

On Being a Young Christian Man

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It's been a wonderful month from my perspective, anyway, and it's been so very foundational, not only to our individual lives and what we are to be like as Christians, but really foundational to the whole future of our church, because the church is, in one sense, it's a collection of individual Christians who are pursuing godliness in their lives, and the strength of our testimony as a church is going to be built upon the individual lives of the people who name Truth Community as their home.

We are in the book of Titus chapter 2. You can turn there. As we have considered the role of older men, and older women, and young women last week, as we've done this, we've really outlined what the life of a true Christian is supposed to be and what it's supposed to be like. And we come to the final section of that here this morning in verses 6 through 8 in Titus chapter 2 as Paul addresses the young men in the congregation. There are a lot of young men in our congregation, men with developing families, those that are in their teens or early 20's, and those who are just starting to approach that. And I want to just say to you up front that I have such a sense of urgency about this message for the young men in our congregation, because as life has gone on in my own life, and I just see the nature of things changing in the world around us at an accelerated pace it seems, and I've often found myself wondering on my knees in prayer what is the future of the church going to be in such a deteriorating time like this? And it can be a little bit discouraging. It can be a little bit intimidating if you look at it only from the earthly perspective, but I want to say something to you young men, you male teenagers, you young men that are just approaching life, you haven't met your future spouse yet, and you're waiting, and you're just developing your spiritual life. I want you to embrace what the future has for you, because the decline in the church and the decline in the world is your spiritual opportunity to stand out for the Lord Jesus Christ. The opportunity is there, for the men who would rise up and grab it, to show forth what a true Christian looks like and to proclaim the true Gospel of Christ. The enveloping darkness simply makes the light stand out all the more by contrast. And so, when I'm thinking properly, when I'm thinking in light of the power of the Word of God, the power of Christ, the power of the Gospel, I'm not discouraged at all when I am thinking properly. You just have to realize that this dark time is our opportunity, and there is a particular opportunity for you young men who are going to be the future leaders of the church of Christ. And don't wait, in the urgency of this message for you, those young men in here, the urgency is don't wait and don't

postpone your sense of responsibility and embracing that challenge. Even as a young man, even as a young teenager take the opportunity and embrace the fact and say, "My life, no matter what anyone else does, my life is going to be marked by faithfulness to Christ. I'm going to be like Ezra. I'm going to set my mind to study the Word of God, to teach it, and to obey it." Set that as the mark of your life. Set that as the aim and goal of your life and watch what the Lord does as a response to that commitment.

What we see as we come to verses 6 through 8 in the book of Titus is how it is, what it is, in a practical sense, that a young man does to set his aim for such a life as this, and it's practical. I love that about it. It's very practical in what it says. Look at verses 6 through 8 as I read them to open us up here this morning.

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.

Paul lays it out for the young men right there, and we're going to look at it in terms of three different principles that he sets forth for the young men to take place. First of all, you young men, and this really applies to all of us. As we said, as we go through this, Paul addresses directly individual groups, but there's a spillover effect for all of us. And so, as we address the young men this morning, the rest of us need to understand that Paul is speaking to us too, as we watch and observe. And first of all, Paul gives the exhortation to young men. The exhortation to young men, that's the first point if you're taking notes here this morning. Look at verse 6. It's such a direct and simple exhortation that he tells Titus to command and to urge upon the young men on the island of Crete. He says, "Urge the young men to be sensible in all things." Be sensible in all things. Earlier in the passage, Paul had told the older men to maintain a dignity in life and to manifest a maturity in faith. He had spoken to the older women, and he had told them what to be like as a godly woman, and the younger women, and he had laid all of this out. And there's a sense in which, as you go through the passage, that the younger men are kind of sitting back and watching this unfold, waiting for the exhortation to come to them. Well, you younger men, even as you think about the very structure of this passage, what you need to start with is, you need to start by looking around at the living examples around you. Identify the men who stand out as particularly godly, and observe their example, and emulate it. Be sensible. Be mindful of the fact that God has put mature Christians around you, and draw upon their example. Be a young man that doesn't simply go about pursuing with your peers the foolishness of the world around. Set your goals higher than that. Set your goals upon the men who have manifested the fruit of true Christian maturity, and find yourself pursuing them to speak with them, to learn from them, to observe their example. And as you watch, perhaps, as an unmarried man, as you watch godly older women, watch them. Observe them. Get a sense of what a godly home looks like, and let the corporate example of the people of God become a vehicle of instruction in your life that you're receptive to and that you are conscious of pursuing.

You say, "How can you see all of that in the passage?" Well, look at the first word of verse 6. Paul says, "Likewise." And so, Paul is connecting this command to "be sensible in all things." He says, "Titus, likewise, urge the young men." It's following the parallel of everything that he had said in verses 1 through 5 up to this point. And so, the exhortation, the primary exhortation to you young men, comes down to one simple thing that's easy to remember. Maybe Paul gave you just one, because he knew how easy it would be to be distracted. Follow through. Get this, and imprint it upon your mind. Paul says, "Be sensible in all things." Be sensible. Be intelligent in your approach. Use your mind to assess life and to determine the priorities by which you will live, rather than being a man who follows his impulses, follows his desires, and simply follows the crowd around. You young men that are sitting here, you must recognize the fact, as we're going to see in a couple verses later, that the Gospel is serious, that the Word of God is real, and when the Bible teaches you and instructs you, the Bible is instructing you for keeps, I like to say. That God means what He says. He intends for you to act upon this. Your approach to being a Christian, to being a young Christian man, should not be one that simply checks off the box of being in church on Sunday, and then you get back to what real life is. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no! Real life for you, as a young Christian man, is being a living godly Christian, and that doesn't stop when you walk out of church on Sunday morning. This is what animates you. This is what motivates you 24/7. This is a comprehensive approach to life.

Paul says, to "be sensible in all things." And so, you young men on the verge of life, looking forward to what the future has for you, listen to me, and listen to me carefully: settle it in your heart, if you haven't already, like Job did, settle it in your heart that you are not going to hand yourself over to the impulsive desires of youth. Settle that in your mind. Realize the significance of this, and burn it deep into your heart. "Whatever anyone else does, I, myself, will not be a man who hands myself over to those impulsive desires." And once you do, let me put it this way, let me state it in the negative, and I mean this by way of encouragement and exhortation, but those of you that are 13, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 30, as you start to move down that chronological time frame, you start to know more instinctively what I'm saying, but for you young teenagers in the audience in particular, understand this. Take this seriously, what I'm about to say: the habits that you start to cultivate, the things that you start to pursue, even at this young point, become the things that you start to pursue now, become the habits that you ingrain, and it becomes what controls you for the rest of your life. If you have any doubt about that, find a reasonably transparent man in the audience and ask him, "Did you start some bad habits early in your life that still affect you today?" If that man is honest, he'll say with a humble, chastened heart, "Yeah, that's true. That's true."

I'm so much on the verge of addressing some of you individually by name, but I'll just do it with eye contact, how's that instead of calling you out, calling you out by name? Understand that even as a young teenage developing man that you can take a heart commitment that says, "Christ, I belong to you, and I am going to be set apart for you, and I am going to separate myself. And give me grace to keep myself from the destructive pursuit of impulses that will become habits that control my life." Do that. Even as a young person, you have a responsibility before the Lord Jesus Christ to

consecrate your life to him. If you are old enough to understand the words that I'm saying, understand that you have accountability for what you hear and how you respond to it. And I say these things with animation. I say them with urgency, not at all because I'm displeased with any of you. That's the furthest thing from my mind. I'm greatly encouraged by what I see of the young people in our church. No, it's a sense of urgency to impress upon you the seriousness and the urgency of it. I don't assume that I have next week to talk with you about these things. And so, I want you to embrace them because this is what the Word of God calls you to. This is not optional for you.

Look at verse 6 with me again. Paul, using the imperative, says, "Urge the young men to be sensible in all things." The "in all things" there, I realize that's after the verse break, but the verse breaks are sometimes a little bit arbitrary and unnecessary in terms of where they fell. So, understand what Jesus Christ is calling upon you as a young man. Look at the words of the text with me. Put your eyes on your Bible right now, and realize that Jesus Christ through His Word is calling you and commanding you as a young man to be sensible in all things. Now, I saw a headline this week. I did not read the accompanying article, but it simply verifies what all of us could see in the world around us. It said that the age 25 had become the new 18 in terms of becoming an adult. It used to be that once you hit 18 you were assumed to be a man. You were considered an adult and expected, here's the key, expected to live up to those kinds of responsibilities. Well, now, the world has shifted so much that to be 25 and still be a foolish man out pursuing your desires is somehow acceptable in society. We know what that is in light of God's word that's in front of us. It's a cultural symptom that young men are not being sensible. If they were being sensible, they would embrace the responsibility of life and start living by it. Not so for the young men in Truth Community Church. You recognize that, and you say, "I reject that, and I am going to pursue being sensible in all things, because that is the call of God on my life." Yes, you young men at Truth Community, recognize that drift and make a personal decisive turn against it. Here's what you say in the depths of your heart. Here's what you say in the depths of your heart. With all of your desires united in this one single direction, you say, "The world may be like that, but not me. I will not be like that. I reject this world as part of the fruit of the repentance of trusting Christ in my life. I reject that, and I'm going to pursue being sensible and living in a self-controlled way."

Now let's be clear. A serious approach to life doesn't mean that you don't enjoy relationships. It simply recognizes that life matters, and that you're going to give an account to God. And so, you live with reverence. What does that look like? You say to yourself, "Okay, Pastor, I'm with you. Give me some things to help me know what to aim at." Well, let's control your thoughts. Control your tongue. Control your temper. Spend less money than you earn. Do what you say that you will do. Stay away from the dark side of the Internet. All these practical, sensible things that simply say, "I'm going to order my life toward self-control. I'm not going to hand myself over to the impulses of my heart or the temptations of this world, and I'm just going to pursue these simple principles of life."

Now, I can hear someone say, "Yeah, in your thoughts and in your temper. Spend less than you earn. That doesn't sound very spiritual. What about all the finer points of

theology and such things?" Well, let me give you a verse to encourage you to think along these simple lines. Theology is absolutely essential. Theology is incredibly important, but don't make, oh young men, do not make the fatal spiritual mistake of divorcing your study of theology from your practical outworking of holiness in your life. Those two things were never meant to be separated, and you don't have to watch very many Internet discussions about theology to realize that the things that come out of people's mouths, even in those discussions, are inconsistent with the godliness that theology is supposed to produce. So, you, as a young man, make this clear in your mind. "I'm not going to separate those two, and I'm going to focus on faithfulness in little things." I'll give you a word from Jesus Christ to encourage you in being sensible even in these little things. Look at Luke chapter 16 verse 10. It was Jesus, himself, who said, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much, and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much." You see, fellows, the principle is faithfulness, not the sphere in which it is exercised. You be faithful in those small things. Those of you that are still living at home under your parents' authority. Honor your father and mother. Speak with respect to them. Do what they tell you to do. This is part of your obedience to God's greater command for you to be sensible in all things. This plays out in the very details of life.

One of the many, many things that I'm encouraged about in terms of what's happening in the life of Truth Community is seeing the relationships that are starting to develop between some of our young people in the junior high and high school levels and a little bit beyond that, seeing those relationships gather together. Listen, as you're thinking about those relationships and those friendships that are developing and growing here, I want you to think about something, and I want you to do this, because it's only right that you would in the presence of God. You young people with those kinds of cultivating relationships: commit vertically to Christ and then commit horizontally to each other that, in so far as it depends on your power, that you will be devoted to Christ. That you will live for Christ, come what may. Settle that basic principle deep in your heart, and then become vessels of mutual encouragement and accountability to one another in that Foolishness has invaded the world. Foolishness has invaded the Church of Jesus Christ. You see it in worldly immaturity. You see it, for example, in the charismatic excesses that are all around us and that people embrace and develop as a philosophy of ministry, simply because it can attract a crowd. Well, look at that as a young man and say, "I reject that. I reject that. I separate myself." And here's the thing. Here's the way that you must think as a young man. Look, I totally get and understand that you have every opportunity to pursue the foolishness and sinfulness of this world. I get that. I get that. And here's how you need to frame your mind to think about that. It's much easier to step into sin than it is to step out of it and take steps toward godliness. I get that, but, young man, here's what I say to you. Here's what I say in response to the Word of God to you: when you look at the ease of sin that is all around you, don't view that as your opportunity to join in it. The fact that it's easy, don't say, "Well then, that makes it easy. I'll go that route." Don't think that way! Rather, see the ease of sin. See the ease of foolishness and say, "Whoa! That's my opportunity to step away and go the different direction. I see this foolishness. I'm not going to join with it. This is my opportunity, as I see it, to step out of it and stand

apart from it and pursue being a sensible, godly young man," in response to the Lord that you say bled for your sins.

This is the way that you have to think. Paul is laying down things that have a practical impact on our lives, but he is laying down the things that the principles that utterly guide your thinking and your response to life. Do you see it? This is not about simple external behavior. Paul's talking about an entire way to approach life, and I have to always pause at points like this and realize that there are some of you that are here apart from Christ. You haven't repented. You haven't put your faith in Christ. You still love the world. You find it hard to pay attention, because you really don't care. You're here just because mom and dad brought you. Look, once again, the Word of God is coming to you by the Spirit of the Word of God. The Spirit of God is taking this Word and calling upon you to turn to Christ. Hear the call. Young women as well, leave your foolish life behind and turn to Christ. Respond to the Gospel. Respond to Christ who said, "Follow me." Isn't it time, you young people, men and women, boys and girls alike, isn't the time passed sufficient for the foolishness that you've been pursuing in your life? Isn't it enough? How much more time do you want to pursue sin? Stop it! Let the Spirit of God stop you in your tracks, just like Christ did the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, and say, "This is the day that I turn to Christ." Don't assume by your youth that you can get around to this later. Every time, listen to me. Listen to me, every time you dismiss the Gospel, every time you dismiss a tender appeal from your parent to turn to Christ, to give up your sin and trust Christ, every time that you look away when the Word of God starts to address your heart, every time that you do that, you're making it easier to do it again the next time. You're making it easier to get harder and harder in it, and I worry. I, in my heart, I weep over some of you. I labor over you in prayer, knowing that you are so cold and indifferent, and you think it's not a big deal. It is. So, I plead with you as an ambassador of Christ. You young people, in particular, turn away from your sin. Turn away from your cold indifference. Turn away from your questioning of God and submit to Christ, the one who laid His life down for you. Those of you that are still outside of Christ, it is time for you to be sensible and to come to Christ and to not continue to presume on His grace. That's a sensible thing to do. If you're not a Christian, you're going to hell. Wouldn't it be sensible to address that as the most urgent priority in life today? Of course it would be. Be sensible in all things. That's the exhortation that Paul makes to the young men.

Now, secondly, Paul gives an example to the young men. We can put it this way. Just mark your second point: the example to young men. He has given the exhortation to the young men. Now, he gives the example to young men. And in this verse that's about to come, really brings all of us back into it even more. Look at verse 7 with me. Paul is speaking to Titus as the spiritual leader in that region. What Paul tells him is that "Titus, you have to devote yourself to being personally an example of the things I'm calling these young men to." Look at what he says in verse 7. He says, "Show yourself," and it's emphatic in the original language. He says, "Show yourself," it's singular. He's talking directly to Titus now. "Show yourself to be an example of good deeds with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech, which is beyond reproach." Paul says, "Titus, it is

time for you to continue on. Embrace and further the fact that you, as the spiritual leader, are an example of the very things that I'm calling these young men to exemplify."

Charles Spurgeon, speaking on the importance of example, said this. He said, "We've all heard the story of the man who preached so well and lived so badly that when he was in the pulpit everybody said he ought never to come out again. And when he was out of it, they all declared he ought never to enter it again." Continuing the quote, he says, "We do not trust those persons who have two faces. Nor will men believe in those whose verbal and practical testimonies are contradictory. An ill life will effectually drown the voice of the most eloquent ministry." An ill life will effectually drown out the voice of the most eloquent ministry. Paul is saying that to Titus, the spiritual leader. I, personally, feel the weight of this passage, as I stand before you this morning. And those men of you that aspire after leadership, those men of you that are leading your families, take heed in this. We realize that we fall short. I realize with understanding sympathy by sad personal experience that your life does not always measure up to the testimony that you want to maintain before your family and in leadership in the church. I get that, because I feel the pain of falling short myself. But what you must understand, what you must embrace, is the fact that you can't accept that as the dominating, defining manner of your life. Men, Christ calls on you to give an example. He calls on me to give an example that is consistent with the fact that we proclaim that God is holy, and He requires holiness of His people. "Be holy," it says in 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 15 and 16. "Be holy, for I myself am holy." Look at verse 7. This is Paul saying the same thing in just a different way. "In all things, show yourself to be an example of good deeds." Let your life be an adequate reflection of the purity of the Gospel that you say that you've embraced and that you proclaim.

Now, Paul addresses the personal example of Titus there in verse 7. Watch what he does in verse 7. What you're about to see, in verses 7 and 8 here, gives you a big window of understanding and insight into why we do things the way that we do at Truth Community Fellowship, soon to be Truth Community Church. Why is it that we teach like we do? Why is it that this isn't a clown show on Sunday morning? Why is it that we teach for an extended period of time? Look at what Paul says in verse 7. Beloved, every one of you, men and women, boy and girl, every one of you, need to understand this, because this goes to something so profound. It goes to the way that the people of God handle the Word of God, and that embraces all of us who know Christ. Look at what Paul says to Titus, calling on him to be an example, good deeds in the way that he lives, he says, "with purity in doctrine, dignified and sound in speech." What Paul is doing here is he's talking to Titus about the way that he teaches and the spirit in which he handles the Word of God. This is so important. This is the engine that drives everything in terms of how we respond to the Word of God, how we think about the Word of God, how we handle the Word of God. And so, as he is talking about his purity in doctrine, I want you to see something here. This has been the emphasis to Titus all along, and it's going to be the emphasis later on. And it's not a crucial issue of interpretation. Some people say that Paul is only addressing Titus in his private speech here in terms of being "sound and pure in your speech in private conversation." Well, that's important and that should be done, but I don't think that that's the emphasis that Paul has here. He's addressing the teaching

ministry of Titus. Look at chapter 2 verse 1. He says, "As for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." He's addressing the way that Titus handles doctrine. In verse 7, he says, "Purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech." And then, look at chapter 2 verse 15. He says, "These things speak, and exhort, and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." He's talking beyond just Titus' private conversations to the way that he handles the Word of God, the way that he teaches doctrine, and that's what I believe this whole verse is addressing, is the way that he conducts his teaching ministry in the church.

Look at what he says. There are three things here. First of all, he calls him to purity. Has the idea being healthy. Be healthy in your doctrine. Avoid error. Be conscious of protecting. Protect the purity of your doctrine and keep false teaching and false ideas and false modern influences out of what you say and what you teach. What Paul's telling Titus here, if you want to just stretch it out and fill in some of the blanks here, Paul is telling Titus, "Titus, you teach to honor Christ and to build up His sheep. Don't teach for personal gain. Keep your motives pure. Realize that God has given you a position of influence in the church, so that you would honor Christ with it and that you would edify the saints with it." That is the point. That is the goal of teaching in the church. It's not to draw a crowd. It's not to make people laugh. It's not to address the political problems of the world. That has nothing to do with the building of the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it was, My servants would be fighting for it." And so, "maintain purity in your teaching," Paul says to Titus. Well, as we come together corporately to study the Word of God Sunday by Sunday, we realize that this is the marching order for what should dominate the hour that we spend together. You say, "An hour. You teach more than an hour. We're together more than an hour." Well, that's okay. Paul is emphasizing that the character of the church flows from the character of the teaching ministry, and if it's superficial and sloppy and indifferent and casual and a comedy, the whole church is going to be defined by that. So, Paul says, "Titus, keep it pure. This is urgent. This is serious. Keep it pure." Purity in your doctrine.

Now, secondly, look at the end of verse 7 here. He goes on and says, "Dignified." Dignified, it's a word that, if I'm not mistaken, I didn't put this in my notes, if I'm not mistaken, the King James translates it "with a sense of gravity." It's a word that communicates a sense of sobriety, seriousness, gravity, to what is said. Let's just step back for just a second together and realize, as some of the music prepared us to think along these lines, that what the Gospel is addressing, what the Gospel addresses to individuals, is the fact that we're all moving toward a day of judgment before a holy God. We're going to give an account. God is not going to tolerate lightly the violation of His holiness by our sin. And either our sins are washed away by the blood of Christ and His righteousness has been credited to our account, or God is going to say, "Your sin requires eternal judgment," and send you away to the place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth forever. I know I don't need to tell you this, so let's just remember collectively together that that's serious, and in a Gospel that addresses that kind of deep, eternal need it's sacred! It's sacred! It's set apart and holy. The Gospel is the most important thing in the world. And so, the fact that it is so sacred and so precious affects the way that we teach it. God intends for the teaching of His Word to be done in a dignified way, in a way

that communicates the seriousness of the subject matter and the holiness of the God who sent Christ into the world to save sinners, and the One who calls His people to holiness.

There should be a sense of sacred sobriety about what we do. And so, this means what Paul is saying to Titus here, what he's saying to the church through the ages, what you and I understand is dissipating so badly all around us, says, "Titus, this Word of God should be taught with high moral authority." He says, "Titus, this Gospel should be taught with a serious demeanor, so that you demonstrate its importance by the very way that you say it." A man who is known for his comedy act is not a man who should be handling the truth of the Gospel, because of his lack of seriousness. People don't disconnect it and say, "Oh, he was joking then, but now he is really serious when he's talking about the Gospel." It doesn't work that way. God calls us, calls the man in the pulpit, and He calls Christians, and He calls a congregation, to be known by the continuity with which they approach life and approach the Gospel.

There should be a seriousness and dignity about the way the Word of God is taught. And let me say this, those of you that came in here with broken hearts, you understand this, particularly at this stage in your life, you come in with things that are really heavy on your heart. Maybe, things that have been heavy for years, and they matter to you. Well, listen. It is wrong for a man to open up the Word of God in front of people like that and treat it in a cavalier, light, joking manner. Your life is not a joking matter. The things that weigh on your hearts are not matters of jokes to you and yet, when a guy stands up and does that, the reality of it is that he's mocking you and your heartache. Part of the reason that we teach seriously at Truth Community is because we believe that the things that are on your heart matter. That they're important and they should be treated with dignity and respect, because your life and your cares and the affections of things that you care about are important, and they should be treated as such by the way that the Word of God is handled.

The Puritan pastor Richard Baxter said this, speaking to pastors. He said, "Whatever you do, let the people see that you are earnest." Don't break men's hearts by jesting with them. Don't get up before people whose hearts are broken and who are trying to find the way to heaven and be a comedian. That's not appropriate. That is a violation of the call. Anyone, whether standing in a pulpit or whether you're doing it privately in your home to people gathered around, anyone who teaches Scripture and opens Scripture should do so in a way that cultivates respect for the Word of God. Now, men can do this differently. There are people that do it in completely different ways than what I do, and they do it more effectively than I do. I get that, but at root, when you walk into a church, that service is telling you whether the congregation and the pastor takes God's Word seriously or not, and it's your right, and it's your prerogative, to demand that from those who lead you, because you're only holding them to the standard of the Word of God which says, "Teaching should be dignified." Now, Paul goes on to say in just kind of overlapping terms. Look at verse 7 with me again. He says, "Purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech." It should be healthy. Simply saying that your teaching should agree with what the apostles said. Your teaching should be biblical. Take what the apostles wrote, and serve it faithfully for the spiritual consumption of your audience. That's what we do.

Now, let's step back from it for just a moment, and, at the risk of repeating myself, but if I don't remember if I said it, you probably don't either, so we're all in the same boat together. Do you see, beloved, knowing that we've all come from a lot of different backgrounds. We've only been at this for under two years. We've all come from a lot of different backgrounds and been in a lot of different churches. What I want you to see is, and what I want us to develop unity around, is why we do it the way we do it here at Truth Community. Why the teaching is serious. Why it's urgent. Why it gets animated, sometimes. This is why. This is why we don't go along with the joking approach to ministry. It's because the Gospel is sacred. It's because God commands us to be pure and sensible and dignified and sound in the way that we approach it. Beloved, if we don't take it seriously, no one else will either. And so, we unify. We gather together around this principle and say, "This is the way that we handle the Word of God here at Truth Community." And if you embrace that, then you can joyfully say, "Hey, I'm all in, because that's what I want too, even if I'm not the one up front." This is serious. It matters. It matters in every direction. It matters vertically, because God is going to hold us accountable. You know, he says that teachers are going to face a stricter judgment. It matters horizontally. Your life matters. Our relationships matter. All of this stuff, it's important, and we reject, we consciously turn away from, the philosophy of worldly living that trivializes everything, turns everything into something of light consequence. We reject that, because we understand that that's not the world as it really is. That's why.

So, Paul has spoken urgently to young men, "Be sensible in all things." He's spoken to Titus about his example and about his teaching. Why? Why? Point number three this morning: the explanation for the young men. The explanation for the young men. Why is it that this is so important? Look at the middle of verse 8 with me. Paul said, "Be sound in speech, which is beyond reproach, so that." Here we go. Here's the explanation. This is the reason why Paul has been saying everything, not only to the young men, but in this whole passage, to older men, older women, and younger women. Just as a principle of reading the Bible, whenever you see the words "so that" or "because" pay extra close attention, because what's happening there is the biblical writer is explaining why he said the things that he just said. And if you can get to the why, then you really get into the transforming power of the passage to understand not just the exhortation, but the reason for the expectation. God was very faithful throughout Scripture to make these things plain to us. "So that" is always going to be an important phrase in a biblical text, always without exception.

And so, he's urged the young men to be sensible in all things. He's called Titus to purity in his life and in his doctrine. "So that." Here's the goal. Look at verse 8. This explains why things have to be done this way. Why our hearts must be aimed in this direction. "So that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us." You know and I know, that there are an abundance of critics just waiting to pounce on the next misstep by Christians. Critics are all around, and it's always been that way. It was that way in the first century. It's that way in the 21st century. There are people just waiting to mock the Gospel, to mock the name of Christ, and to mock us for pursuing this life that separates ourselves from the world. They mock it. They're hostile to it. They attack you

in it, and so there are critics everywhere. What Paul is saying is that obedience to this instruction that I've given to you here will work to silence that kind of criticism over time. Your exemplary life, young men, your pure motives with the way you approach ministry, your dignified demeanor, works to silence those who would otherwise have occasion to voice their venom against the victory of the Gospel. Paul says, the Bible says, what God is telling us here, and this I trust and I pray that this will give you an elevated sense of the nobility of pursuing faithfulness in those little details we were talking about earlier. There's an elevated nobility about what Paul is saying here. What Paul is saying here is that your faithfulness to this kind of lifestyle will shame them into silence. Your faithfulness to loving truth, to gracious holy living, your faithfulness to a body of believers, over time, has a deadening effect on the critics of the Gospel, because they see your life. And while they may still spout it verbally, it's a shameful thing for them to do, because there's obviously no valid basis for their accusations against you. It's not that Gospel teaching will be forever unchallenged. That's not what Paul was saying, because his teaching was repeatedly challenged. He bore in his body the marks of his faithfulness to Christ. But what he is saying here is that the goal of all this instruction that he's been giving to us is that the Gospel would not be challenged legitimately. That our lifestyles would be such that critics would be shamed, because their criticism of us and the criticism of the Gospel is so obviously groundless.

Those of you that are in the vise of personal persecution right now, just persevere in your faithfulness of obedience in a godly attitude and loving Christ. Just persevere in that, because over time, your life will silence the vocal opposition that you're facing right now. Just continue on the path that you started and be faithful to it and God, in time, will silence those mouths that currently squawk against you. And for all of us who feel the weight of that kind of opposition, those of us that have had family members cut us off and want nothing to do with this because of our testimony for Christ, let me help you think rightly about that as we close here. Rather than resenting that kind of unfair opposition, rather than resenting the fact that you're being spoken unfairly and unjustly and they're doing unkind things to you, rather than resenting that, you need to think about it this way in light of this passage. Look at verse 8 again with me. You're looking at verse 8, right? Good. Excellent. That's right where we want to be. This is exactly the verse that God has for Truth Community at this very moment in the life of our body. He says, "So that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us." He's been calling them to sensibility and holiness and he implicitly is recognizing the fact that there are going to be opponents and those that are hostile to us. What this means is this: when you're conscious of that opposition, you no longer have to resent it, because what that opposition really is, in the hand of an omnipotent God who providentially works all things together for good to His people, what that opposition really is, is simply just another motivation to teach you to love holiness and to pursue it.

They would criticize the Gospel and are waiting for the opportunity to jump on your first misstep. Okay, they shouldn't be like that. That's pretty wicked. That's unkind, unfair, and ungodly. I get that. You don't have to worry about that. You simply look at that and say, "Okay, this is what Paul was talking about in Titus 2:8. And so, this simply motivates me to be a little extra careful, a little bit more committed, a little bit more serious about

living, because one of the things that will come from that is that I'll help silence that opposition over time." And so, rather than taking personal offense, because you see the hostility of the individual, view it differently and say, "Oh, God has these people here in my life in a way that motivates me toward greater holiness." And their opposition and their hatred and their hostility simply becomes yet another reason to live faithfully for Christ. And you say, "Okay, I got a million motives to live for Christ and this hostile person just gave me one million and one." Great! "I'm going to be all the more committed. I'm going to let the gold of my life be tested by the fire of this opposition, and I trust God that He'll make it even, the gold of my testimony, even more pure as He purifies it by fire, the people that resent me. And you can embrace even the opposition when you're committed to living sensibly in all things.

Final word here, as we close. And I'm not going to do this. I'm very, very tempted again, not tempted in a bad way. I'm very inclined to have you just kind of look around at the people around you. In fact, let's do that. Just look around. Just quick, just for a moment, just glance at the people side-by-side to you. That's all I am saying, so that you have faces to put on what Paul is about to say here. This isn't just about you individually. This is about us together. Look at what he says, "So that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us." He doesn't say, "Titus, do this so the opponent will have nothing bad to say about you." He says, "Do this, so that they won't have anything bad to say about us." There is a corporate, there's a recognition, that you're part of a bigger body. That when you live your individual life of faithfulness, you make it harder for others to be critical of those that you share life in the body of Christ with together. As we do that individually, as we individually pursue this kind of serious holiness, we provide a protective bubble in which the rest of us enjoy the benefit. When you're faithful in your marriage, you make it harder for someone else to come along inside and criticize someone else in the body. When you're living faithfully, when your words are true, and your words are edifying, you make it harder for someone else to impugn the integrity of the leadership of your church. What Paul is recognizing here is that our individual lives have a spillover effect on the Christians that are around us. When you and I live a godly life, we contribute to protection that our fellow believers have against criticism. That's why you can't separate what you do at home, you can't separate what you do at work, from a sense of understanding that everything that I do somehow contributes to the testimony of Christ. We're unified in the body of Christ, and, therefore, what the foot does affects the hand.

And so, we view that not with the sense of constraint or resentment. It just becomes another glad opportunity to pursue holiness. You're motivated in the privacy of your room to pursue holiness, because you say there's more than me that's involved here. If one prominent person from Truth Community goes out and engages in some real scandalous thing that hits the newspapers, it affects us all. And so, that's a negative way of looking at it, but that's the way we need to think, is it not? No, my life affects the people that are sitting around me on Sunday morning, and I love them, and, therefore, I'm just going to be a little more inclined to holiness and a little bit more resolute in resisting temptation today, because I love Dane Logan. I love Jim Hatton. I love Buddy Stark. I love Glynn Griswold, and I want my life to have a spillover benefit to them. That's the

way all of us should be thinking about life in the body. We pursue holiness "so that," verse 8, look at it with me again, "that the opponent would have nothing bad to say about us." We share in this together, and when we're serious in pursuing the Gospel together, being together is a blessed blessed thing. It's a privilege to be a part of a body like that, and I thank God that we've made so much progress in this direction in such a short period of time. Pray with us, as we continue to grow in that, in individual holiness that has an imprint of testimony that spills over into the lives of others and protects us from people saying wicked, untrue things about us. Your holiness helps participate in that.

Let's bow together in prayer.

God, we just ask You to give us grace to live these things out, so that we would honor Christ, and we would honor each other with our daily lives. Father, I pray for the young men in this room. Oh, the names are right on the tip of my tongue. You know them by name, Father. They're here right now in the room. Help them to be sensible in all things. Help them to learn now. Help them to live now with faithfulness in such little things, so that when You open up spiritual opportunities to them down the road in their lives, they would already be so trained in faithfulness that a spiritual opportunity would be something that they would naturally handle faithfully, because it's a way they've handled the totality of their life. Father, bless the young men to that end.

Help us all. Bless us all as we handle Your Word in private and in public, Father. That we would do it in a way that was beyond reproach, that was dignified, that was loving and gracious, but communicated a dignity, that communicated the seriousness of the Gospel. And, Father, as we live that way, I ask You on behalf of each one here, each one that names Truth Community as their spiritual home, Father, I ask You that You would silence the opponents that are around them. Put them to shame. Teach the opponents, Father, if they won't bow to the Gospel, at least, strike them in their conscience that they need to silence their mouth, because there is nothing bad in the one that they're opposing.

Lord, in various levels, we understand that some of us are going through times of intense personal persecution right now. I pray that You would strengthen the one being persecuted to continue faithful to Christ. Give them the wisdom to simply turn away when that's appropriate. For those that are in a broader, more public arena, Father, give them grace to be faithful, so their opponents would also be put to shame.

And, Father, for all of us, for all of us, Lord, we thank You for the Gospel. We take it seriously. We love it, Father. This doesn't make us somber, joyless people. We're joyful. We're grateful. We're gloriously hopeful, precisely because we take the gospel seriously. And Father, it would be our desire to see that gospel spread, spread to those in this room that don't know You, and, Father, spread outside the walls of this place that the redeeming work of Jesus Christ would be magnified and that souls would be converted from sin to Christ. And we pray that You would make each one of us a faithful instrument to that end, and if You'll answer that prayer, Lord, we will be a people most richly blessed. And so we commit all these things to You in Jesus name. Amen.

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