds,” etc.) and do a word study—looking it up in the Greek, giving a definition--and then an example and application.
- 2) Why would having these qualities result in your opponent being “put to shame” and “having nothing bad to say about us”?
- 3) You can compare and contrast the admonitions between older men, older women, young women, young men, and bondslaves. You can show the strengths and weaknesses of each group.

We can easily spend weeks studying this passage, but in the short time that we have today we’re going to look at another theme in this passage.

Verses 6-8 are addressing young men and verses 9-10 are addressing bondslaves and although both sections have a similar focus, we are going to concentrate on verses 6-8.

What is the theme that we’re going to study in this passage? Let’s look at some of the key words and phrases.

- Be sensible
- Good deeds
- Purity in doctrine
- Sound speech
- Beyond Reproach
- Nothing bad, i.e. a good reputation

Paul is urging young men to develop godly character.

1. Is character important and why?

Well of course it's important because God commands us in this and other passages to develop godly character. But why is it important?

We're going to quickly look at two people in the Bible to answer this question.

See how quickly you can figure out who this one is.

The first person had a divine calling. An angel came and proclaimed to a barren woman that she shall have a son.

This angel proclaimed that her son would be consecrated from birth and would be a great deliverer of her people.

He grew up to be strong and a leader of his people.

Do you know who this is?

This man is Samson. From the womb God called him to be a Nazirite, which means "holy unto God." This was quite a start in life. In fact, you'd have to put him right up there with John the Baptist and Jeremiah among men who had this kind of divine calling before he was even born.

He was also big and strong, and he was probably intelligent seeing how clever his riddle was.

He was a leader and a judge in Israel so he had power and fame. He had it all and he did many great things. He killed a lion with his bare hands and he killed a thousand men with only the jawbone of a donkey.

He was also a Nazirite and as a Nazirite he made a vow not to do three things.

- He had to abstain from wine and grapes.
- He could not cut his hair.
- He could not touch a corpse or a grave.

But for all that Samson had: a divine calling, looks, power, and authority he lacked character.

As a Nazirite he only had to restrain himself from doing three things and yet he broke them all. This showed that he didn't respect his calling from God and, therefore, he didn't respect God.

He married a Philistine which violated God's command, and he also rejected his parents' counsel.

By going into a vineyard when he was supposed to avoid grapes showed that he didn't care about temptation and purity.

He married because she "looked good" and so lust ruled over judgement.

And we could go on.

And because of his lack of character his life worsened.

Judges 16:21 is perhaps the definitive verse of his life, “Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he was a grinder in the prison.”

- We see first that he was made blind, not just physically but blind to what God had made him.
- Then with ropes they bind him, but also his sins had bound him.
- Finally he was made to grind in the prison, but his sins and wayward life had already ground him down to a shell of a man. He went from being the leader of Israel and freely roaming the hills and cities to living in a dungeon. His sin had made his world smaller.

Blind, bind, and grind—this is what will happen to a life lacking character.

*** Show picture with the downward arrow of Samson ***

There was a brilliant and impressive start but a bad ending because there was nothing to sustain it.

Now let’s look at someone else.

See if you can figure out who this is.

This person had no special calling at birth.

He was an uneducated fisherman.

Of course this is Peter.

After Jesus called him, Peter made a lot of mistakes.

Jesus once said to him, “Get behind me Satan.”

He blew it on the Mount of Transfiguration when he equated Jesus with Moses and Elijah by saying, “I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (Matthew 17:4).

But he had two particularly egregious misgivings.

One was that in order to save himself he denied Jesus three times. He gave up on Jesus.

And second, after Jesus was crucified he gave up everything and went back to fishing. He just quit.

In both of these incidences he showed a lack of perseverance.

But in the book of Acts we see him grow.

In Acts 1 he takes charge.

In Acts 2 he preaches and 5,000 are saved.

He is the one who brings the Gospel to the Gentiles.

And in his final appearance in Acts 15 he speaks and clarifies truth at the Council at Jerusalem.

This same man who quit when Jesus was taken away said this in his last sentence in his last letter in 2 Peter 3:17-18.

“You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand [what was this “beforehand”? That Jesus is coming back. See the difference? When Peter was young and impetuous he left the cause when things got rough. Now after growing in character and faith he stayed unfaltering in the conviction of Jesus coming back.], be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

*** Show picture of the ascending arrow of Peter ***

Peter started at the bottom, but he respected God and so he grew.

See the difference in these two men?

Samson started strong but lacked character. What were his last words? They were a prayer of revenge and his own death.

Peter started out weak but grew in character. His last words in the Bible were a desire to glorify God forever.

*** Show picture of X without the caption ***

How do you want to end?

Does godly character matter? Absolutely. It will determine the course your life takes and whether or not it will end well.

Realize this: The world does not need you; rather, the world desperately needs to see Christ in you.

This will happen when Christ shines through your godly character.

It's been said that there are really five Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and you and that to most people you will be the only Gospel that they read.

This is why Paul spent most of Titus chapter 2 urging people to develop godly character. He wanted them and us to fight the good fight and to finish the course. He wanted God to be glorified.

*** Show picture of X with the caption ***

Faith + Obedience = Godly Character

2. What is our target, our model, for godly character?

How do we develop good character? It doesn't come from reading "Godly Character for Dummies."

Proverbs 29:19 says, "A slave will not be instructed by words *alone*; for though he understands, there will be no response."

Good character doesn't come from a text; it comes from example, from models.

We see this as early in children. The child's question is not "Do I want to be good?" but "Who do I want to be like?" Their character is built not from dictates and commands but from watching people, from their models. You want to know how parents act; then watch their children.

So who is our example? Who is our model?

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" and in Ephesians 5:1 he says, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children..."

The ultimate example of who we should become is God.

*** Show picture with the target on it ***

He is our target. He is our model.

There are many passages in Scripture that verify this. Here are two.

Matthew 5:48, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

1 Peter 1:15-16, "¹⁵but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.'"

Our target is clear; it is God. It is not just to be better than your co-workers or your neighbors. It is not just to be better than celebrities or professional athletes. It is to be as perfect and as holy as God.

We want to compare ourselves to other people. "See, I'm better than he is. I don't curse like he does. I go to church every week and he doesn't." That's always low hanging fruit. You can always find people who are less spiritual than yourself.

But God says in 2 Corinthians 10:12, "but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding." When we compare ourselves to other people God says that we just don't get it. We don't understand because when we compare ourselves to other people it's so that we will win. God wants us to compare ourselves to Him, to Jesus Christ. When we do that then we want to grow.

But you must realize this, God never asks us to be something that He Himself already isn't and He never asks us to do something that He already hasn't done.

We see this throughout the Bible. As I read these three verses see if you can determine what Paul is saying our motivation is.

Romans 15:7, “Therefore, accept one another, **just as** Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”

Ephesians 5:2, “and walk in love, **just as** Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us...”

Colossians 3:13, “bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; **just as** the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

Did you catch that? We should do something because God has already done that for us. The list can go on and on. Here is one more.

1 Peter 3:21, “For you have been called for this purpose, **since Christ also suffered for you**, leaving you **an example** for you to follow in His steps”

The book of Ephesians has six chapters. In the last three chapters Paul is exhorting the Ephesians to live in a godly manner. He is laying down some pretty heavy stuff. Paul’s exhortations come like a trip hammer, do this, do this, do this over and over and over for 89 verses covering about every topic that you can imagine. But why can Paul lay this on us? Because in the first three chapters he tells us about all that God has done for us and who He is. And it is because of these first three chapters that he can start chapter 4 with “Therefore.” “Therefore!”

- Because God has saved you by His grace – Therefore walk in a manner
- Because God has sealed you in Him with the Holy Spirit – Therefore walk in a manner
- Because God has knit you into a church with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone – Therefore walk in a manner

“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, **implore** you to walk in **a manner worthy of the calling** with which you have been **called...**”

Paul can spend 89 verses telling us what we should become because God has already gone before us and is giving us the abundant and sufficient grace to finish the task.

I am convinced that if you lack a godly characteristic it is because you don’t see it clearly in God. In other words, you have a deficient view of that quality in God and that is why you don’t have it in your own life.

If you are not a loyal person then I bet that you don’t understand God’s loyalty to you.

If you are a selfish person then you haven’t seen how Jesus considered you more important than Himself and emptied Himself.

If you have a hard time forgiving other people it is because you don’t comprehend God’s forgiveness of you. Think about it, if you truly understand the depth and multitude of your sin, if you truly comprehend what God did for you on the cross, if you fully appreciate Romans 8:1,

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” then how could you possibly refuse to forgive one person’s sin against you?

We see Paul laying this foundation in Titus. Before he gets into the qualifications of an elder and the admonitions in chapter 2 he points to Jesus Christ as our provider and example.

Listen to how much Paul packs into the first four verses of this book.

- 1) That God chose us
- 2) That God gave us the knowledge of the truth
- 3) That God has given us hope and eternal life
- 4) That God cannot lie
- 5) That God gives us promises formed an eternity ago
- 6) That we have a common faith
- 7) That we have grace
- 8) And we have peace

All from where?—Jesus Christ our Savior.

What a foundation!

This is the “Faith” part of the equation.

*** Show again picture of X with the caption ***

But when we don’t set Jesus as our target then we will set up other models.

*** Show picture without the target ***

All of these people have good qualities. But without the standard of Jesus Christ how will we know which traits to imitate? The problem is that we will likely choose based on success rather than on righteousness.

3. How do we hit the target?

Here are four ways. Much more can be said about this, but we’ll just keep it to four.

- a) Read the Bible every day.

It doesn’t matter if you read in the morning, at lunch, or in the evening. Just read it.

God doesn’t usually speak to us in an audible voice. At least He never has to me. But He has shared His private thoughts, His plans, and His heartfelt desires with us in the Bible.

In John 14:5, “Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?’”

The Bible tells us the way. But if you don't read it then you, likewise, will ask "How will I know the way?"

And what was Jesus' answer in verse 6? "Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

See, Jesus is the target; He is the model.

Before we read the Bible we should always pray. Pray not just for wisdom and understand but also for humility. This is because the Word of God wants to change us. The Holy Spirit wants to dig in and cut out that sin and that can hurt. We don't want to leave our comfort zone. We want to think that we are good enough the way we are. We want to believe that people will love us and accept for who we are right now and so why go through the pain of change? But it's exactly for that reason that we need to pray.

Augustine was known for having a problem with lust and licentiousness when he was young. So he famously prayed, "Lord make me pure but not yet." We don't want to be like that. Our prayer should be, "Lord make me pure, now."

But just don't read the Bible, study it. Do your own studies on Biblical themes, people, events, books, topics, anything. This is where God can really speak to you.

Two semesters ago I taught the class "How to Get the Most out of Studying the Bible." If you took that class then hopefully you have some good ideas on how to do a Bible study. If you didn't attend that class then you deserve to suffer.

b) Attend church and be involved.

God will use His people to reveal Himself to you. This might be by way of example, through words of counsel and encouragement, and by providing an opportunity for you to serve them or to be served by them.

Church is probably the best place for you to use your spiritual gifts.

Plus you get to praise God through song and hear God's word in the sermon.

All of this puts your eyes on Jesus.

c) Worship.

Worship can be the forgotten Christian disciple. We have no problem asking God for things. We can easily praise God for what He has done for us. But worshipping God simply for who He is can be difficult. We like to include ourselves in everything even if we're not the focus. But worship excludes us. It is a focus wholly on God. We are out the picture. That is hard. But you know what? Worship will bring your heart closer to God than anything else.

d) Prayer.

Spend time talking to God. Pray every chance that you get. Pray driving to work, pray when you're waiting for the microwave to finish, pray when you're walking anywhere. Pray by yourself, pray with your spouse, pray with your children, pray with other Christians.

Prayer gives you a constant presence of God.

Charles Spurgeon said, "True prayer is neither a mere mental exercise nor a vocal performance. It is far deeper than that - it is spiritual transaction with the Creator of Heaven and Earth."

Can you think of a verse that preaches all four of these disciplines?

Acts 2:42, "They were **continually devoting** themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

And what was the result? Acts 2:47, "And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

Do you want to be an effective evangelist? Continually devote yourself to these basics as a person and as a church.

*** Show picture again of X with the caption ***

This is the "Obedience" part of the equation.

In conclusion

Back in Titus 2:6-10.

Paul starts this section by "urging," "entreating," "admonishing," "exhorting" the young men. He is "beseeching" them to strive to develop this godly character.

Godly character is not frosting on the cake. It is not a bonus that you give back to God as a "thank you." This is critical stuff.

It is so critical that the word that Paul uses in verse 7 for "show" is "tupos" which literally means an impress of a die.

He does not want this character just painted on the surface where it can wear or scratch off.

*** Write a godly character quality on a piece of paper (like "Kind") in pencil and then erase it ***

God doesn't want character that will disintegrate the moment when pressure is applied and trials come.

God wants it pressed into us.

*** Use the embosser to emboss a piece of paper ***

God wants our godly character to go deep, to be hard to remove, to remain.

- Be sensible
- Be an example of good deeds
- With purity in doctrine
- Of sound speech
- And beyond reproach

As so, as God told Paul to write to Titus, I likewise beseech you to pursue godly character in Jesus Christ our Savior.