

Titus: 1st Century Wisdom for 21st Century Leaders

Session 1: Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Edited Transcript

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Take two. Good morning. Well, that was very nice. It's good to see you guys this morning. Hey, let's see if this works. Yeah, all right. Awesome. Hey, it's great to be with you. Pat's been doing a series called The Christian Man. He's going to continue that series, but he's away this week. I'm not going to plug into his series because it's his book and I'm not writing any part of it. That's his stuff. We're going to do a three-part series. We're going to look at the book of Titus together. There will be one this week and then one next month and then the one after that, sort of fill in some gaps with Pat's travel schedule. We're going to be looking at the book of Titus and we're going to be looking at it from the viewpoint, from the perspective of leadership, of a leader and we're going to look at the first century wisdom for 21st century leaders that there is in the book of Titus.

You might say, "Oh, well, a leadership study, that's not for me." Well, every man is a leader. You're in a leader in your home. You're a leader in your workplace. You're a leader in your church. You're a leader when you're out in the community and something needs to be done and a man sees that that needs to be done, whether it's a lost child needs to find their parent or a little old lady needs to walk across the street or anything that you see. Any time that you take responsibility for something, any time that you see a need and you meet that need, that's leadership and, especially when you're meeting somebody else's need, that's servant leadership. Titus gives us some great guidelines on leadership. Now, Titus does that from a specific perspective that we'll talk about in a minute, but in this book of Titus, there's this great set of leadership principles that we can apply even today.

We're going to look at this letter from Paul to Titus. The first chapter we're going to talk about or the first week that we're going to talk about this, we're going to talk about how your actions speak louder than your words, that actions speak louder than words. Now, one of Pat's favorite quotes is this quote by Andrew Carnegie. Normal people call him CARnegie, but apparently it's supposed to be pronounced CarNEGie. That means that I'm up on how things are supposed to be pronounced. Andrew Carnegie, that's the big idea for the day. Now you all know how to pronounce Andrew Carnegie's name correctly. He said this. He said, "The older I get, the less I listen to what people say and the more I just watch what they do."

I have my own corollary. The older I get, the less I feel the need to explain myself and the more I just realize it doesn't matter what I say. All that really matters is what I do. The way I act is going to have much, much bigger impact on people than the words that I say to them. People are watching us. They're watching the way that we behave. They're watching the way that we act. Sure, they're checking that against what we're saying, but, really, guys, over time, people stop listening to you and they just watch

what you do. Then, if what you do is consistent with what you say, then they'll listen to you more carefully. A great lesson here for us. If you have a Bible, turn to Titus chapter one.

Now, Titus, it's a little tiny letter. It's in the back of the New Testament. It's right before Philemon, if that helps you, which is right before Hebrews, which is a big one. You can find Hebrews. If you find Hebrews, go left. Titus chapter one and I'm just going to read the first chapter to you and then we'll go through it together.

"Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

"For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, 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, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work."

Well, that's uplifting. Huh? Let's pray and ask that God would illuminate our minds and hearts as we study this passage this morning: Father, thank you so much for this group of guys that you brought here together this morning. Thank you, Lord, for the guys that are watching this in groups all over the country, all over the world, as they seek to know you better, to follow you more closely, Lord. We pray that you would use men to build your kingdom, to bring you glory, Lord, and we need to understand your word so that we can do that better. Father, would you teach us this morning through the power of your Holy Spirit? In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

Here's our outline for this morning. Actions speak louder than words, Titus 1. We'll look at the beginning, sort of the relationship between Paul and Titus. Why did Paul even write this letter? Who is Titus? Then, we'll look at the Qualifications and Disqualifications of a Leader. Then, finally, we're going to talk about those last two uplifting verses and talk about Purity and Corruption. Let's start with talking about Paul and Titus.

PAUL AND TITUS

Now, when Paul writes a letter, you have Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians and then all the way through here. Here we are in Titus. The books that are in the Bible, the epistles from Paul are not organized in chronological order. They're sort of organized in the way and the context in who they were written to. This book, Titus, this letter, Titus, is part of what's called the Pastoral Epistles. Paul wrote two letters to Timothy and one letter to Titus. Both Timothy and Titus were pastors that Paul had trained up. Paul wrote these letters to them as pastors, sort of giving them guidance as they were leading congregations or really leading whole regions of the church. In this case, this is a letter to Titus who was leading, at this point, the church as it was spread throughout Crete.

If you look at this, here's the thing. I love Paul when he writes these openings, he always writes these incredible, not always, but often writes these sort of incredible theological treatises. He will use just a sentence or a couple of sentences to often lay very foundational truths about who God is and about what the gospel is. It's no difference with this one. Every time that Paul writes a letter, sort of the letter starts with this greeting. It has the writer, the reader, and the greeting. Almost every letter opens like this. I want you to know who wrote this letter, I want you to know who the reader of this letter is intended to be, and then, once we've got that, here's my greeting. This letter is no different.

If you look at the first couple verses here, "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior. To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior." Now, whenever you read scripture, one of the things you want to take note of is are there any words that are repeated over and over again? If they are, why?

If you look at this greeting, it's very interesting. It's a very sort of unique feature in this book that Paul uses a word over and over again, five times actually in this opening. When I say the word, you're going to be like, "Well, duh. Of course he would use that word over and over again," but it's really actually pretty striking and different than the other letters that he wrote. If you haven't figured it out yet, anybody figured it out yet what the word is? "God." Yeah, the word God. He writes this word over and over. Five times he says the word God. Now, you might say, "Well, why?" Well, look at what Paul's writing here. Paul says he's a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. What Paul is doing here in this letter to Titus, he's writing a letter to Titus but he knows other people are going to read it. If you remember how this chapter progresses, he talks about false teachers and people who are the circumcision party. Paul is writing to Titus so that, as Titus goes into Crete, he can set some things straight and he's doing it under Paul's authority. Paul is establishing what his authority here is even to give Titus this instruction. The people need to listen to Titus not just because of who Titus is, but because of Paul's authority that was given directly by God and he says an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Now, what he's saying is I saw, I spoke to Jesus, and Jesus gave me the message that I have. You might say, "That makes a lot of sense because Paul was one of the disciples." Anyone? Paul was not one of the disciples. Paul never met Jesus before the ascension. Paul, very clearly in earlier books, talks about how after he had the experience to the road to Damascus where Jesus spoke to him, powerful light blinded him, and then he also talked about how he went away and was ministered directly by Jesus who gave him the message that Paul had for the Gentiles. Paul, a Jew of all Jews, taught by a man named Gamaliel who was a very well-known Jewish scholar, teacher of the day, had the pedigree of a Jew. God plucked him out of Judaism and sent him out to the Gentiles, which the Jews were like, "We're the best and everybody else is the rest." Paul, a Jew of all Jews, was sent to the Gentiles. Paul's saying, as he's going

to the Gentiles, "Look, this is the message that Jesus gave to me directly." That's why he keeps saying God over and over again to establish his authority, to establish where he's coming from and to make that clear.

There's tons of other theology we could talk about in here. "For the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began." He's really sort of like he often does, sort of giving an outline of what the gospel's all about, who it's for, how God informs his people, the character of God. God never lies. He promised before the ages began that this has always been the plan. This is not like Adam didn't come and, oops, Adam sinned. Got to go to plan B. I'll send Jesus. Oops, they killed him. Got to go to plan C. This was the plan that God had all along Paul is saying. This tells us about God. Then, "At the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God," and then to make sure you understand, "God our Savior." He's talking about Jesus Christ.

This is Paul establishing his sort of credentials. Then he's writing it to Titus "my true child in a common faith." Who is Titus? Well, Titus, if you want to write something down, you could say Titus the Troubleshooter. Titus was a troubleshooter. He went into Corinth. If you read 1 Corinthians, you realize that the church in Corinth, which was north of Crete, the church in Corinth was a mess. Paul had gone there. He'd spent a considerable amount of time there, built this church, leaves, finds out what's going on, and then he writes 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians is like, "What is your guy's problem? You're doing this wrong. You're doing that wrong. There's incest in the church. There's the rich people treating the poor people poorly in the church. There's lawsuits in the church. What are you guys doing?" Well, who did he send to help straighten that situation out? Titus.

In fact, there's a passage where Paul is worried about Titus because Titus was supposed to meet him after he was in Corinth and he hadn't been there yet. Paul changes his journey to sort of head towards Titus just in case Titus needs his help because he's worried about him. He thinks maybe the Corinthians did something to him. Titus shows up and goes, "Oh, no. We're all good." Then Paul sends Titus back and Titus gets the Corinthians... What happened is the Gentile churches were actually sending money to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem because of how persecuted they were. The churches in Asia Minor all the way up into what's now called Serbia, those churches were actually sending money to the church in Jerusalem to help support the Christians there. Titus is the one that got the money from Corinth. Titus is quite a compelling guy, quite a winsome guy, a convert. When he says, "A true child in a common faith," it's probably referring to the fact that Paul converted Titus. Titus is quite a guy. He's mentioned elsewhere. He's mentioned in Galatians. He's referred to a lot in a few other places.

This is the writer and the reader, Paul and Titus, and then the greeting. "Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior." Then, there's this little transition of the task. Verse five, "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you." We've got the writer, the reader, the greeting, and now, Titus, this is the task. I need you to get the church of Crete. I need you to get it set up and I need you to get it organized because it's a mess. What is Crete? Crete's an island in the Mediterranean. It's the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean. I was going to tell you the four that were larger, but I realized that none of you really care, but one of them is Sicily. You've got this 150-mile long island and anywhere from seven to 30 miles wide. That's like probably 1,500 square miles that Titus is, "Hey, could you go straighten the church out there?"

It's got a mountain range down the middle of it so most of the towns are around the border. Titus probably was going around the outside of the island to these cities. Paul said, "So what I need you to do is I need you to go to these places where there's collections of believers, the churches, and I need you to get the structure set up. Get the elders set up in each of these areas." Then, he starts to give these qualifications.

QUALIFICATIONS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS

What are the qualifications and disqualifications of these leaders? You might say, "Well, again, how does this apply to me? First of all, I don't live in Crete." I know. "Secondly, I don't want to be an elder," maybe you're saying. Well, think about what this is. This is first century. All of you have had more access to the Bible than any of these people that Titus is going to talk to.

First of all, they had no New Testament. They may have had a few letters. They maybe even had a copy of one of the gospels, maybe. You, each guy in this room, has more access to Bible teaching, to Bible knowledge, to the scriptures themselves than just about anybody that was in Crete. From a knowledge standpoint, from an exposure to the Word standpoint, there is not one of you guys in this room that Titus wouldn't have said, "Hey, I wonder if you would make a good elder because I don't have very many guys that really are grounded in the faith yet?" Then, we're going to see a little later on some of the ones that are grounded in the faith are messing it up. They're perverting it. They're corrupting it. These qualifications really do apply to us.

Now, the other way I want you to look at this is, as men today who are called to be leaders in all of our spheres of influence, at work, at home, in our community, all the different places that we interact with people, we're called to be leaders. We're called to represent the gospel even as you just go through everyday life. Then, a lot of us are called to be leaders, especially, most particularly in our family and in our work. What are these qualifications that Paul is giving to Titus that can help us understand what leadership looks like? If you look at this list, man, it's a pretty high bar. What I want to talk to you about is how there's really sort of three areas that Paul talks about as he's talking about these leadership qualifications.

There's the area of your family, there's the area of your character, and there's the area of your faith. Verse six, "If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, his children are believers and his children are not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach." He's saying the reputation of this leader must be, another translation uses the word blameless. He's blameless or above reproach is another way of saying that. Right? Then, in his family, he needs to be the husband of one wife and his kids need to be believers. Now, some of you are going, "Well, I'm divorced and I have a kid that doesn't follow Christ. I'm immediately disqualified." That's probably not what this means. It probably means the husband of one wife like at the moment, like don't have two. Trust me, there's all kinds of practical reasons you don't want two also. Not two.

Now, some people would say that this would disqualify from eldership, at least, a man who's divorced and remarried. Some would say that. That's not the debate we're going to have today. I would say that as he's talking about leadership, he's saying that the way you treat your wife is an important thing. The state of your marriage is an important thing for a leader. If your marriage isn't straight, you need to get your marriage straight before you try to become a leader in the church especially. How can you lead from a place where your family is not straight? The same thing with your kids. Now, if you look, this

passage is similar to a passage in the letters to Timothy. In the letters to Timothy, it says believer here, but another way of translating that word would be faithful. What that really means is you don't have a child who is rebellious against the family. Again, the point is not like some judgment thing. The point is your family's your first priority. Your family's your first responsibility. If you don't have your family straight, if you're not loving your family well, if you're not leading your kids well, then you're going to have a hard time leading outside that. It's very practical. It's not arbitrary.

The first place that Paul is talking about is in our families. Are we leading our families well? Then he says at the beginning of verse six, "If anyone is above reproach." Then, in verse seven, it says again, "An overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach." Now we're starting to talk about character, your character. What kind of a character must you have? Well, he starts off with some negatives. Don't be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain. Now, how many of you have had horrible leaders at work, like a horrible boss, in your lifetime? They probably had one of these attributes at least. Didn't they? They were probably arrogant. Maybe they were greedy. Maybe they were angry. This makes sense, right? It's important for us to look at our own character. Do you struggle with any of these? If you struggle with one of these, it's a thing you need to focus on. We need to ask God to help change our hearts on.

Rather than that, "but be hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined." These are our character attributes. Then he says, "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." Get your family straight. Love your family well. Live your life as a man of character, and then live out your faith, which means you need to know the truth of the gospel so that, as much as anything, so that when somebody else says that something is the gospel that's not the gospel, you can say, "Uh, uh. That's not the gospel." You need to know God's word clearly. We all need to be under the right teaching to help us understand God's word and to rightly divide it, that's one of the phrases that's used, to rightly understand and apply it, so that when we hear something that sounds good but it's not right, we can say, "No, no, no. That's not right." I mean, it's easy when you hear something bad to say that's not right. What about something that sounds right, it sounds good?

Then, Paul gives us very specific example of just that in verse 10. This is where he's starting to talk about this other group of people. "For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party." What is the circumcision party? Well, Paul talks about these folks in Galatians as well. They were a group of people who said, "Yeah, Christianity's great. You got to be Jewish to be a Christian." They call them the circumcision party because one of the ways that the Jews were set apart was through circumcision. We're in the Gentile population. Circumcision is not a custom. It's not something that they do, but there were people that were saying, "Hey, if you want to be a Christian, you got to go get circumcised." Ouch. They were setting up a false obstacle.

Here's the thing. You could go back to the Old Testament and look at circumcision and you could go, "Oh, you know what? Okay. I guess that makes sense. I mean, Jesus was a Jewish rabbi and I want to be a follower of Jesus so I, really, the Old Testament that Jesus quoted all the time talks about being circumcised. I need to be circumcised to follow Christ." This is why Paul is saying you need to understand the gospel, you need to understand God's word so that when somebody says something that's not right, you can rebuke them. The circumcision party was in here and they were adding things to the gospel. They were adding these Jewish customs that were not required to be a Christian. They were saying that you had to do them. It was pulling people away. Paul even says that they were doing it for their own gain. They were dividing families and they were doing it for their own gain in verse 11.

In verse 12, he kind of takes a little side note here. There's a, I'm going to get his name wrong here, Epimenides I think his name was, was a Cretan philosopher. He was himself from the island of Crete. He said that Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons about his own people. Paul goes, "Yep." Now, is he really calling Cretans this? No, what he's saying is that don't let them appeal to some kind of weird national pride to resist what you're saying. Even their own national hero, their prophet that they all revere, even he said that they make bad decisions, that their character's not always upright. Don't let them act like you're picking on them because of where they're from. Their own prophet picks on them for where they're from. Get past that so that you can get to the core of the matter. The core of the matter is that this circumcision party, verse 14, "Devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth."

This is what he's saying. He's saying these people, they're deceivers, they're self-serving, and they prey on the gullible. Paul's saying, no, that's not the characteristics of a leader. That's not the people that are going to be in the leadership of the church that we're building in Crete. Get rid of them. In fact, he says rebuke them harshly. Then, Paul then goes on. Actually, let me talk about it. He's talking about the way you love your family, the way you live your life and your character, the way you live out your faith, he saying avoid these deceivers, being self-serving and being gullible.

Instead of a Big Idea, we're going to have a Leadership Lesson. The Leadership Lesson is this: "A leader's reputation is built on the way he loves his family, lives his life, and lives out his faith." This is our Big Idea, is this Leadership Lesson, that **a leader's reputation is built on the way he loves his family, lives his life, and lives out his faith.**

As a leader, your reputation is key to the quality of your leadership. If people look at you and they say, "Well, you don't treat your family well. How can you help somebody or teach somebody what the Bible says about how to be a good father or be a good husband?" If they look at you and you're a liar or you're angry all the time, you're quick-tempered or you're arrogant and you're saying, "Oh, the fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control," and they're like, "Yeah, right. To you, those are just words." Your reputation will either augment your leadership or it will undermine your leadership. Your reputation is something that you need to protect. **A leader's reputation is built on the way he loves his family, lives his life, and lives out his faith.**

PURITY AND CORRUPTION

Then, let's look at this last section when Paul talks about purity and corruption. Paul says, "To the pure, all things are pure. To the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled." What is Paul talking about? Well, you may remember the story in Acts 10, Peter saying, "Nothing impure has passed my lips." In a dream, God shows him that basically the kosher laws don't apply anymore. A sheet comes down from heaven and on the sheet are all kinds of food. God says, "Take of the food." Peter's like, "Some of that food's not clean by the Jewish laws." God goes, "No, no, no. It's not about whether the animal's clean or not or the food is clean or not. It's about whether you're clean or not. The food doesn't make you clean or unclean. The state of your heart makes you unclean." Jesus said the same thing in Luke 6:45. He said, "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." It's what's in your heart that determines how you behave.

When he's talking about, "To the pure, all things are pure, and to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure," what he's saying is that to the impure, to the defiled, everything's dirty. Why? Because they're blaming everything else for their own state of their heart rather than taking responsibility for

themselves. If your heart is pure, then those things outside of you aren't going to affect whether your heart is pure or not. He's referring, again, back to this circumcision party, back to the Judaizers they're called in other places, these people that are adding all of the Jewish customs and laws on top of Christianity and saying, listen, the way to God is by these customs and behaviors that you perform. Whereas Jesus said there's one way to God and one way only. It's through him, not through your behavior, not through the activity that you do, not through your goodness, but only through my righteousness is the way to God. The Judaizers, the circumcision party, is saying, no, you have to do these behaviors.

See, that's a slippery slope because once you say you have to get circumcised and you have to follow the Jewish customs, they're just going to keep adding behavioral requirements onto your faith. Guys, I'm just going to tell you, if you're in a church that keeps adding behavioral requirements and saying, "Oh, if you give this much money, then God's going to bless you. If you do these activities, God is going to bless you," if they're constantly giving you behavioral requirements to have a relationship with God, then Paul is saying that that's unpure and evil and it should be rebuked sharply. I hope I'm not stepping on too many toes here, but if your church is doing that, this is exactly what Paul's talking about to Titus. You got to figure out how to deal with it because you can't give into that. That is pulling you away from the gospel. There's one way to God. It's through Jesus Christ. What are you going to focus on? Are you going to focus on your behavior or are you going to focus on the gospel? Are you going to focus on the Lord? That's what Paul is saying here.

This book, this fascinating letter, we're just seeing a glimpse of the relationship between Paul, a man who's seen Jesus, who's been taught by Jesus, who Jesus has given the responsibility basically of building the church outside of the nation of Israel. Paul's the guy that goes all throughout the Gentile lands and gets things going. Then, he's got these proteges, Timothy and Barnabas and Timothy and Titus and Tychicus and all these guys. If you read through the epistles, you can see all these guys that Paul had a huge impact on. Titus is one of these guys, Titus the troubleshooter. Titus is a leader and Titus is looking for leaders throughout Crete. God is looking for leaders in his church today. We can be those leaders if we remember that a leader's reputation is built on the way that he loves his family, he lives his life, and he lives out his faith. Let me pray for us and then we'll take about 20 minutes for table time. Then, I'll bring us back for a quick closing.

Lord, thanks for Paul. Thanks for talking to him on that road to Damascus. Thank you for teaching him the things that you wanted him to know and then for sending him on this mission to build the church. We are the spiritual great, great, great grandsons of Paul. Lord, we're so grateful that you would have equipped him to do this. Lord, thanks for Titus and for the lessons that Paul is teaching him, the lessons that we can learn too. Lord, help us to safeguard our reputations so that nothing would hinder us from spreading the gospel, nothing would hinder us from showing people your love, from showing them the one way that they can achieve relationship with you for eternity is through Jesus Christ and accepting his sacrifice on our behalf. Lord, bless our reputations, Lord. Give us the right reputation out in the community, in our family, in our workplaces, so that can proclaim your gospel. In Jesus's name, amen.