

Mothers Energized by Grace

Love Their Children

Titus 2:4

Ministry in Christ's church was never easy even from the start. This morning as we open Paul's letter to Pastor Titus, missionary church-planter to Crete—we look at the description of the cultural background of the congregation Titus served two thousand years ago.

Titus 1: 12-13 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (NKJV)

Wow, just think of what a miracle it was to find group of believers saved out of such a godless society. They came from centuries of culture dominated by **total** ('always') **untrustworthiness** ('liars'), **total out-of-control living** ('evil beasts'), and the **total undisciplined pursuit of personal lust-filled appetites** ('lazy gluttons').

Again we see from these two verses that when the Gospel of Jesus Christ entered the Roman world of the New Testament the landscape was very bleak. Christ's church was born into a sin-warped, sin-darkened world of mixed-up marriages, sin-scarred lives, and confused families.

*Paul here quoted a line from a poem by Epimenides, a poet and philosopher who had lived in Crete 600 years earlier. The quotation reveals basic character flaws in the Cretans, giving them a bad reputation for lying, violence, and laziness. The reputation of the Cretans was so bad that the verb form of their name (*kretizo*) was used by the Greeks to indicate lying. Paul applied this familiar phrase to the false teachers.¹*

But men and women who were gloriously saved did not automatically become great wives and mothers, or husbands and fathers. When they came to Christ and were forgiven, God graciously gave them everything they needed to become godly wives, mothers, husbands, and fathers. But, they needed something else. They need worship services that taught them to believe correctly, and then they needed small group discipleship times to learn how to behave correctly. Correct behavior is behavior energized by grace.

¹ Barton, Bruce B. ; Veerman, David ; Wilson, Neil S.: *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 1993 (Life Application Bible Commentary), S. 260

I really believe that this insight into the Cretan culture can stir our hearts to glorify the amazing grace and saving power of God.

- If the Gospel of Christ can reach into a culture of people who were the descendents of the wicked, pagan Old Testament Philistines (as in Goliath and David) and build them into grace-energized servants of Christ's church—***He can work with anyone.***
- If God can make saints out of people who had so descended in their personal character until Paul describes them with this trio of disparaging words “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons”—***He can change anyone no matter how weak, how wicked, how undisciplined.***

This letter to Titus should encourage every one of us that God is so wonderful, His grace is so powerful, and we are so in need of His work in our lives. The greatest truth is that He can change us no matter how bad we've been, and no matter how much baggage we brought into our new life with Him.

The Cretan church was saved, bought from the slave market of sin (redeemed), but still had clinging to their lives the garbage of their culture. They had generations of bad habits, false thinking, and warped lives.

What was the plan God had in mind to transform these very un-saintly people? The same plan He has for all of us this morning. Save them by His grace and sanctify them by His Word.

As I worked over this morning's passage for the past two weeks I kept thinking about what the church in Crete must have looked like. Can you imagine congregation after congregation around that island of Crete that Titus had to visit? Each one had some form of the unpleasant odors of un-disposed remnants of fleshly garbage. Each church had newly saved saints who were in varying degrees former totally untrustworthy liars, former totally out-of-control evil beats, and former totally undisciplined, lazy gluttons!

Just like someone who smokes that can't smell the stale odor of smoke that reeked from all their clothing, car or home—so these former pagans couldn't smell all their fleshly habits that needed change. Like garbage left to rot smells until it is disposed of and cleansed away, so Titus was to start a spiritual search and dispose mission into the lives of the Cretans.

God wanted to shine the spotlight of His Word into their lives corporately, and then individually. As any garbage was exposed it was to be denied, and the area exposed to that garbage cleansed and freshened by the power of the sanctifying Spirit of God through His Word. That is the essence of Titus 2: 12-14.

*Titus 2: 12-14 teaching us that, **denying** ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14*

who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. NKJV

Two words stand out in v. 12. The word God chose for "teaching" is the word **paideuo** which speaks of training a child using discipline as needed. God wants us to be instructed, taught, trained, and whatever else is needed until we say no to sin.

The word "denying" is **arneomai** and means 'to refuse, reject, not accept, not take an offer of'. This is the word used for Peter's denials of the Lord after Gethsemane (Matthew 26: 70, 72); and it is the same word for Moses when he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Heb. 11:24). God wants us to not accept any stinking garbage from the world, He wants us to refuse anything that will foul the fragrance of the worship we are to offer.

The mission Paul sent Titus out to do was to take the new believers and have them scrape off their lives anything that clung to them of the old life, mortify, sanctify, and purify away anything that was not pleasing to God.

The Cretans as new believers were out of whack in one way or another and smelled bad spiritually--their lives, their marriages, and their homes. And that is just the type of material God can use for His marvelous work of salvation. What they needed was long-term sanctification. They were just children-in-the-faith in need of a long bath in God's Word, administered by mothers and fathers-in-the-faith!

This need for removing remnants of garbage that stinks confronted me on Thursday night. I walked into our house for the first time in ten days and it smelled like a dumpster. I prowled around looking for where that horrible smell was coming from. Trash cans were checked, pantry potato bags, fruit bowl, and all came up clear. Then I saw a dark circle on the floor in front of the fridge. When I pulled open the door of that trusted 12 year old appliance there was the finest collection of colorful molds and layers of decay available anywhere in the city. Our compressor had died, and the result was a stinking mess. But because I value that appliance I had only one choice—to get rid of the garbage.

For the next six hours I bagged, hauled, washed, scraped, bleached and scrubbed that old friend in the kitchen until it was pure white again and mold and stink free. Refrigerators have no smell of their own; they just hold objects that begin to smell if allowed to. All it needed was to be washed and renewed and it would be back as good as new.

When Titus came to Crete to pastor Christ's church, it was sometime in the early 60's AD. As he arrived the churches were filled with spiritual lives that smelled like a dumpster. The old rotted flesh of their former ways stood in the way of their progress in Christ. They were bought and paid for but needed the washing of sanctification through God's Word.

There were stinking lives, stinking marriages, and stinking families. Paul proposed to Titus a two-part plan: regular systematic teaching in the church gatherings and private one-on-one discipling sessions for focused applications of the sanctifying Word.

When we study this idea of the older-in-the-faith godly, Titus 2 woman we are describing a woman who has chosen to learn from God how to live her life day-by-day and step-by-step in way that pleases God. Women energized by grace are useful to God.

Titus 2 describes how God works in the life of a believer. When we were saved and the gospel of grace began in our lives, the evidence is seen in the sanctification process. Grace always teaches genuine believers how to say no to sin in any form. When God gets to pick the curriculum for His Church, what does He choose to be taught? He lays down godly character qualities he wants in women.

For just a moment please follow along in your Bibles in Titus 2: 3-5, as I again read those special character traits for women.

v. 3 the [grace energized] **older women** likewise, that they be

1. reverent in behavior,
2. not slanderers,
3. not given to much wine,
4. teachers of good things— v. 4
5. that they admonish

the [grace energized] **young women**

1. to love their husbands,
2. to love their children, v. 5
3. to be discreet,
4. chaste,
5. homemakers,
6. good,
7. obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

Women energized by grace have these characteristics are highly useful to God. The long-term goal of their lives is geared towards being useful to God.

Christ's Church Used Grace Energized Coaches in Godly Living

The whole goal of a Titus 2 woman is to train younger women in Biblical, simple-to-measure, Spirit-empowered, love-based living.

The Titus Two woman is an imperfect person, saved by God, and energized by His grace to live an exemplary life as described in Titus 2: 3-4. As we have already learned in v. 3 we can summarize that:

- Women energized by grace—are reverent in their behavior,
- Women energized by grace—are not slanderers,
- Women energized by grace—are not given to much wine,
- Women energized by grace—are teachers of good things, and
- Women energized by grace—are discipling younger women.

Those new believers, fresh out of paganism needed coaching, training, modeling, and encouraging in a one-on-one relationship. Godly behavior is a series of choices; and those men and women had to be nurtured in daily skills that would lead to loving marriages and families.

And that is the vital ministry which we find captured for us in Titus 2.

God wants men and women that will mentor, nurture, and coach godly living for His church. These individuals believe that God has called them to touch one life at a time for His glory.

v. 4b “the young women to love their husbands” (6) Wives energized by grace love their husbands.

Wives energized by grace are first of all “lovers of their husbands”.

A Christian home in a pagan culture was a radically new thing.

Those believing wives in the early church like those today, almost always want to obey the Lord, thus they submit and fulfill their responsibilities to their husbands—but often only dutifully and not lovingly. It’s not just that loving your husband is a virtue; Paul says that **not loving him** in a way that he can feel—*is a sin!*

Go back and by God’s grace rekindle the blessing, edifying, sharing, and touching that always builds a strong, close, encouraging partnership for life. Be a beacon of Christ's love reflecting to an empty and hopeless world that true love is possible and can be shared for as long as you live.

v. 4c “to love their children” (7) Mothers energized by grace love their children.

Mothers energized by grace are secondly “lovers of children”.

This characteristic is also one word in the Greek text, **philoteknos** and it means to be a lover of children. As we see in 1 Timothy 2:15, this is a woman’s highest calling. “God doesn’t want all women to be mothers or they would be. Those women who have no

children mean a great deal to God's kingdom because He has given them freedom to serve in unique ways. God wants women who are mothers to love their children, which involves making personal sacrifices for the benefit of their children. Remember, loving your children is not merely expressing love your children can feel, it is also pouring yourself into your child's life so that he or she grows up to love Christ".²

Almost all mothers in the world have the same maternal instinct of love, nurture and protection for their babies. It causes great and widespread public indignation when a mother is found abandoning, or even worse, harming her child. That is built into almost every mom. But there is also an equally widespread reality from time to time it becomes so very hard to take care of children that a mom no longer "feels" positive feelings towards her children.

In the Roman world those feelings arose from having to bear children as a "duty" for the husbands, or from having no life outside the home being acceptable so there was never a moment of rest from the constant demands and pressures of the children, or even more prevalent, the Roman world's sweeping women's liberation movement had infected many women with the sense that they should get out and make a place for themselves in a male-dominated world.

Things haven't changed much in twenty-centuries, have they? Those same pressures that were brought into homes and marriages in Paul's day, are still in various degrees with us now. And, the basic emotional make-up of people is pretty similar around the world, as well as throughout history. So how did God instruct Paul to prepare Christ's church for these great social challenges and family pressures? Again, Titus 2 has the solution. God says that the way that tired, burned out, and depressed mothers get relief is from the faithful army of Titus 2 grace-energized role models.

In new marriages or when children first come to a home, busyness and activity reach a high pitch as the tasks of homemaking and child care increase. Is it possible that being loving can get crowded out? Don't forget the love that motivated the marriage and the desire for children. Don't let all the tasks (even though some are very irritating) ruin the love relationship.

*Within the church today, older women rarely become active role models for the younger women. In fact, the honor due our elders in the church is often absent. Age groups are isolated from each other, causing people to feel that little can be learned from one another. It is unfortunate when patterns in society become patterns for the church. The church must encourage intergenerational caring and sharing. There are times when the kitchen provides an eloquent pulpit for the application of biblical truth!*³

What are some of the lesson these in Spirit-prompted in-home mentors would teach? Just a few might be:

² John MacArthur, *Different By Design*, (Wheaton,,: Victor Books) Marriage and Divorce (electronic edition), Logos.

1. **Explain to them** that negative feelings towards your own children in some circumstances is normal, even for a mature and godly woman.
2. **Remind them** that God planned for younger women in His church to need the mentoring of older women.
3. **Show them how** families are vulnerable to cultural trends that seep in slowly, and how these trends can devastate a Biblical family life.
4. **Teach them** the Biblical perspective of motherhood with children being gifts from the Lord and our highest duty to raise for the God's glory.
5. **Assure them** that we do not have any unique challenges, just the same old struggles that God's Word has clearly said would need to be faced and dealt with God's way.

Why did Paul stress that young Christian women should love their husbands and families? While such teaching may appear too obvious for mention, there are forces at work in today's world that undermine even that very basic part of family life.

Women are being told that their interests or desires come first, that they must seek what makes them happy before they can be good wives and mothers. While women should be encouraged to use their gifts and abilities, each Christian woman must align her priorities with God's wisdom, not the world's values. She must love her husband and her children, accepting the sacrifices that love brings. God will honor those who value what he values.

Women who were new Christians were to learn how to have harmony in the home by watching older women who had been Christians for some time. We have the same need today. Younger wives and mothers should learn to live in a Christian manner—loving their husbands and caring for their children—by observing exemplary women of God. If you are of an age or position where people look up to you, make sure that your example motivates younger believers to live in a way that honors God.⁴

The Bible clearly explains and illustrates this love that was modeled by Christ. This special **phileo** love is demonstrated by Jesus Himself. This type of close, companionship and friendship, emotional love is how Christ's relationship is described with Lazarus (John 11:3) and with "the disciple He loved" named John (John 20:2). This is also the word used in Revelation 3:19 for Christ's love for true saints in His church.

Jesus demonstrated His love to Lazarus and all who saw that friendship knew how close they were. The same was seen in Christ's closeness to the Apostle John. That is how Jesus loves us, and wants us to know He loves us, feeling His closeness, and enjoying His friendship.

And that **phileo** love that is emotional, close, and visible is what the Lord asks from

³ Barton, Bruce B; Veerman, David; Wilson, Neil S.: *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 1993 (Life Application Bible Commentary), S. 265

⁴MacArthur, John: *Titus*. Chicago : Moody Press, 1996, S. 82

⁵ Adapted from Elizabeth George, *A Woman after God's Own Heart*, Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997, chapters 7, 10, and 11.

grace-energized mothers towards their children.

Here are ten practical "love gifts" that mothers energized by grace can offer love that can be felt; in other words practical ways a Titus 2 mentor encourages a younger mother in loving her children.

1. Give them a ***heart that prays***.
2. Give them a ***heart that serves*** and meets their needs with love: a regular schedule of nutritious meals, clean clothes, clean bodies, adequate sleep and rest.
3. Give them a ***heart that rejoices*** and is filled with happiness. Psalm 113:9 describes a "joyful" mother.
4. Give them a ***heart that gives*** like Christ's (Mark 10:45): because love gives (John 3:16); because love is generous (II Cor. 9:6); because love expects nothing back (Luke 6:35).
5. Give them a ***heart that plays*** and is full of fun.
6. Give them a ***heart that celebrates*** all their special days (Matthew 5:41); and since we have to do all those things in the family, why not make them special!
7. Give them a ***heart that prefers your family first*** (Titus 2:4 says they are your first priority).
8. Give them a heart that is focused (Matthew 6:24).
9. Give them a ***heart that is present*** and attentive (Psalm 119:10 'my whole heart').
10. Give them a ***heart that trusts*** in the Lord (Isaiah 26:3 'perfect peace...trusts').⁵