

# Letters to Live By

## TITUS 1

### **FIRST DAY:** Introduction

For a moment, imagine yourself being part of an evangelistic campaign in the most corrupt, immoral, and tumultuous island in the known world. Now imagine that, after the campaign has finished, you are the one who is left to raise up godly leadership and establish churches. That would be a formidable task indeed—yet, that is exactly what the apostle Paul tasked Titus with doing!

Crete is an island in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Greece; it is 156 miles long and only thirty miles wide. It was the ancient home of the Philistines. However, by Paul's time, five fiercely independent factions inhabited the island, with pirates and sailors as the main visitors. According to Greek mythology, the god Zeus was born and died on the island of Crete, and came back to life as the greatest of all the Greek gods.

It is unknown when the first church was established on Crete. Some believe that the gospel was taken to the island by men who were present during the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–11). Others believe that Paul, after he was released from prison, went with Titus on the first evangelistic mission to Crete. Whatever the case, there was a true work of God on the notorious island of Crete, and Paul left Titus to establish churches there by raising up and training godly leadership.

Titus was a beloved companion of Paul. Although he is not mentioned in the book of Acts, Paul mentioned him over thirteen times in his epistles. In his letters, Paul referred to Titus as his *brother*, *partner*, *fellow worker*, and *son*. To the Corinthians, Paul spoke highly of Titus's character and ministry (2 Corinthians 7:13–16; 8:16–23). Paul took Titus, a Greek, with him to Jerusalem to introduce him to the church council as a valid representative of the great work of God in and among the Gentiles (Galatians 2:1–4).

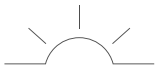
Paul also sent Titus to Corinth to represent the apostle and quell some of the problems and divisions that had surfaced in the Corinthian church. According to Paul's commendation in 2 Corinthians, Titus's mission was a success. This could be why Paul entrusted Titus with the mission on the island of Crete.

In this epistle, Paul reminded Titus to exercise his God-given authority in bringing order to the churches in Crete by:

- Establishing godly leadership for both men and women
- Refuting false teachers
- Exemplifying and encouraging good works among the believers

By doing so, Titus would establish the churches there.

The epistle to Titus is relevant for believers today because it contains: great lessons about how truth affects behavior; important doctrinal statements concerning the deity of Jesus; requirements for church leadership; and astounding exhortations, as well as fascinating contrasts between the believer and the culture. This short epistle is rich with edification, instruction, and encouragement.



#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

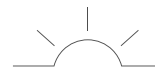
Paul referred to himself with the phrase, a *servant of God*. This phrase in the Septuagint is used also of Moses, Samuel, David, Daniel, and other Old Testament figures who were servants of God.

*Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate your heart and mind to all the wonders contained in the epistle to Titus.*

#### **SECOND DAY:** Read Titus 1:1–3

1. As was his custom, Paul opened his letter to Titus with a personal introduction. From Titus 1:1a, note and comment on how Paul identified himself.

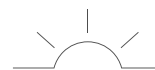
- a. Paul had alternated these two titles throughout his epistles to describe his calling, but this is the only instance in which he used them together. What do you find interesting about this?
2. Paul indicated two aims of his calling. Use Titus 1:1b to record what he was called *according to*:
- a. *The \_\_\_\_\_ of God's \_\_\_\_\_*
- (1) This meant that Paul was called to strengthen the *faith* of God's people. Why is this essential?
- b. *The \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ which accords with \_\_\_\_\_.*
- (1) The Greek word for *acknowledgment* is *epignosis*, which indicates *precise and correct knowledge*. Why is this kind of knowledge particularly important as it relates to the *truth* of God's Word?
- (2) What link do you see between *acknowledgment of the truth* and *godliness*?
3. Because of this *truth*, what *hope* does the believer have? Titus 1:2a




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**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

The epistle of Titus was an official document as well as a personal letter. Therefore, Paul, knowing his letter to Titus would circulate among the believers on the island of Crete, made sure to present his apostolic credentials.




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**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

The Greek word for *godliness* is *eusebeia*, which means *devotion*, and *reverence for God and what He calls sacred*.

- a. Use Titus 1:2b to explain the certainty of this *hope*. See also Colossians 1:5.

(1) Connect this with Numbers 23:19 and Hebrews 6:17–19a and share how this speaks to you concerning the certainty of your *hope*.

4. Titus 1:3 (NLT) says, *And now at just the right time He has revealed this message, which we announce to everyone. It is by the command of God our Savior that I have been entrusted with this work for Him.* Use this statement to remark on the following concerning the *message* of the gospel:

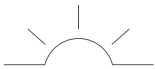
- a. Its timing (see also Romans 5:6 and Galatians 4:4–5)

- b. Its audience

- c. Its entrustment

5. As Paul was entrusted by God with the gospel message, so too are all believers (Mark 16:15). How does this inspire you?





### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

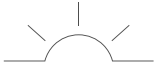
The Greek word for *dissipation* is *asotia*, which implies riotous living. It is from the same root as the word describing the prodigal son in Luke 15:13.

4. Although it is not recorded, Paul had apparently ministered with Titus in Crete. According to Titus 1:5, Paul had *left* Titus in Crete for two purposes. Write them below:
  - a. *That you should* \_\_\_\_\_
    - (1) The phrase *set in order* was a medical term used of setting a broken bone. What does this convey about the charge given to Titus?
  - b. *And* \_\_\_\_\_
    - (1) Why do you think this was important? See also Ephesians 4:11–15.
  
5. Take a moment to pray for God's *grace, mercy, and peace* for those in leadership at your church.

### FOURTH DAY: Read Titus 1:6–9

1. Paul had *commanded* Titus to appoint *elders*, and then gave him the qualifications for this office. From Titus 1:6, note and remark on the qualifications for:
  - a. The *man* himself
  - b. His marriage
  - c. His *children*

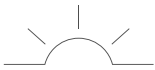





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**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

A bishop is to be a steward of God. *A steward does not own but manages all that his master puts into his hands.*<sup>1</sup>  
 –Warren Wiersbe




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**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

Bible scholars note that the titles of elder (*presbyteros*) and bishop (*episkopos*) were often given to the same person; *elder* refers to the person and *bishop* refers to the office.

- (1) Observe that in writing to Titus, Paul twice included *blameless* as a requirement for elders and bishops. Considering the notorious culture of Crete, why do you think this was particularly important?
  
3. According to Titus 1:9, how should a qualified bishop:
  - a. Esteem God's *Word* (verse 9a)
  
  - b. Use God's *Word* (verse 9b)
  
4. Share a way God's *Word* has proven *faithful* in your life.

**FIFTH DAY:** Read Titus 1:10–16

1. To underscore the necessity of *holding fast the faithful word*, Paul described *those who contradict* it, indicating *especially those of the circumcision* (Titus 1:9–10). He was referring to legalistic Jews obsessed with man-made traditions and fables (see 1 Timothy 1:4–7). Use Paul's warning in Titus 1:10–16 to describe and comment on these people, as well as the inhabitants of Crete:
  - a. What they were like (verses 10, 12, 15b, 16)



(1) What do you find alarming about their description?

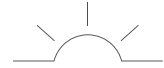
(2) Bible scholar John Stott described these false teachers as having *ritual without reality, form without power, claims without character, faith without works*.<sup>2</sup> How does this explain Paul's severity with these men?

b. What they did (verses 11b, 14b)

c. How they should be dealt with (verses 11a, 13)

(1) Notice that the purpose was for them to become *sound in the faith*. What does this suggest to you? See also Jude 22–23.

2. From Titus 1:15, what contrast do you note between the *pure* and the *defiled*?



#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Paul quoted the poem, *Cretica*, by Epimenides (a 6th Century BC poet and philosopher) in Titus 1:12 and in Acts 17:28. In this poem, Minos (the first mythological king of Crete and supposedly the son of Zeus) addressed the god Zeus: *They fashioned a tomb for you, holy and high one, Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies. But you are not dead: you live and abide forever, for in you we live and move and have our being.*

- a. What ramifications do you see in this verse concerning church leadership?
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3. Why do you think those who are *insubordinate* are so dangerous to the church?
    - a. Take a moment to pray for your church leadership in dealing with those who are *insubordinate*. See also 2 Thessalonians 3:2.

**SIXTH DAY:** Review

1. From your study this week, share something that stood out to you concerning:
  - a. Paul
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Titus
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. Crete

- d. Elders and bishops
  
  - e. The insubordinate
  
  - f. The faithful Word of God
2. From your study of Titus 1, what exhortation(s) did you find to **live by**?