

Titus 24-07-24b

We're ready to pick up our study here in Titus, and one of the things you notice is that as a part of the description of the church, the interaction, the relationship between believers, we have a Heavenly Father, we are brothers and sisters in Christ, and the oft-repeated metaphor for our fellowship is that of a family. When you look at the qualifications for leading and for effective functioning in the church, the qualification includes an emphasis on a healthy family, a solid marriage, and child training and child raising. This is why in the past we have heard the notion of divine institutions, marriage, family, nation, the first one of course being volition or free will, but marriage and family are at the center.

And so it is of interest to me that if you look at the family, there is a correlation that has even been measured statistically between healthy spiritual life and healthy family life. And I want to show you something that I dug up here. This, if you can see it, is a chart of the number of children per family, actually per woman, if you will, for various kinds of belief groups.

And you probably can't read the descriptions below, but there's only one of these that you need to see. The blue stripe is how many of these people there are. And I was made aware of this kind of thing in Lebanon when you have the Muslims, the Arabs on one side, and you have the Christian, Maronite Christians on the other.

And the Christians, because of their Orthodox sort of Catholicism emphasis, had fewer numbers of children. And the Muslims were literally out reproducing the Christians in Lebanon, so much so that it eventually shifted the government and so on. But the leftmost area is what we are looking at.

Because if you hope to exist and perpetuate your faith to future generations, you need to not be diminishing in numbers because you don't have as many children. And for all of these that you see, and some of these are the Pentecostal churches, for example, and the Catholic churches are right in the middle. But you'll notice that the blue stripe goes off the chart in the middle there, that top one, that's the Catholics, Catholic or Orthodox.

So the red line not being as high, what that means is they're not making as many Catholics. And over time, their numbers are going to continue to diminish because they're not having as many children. And Catholicism will slowly be out reproduced by those who are not Catholics.

And if most of these, the blue line is either very close to or well above the red line. And if you want to exist in the future, the red line needs to be at least as tall as the blue line or taller. If what I'm saying makes sense, you want to be having children who hopefully are going to perpetuate your faith.

Well, I don't really care if the Buddhists and the Hindus on the far right, what they do, but you'll notice that the Buddhists, it's the second to the last one on the right that you can see. There's other world religions and such, but there's not as many Buddhists being born. There's not as many Hindus being born.

The little red line is short. If you look all across here, what is the one area where you see a red line that is more than twice as high as the blue line? It's of the pairs. It's the fourth one over.

Do you see it? The fourth one over, it's got a little short blue line and a great big tall red line, which means the people in whatever category this is are having twice as many children as they need to hold their own in numbers. That group is the only group on this entire chart that is composed, if you can read or I'll tell you what it says below, it says over 75%. This fourth group is non-denominational Christians, i.e. Bible churches, non-denominational Christians, and in that group over 75% of them believe the Bible is the Word of God.

Over 75% believe the Bible is the Word of God. They're having more than twice as many children as they need to continue being non-denominational, God-fearing, Bible-thumping Christians. They're the only group that God is blessing with fertility and fecundity and reproductive success.

Why? Because we are optimistic. We love a family. We love having children.

You would think, well, the Catholics who don't believe in birth control, they would be out-populating everybody because they don't believe in birth control. The Catholics, if you look at them, go two groups over from that fourth one that's got the short blue line, the shortest blue line, and one of the tallest red lines, go two over. That's Catholics.

And notice, even with no birth control as a part of their faith, they are not reproducing in sufficient numbers to sustain their fraction of the population. Catholics are dwindling. Buddhists are dwindling.

Another group that is outperforming is the one next to the Catholics to the right. If you count the pairs over, one, two, three, four, five, six, seventh one over is the Jews. The Jews are producing more children than they need so that their numbers will grow.

Right next to them is the Muslims, and the Muslims are not outperforming the Jews in reproductive numbers, much less the over 75% believe the Bible is the word of God crowd. But if you want to look up this chart, you can find it on the instituteforfamilystudies.org. Just look around. I gave Brian the information on the break.

It's from August of 2022. And the name of the study up here, I'll put it on for you, is America's Growing Religious Secular Fertility Divide. It is a scientific analysis of what is happening in terms of the nuns, those who profess no faith at all, as a growing

proportion of the population, especially in America, and the shrinking of denominations of all kinds, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, all of them are shrinking.

And even the number of children they have isn't sustaining them because those children are not following them into the church or remaining in the church once they reach majority. The reason I point this out is we have an attitude based on the word of God. When we believe the Bible is the word of God, and you can imagine there's just all levels of faithfulness, faithlessness, interest, apathy, or whatever else.

But just the single characteristic of believing the Bible is God's word gives people a propensity to have families with children. And it's an opportunity. It is a stewardship.

All of the things that we see in Titus chapter one, for whatever reason, and you can think about it and read about it in that study, but there is a combination of a strong sense of structure and duty and commitment. There is optimism about the future. There are people who don't want to have children because they don't know what kind of world they're bringing them into, or they want to abort their children.

I think part of that statistic is most people who believe the Bible is the word of God do not believe that it is right to abort unborn human beings. And it's remarkable. It is by far, far and away without any notion of comparison, the largest difference between existing and future people from those families on that entire chart, any faith, any religion, any demographic.

Bible believing Christians have children and have more than twice what they need to sustain their numbers. That's us. Now our numbers are relatively small, but we're not going away.

You are salt. You are light. You can't lose your savor.

It's important for us to be people of the truth, to be blessed by God with families and with support for God's authority structures, God's institutional structures that make for prosperity and make for peace and make for opportunity. And it just fascinates me. I stumbled across this kind of by accident, looking for something else.

And I thought, isn't that remarkable? People who believe the Bible is the word of God, God blesses them with healthy families and lots of kids. And it's a wonderful thing. It's a wonderful thing.

It's also a wonderful opportunity and responsibility as we have seen in these paragraphs in the opening section of Titus. So as a part of child raising, as well as a part of being blameless and being someone who bears the fruit of the spirit, abides in the vine of Jesus Christ, we are not going to be self-willed, not self-willed. We subordinate our will to our faithful creator.

We submit ourselves under the mighty hand of God that he can exalt us in due time, not self-willed. This is verse seven of chapter one, not quick tempered. If we have an anger problem, we've got to get a handle on that by God's grace and cultivating the presence and power of the spirit, soaking our minds, our hearts, our souls in the word of God gives us that soft answer.

God's soft answer that turns away wrath. We disinvest from things that used to anger us. This can be anything from personal circumstances to politics and world events to take a step back from the edge.

Just take a deep breath. This isn't going to matter in eternity, but my attitude about it does count toward eternity. So am I going to let the circumstance dictate or am I going to let the spirit and my opportunity to represent the Lord Jesus Christ dominate? Am I going to be a good and faithful steward and servant and not let anger get the better of me? In some ways, anger is like a drug and you can get hooked on it.

You get to where you don't think things are normal unless you throw a fit every once in a while. It's toxic. It's dangerous.

It wears the sear down. The sear is the part in a triggered weapon that prevents the hammer from falling until you're ready for it to. But if you have a worn sear, the weapon begins to go off unpredictably because it doesn't have a breakpoint.

The hammer has not fallen. Now it does fall. You've got a real predictable and sharp point of I haven't fired.

Now I have fired a worn sear. It's rounded and the release can happen anywhere along the slope and you just don't know when you're going to release and you've got a bad sight picture. Bad things can happen.

Not quick-tempered, not self-willed. And do you notice the negatives come first? Before you can build positives, you've got to eliminate the negatives. You can't build positives if you haven't taken out those knots.

You can't settle Canaan with Israelites if you haven't eliminated the Canaanites, the idolaters, the Molech, Baal-worshipping, Ashtoreth, hill-climbing perverts of the land. They must be destroyed. Then you can settle the people of God.

So when we look at our lives and we say, well, you know, I really want to cultivate joy and peace and faithfulness and long-suffering and gentleness. That's a worthy ambition. But the first step in doing that is to first look at the knots.

Am I self-willed? Am I hot-tempered? Am I given to self-indulgence? Not addicted to wine, scratch out wine, put a blank for whatever it is that you can't stay away from. Too much entertainment, too much TV, too much hobby, too much conversation, too much

gossip, too much distraction. Wine's just a placeholder for whatever it is that we indulge in rather than what we're supposed to be doing.

Not given to wine, not violent, not violent. Soft answer. Keep your head while all others are losing theirs.

Take a beat. Take a breath. Send up a prayer.

Ask for wisdom. Cultivate self-control. Seek the influence and the light, the guiding light of the Holy Spirit in a conversation, in a situation.

When there's a setback, when there's a surprise, when there's an unwelcome circumstance, bad news, a catastrophe, just take a beat. Not violent, not greedy for money. Again, these all stand for things.

It's not just, well, I don't care how many dollars I have in the bank. This is greedy for gain, and we've seen this in 1 Timothy, and we're going to see it again in the rest of chapter one. Greedy for gain is any kind of gain.

Let me ask you a political question, and this question would be the same no matter where you stand on the entire political spectrum. When you look at the other side, the side with whom you disagree, in some cases violently disagree, not supposed to be violent, but we have violent, we just have matters of principle, and we think this is just a manifestation of evil on the other side. Okay, you got that picture in your mind.

Ask yourself this question. The representatives and the spokespersons for that point of view, what are they getting out of it? For whatever reason, they're not just believing that point of view. They're not just endorsing that side of an issue.

They have gone into politics to prosecute it and to promote it and to make it happen. They want the courts to decide that way. They want the legislation to go that way.

They want the executive branch to perpetrate policies that way. They've got that viewpoint, and they've invested themselves in it. Why? Now I'm talking about the other side.

We can always believe ourselves to be altruistic, and we just want the best for the country, and that's why we're not talking about us. I want to talk about the opponents. Maybe we can be a little more objective looking at them.

Why do they do it? Are they altruists? I really believe this is best for the country and best for this group and that group and this cause and that issue. Is that why they do it? How many times do you begin to perceive that they are enjoying the limelight? They're enjoying the spotlight. They're enjoying the influence.

They're enjoying the invitations to speak and to be interviewed and to be on the news.

You're the one they want to go to for commentary when new things happen, and you're the voice and the personality that is representative of that view. Your books sell.

Your speaking engagements pay. You are gaining individually and personally, in many cases, on both sides. I'm not saying this is only happening on one side.

To the extent that people crave the power to influence others, YouTube influencers, most of them don't make a lot of money, but they just really enjoy being notorious, being known, having their name out there, how many followers have I got, and so on. That is gain. When you see greedy for money or greedy for gain, this is primarily why do people want money? If you're Robinson Crusoe and you're on a deserted island, you could have pirate chests full of gold.

Is it gratifying? You're going to be wandering up and down trying to find a coconut you can crack open and eat. What is the value of money? Why are people greedy for money? Because money makes you impressive in the eyes of others. At least, this is the thinking.

I want money because I will have stuff. I can be both someone who dissipates and indulges myself by buying the pleasures of the world, and I can impress everybody else. If I have enough money, I can tell people I don't like to take a hike.

I don't need a boss. I'm independently wealthy. So remember, not dissipated, not insubordinate.

Money puts you into both of those categories. You can be both insubordinate and dissipated with enough money. Buy all the drugs you want.

Buy all the alcohol you want. Buy all the yachts and the other accoutrements of the world that you want. Buy the houses.

But generally, people want to buy stuff because they want to impress people. And there are other ways you can impress people, especially with the advent of the Internet. So when you see this description in verse seven, not greedy for money, this means not looking for gratification from others or from self-indulgence.

That's what money does. Money in and of itself. I mean, look at a dollar.

What's it good for? Um, not a lot. It's a piece of paper. It's what it can buy.

It's what it can do. It's what I can do with it, what I can make of myself, what I can get for myself, what I can impress other people with. That's, that's the value of money.

So greedy for money means greedy for influence, greedy to make an impression, greedy to have influence or power. I want to see my way accomplished. And I would like to foist my way on these other people, whatever it is.

But contrast, here's the positive side. Verse eight. Instead, once you have gotten these knots cleared out by God's grace in God's power, through God's word and God's spirit, now what can we cultivate? Hospitality.

Again, all of these represent something. It's not, oh, well, you know, anytime somebody comes over, I offer them something to drink and give them a cushy chair. What is hospitality? What is its essence? What is the essence of hospitality? It is putting yourself out in the interest of someone else.

What is the description of genuine love? What's our shorthand description of genuine love? Sacrificial to self beneficial to others, right? That's hospitality. I dig into my cupboard or my larder or whatever I have and I put it at your disposal. I want to make you comfortable.

I want to give you a good experience. I want to make you have an enjoyable experience and I will put myself out in that endeavor. That's hospitality.

So this is outward looking, not only for our own interests, but also the interests of others. Philippians chapter two. This is the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

Let this mind be in you. We look out for the interests of others, not just our own. Hospitable, a lover of what is good to notice, to single out, to appreciate, to compliment, to encourage that which is good.

Instead of constant, notice it doesn't say a criticizer of evil. It says a fan of what is good. I have always had philosophical difficulty with the idea that child training should be all carrot and no stick.

You know, just reinforce good behavior and just wait for the bad behavior to wear itself out. In child training, as God does with us, his children, whom the Lord loves, he chastens and he scourges every son whom he receives. Consequences for bad behavior are a godly part of structure.

This is how you have faithful children, is you reward good behavior and you discourage and punish bad behavior. In Titus, as in the books to Timothy, we're going to see that pastors are exhorted and commanded both to encourage what is good and to call out, rebuke and stop the mouths that are spewing what is bad. But here as a personal characteristic, it doesn't say everybody should go around criticizing what is evil.

These personal characteristics strike closer to what every believer should do. Leaders have the responsibility to rebuke and call out evil, to identify it, to stop the mouths of those who are communicating it in their own group. Now, if I see somebody in another group, I don't have any business trying to go stop his mouth.

Who am I to judge another man's servant? To his own master, he's accountable. That's

not my job, but in the group. And so when you look at this as a microcosm that is applicable to an individual, what should I be doing in my own thinking? Instead of constantly dwelling on the shortcomings of others around me, what should I do? Whatsoever things are good, pure, true, noble, lovely, of good report, think on these things and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will preserve and guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

It will keep us in Christ to focus on what is good. So the leader for the church, hospitable, a lover of what is good, that's what he, you find him hanging out where the good is, encouraging it, helping with it, putting a shoulder under it, complimenting it, being proud of it, and dwelling in Beulah land, not in no man's land, to focus on what is good. These things that are pure, good, noble, and lovely.

I was going back through our memory verses. I love those times when more of us were together and we had our verse rings and we would go through those verses at the beginning of church. I encourage you to go back and review them.

If you've lost the verse rings that Debbie made, all of the verses are on the website. I changed the background to make them a little bit easier to read and review. Those are wonderful verses, and that's one of them.

Whatsoever things, and all of these positive attributes, think on these things. If we find ourselves going around in a critical spirit, looking at what is down, looking at what is failing, looking at what is bad, looking at who shot John, as my dad used to say. I don't even know who John was, but somebody shot him.

But focus on what is good. Dwell on what is good. Jesus called out the Pharisees, yes.

Jesus cried over Jerusalem, yes. But in the bulk of his teaching ministry, he is exhorting and encouraging what is good. You see tares in the field, let them grow together till the harvest.

We'll deal with them then. Wheat, keep on growing. Don't worry about the tares.

We'll deal with that when the time comes. Servant, you've been given something, do something with it. You got five, make five more.

You got three, make three more. You got one, and you stick it in your pocket and do nothing with it. There is a time of reckoning for that.

We're not all, you know, peace, joy, brightness, happiness, and there's nothing bad, but leave bad in its place. So a lover of what is good, sober minded. This means not giddy, not hysterical, not flighty, sober minded, practical, down to earth, just.

We do what is right, even if it costs. Get too many groceries in the bag, go back and

make it right with the store. You run over your neighbor's shrub when you're trying to park.

You accidentally back your mower over their tulips. Go make it right. Just.

What is fair? What is justice? What is proper? And if there's going to be a deficit, let the deficit be on our side, not on somebody else's. Holy, not defiled. There is an emphasis on defilement here coming up under the verse 10 and following and self-controlled.

This is kind of a summary of the previous ones. Self-control is required in all of these areas. That's why it is such a gift for faithful parents to imbue their children with self-control, for teachers in classrooms to imbue their children with self-control.

It is the greatest gift you can give a prospective human being is to teach them self-control. Self-control is, in my view, one of the greatest personal attributes you can have. It's kind of like if you can control the tongue, your whole body is in subjection.

What does it take to control the tongue? That's self-control. I want to say it. I'm not going to say it.

I want to express it. I want to go off. I want to rant.

I'm not going to do it. Bridal the tongue, whole body is in subjection. It's self-control, self-controlled.

But notice the summary here, holding fast the faithful word, valuing it as uppermost and of primary importance. Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught. This is the product of instruction.

This is why our church more resembles class, and we call it class instead of a sermon or a worship service or whatever, because church is a place of instruction. It is a place of truth, sharing the truth, celebrating the truth, enjoying the truth, fellowshiping in the pillar and ground of the truth. And the only way we can develop these qualities and eschew these bad characteristics is to be taught.

Teaching is the key. You can't know the truth if it isn't taught. So we look for it.

When we find it, we listen to it. Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught so that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort. This is the positive side.

All of you people join with me. Let's walk this narrow road together. Let's aim for the straight gate and climb that hill together.

Let's enter the new Jerusalem together. Let's have our houses side by side in those holy and heavenly precincts that are to come. Exhort, encourage the brothers and sisters, the faithful, the widows, the children, and convict those who contradict.

Convict those who contradict. Notice it isn't go chase down somebody that's teaching erroneous things somewhere else. If you are going to contradict, if you're going to convict someone who is contradictory, they're in the fold.

And this is pretty much not in this house. My parents were very clear. There were certain things that would not happen in their house.

What other kids do in their parents' house, all of us have heard this growing up, I think, well, you know, Johnny's parents let him X, Y, and Z. They don't live in this house. This is our house. And in our house, this is the policy.

This is what we do. This is what we don't do. No running in the house, no wrestling in the house, et cetera.

And the responsibility for leadership is in the sphere of that leadership authority. A pastor has God-given authority in the fellowship to which he is assigned as an under shepherd, in the same way that a husband and wife have authority in the household where they have their marriage and their children. They don't have authority to go tell somebody else how to do their marriage or raise their kids.

Same thing with the pastor. Pastors have no business chasing down some other guy and wagging a finger and saying, you're wrong. We have a responsibility in our group to look for the light, to know the truth, to teach the truth, and to know it well enough to be able to express it to others who come into our periphery.

We do not go forth and harangue people and try to change their minds, whether it is in society, whether it is in spiritual life, whether it is even in family life. Our responsibility is within our own bursting radius, our own sphere, our assigned area of responsibility. I could go on about lieutenants who have a responsibility for interlocking fields of fire in a military position.

I don't go a mile down the road and tell some other lieutenant how to set up his machine guns and deploy his guys. My area is going to be squared away. That's my job.

What everybody else does is on them. The higher-ups can judge them. I've got an area of responsibility.

I'm a platoon commander. I've got these squads. I've got weapons.

I've got different kinds of distances that I'm supposed to cover and flanks that I'm supposed to guard. I'm going to do that. I'm going to do it to the very best of my ability.

I meal with the guy that's connecting to my flank and say, hey, where are your guys? You're leaving me open here. But that's because we are in contact. We have an influence on each other.

If it's not influencing me, I have no business chasing it down and haranguing it. And this happens a lot in both social, political, and spiritual life today. We have enough working with what is directly assigned to us.

Well, now in verse 10 and following, Paul is going to remind Titus that there are many insubordinate idle talkers and deceivers, especially from the traditionalists, the circumcision. How does that translate to today? We'll see it next time. But there is an ossified, calcified Christianity that has been handed down in a traditional manner so that when people think of church, they think of parking lots, steeples, pews, baptistries.

Now the next generation, praise and worship, light shows, air conditioning, padded seats, entertain me, have people sing and sway and play drums and whatever else. But whatever the tradition is, you can go back 200 years, there were still calcified, ossified traditions that edge out, elbow away the truth of the word of God, of what church is supposed to be and do. And that's what Titus faced in Crete.

It was a combination of secularized culture from the Cretans themselves, who are lazy gluttons and inveterate liars, according to their own poet, evil beasts, down in verse 12. That's society on the outside. But those who say, okay, we're going to get religion, we're going to convert the heathens.

But what they convert them to is heinous. You had Catholic missionaries in centuries past who would go to new lands, but what they did was horrific. Because they weren't, in many cases, interested in saving souls, they were interested in pillaging the natural resources and enslaving the people.

And in the name of religion, and in the name of God, they did horrific things. Same thing was happening here. We cannot use Christian faith as a political tool, as a social justice implementation, try to achieve earthly goals, take what God has given us and do humanly targeted missions.

That's what's coming up in verse 10 and following. It's so interesting, so pertinent, especially in this election year, as you hear people bandying about the presence or absence of faith or church attendance or endorsement by various pastors and public Christian figures. We have to be so careful.

This is another kind of deflection, distraction, and undermining of who we are and why we're here. It does not ultimately matter who gets elected. And I say that knowing that it sounds shocking.

Our struggle is not with flesh and blood, and that has wide implications. But what about the laws? What about the policies? We're not here for laws and policies, except to obey them. We are here to represent the Lord Jesus Christ.

How many Roman laws did Jesus bring up and criticize? How many leaders did he call out

and criticize and say they ought to be replaced? Even in the Sanhedrin, even in the priesthood, even in the ranks of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, how many people did Jesus call out by name and say, this guy's got to go? This Caiaphas, he's a rascal. Let's all get together and throw rocks at Annas and Caiaphas. We only know about them because of what they did, not from what Jesus said about them, because he didn't talk about them personally.

What was Jesus interested in? Read Matthew 5, 6, and 7. Listen to the message of the parables in Luke. Listen to the emphasis that Paul brings from another perspective, but the very same issue. It is personal integrity, personal character, personal faith.

I don't have time to worry about which direction the nation is going, and I can't do anything about it individually anyway. The best thing I can do is be salt and light so that God will take the heart of the king in his hand and turn it in the direction he wants it to go for the blessing of his people. If God wants to bless me, there's no government that can stand against me or government official or government policy.

I want to be someone God can bless. I'm going over the heads of these federal and state and local people. I'm going to my father.

Let him take care of me, but I've got to be qualified to enter and make my requests known. I have to be blameless. I have to be abiding in the vine.

Then I have access to the highest throne in all creation and beyond creation. I've got direct access to my father, the God of the universe. What do I care about these people sitting around in Washington, D.C.? As a final note, and this is free, no charge, off the subject, there is a tradition that Washington, D.C. is founded on seven hills.

You can look it up in Wikipedia. There's Capitol Hill and six other hills that are named. If you think about Revelation 17 and you think about seven hills and you think about a lady riding the beast, it sparks a curious line of thought.

With that, I'll leave you and look for you this coming Sunday. Let's close in prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you that we are held in your hands. We are safe. We are secure.

We have a blessed present and an inheritance in the future. We pray that your Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts in such a way that we will be constantly aware. We will see clearly our opportunities for faith and patience so that we can inherit those promises and be fully qualified for service and function, fruitfulness, and influence both now and in the ages to come.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.