

WOMEN'S
EVANGELICAL
COMMENTARY

NEW TESTAMENT

EDITED BY

DOROTHY KELLEY PATTERSON &
RHONDA HARRINGTON KELLEY





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Contents:

INTRODUCTION4
TITUS9

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INTRODUCTION



The *Women's Evangelical Commentary on the New Testament* is the initial volume in a library of helpful resources and is the first of a two-volume commentary set. The Old Testament volume is scheduled to be released in the summer of 2006. These unique tools make a special effort to address adequately the biblical texts about which women are asking questions. God's Word will be opened through systematic exposition by women for women on subjects important to women.

A commentary by definition is an expository treatise or a series of comments or annotations on a Scripture text. This New Testament volume is much more than exposition. The introductory sections include discussions on author, date of writing, recipients, setting, themes, and the genre of literature, as well as an outline to guide the reader through each book in a systematic way. The heart of the volume, however, is an exposition of the text of each book with special attention to challenging verses, idiomatic phrases, difficult words, and passages of interest to women. Selected word studies and discussion of literary and stylistic matters are included.

Women mentioned in the text will be examined in profile with summarized information about their lives so that the reader can see their life challenges and how they trusted God to solve them. There is no attempt to idealize their lives; rather, they are presented in the midst of good and bad choices, faithfulness and disobedience, piety and self-centeredness. You can reach out and touch these women, who become your examples of what to do or not do, your models for inspiration, your mentors for spiritual growth. Charts are tools for highlighting information on women, not because women on the pages of Scripture are more prominent than men and not because women are superior in their devotion to spiritual things, but merely because one of the goals of this volume is to introduce contemporary women to women of the Bible.

Articles on how to study the Bible and other topics related to the interpretive process offer thought-provoking scholarship, devotional meditations, and the practical outworking of faith from the pens of women. A pronunciation guide for key names of people and places and appropriate maps are provided with each book. Devotional sections called "Heart to Heart" include illustrations as well as practical insights and helpful applications of the text. User-friendly indexing and a suggested bibliography for further study are included. Occasionally an excursus, a more in-depth discussion, has been inserted by the editor to pursue special topics of interest whenever further explanation is needed.

The ultimate goal is to provide a tool to walk a woman through the Bible in woman-to-woman exposition of God's Word. Opening God's Word to women through a comprehensive study of Scripture prepared by women for women on subjects important to women is not really a modern phenomenon. In the Apostle Paul's discussion on church order, he instructed spiritually mature women to teach women who were fresh and new to the faith (Ti 2:3-5).

Are the women who have contributed to these volumes really qualified to write commentaries? The team of women assembled includes both seasoned expositors and a number of young women who have recently completed their training in biblical studies and who come to the task of biblical exposition with excellent academic preparation as well as enthusiasm for a new and fresh opportunity to put these tools to work in the marketplace of ideas. These women—the experienced

and the newly equipped expositors—do not come to this task to interpret Scripture from their own perspectives or from the view of a supposed superior feminine scholarship or from any suggestion that the Bible must be reinterpreted by women to escape the alleged “oppression” of the patriarchal society described in Scripture. They come with stellar academic preparation to do serious exposition with a special passion for opening the Word of God to other women.

No interpreter approaches the sacred Book without presuppositions. The question of personal biblical interpretation comes out of what you bring to the table in beginning your process of examining the text. For this commentary project the editors have settled on these presuppositions:

- The Bible is God’s Word; it is true, without error, the only standard of truth, and God’s objective revelation.
- Through the Bible God reveals
 - Himself as Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 - the nature and condition of human beings—male and female,
 - God’s way of reconciling His creation to Himself,
 - God’s standards for how women and men relate to Him and to other human beings, and
 - God’s power and wisdom for walking in His ways.
- The Bible can be understood by ordinary women and men.
- The Bible must be interpreted in its plain and natural sense.

Since Scripture provides all you need for “life and godliness,” the way you approach Scripture will affect the power Scripture has in your life. You should come to Scripture with the same mindset as you would come to an audience with God. If you approached God, you would come with your mind focused and your heart ready to respond to what God might tell you. Your attentiveness to God and your readiness to obey Him will enhance or limit your understanding of His Word.

God is consistent, and so is His Word. Those whose hearts are not set on obedience to God delight to find apparent contradictions in Scripture. This skepticism serves as an excuse for them to persist in a life of disobedience, of doing their own thing, of picking and choosing what they will believe and obey. When your heart is right, you may not understand a portion of Scripture or the relationship between various portions of Scripture, but you proceed in your study knowing that God does not contradict Himself and that through the disciplined application of time-honored interpretive principles and through His Holy Spirit, He will make plain to you what He is saying.

The godly woman seeks to conform her beliefs and behavior to Scripture, not the other way around. She welcomes the help of fellow believers in this task, including those who write commentaries. Each of you is like the Ethiopian official whom Philip asked if he understood what he was reading as he traveled from Jerusalem back to Ethiopia. His response is as yours, “How can I . . . unless someone guides me?” (Ac 8:31).

Every woman needs this guidance. The task of the commentator is to make clear the meaning of Scripture and challenge the reader to fashion her life accordingly. Modern mentality defines freedom as the ability to set your own standards and chart your own course. However, freedom in the Bible is defined primarily in relationship to God’s law. Natural notions of freedom are based on a radical misreading of the human condition. Freedom in this natural or popular sense is a path of disaster because it will lead you away from the One who created you and desires to restore you to a right relationship with Himself and with one another.

Freedom in the Bible is defined primarily in relationship to God’s law. God’s natural law and His moral law define the conditions of life—abundant, overflowing life. The words *law* and *command* carry a negative connotation, not because law is negative but because human

hearts and minds have been gravely distorted by sin. In order for a woman to say with integrity to God, “I delight in Your law; I love to do Your will,” some radical reorientation has to take place in her heart.

Scripture describes this radical change in many ways. One of the most familiar is the new birth. Different women come to this change in different ways. One of the common threads is the recognition of God’s law, the awareness that you have violated that law and that you don’t have within yourself the ability to measure up to God’s high standards. These realizations are coupled with the good news that past violations are completely forgiven through Christ’s death and that power to measure up to God’s expectations is available for the asking day by day.

Genuine freedom is born in this way. Genuine freedom produces the ability and the desire to live the kind of life that not only fulfills the commands of the law but also develops an even more complete and demanding love, enabling you to submit to God and to do His will. Nowhere in Scripture is there an admonition to embrace life in terms of your own rights. As God’s creation, in relation to Him, the Creator, you have no intrinsic and inalienable rights. You must be totally sold out to Him and under the authority of His Word (Pr 3:5-6).

Why a commentary for women? The psalmist has a timely word describing a great company of women as they brought the good news (Ps 68:11). What a worthy task for women to be numbered among those who love His Word and take “the good news.” Although the commentators are all women and in a sense write from that perspective, the Word of God is not to be interpreted through the “gender lens.” God’s Word is for women and men, but this particular resource, without apology, is prepared primarily for women to use.

The commentators have a passion for woman-to-woman exposition, and the passages selected for comment within the limits of a one-volume commentary on the New Testament were selected with the volume’s audience in mind. However, in interpreting those passages, the contributors have been committed to evangelical hermeneutical principles that have been tried and proven throughout the generations.

Women have shown themselves to be uniquely sensitive to spiritual matters. Survey any Christian book store and you will find that far more Bibles and spiritual resources are purchased by women. More women than men are involved in Bible study whether in homes, churches, or community gatherings. Many women sense that their innermost personal needs can be met by a word from God. Even injustices and tragedies can be endured through the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit, and Scripture is the most vital link to the comforts offered by the heavenly Father.

There have already been some ventures into this arena. Egalitarians¹ and feminists have produced several one-volume commentaries and a host of other biblical resources. Elizabeth Cady Stanton published *The Woman’s Bible* in 1895. She stated her purpose as achieving for women freedom from what she alleged to be the “oppression” of Scripture. Although Stanton did comment on passages she believed to be of interest to women, she also removed verses she thought were tainted with a male bias. Using an experiential method of interpreting Scripture, she placed herself over Scripture, molding her interpretation of the text to fit her own life and agenda. Her position has continued to be the ideological foundation for feminist theology in which individual choices and personal experience become the ultimate basis for interpreting Scripture.

In 1995 Dorothy Patterson and Rhonda Kelley led the editorial team producing *The Woman’s Study Bible*.² The team of women accepted the absolute veracity and uniqueness of the Bible. They did not need revisionism or accommodation or relativism. Those women were committed to study Scripture and pull out its meaning to present to women the Creator’s purpose for their lives. That project proved that women from many different denominations, ethnic backgrounds, and occupations could accept a word from God as not

only true but also binding for all. Their training and giftedness were willingly harnessed to open the Scriptures with a determination to find a word from God for women who are hurting from injustices and who are burdened with the problems of life. The guidelines for biblical exposition formulated by the editors years ago are still appropriate. It is clear that women working within carefully defined hermeneutical boundaries can make some unique contributions to the task of woman-to-woman biblical interpretation:

- A *distinctive exegesis* demands pulling out the meaning of the text rather than reading into the text your own personal whims.
- *Intuitive scholarship* links discerning intuition with the discipline of scholarship, providing an innovative dimension to evangelical interpretation.
- *Nurturing sensitivity* inspires new and exciting ways to encourage and motivate.
- *Mentoring friendships* undergird spiritual bonding by offering common ground instead of polarity in the quest to understand and interpret Scripture.
- *Creative service* connects the mind and heart to present inspiration and guidance that are not only fresh and relevant but also firmly anchored in biblical boundaries.

Without doubt these guidelines push to the forefront both strengths and weaknesses found in the Creator's design of the feminine mystique.

Intuition is a gift associated almost exclusively with women. A woman can become so attuned to the assets of this powerful and useful gift that she forgets the boundaries of disciplined study formulated throughout the generations. A woman must be careful not to "throw out the baby with the bath water." She should use her God-given intuitions to prompt interest and draw attention to areas where more disciplined study is needed, but she must conscientiously work with hermeneutical principles faithfully used through the generations.

Maternity is also a God-given gift, but it is not reserved for bearing and rearing children. The nurturing instinct at the heart of maternity brings unique instincts for encouragement and inspiration. In studying Scripture, nurturing can be a valuable force in motivating the student of Scripture to take what she has learned in exposition and apply those truths to living the Christian life.

The woman-to-woman mentoring described by Paul in the book of Titus grows out of the fertile ground of God-created femininity. Friendships are not limited to women by any means, and yet there seems to be a unique relational spark among women who then form life-changing, long-lasting, and far-reaching friendships among themselves. Yet both the nurturing and mentoring cannot reign unchecked when it comes to Bible study groups and inductive Bible study; they must be anchored to didactic instruction, which sometimes includes pulling from Scripture a "hard word" that is not comforting or appealing when compared to what you personally want to believe or do. Scripture must also convict and correct, often a painful process but ultimately deeply rewarding.

The ways women serve in the church and kingdom also fall into an area that demands guidance as well as inspiration. No woman (or man) has complete freedom to do whatever she feels gifted or called to do. The unique creativity of women exemplified in the Bible must line up with God's clear boundaries revealed in Scripture regarding the channels in which that creativity is expressed. God's guidelines don't vary with cultural norms and values.

Defiance of the boundaries turns service into doing your own thing, which may indeed provide something good for some and even offer what may appear to be satisfying spiritual results; but to resist God-given boundaries becomes a means of moving obedience to God from absolute mandate for you to selective choice by you.

Any woman who uses the commentary must remember that the first and most important step to studying Scripture is always a personal reading of the text of Scripture, letting its words speak to your heart. God promises that these words "will not return to Me empty" (Is 55:11). Nevertheless, a woman who believes that she needs no help in study of the vast

depths of Scripture exercises overconfidence or naïveté. Unlocking God's Word is often expedited through the help of capable and committed commentators who share the results of their years of disciplined study. These commentators offer to any woman who comes reverently to Scripture with an open heart and ready mind an effective and helpful catalyst for personal study of the Holy Book.

Bible study booklets are not and were never meant to be commentaries. In fact, you cannot prepare a Bible study on any level effectively unless you have gathered for yourself commentaries by those who have prepared themselves in a formal way to explain the Scripture. A capable Bible teacher will study carefully biblical exposition done by trained scholars and teachers in order to understand clearly the meaning of the text before she begins to write Bible lessons or teach Scripture to others.

There are also a number of devotional volumes bearing the designation of "commentary" but without any systematic exposition of the Scripture. While these do offer encouragement and help for the Christian life, which is important, this project in biblical exposition is definitely different and uniquely distinct in comparison to other products prepared specifically for women. For a woman to profit from this volume, she must first have a desire to know what God says and then at least be open to doing what He demands. This volume has as its goals:

- to challenge women to make a systematic journey through the Scriptures in search of God's truth and message;
- to give women an opportunity to receive clear biblical exposition prepared by women with formal training in theological and biblical studies, including the biblical languages, with special emphasis upon those passages of Scripture, especially the difficult-to-interpret verses, that speak to women; and
- to learn how to find biblical solutions to life's problems and answer questions about life choices and decisions through personal study and the interpretation of God's Word.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, one of history's finest biblical expositors, raised an interesting discussion in his volume *Commenting and Commentaries*. He described how the commentators would relate to the students of Scripture as "a glorious army . . . whose acquaintance will be your delight and profit." He also offered a warning: "It seems odd that certain men [and this certainly could be women] who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to them, should think so little of what he has revealed to others."³

Never has there been a time when women were any more diligent in pursuing the study of God's Word. May God grant to the women who use this commentary renewed commitment of personal time and resources that will unlock the riches of God's Word to all women who pursue the high and holy task of serious study of God's Word. We pray that the *Women's Evangelical Commentary on the New Testament* will be a resource for that study. DKP



Footnotes

¹The dictionary defines an egalitarian as one who believes in the equality of all people. However, in contemporary society many insist that no distinction in roles can exist in "equality." The Bible presents equality and role distinction as different, but compatible, aspects of human existence. There is a difference between who a person is and what a person does.

²Published by Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tenn., 1995. Dorothy Kelley Patterson, General Editor; Rhonda Harrington Kelley, Managing Editor. Because Dr. Kelley and I poured into the volume much of our own personally developed material, especially in its charts, maps, portraits, and topical notes, you will find some of these personal resources in this series of volumes.

³Charles H. Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988), 9.

TITUS

Introduction

Title

This epistle bears the name of its recipient—Titus, the young protégé of Paul. Although Titus was not identified as a pastor, this letter, as those written to Timothy, dealt with practical and timely issues that would have been foremost in the minds of congregants and church leaders—both from an individual perspective and in the life of the congregation. These books have been known as Pastoral Epistles. Titus was mentioned 13 times in the New Testament (2 Co 2:13; 7:6,13,14; 8:6,16,23; 12:18 [twice]; Gl 2:1,3; 2 Tm 4:10; Ti 1:4). Titus Justus mentioned in Acts 18:7 was a different man.

A Greek by ethnic heritage, Titus was converted under the ministry of Paul (1:4). He chose to remain uncircumcised, perhaps as a testimony to the power of the gospel for Gentiles as well as Jews (Gl 2:3). His close association with the apostle is noted:

- Paul commended Titus as his partner (Gk. *koinōnos*) and fellow worker (Gk. *sunergos*) in ministry (2 Co 8:23).
- Paul took him to the Jerusalem Conference (Gl 2:1-5), perhaps to make the point that Gentiles, even without submitting to circumcision, were just as much heirs to salvation as Jews.
- Paul used Titus as his personal messenger to the troubled church at Corinth (an assignment in which the young man seemingly met with both challenges and successes, 2 Co 8:16-24).
- Titus was then sent to Crete where doctrinal aberrations and moral decadence had invaded the churches (Ti 1:5). At some point Paul also sent Titus to Dalmatia (2 Tm 4:10).

In conclusion, for this brief epistle to bear the name of its emissary is indeed appropriate. Titus had distinguished himself, not only with the Apostle Paul but also among the churches, as a man who, though young in years, was mature in the faith and full of wisdom and discernment. He did not waiver in his convictions and held fast to the great doctrines of the faith, and he demonstrated a gracious statesmanship that endeared him to the congregations to whom he was sent, enabling him to work through their difficulties and to bring them back to center in their kingdom responsibilities.

Setting

During the time these Pastoral Epistles were penned, the Apostle Paul seemed to be on the move—at least out of prison (1 Tm 1:3; 3:14; Ti 1:5). Paul's reference to an earlier visit to Crete would seem to suggest that he established a church, leaving Titus to organize the congregation and disciple the new believers. Crete is one of the larger islands in the Mediterranean, extending approximately



156 miles in length and up to 30 miles in width. Ancient cities included Knossus, Paistos, Haga Triada, and Fair Havens (Ac 27:8), and all were overshadowed with a mountain range whose top peak, Mount Ida, the traditional birthplace of the Greek god Zeus, reached 8,193 feet.

According to Greek legend, the son of Zeus became king of Crete, and the reign of this powerful and acclaimed King Minos has indeed been documented in history. One can find extensive archaeological excavations with fascinating evidence of this earlier civilization in the ancient Minoan Palace. Perhaps the most unique aspect of the legends surrounding this period of Cretan history has centered upon the ancient legend of the Minotaur, a monster who was a half bull and half man and was shut up in Labyrinth. An extensive “bull lore” was associated with the island of Crete. The entire legend is shrouded in immorality and lends understanding to the problems Paul and Titus found in the churches on the island. The Cretans were overwhelmingly stereotyped by ancient writers as immoral and rude and as part of a barbarous culture.

Genre

The reader should not be surprised that Paul chose a very personal medium for sending such an intimate message to a co-laborer who was facing the challenging task of correction and encouragement within a difficult congregation. The epistle or letter without doubt came directly from Paul’s heart with the intent to accomplish his goals despite his own absence. Note the earlier discussion on this genre in the introductory section of Colossians. The use of this style in personal communication was quite appropriate. Critics err in trying to separate the apostle from a letter bearing his own imprimatur in the salutation (1:1).

Author

When Paul identified himself as the sender of the epistle (1:1-4), believers who honor Scripture as accurate and without error end all discussion on authorship. The church fathers of the ancient world did not question Pauline authorship; nor do evangelical scholars in modernity suggest that the clear statement of the text is inaccurate. However, theologians enamored with the higher critical method of questioning anything and everything about Scripture have not left this question untouched.

Most attacks on Pauline authorship have come on the basis of suggesting a vocabulary difference between words used in the Pastoral Epistles in comparison to Paul’s longer letters. Most writers in antiquity or modernity could not survive a vocabulary test based upon common words used in different works whatever the length. Some authors, in fact, work toward a variation in words for interest as well as precision. In addition, one would assume that Paul would use a different approach, and even different words, in speaking to his co-laborers than he would use in writing directly to a congregation. Certainly in the case of the former, appealing to a body of truth already presented as the standard without the need of redeveloping that material at every appropriate point would be sufficient. Perhaps a worthy presupposition for determining authorship would be to accept without question whatever is explicitly stated in the text. From that point, one can enjoy the scholarly pursuit of how the other pieces fit together. The apostle’s autograph at the beginning of the epistle and the consistency of his theological teachings, including the language used to express these truths, provide ample internal evidence to support his authorship.

Date

There has been some legitimate discussion about the dating of the epistle of Titus. The question is whether Paul endured one or two imprisonments in Rome. There seems to be good consensus that Paul was not in prison between AD 62 and 64, which allowed for his travel to Nicopolis, evidently by his own choice and thus as a free man, to spend the winter (3:12). The date of AD 63 has been supported for these reasons:

- the optimistic closing words of the capable historian Luke in the Acts/Luke material (Lk 24:52-53);
- the tradition regarding additional, though unrecorded, missionary journeys by Paul;
- other minor historical data that seemed to necessitate Paul's release from prison shortly after the close of the events recorded in Acts.

The writing of 1 Timothy and Titus has been projected as falling between Paul's first Roman imprisonment (as early as AD 61–63) or as late as sometime before his penning of 2 Timothy (as early as AD 64–67), if Paul's death did occur, according to a strong tradition, during the reign of Nero (which ended AD 68).

Recipients

Paul addressed this letter to his Greek convert Titus. Even though an uncircumcised Gentile, Titus accompanied Paul to the Jerusalem Conference and was a strong helper to Paul in pleading the case of salvation by grace alone, without the requirement of circumcision or any other personal work (Gl 2:1-5). Titus might be considered the test case of salvation, which for the Jews required circumcision, by grace alone without the keeping of the law.

Titus also excelled in his handling of the problems among the Corinthians when he did troubleshooting for the apostle in that troubled congregation (2 Co 8:16-23). This letter gave Titus the authority and the encouragement to address issues of doctrine, church polity, and even the spiritual formation of the church in Crete. The apostle used this epistle to instruct Titus on what he should teach and how those teachings would apply to the believers in Crete. Titus received not only a letter but the apostolic authority carried therewith. Titus certainly played an important part in extending early Christianity beyond the confines of Judaism to Gentiles and unto the ends of the world.

Major Themes

Sound doctrine is at the heart of this brief epistle (2:1-14; 3:4-7). Church polity is clearly a component in that doctrinal foundation. Not only was doctrine addressed, but also the spiritual fervor to incorporate that doctrine as a standard for Christlike living was clearly mandated.

Servant or Christlike living was delineated as the natural and essential outgrowth of understanding sound doctrine. Despite the pagan environment, the Cretans were held to the highest ethical standards, as was expected of every believer. They had no option other than placing themselves under the authority and lordship of Jesus Christ in their everyday lives. Obedience was to be neither optional nor selective. Personal responsibilities were clearly delineated for older men and women as well as for those who were younger. High standards were demanded from those in authority as well as those under their direction (2:1-10). Serious warnings were issued concerning false teachings and the teachers who propagated such (1:10-16; 3:9-11).

Pronunciation Guide

Artemas	<i>AHR tih mus</i>
Tychicus	<i>TIK ih kuhs</i>
Nicopolis	<i>nih KAHF oh liss</i>
Zenas	<i>ZEE nuhs</i>
Apollos	<i>uh PAWL uhs</i>

Outline

- I. INTRODUCTION (1:1-4)
 - A. Author of the letter (v. 1)
 - B. Motivation for writing the letter (vv. 2-3)
 - C. Recipient to whom the letter is addressed (v. 4a)
 - D. Salutation and greeting (v. 4b)
- II. THE APPOINTMENT OF PASTORS (1:5-9)
 - A. Consistent patterns in character (vv. 5-8)
 1. In the family (vv. 5-6)
 2. In personal habits and life (v. 7)
 3. In faith and practice (v. 8)
 - B. Passionate purpose in ministry (v. 9)
- III. THE CHALLENGE OF COMBATING HERESY (1:10-16)
 - A. Overcoming the general worldview (vv. 10-11)
 - B. Engaging the specific field assignment (vv. 12-16)
- IV. THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR BELIEVERS (2:1-10)
 - A. A general word (v. 1)
 - B. A specific word (vv. 2-10)
 1. To older (“spiritually mature”) men (v. 2)
 2. To older (“spiritual mature”) women (v. 3)
 3. To younger (“new in the faith”) women (vv. 4-5)
 4. To younger (“new in the faith”) men (vv. 6-8)
 5. To slaves (vv. 9-10)
- V. A PERSUASIVE REASON FOR OBEDIENCE (2:11–3:11)
 - A. The gift of grace in salvation (2:11-15)
 - B. The outworking of faith in life (3:1-11)
 1. The recognition of authorities (v. 1)
 2. A respect for others (v. 2)
 3. A call to obedience (vv. 3-8)
 4. A warning against disobedience (vv. 9-11)
- VI. CONCLUSION (3:12-15)
 - A. Final instructions (vv. 12-14)
 - B. A personal closing (v. 15)

Exposition of the Text¹

INTRODUCTION (1:1-4)

Author of the letter (v. 1)

1:1 Paul, in his salutation, shared his own personal testimony as well as encapsulating his driving passions and previewing the themes of this brief epistle penned to Titus concerning building the church in Crete. He clearly stated two relationships upon which his life and ministry were based:

- Paul was a **slave** (Gk. *doulos*). Perhaps it is significant that this word was frequently used to describe one born into slavery, and anyone who

comes into this relationship with Christ is born again, becoming a bondsman through spiritual birth. Every follower of Christ must become a slave to the Lord, dying to self and committing himself entirely to Him (Rm 6:1-23; Gl 2:20; Eph 6:6).

- Paul also described a unique relationship reserved for only a few selected for a particular service to Christ. He was an **apostle** (Gk. *apostolos*, “messenger” or “one sent,” transliterated into English as “apostle”) **of Jesus**

Christ. The New Testament clearly delineated the requirements for the esteemed position of apostleship:

- Apostles were chosen, called, and sent forth by Christ (Mk 3:13-15).
- They were eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ (Jn 20:20-29).
- They were marked by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:22-23).
- Seemingly their appointment was for life and reached beyond the influence of the local congregation (Mt 28:18-20; Ac 1:8).

As an apostle, Paul related to the broader kingdom, described here as **God's elect**, who were believers. This designation underscored that election took place

according to God's foreknowledge (1 Pt 1:2). The faith of God's elect was of particular interest since Crete had been plagued with doctrinal instability, which was one reason Paul sent Titus to offer wisdom and encouragement to the Cretan congregations. He coupled with **faith** the **knowledge of truth that leads to godliness**.

There would be no defense of the faith or maturing of the faith without **KNOWLEDGE** (Gk. *epignōsin*, "know well, perceive, understand, learn"), a word that is amplified with the prefix preposition (Gk. *epi*, "upon"), which would suggest thorough or full knowledge.

Heart to Heart: Digging Deep into God's Word

Overwhelmingly women purchase more Bibles and more Bible study materials than men do. By all rights, just the amount of materials in the marketplace should make women the best equipped Bible students of the modern era. However, one has only to peruse those materials to see that there is a great gulf fixed between most of what is being produced by women for women and even the most basic devotional commentary. Inspirational thoughts, practical application, and systematic topical studies are all important, but women need more. Women can study the Bible in depth; they can learn to do genuine exposition or verse-by-verse interpretation of God's Word, using the best hermeneutical principles; and this commentary is a step in making available to women resources produced especially for them. Here is a clarion call to women to demand the best in biblical scholarship—even resources prepared by women and men who have been formally trained in biblical studies—and to spend the time necessary to dig deeply into God's Word and pull out its rich truths and full knowledge.

Motivation for writing the letter
(vv. 2-3)

1:2-3 There are some important words in verses 2 and 3. **Hope** (Gk. *elpidi*) is not to be understood as something without certainty, as the word is popularly used in modernity. Believers must know that their hope is a sure thing, based upon a settled expectation and grounded in the very person of God Himself. A believing woman's

unique trust in God as being entirely trustworthy enables her to wait patiently for the consummation of her salvation even in the midst of a hostile and destructive world. **TIME** (Gk. *chronōn*, "period of time") in verse 2 has the sense of a sequence of time, a concept readily understood by anyone. In other words, God's plan for salvation was in place before time began, a reference to the sequence of

events in time. Time (Gk. *kairois*, “appointed or proper time, season”) in verse 3 suggests a particular occasion rather than an extended time. Here the reference is to a time chosen by God to reveal Himself in Christ. Human beings move through a chronology of time, but God often makes His particular intervention in an event in time, such as the proclamation of His message.

Recipient to whom the letter is addressed (v. 4a) and salutation and greeting (v. 4b)

1:4 **Grace and peace** presented an enigma. People have continually been looking and working for peace. The question comes again and again: Will there ever be peace in the Middle East? in Ireland? in Africa? in Korea? But how much more believers ought to realize that before peace must come grace. Genuine peace cannot be achieved by war or diplomacy but only by spreading abroad the grace of the Lord Jesus. Both grace and peace come from God alone, but peace will only come after God has done His work of grace in the heart.

THE APPOINTMENT OF PASTORS (1:5-9)

1:5-9 Paul gave to Titus a reminder of his assignment in Crete. Not only was he to **SET RIGHT** (Gk. *epidiorthōsē*, “correct”), but in the process he was to do what was left undone. The former word was used in medical writings in reference to setting broken limbs and could project the idea that the task was necessary and would require enduring some painful adjustment as well as heeding an urgent demand for getting it right. The spiritual body is as important as the physical body in its care and healing.

Paul also advised Titus to **appoint elders in every town**. The apostle did not intend

for Titus to remain in Crete. He followed this assignment with very specific qualifications dictated by the divine requirements as well as the serious spiritual responsibilities that would belong to them. There was no random choice on the part of Titus or the congregation, but Titus had been designated as God’s agent for making these important assignments for service in the congregations on Crete.

Interestingly, Paul used two words—**ELDERS** (Gk. *presbuteros*) in verse 5 and **OVERSEER** (Gk. *episkopon*, “overseer, guardian, bishop”) in verse 7. These words are used interchangeably in Scripture in reference to pastors (see also Gk. *poimenas*, “shepherd,” a word used elsewhere in the New Testament in tandem with the former words, Eph 4:11). Four major passages discuss the qualifications and responsibilities of the pastor or elder or overseer (Ti 1:5-7; Ac 20:28-35; 1 Tm 3:1-7; 1 Pt 5:1-4). Most of the early churches seemed to have a plurality of pastors, each of whom probably had an area of oversight of some particular ministry in the church much as is common in large congregations in the modern era. The elders appointed were local, living among the congregants they served, and they had requirements to meet. The word translated “elders” certainly has a connotation related to age, which would make perfect sense in that older men tend to have more wisdom and experience and thus be better prepared to meet such a challenge. However, many scholars accept this designation as a distinction or technical term for a church leader.

The word translated **OVERSEER** (Gk. *episkopon*, compound word with the preposition *epi*, meaning “over,” and the noun *skopos*, “one who watches or looks out”) is not a reference to another person but carries the nuance of the way a pastor would function in overseeing and guarding or watching over his flock

or congregation. The same word was used to describe the Lord as the Overseer of your souls in 1 Peter 2:25.

Likewise, the word used in other texts and translated “pastor” adds to the understanding of this divinely assigned leader of the congregation with an emphasis on his loving care and faithful guidance of those whom God placed in his ministry flock.

Not only is this section addressing the requirements for pastoral leadership in the congregation important to men who have been called out to undertake the responsibility for leading the flock of God, but also these verses have lessons for the laity concerning what they should expect from the pastor or any spiritual leader who would relate to the congregation.

<i>Pattern for Pastors</i>		
<i>Requirement</i>	<i>Insight</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Blameless	(Gk. <i>anegklētos</i> , “irreproachable”) The word meaning “accuse” is prefixed with an alpha privative (<i>alpha</i> , first letter in the Greek alphabet), which negates the word. Thus, the word means non-chargeable. The pastor should stand above accusation, maintaining the highest moral character, having an untarnished reputation.	v. 6
The husband of one wife	The emphasis is not that the pastor must be married, for Paul himself was single—at least at this time (whether by choice or as a widower). Rather, the emphasis was that the pastor should be a one-woman man, having taken very seriously God’s plan for marriage (Gn 2:24; Mt 19:5). His marriage must also be exemplary.	v. 6
Having faithful children	(Gk. <i>tekna echōn pista</i> , “having believing children”) Seemingly these children were still under their father’s authority in the home. This idea was not just a physical behavior requirement but a spiritual heart condition. Above all, a pastor ought to give his energies and passion to winning his own children to faith in Christ. And his exemplary life should call forth the respect of his children.	v. 6
Not accused of wildness or rebellion	(Gk. <i>asōtias</i> , “reckless living, dissipation”) This word for “wildness” was also used in Luke 15:13 to describe the lifestyle of the prodigal son. It was sometimes translated “incurable” in the sense that one was destroying his life so completely that it could not be rebuilt. Rebellion (Gk. <i>anupotakta</i> , “undisciplined, disobedient”) suggested refusal to submit to authority. Parents cannot control or dictate a child’s response to God, but they are responsible for guiding the child’s public behavior. It stands to reason that a child who refused the authority of his parents or teachers would not be likely to honor God or submit to His mandates. No pastor would want his child’s outrageous behavior to bring hurt to the church and destroy his own credibility as God’s servant.	v. 6
God’s manager	(Gk. <i>oikonomon</i> , “steward, administrator, treasurer”) A steward managed the owner’s household with responsibilities and authority assigned by the owner. The church is God’s household, and pastors have been given its human oversight. They are directly accountable to God.	v. 7
Not arrogant	(Gk. <i>authadē</i> , “self-willed, stubborn”) This compound word linked the personal pronoun and the verb meaning “enjoy oneself.” A pastor should be more concerned with pleasing God than himself.	v. 7
Not quick tempered	(Gk. <i>orgilon</i> , “inclined to anger”) Righteous indignation was perfectly acceptable, but there has never been a place for eruptive anger or bitter wrath, and most pastors will have many challenges that test their self-control.	v. 7
Not addicted to wine	The fermented fruit of the vine of Paul’s day cannot be compared to the intoxicating alcoholic beverage of the modern-day liquor industry, which wrecks homes and takes lives. Pastors must bring even their habits into subjection to an exemplary standard.	v. 7

continued

Pattern for Pastors (continued from previous page)

<i>Requirement</i>	<i>Insight</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Not a bully	(Gk. <i>plēkiēs</i> , “combative person”) No believer should allow an annoyance to provoke him to violence toward another. Scripture is clear that a believer is to endure suffering with a patient spirit.	v. 7
Not greedy for money	(Gk. <i>aischrokerdē</i> “fond of dishonest gain”) Materialism grips this age, including those who serve the Lord. Doing the best for your family, providing their necessities, and working to give some extras are the happy privileges of every husband and father. However, one must guard against being pulled into a materialistic mindset where things are more important than people and God.	v. 7
Hospitable	(Gk. <i>philoxenos</i> , “loving or delighting in a stranger or foreigner”) Rarely used in the New Testament, the word could be appropriate here because of the necessity for travelers to depend on local homes for accommodations, or perhaps the emphasis is on the open door such loving care would provide to share the gospel.	v. 8
Loving what is good	(Gk. <i>philagathon</i> , linking the popular word <i>phileō</i> , “love,” with the word for “good”) The admonition is entreats pastors to seek and to embrace with passion the good as a springboard for all they do.	v. 8
Sensible	(Gk. <i>sōphrona</i> , “thoughtful, moderate, self-controlled, decent, modest”) The spiritual dimension adds to good intellectual choices a sanctifying presence that permeates all of life with wise and discerning choices of how a pastor thinks, what decisions he makes, what words he utters, and what deeds he does. No trait is more important for a pastor.	v. 8
Righteous	(Gk. <i>dikaion</i> , “just”) The pastor must not only be in right standing with God, but he must also be just and fair in dealing with members of his family and congregation, whether in business or community or in the business of the church.	v. 8
Holy	(Gk. <i>hosion</i> , “devout, pious”) This word is not the usual New Testament word for “holy.” The nuance in its meaning suggests going beyond the usual reverence for God with the idea of being accountable to God without any regulation or monitoring. How could a pastor represent God to the people if he himself is not set apart unto the Lord in a unique and all-encompassing way? His task is to model holiness and draw others to walk in the way of the Lord.	v. 8
Self-controlled	(Gk. <i>egkratē</i> , “disciplined”) Certainly a pastor must be master of himself in the sense that he commits his life and decisions to the control of the Holy Spirit. He moves from self-control to God-control in his own life and seeks to move all in his congregation to that model.	v. 8
Holding to the faithful message as taught	His task culminates in the mandate to cling to or hold firmly (Gk. <i>antechomenon</i> , the verb meaning “have” is prefixed with the preposition “against” so that the idea is literally “to have against,” suggesting that your hold is not easy but is buffeted with difficulties that are working against you). What a picture for the pastor who must hold fast and firm the teachings of Scripture in the midst of his own pressures and challenges so that he will have a “faithful message.” Clearly this message is one that embodies faith and comes directly from God. It is not only free from error but also imparts health and encourages growth. The apostle continued to expound on the nature of that message, using the phrase “sound teaching” (Gk. <i>didaskalia tē hugiainousē</i>). The “teaching” or instruction entailed both content (OT and NT—the whole counsel of God) and action (lifestyle), and it is further described as “sound” or, more literally, “healthy.” This medical term often describes someone in perfect health. No better tool could come to the pastor in his task of discounting false doctrine than to have “healthy teaching” to use in confronting error and distortions that would attack the gospel.	v. 9

THE CHALLENGE OF COMBATING HERESY (1:10-16)

1:10-16 Throughout history those who embrace the gospel, and especially those who present the gospel, have been plagued with persecution and suffering and senseless attacks. The blood-sprinkled trail of martyrs has included godly men and women of faith. Paul here reminded his readers that there have always been opponents to the gospel. These talkers often had much to say about God's glory, but they had no fruit or converts who had come to Christ by their testimonies. The phrase **especially those from Judaism** was a reference to some of the legalistic Jews, who believed themselves to be the only real interpreters of Scripture.

Paul was strong in his words concerning the false teachers (v. 11). He recognized that one can be lulled by the call to tolerance so much that he might tolerate doctrinal error, which would be devastating to him and to others. **The Greek word EPISTOMIZEON (epi or "upon" is linked with stoma or "mouth" so that the idea is "upon" or "over the mouth," i.e., "muzzle") is clear; in other words, Paul himself took the initiative to call for stopping the mouths or silencing those who taught contrary to Scripture.**

The quote in verse 12 is from the Cretan poet Epimenides, who inhabited the island in the sixth century BC. Historically the residents of Crete had been known for their immorality. Interestingly Paul was well acquainted with ancient nonbiblical literature. Perhaps here he was using that knowledge to gain a hearing from nonbelievers in Crete. Or he may simply have been using the words of a pagan poet to awaken the people to their profligate lives and thus the need for the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ.

Doctrinal purity is not optional. To insist on the truthfulness of Scripture is not exercising intolerance or bigotry. Just as a child should be snatched from the dangerous path of an on-coming car, even if against the child's will, the strongest rebuke of those who would deceive was deemed necessary by Paul. The rebuke is to be done **sharply** (Gk. *apotomō*, linking *apo* or "off" with *tomos* or "cutting" as with a knife). Paul expected such a severe rebuke to produce sound doctrine and have the healthy result of building up faith (v. 13).

Paul described the false teaching as the **Jewish myths and the commandments of men who reject the truth** (v. 14). He did not elaborate on these. However, Jewish rabbis were known for the elevation of their own traditions to a position of importance alongside the law of God. Their legalistic interpretations often added to or even contradicted the divine law recorded in Scripture. They assumed that they could make themselves acceptable to God by their own traditions and rituals, such as their extensive and complicated dietary regulations (vv. 15-16).

The purity to which Paul alluded was not acquired (see Rm 3:10); rather, it was bestowed by God Himself through His atonement (3:5). Only in this way is the believer distinguished from the unbeliever. The **pure** (Gk., *kathara*, "clean, ritually pure, guiltless") were pure by means of their faith alone (v. 15). Of course, Paul was not suggesting that the "pure" could not or would not sin; rather, his point was that no sinner could make himself pure however religious he might be.

The false teachers were observant of religious traditions. They even professed (Gk. *homologousin*, "confess," "promise," "declare") **to know God**. Paul had the strongest condemnation for their duplicity (v. 16). C. S. Lewis once observed, "Of all bad men, religious bad men are the worst."²²

THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR BELIEVERS (2:1-10)

A General Word (v. 1)

2:1 Paul moved from the necessity of Christlike holy living for pastors to a call for personal holiness in the lives of believers in the congregation, realizing that living in an unholy day would call for leadership among those in the congregation—both men and women—to provide an example and the necessary encouragement to call all believers to Christlike living.

A Specific Word (vv. 2-10)

2:2 Paul began with the men (Gk. *presbutas*), and without question this word denoted older or aged men; and those addressed here were not pastors but rather the natural leaders of the congregation. No age was specified, but the idea expressed seems to identify men who were mature and settled in their own homes and in their respective spiritual

walks. The six requirements for holy living included being self-controlled, worthy of respect, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and endurance. The first group contained ethical considerations and came alongside what had already been noted for pastors. The second group of three was devoted to ministry of life or what the men were to exhibit in their own respective spiritual lives. Character must always be fleshed out in the way one chooses to live and work. Paul expected the scrutiny and judgment of the pagan world on the lives of believers. Teachers give instruction in both doctrine (what to believe) and ethics (how to live), and they model how believing and living are intertwined in holding to certain timeless principles and living out the application of those principles in timely ways. Genuine godliness lived out in word and deed cannot be achieved without a genuine faith built upon the foundation of truth as recorded in God’s Word.

Self-Control Is the Key

<i>The Group</i>	<i>The Dominant Character Trait</i>	<i>The Faithful Outworking</i>
Older Men	Worthy of respect	Sound in faith, love, and endurance
Older Women	Reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not addicted to much wine	Teaching what is good, encouraging the young women
Younger Women	Sensible about everything, pure life	Good homemakers, submissive to their husbands
Younger Men	Sensible about everything	Examples of good works and sound speech
Titus—the pastor	Integrity, dignity	Setting an example of good works
Slaves	Well pleasing, not talking back, not stealing	Submission to their masters in everything

2:3 The section devoted to women began with an adverb (Gk. *hōsautōs*, “in the same way, likewise”) connecting these verses with the beginning of the chapter and words of instructions to men. The list of these qualities is very similar to the qualities assigned to wives of deacons (1 Tm 3:11), which is natural since all women in leadership in the local church

would be expected to meet high standards in character and lifestyle. **THE OLDER WOMEN** (Gk. *presbutidas*, “old or elderly women”) are addressed as the teachers in this woman-to-woman teaching within the church. To suggest that these women or “female elders” were required to be “worthy of the priesthood” has no basis in the text.³

While the word selected is clear in its meaning, even though it is a *hapax legomenon* (a word used only once in the Greek New Testament), the passage as a whole made a clear contrast between the teaching women and the pupils identified as young women (Gk. *neas*, “new, fresh, young”), who were not necessarily merely young in years but who were new and fresh to the faith. The context then allows the teachers to be identified as those who are immersed in faith, usually older in years but most of all

well versed in God’s Word and saturated with His wisdom, or “spiritually mature women” who then would teach women new or fresh to the faith, usually younger

Spiritually mature women are to teach women who are new to the faith!

women who have not yet been equipped with the knowledge of God’s Word and the discerning wisdom that comes from time in studying Scripture. Spiritually mature women are to teach women who are new to the faith!

Spiritual Mothering

<i>The Mentor & Novice</i>	<i>The Curriculum</i>	<i>The Reward</i>	<i>The Biblical Example</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older Women (Gk. <i>presbutidas</i>) could be understood as spiritually mature women. Age definitely gives the edge in spiritual maturity (Ti 2:3). • To teach the young women (Gk. <i>neas</i>) was not only a reference to youth but connoted freshness or what is new. New converts and those who have not been discipled were in view (v. 4). 	<p>Lifestyle Example (Ti 2:3) reverent in behavior—godly conduct, dress, and conversation</p> <p>Warnings (v. 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not slanderers (fault-finding, gossip, false accusation) • Not addicted to much wine <p>Admonitions (vv. 4, 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To love their husbands (v. 4, Gk. <i>philandrous</i>, connoting “esteem” or “respect”) • To love their children (v. 4, Gk. <i>philoteknous</i>)⁴ • To be sensible (v. 5, Gk. <i>sōphron</i>) • To be chaste or sexually pure (v. 5, Gk. <i>hagnas</i>) • homemakers (v. 5, Gk. <i>oikourgous</i>) • good (v. 5, Gk. <i>agathas</i>)⁵ • submissive to their husbands (v. 5, Gk. <i>hupotassō</i>; also used in Eph 5:21; Col 3:18; 1 Pt 3:1) 	<p>To prevent slandering of God’s message (Ti 2:5)</p> <p>To give young women the opportunity for spiritual ministry (vv. 12-15)</p> <p>To guard the sanctity of the home (Ti 2:4-5)</p>	<p>Naomi and Ruth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naomi won Ruth to faith in <i>Yahweh</i> (Ru 1:16-17). • She gave Ruth wise counsel to win the heart of Boaz (Ru 2:20,22; 3:3-6). • She helped nurture Ruth’s son Obed (Ru 4:15-16). <p>Deborah and Barak</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deborah guided him into battle (Jdg 4:6,14). • She accepted Barak’s call for help (Jdg 4:9,10). • She celebrated the victory in song (Jdg 5:1-31). <p>Elizabeth and Mary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elizabeth encouraged Mary (Lk 1:41-45). • She offered Mary hospitality and refuge (Lk 1:56). <p>Priscilla and Apollos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priscilla, with her husband Aquila, received spiritual preparation from the Apostle Paul (Ac 18:1-4). • They patiently shared their understanding of Scripture (Ac 18:24-28). • Priscilla kept her home open to believers (Rm 16:3-5).

Paul then moved to describe the character of these spiritually mature women who would be teaching the younger women. Woman-to-woman teaching goes back to early Christianity where it was tried and proven. Mentoring relationships among women have been God-ordained and profoundly effective. A woman must be **REVERENT** in behavior (Gk. *hieroprepeis*, “like people engaged in sacred duties, that which is suitable to holiness”, “temple-like”; *katastēmati*, “demeanor, deportment”). Certainly this demeanor would be inclusive of dress, suggesting a godly modesty. Most of all the word suggests outward action as emanating from inner character. A woman’s everyday activities are as if she were engaged in sacred duties, carrying into daily life the demeanor appropriate for the temple. In fact, the root for the word translated “reverent” is the Greek word for “temple.”

Jerome, one of the ancient church fathers, summarized the passage in this way: “Their walk and motion, their countenance, speech, silence, may present a certain dignity of holy propriety.”

The apostle continued with some warnings for women who want to be used in this teaching role. They must not be **SLANDERERS** (Gk. *diabolous*, “devils”). This word is a compound form with *dia*, a preposition meaning “through or by means of,” and *ballō*, a verb meaning “throw.” In the passive tense, *diaballō* means “bringing charges.” Of course, the Devil is the great accuser and uses every opportunity to bring charges against believers or to *cast through* their lives and characters. Spiritually mature women who are going to be leaders and teachers must not *cast through* or *gossip*. Their words are to be encouraging and uplifting and instructive.

Heart to Heart: What Is the Fruit of Your Mouth?

Women are often accused of wagging their tongues in an ungodly manner. Certainly in the church at Corinth women were evidently caught up in the ecstatic utterances in public worship so much so that the apostle says clearly, “The women should be silent [Gk. sigatosan, “stop talking” or “close your mouth”] in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak . . .” (1 Co 14:34). This warning is a reminder that all words coming from the lips of a godly woman must be wholesome and Christ-honoring. Even prayer meetings can be turned away from a holy purpose when intimate and embarrassing details about a sister’s tragedy are shared under the guise of requesting prayer, while in reality the sharing of prayer requests becomes a conduit for passing along information about tragically sinful behavior.

The phrase **not addicted** (Gk. *dedoulomenas*, “enslave, subject, bring into bondage”) **to much wine** is not surprising in a letter concerning the Cretans, who were known for their drunkenness. Even in contemporary society there are ample warnings in public places directed to women concerning the drinking of alco-

holic beverages. Again women who want to be teachers and mentors of other women are to be held to the highest standards.

Perhaps you are wondering why Paul would use the phrase **TEACH WHAT IS GOOD** (Gk. *kalodidaskalous*, a *hapax legomenon* or word used only one time in the NT and not found outside

the NT) rather than encouraging the mentoring women to warn the women they were teaching to avoid bad and evil. Perhaps Paul coined this word to describe a unique method of teaching, which would combine both example (character) and behavior (lifestyle). Actually the apostle showed a prophetic edge as he offered a timely word for subsequent generations. How can you warn against evil effectively when the pattern for what is good and godly has been lost? The spiritually mature women were to instruct and teach what is good in character and life as well as to motivate those women who were fresh in the faith to live godly lives, incorporating what is good and Christlike into their own lives. The emphasis was not on formal instruction but upon the private counsel and encouragement given by word and example. Character was intertwined with duty in the ancient world. Habits and lifestyle were at the heart of character. Thus, for a woman to manage her relationships to husband and children and others demanded certain appropriate traits of character.

2:4-5 The apostle hastened to provide the curriculum for this good teaching. Perhaps you are surprised that the things taught are not on what is considered to be a higher spiritual plane, such as methods in Bible study or skills in evangelism or even information on how to develop strategies for helping the needy. None of these things are unimportant, and all surely come in due course. However, Paul began according to the priorities already set forth from creation. He did not leave this important instruction to chance or assume its duties would be done by natural impulse. The phrase **so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and children** certainly catches the sense of the Greek text, but for better understanding one should note that two primary words are used, *philandrous*

(Gk. “husband-loving”) and *philoteknous* (Gk. “children-loving”), which reminds the reader that these are really two different assignments. You do indeed love husband and children, but your loving deeds and faithful service are offered to each in different ways. Because the woman was created to be a helper to the man before children ever arrived on the scene and because they as husband and wife begin their journey, and usually end it, without their children, it is quite fitting that the first lesson to be taught is for wives to love their husbands. But children are worthy of appropriate lessons in loving as well.

There are different words used in the Greek language for love, and the scope of this discussion does not allow the development of these. Certainly the Holy Spirit inspired certain words for a reason. One possibility is that *agapaō*, uniquely used in the New Testament and having the nuance of self-sacrifice and unconditional love, may have been much more natural for a wife and mother who in her own God-given nature and assignment from creation has a unique bent to self-sacrifice for her family. On the other hand, a wife/mother may find it more difficult to live for her family over the years than to offer her life in a moment of crisis. Perhaps *phileō* called for a measure of respect and honor, which certainly was inclusive in genuine love. In this case, a woman might find her daily challenge to be in honoring her husband and children and respecting them with her words and actions. Beginning this section with an admonition on how a woman was to relate to her family is then in tandem with instructions given elsewhere by the apostle, as well as by Peter, to wives (Eph 5:21-24, 33; Col 3:18; 1 Pt 3:1-6).

Another surprise in the apostle’s list is **HOMEMAKERS** (Gk. *oikourous*, “working at home”). This *hapax legomenon*, a word used only here in the

New Testament, is a simple compound word linking “home” and “work.” Jewish women were certainly busy in their households according to biblical or extrabiblical sources. They would grind the flour, bake the bread, cook the meals, spin and weave the cloth, sew and launder the family’s clothing, keep the house, and care for the children as well as extending hospitality to neighbors and even strangers passing through. To suggest that this term implied “having a home office” would be anachronistic at the least and inconsistent with the context’s emphasis on husbands and children.⁶ The emphasis seemed to be on a woman’s efficient management of her household. Although many scholars do link **good** as a descriptor of the homemakers, this commentator prefers to consider it separately as a character trait. In any case, this homemaker is certainly understood to be not only hard-working but also passionately committed to her husband and children. What she did for them was not mere duty but joyful service offered ultimately unto the Lord. Single women would do well not to dismiss this passage as only directed to married women, for there are numerous epithets addressing character traits that should belong to all women. And one must not underestimate the importance of understanding God’s plan for the home and relationships therein as a prelude to His revelation of Himself.

Note the consistency of this passage in relationship to other household codes and words directed to wives in Scripture. The household is the basic unit of society and is interconnected with the church and even with the state. The proper ordering of the household, that is, how husbands and wives as well as parents and children relate to one another, is essential to maintain order in the church and support lawfulness in the community. Even though believers are not of the world, they must live in the world.

The phrase **SUBMISSIVE** (Gk. *hupotasomenas*, a present middle participle, “submissive to,” “under the authority of”) **TO THEIR [own] HUSBANDS** is completely in harmony with other passages. The word calling for submission is not demeaning; in fact, one cannot submit in the sense the word is used in the New Testament without choosing to do so. Submission is a personal choice, and the obedience it calls forth goes beyond human authority because the mandate comes from the heart of God Himself.

This section addressed to women ended in an unusual way as the apostle made his final appeal a reason for all that has gone before, **so that God’s message will not be slandered**. The surprise is in the choice of the Greek word *blasphēmetai*, which probably for some seems a bit strong. The word is transliterated into English as “blasphemy,” a sin not to be taken lightly. The word does mean “to slander” or more precisely “to speak lightly of sacred and holy things” or “to speak against God so that you cast through or make null and void God’s word and His truths.” Not only must you avoid speaking or doing evil, but you must say and do good in order to avoid dishonoring God and to pursue honoring the Lord and His name (vv. 3,5). Only by obedience to the divine mandate does one magnify the Lord and draw others to Him. Disobedience brings the gospel itself into disrepute and incites reproach against God’s Word.

2:6-8 Paul’s admonition to the **YOUNG MEN**, as with the young women, is made with earnest entreaty, urging them (Gk. *parakalei*, “call alongside”) to be sensible, (Gk. *sōphroneō*, “of sound mind,” “serious”), a word that involves caution and self-control, precluding personal gratification and self-interest. Derivatives from the same word are used elsewhere in this passage (vv. 2,5).

Here Paul found a natural opportunity to call for Timothy to serve as an example for other young men in what he did as well as what he taught. Not only doctrinal purity but also chaste language was included in the apostle's admonition. Nothing is any more important to spiritual leadership than consistency in your character and life. What you teach must be exemplified in how you live. The message in verse 8 is described as an apology, a carefully prepared and persuasively presented testimony of the gospel. Paul surely knew criticisms would come, but his concern was that these young men would be so well equipped that their opponents would not find in their lives weakness or reproach to use against the gospel (v. 8).

2:9-10 Slaves were an essential part of the Roman society, especially its economy. Paul did not express approval of slavery in his comments on how Christian slaves were to relate to their masters. He recognized the situation as it existed without offering judgment on whether it was right or wrong. Without apology, the apostle injected Christian principles into the pagan system so that even slaves could be a witness for Christ. The important issue was how slaves and masters were to treat one another.

Paul referred to himself as a bondservant to Christ. The only exception for a slave's obedience to his master would be a moral or spiritual matter in which the slave would be accountable first and foremost to God (Ac 5:29). The root of the tragic injustices found in slavery issued from the hearts of men. Sinful hearts taint any system just as Christ brings spiritual liberty in any situation.

Paul presented character qualities for the slave who wanted to emulate a Christlike demeanor:

- **submissive to their masters in everything** (v. 9a; see also 2:5 and comments on "submissive");

- **well-pleasing** (Gk. *euarestos*, "acceptable") with a sincere desire to please (v. 9b);
- **not talking back** (Gk. *antilegontas*, "speak against") or refraining from argument and contradiction (v. 9c);
- not **stealing** (Gk. *nosphizomenous*, "keep back for myself," "embezzle") or pilfering or misappropriating for yourself what belongs to another (v. 10a);
- **demonstrating utter faithfulness**, a cherished virtue of commitment (v. 10b).

All of these qualities associated with a Christian slave are just as appropriate in the right relationship between a Christian employee and his employer. Excellence in the marketplace is a powerful tool for witness.

Neither the words of Paul nor any reference in Scripture endorsed slavery. Scripture spoke to slavery and assumed its continuance without endorsing or supporting its existence. Paul cannot be accused of accommodation or support of slavery based upon the Spirit-inspired words he penned concerning how both slaves and masters were to act within the existing system. Rather the apostle addressed the matter of correct behavior for those who found themselves in slavery. A slave could not change his condition, but he could accept his position with a peace based upon trust in the providence of God to carry him through. There is reward in voluntarily choosing to submit yourself even to what cannot be changed. Voluntary submission is very different from coerced subjection because it looks with hope toward the future and Christ's return and subsequently to the believer's reunion with Christ in the air at His return or in heaven if death comes before Christ's return. Who better than a slave can demonstrate the sufficiency of Christ to provide sustaining grace even in the darkest hour and deepest disappointment!

Paul understood that he himself could not abolish slavery, but he knew that turning

hearts to Christ would eventually remove a system with such potential for evil. However, for balance, you must note that even though slaves were owned as property, modern conclusions must be considered in light of a different social context. Some “free” people were even worse off than those slaves who were considered as members of the family and whose needs were provided accordingly and whose lives in some cases were not necessarily lived in suffering and humiliation. Some enjoyed considerable freedom and even held positions of authority. The apostle concentrated his energies on helping slaves—and masters—to live and act in Christlike ways. Even in modernity there are slaves in some places in the world. A slave is responsible for bearing a witness to the living Christ by the way in which he lives (**adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything**, v. 10c). Instructions to slaves included the same admonition to seek a Christlike standard for character and work, including consistent faithfulness under pressure and loyal commitment even in the midst of injustice. Nothing brings as much credit to Christianity and its doctrines as the quality of character a believer’s faith produces in her life.

A PERSUASIVE REASON FOR OBEDIENCE (2:11–3:11)

The Gift of Grace in Salvation (2:11-15)

2:11-12 Here the application seems threefold:

- **Sensible** living expressed a serious reflection that demanded personal restraint and self-control, or better God-control, over your thoughts as well as your actions.
- **Righteous** conduct spoke of absolute integrity and justice with others.
- **Godly way** described an overall atti-

tude of piety that characterizes what you think, say, or do.

2:13-15 Verses 11-14 cast a vision of expectant living, moving through the journey of life renouncing evil and molding your life after that of Christ, but always looking beyond this world to what is to come, **the blessed hope** (Gk. *tēn makarian elpida*). “Blessed” is a word suggesting happiness and good fortune (certainly by-products of the hope described), and “hope” definitely had a focus on the future. Believers waited for the return of Jesus Christ. He came as a baby in the manger in His incarnation, and He was born to die because redemption and the cross were before Him. However, when He returns, He will come in strength and victory, and that return is the next great event in redemptive history and one to which all who put their trust in Him for salvation can look with expectancy. Redemption, which began with the birth of the Christ Child in a humble manger and moved forward with His great suffering and death on the cruel cross, will culminate with His glorious return.

The Outworking of Faith in Life (3:1-11)

3:1-3 Again the call for submission (Gk. *hupotassesthai*) appeared, coupled with a call for obedience (Gk. *peitharchein*, “listen to”). If obedience to those in authority would impress earthly rulers, how much more would the Heavenly Father be encouraged and glorified when believers are **submissive** and obedient to Him and His mandates. Obedience is a necessary attribute for anyone who identifies herself with Christ, and that obedience is shallow and unimpressive unless it is complete and unconditional.

3:4-7 Paul undoubtedly believed that God is the author of salvation. God initiates the process by making provision for your salvation and by drawing you to

Himself. He extends His mercy, and once you accept that mercy, He completes the work of redemption. You are not saved by your own works of righteousness; rather, Christ provides His work of righteousness; and thus Paul spoke clearly, **not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy.** . . . Salvation, which comes through God's merciful grace, not works that come from your own imperfect and feeble efforts, makes the doing of good works possible. Good works are not possible without a right relationship to God, and a right relationship to God will produce good works as its fruit.

Some have seen the **washing of regeneration** as a reference to baptism, but several considerations make this conclusion impossible:

- Nothing in this passage suggests that any individual can do something equal to Christ's redemptive work.
- On the other hand, these verses do clearly define what God does to make salvation possible. It is clearly God's work from start to finish.
- The apostle even underscored that salvation is not secured by one's "works of righteousness."

What then is meant by "the washing of regeneration"? David spoke of a unique kind of cleansing: "Wash away my guilt, and cleanse me from my sin" (Ps 51:2). The sweet psalmist of Israel certainly did not have reference to baptism, but his language indicated that he sought and expected to receive a cleansing from his sin. Baptismal waters, as important as they are for obedience and witness, cannot wash away sin. Rather, Jesus shed His blood on the cross, and that blood does indeed cleanse from sin.

3:8-11 Reject a **DIVISIVE** (Gk. *hairetikos*, "factious, causing division" from a root meaning "choose" or "decide") person. In English the word

has been transliterated as "heretical" and first came to denote self-willed opinions and eventually adapted the connotation of opinions of personal preference that produce divisions. One who decides to go her own way and in the process causes divisions may not hold false doctrine, but she does bring confusion within the assembly of believers.

CONCLUSION (3:12-15)

Final Instructions (vv. 12-14)

3:12-14 Paul seemed to indicate a changing of personnel in Crete when he called for Titus to join him in Nicopolis, suggesting that he would send Artemis or Tychicus (see Ac 20:4; Eph 6:21; Col 4:7) to continue the work on Crete. Note the mention of the eloquent and brilliant Apollos (v. 13), who had received instruction from Priscilla and Aquilla in Ephesus (Ac 18:24-26). The gospel was proclaimed as the way of salvation, and just as clear was the conclusion that the outcome of salvation would be a change in behavior. The men mentioned in these verses did not seem to be pastors but more probably were committed laymen who were serving in important kingdom positions of leadership.

A Personal Closing (v. 15)

3:15 Paul in his final instructions made clear that the pastor or even a team of pastors could not meet all the urgent needs of a congregation—whatever the size. He thus challenged **our people** (v. 14), all believers, to arise and do good works. His final words were a poignant reminder to the congregation that all must be done in love and harmony, which would then draw **grace** or the unmerited favor of God Himself to all **in the faith**.

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- **Advanced Study*

Footnotes

- ¹ I am most indebted in my understanding of this brief epistle to Paige Patterson's *Living in Hope of Eternal Life: An Exposition of Titus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), which is no longer in print.
- ² C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (London: Collins, 1961), p. 32.
- ³ See Catherine and Richard Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 91. The Kroegers espouse an egalitarian perspective.
- ⁴ The Holman Christian Standard Bible translators elected to link these two phrases, "to love their husbands and children."
- ⁵ The HCSB translators understood "good" as an adjective modifying "homemakers."
- ⁶ Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 328. Written from an egalitarian perspective.