



## **Zealous for Good Works: Disciple to Display the Worth of Jesus**

**(Titus 2:1-10)**

**Matthew Williams**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

When you hear the word “Theology” what comes to mind? Do you think of stodgy old guys huddled in a basement writing big books with big words? Do you think of something pastors go to school to study? Is it what religious people need to stop arguing about so they can focus on loving their neighbor? Maybe you have a vague sense that theology refers to something spiritual but aren’t really sure what it means.

In a sentence, **theology is simply the study of God.** And it is the most important thing you will ever do as a human being. Why? Because as your knowledge of God goes, so goes the course of your life. Embrace true theology, and you have chosen the path of joy and life. Embrace false theology, and you have chosen the path of sorrow and death. As A.W. Tozer famously wrote, “What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.”

But it’s not easy, is it? When push comes to shove, would you rather think hard about the Bible, digest a challenging Christian book, or catch up on the last episode of Ted Lasso? What feels more fun? More relaxing? More life-giving? Listen carefully to these words from Steve Wellum in the introduction to his systematic theology.

“We have privileged religious experience and pragmatics over disciplined thinking about Scripture. For many, theology is a hard ‘Sell,’ especially in the age of social media, where careful thought is replaced by images and tweet. Theology has little ‘Cash value’; what we want are instant answers to meet our felt needs. And we especially fear divisions within the church that often occur when careful theological thinking confronts false teaching...

Theology is not optional for the church; it is fundamental to our thinking rightly about God, the self, and the world...Theology is not a discretionary exercise; it is essential for the life and health of the church, and whether we realize it or not, everyone has some kind of theology. But the most significant question for us is whether our theology is true to Scripture or not. If it is not, this is serious since wrong ideas about God and Scripture result in disastrous consequences.”



He's not exaggerating for effect. If you get your theology wrong, if you buy into false doctrine, spiritual lies about who God is and what he requires of us, it will shipwreck your faith and destroy your soul. That's exactly what was happening on the island of Crete in the 1<sup>st</sup> century when the Apostle Paul wrote a letter to a pastor named Titus. Professing Christians were "Devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth" (Titus 1:14). They were believing lies about God, lies that showed up in the way they lived. Verse 16, "They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works." They said, "Oh yeah, we're Christians," but their lives were no different than the rest of the world.

And here's what fascinating. Paul doesn't say, "Just stop it, ok?" Stop lying. Stop doing evil. Stop being lazy gluttons. He doesn't say, "Titus, make them change their behavior and keep God's rules." Look at Titus 2:1, "But as for you," in contrast to all the false teachers spreading lies about God, "Teach what accords with sound doctrine." Hold on, Paul, I think you got the Cretans confused with Galatians. We don't have a doctrine problem here. We have a behavioral problem here. Why are you flagging the need for "Sound doctrine" or true theology?

Because you can't separate what you believe about God from the way you live. They're always connected, which is why sound doctrine is more than a list of things the Bible says are true about God. Sound doctrine includes how Scripture instructs us to live in light of what is true about God. It's not less than the historical facts of the gospel. Jesus lived. Jesus died. Jesus rose from the grave. But it is significantly more. It includes the kind of life that's consistent with the truth of the gospel.

In response to the person and work of Christ, how then should we live? That's sound doctrine. It's not just something we know. It's something we practice. So what does it look like to practice sound doctrine? **Practicing sound doctrine means discipling one another to display the worth of Jesus in every season of life.**

## **1) WE PRACTICE SOUND DOCTRINE IN THE DETAILS OF LIFE**

Let's clear up two common misunderstandings as we dive into the instructions Paul gives to various groups in the church.

**First, cultural norms are not the essence of what Titus 2 teaches.** So we must not say, "It was good for men to practice self-control and women to be submissive to their husbands back then. But times have changed. Our needs have changed. We're more



enlightened.” No, my friends. These are not lifestyle suggestions. This is sound doctrine. This is the kind of living that’s consistent with the truth of who God is and all he’s done for us. God has not changed since the 1<sup>st</sup> century. What he requires of us has not changed either!

Second, for each of these groups, **the expressions of godliness Paul highlights are uniquely important, not exhaustive or exclusive.** Paul’s saying, “Be sure to give attention to these virtues,” not, “Only give attention to these virtues.” For example, the fact that he doesn’t tell young men to be sound in faith, love, and steadfastness does not mean they shouldn’t be. The fact that he doesn’t tell older women to love their husbands does not mean they’re all unmarried or are free to treat their husbands however they want.

No. Paul’s addressing common categories, which requires speaking in general terms and allows him to identify expressions of godliness that require careful attention from a particular group. So if you’re an older woman caring for children or a younger woman without them, don’t write Paul off as a stereotyping male or whip out an equal opportunity red pen. Focus on what directly applies to you in your present season of life.

Sound doctrine is practiced in the details of life, and Paul starts in verse 2 with older men. Why? Because as the older men in our church go, so goes our church. You have a leadership responsibility, brothers. God has called you to set the tone. To set the bar for godliness. And if you’re retired and physical work feels less important, know the spiritual work God has set before you is only becoming more important.

You must be **sober-minded**. What’s that mean? It means the fact that King Jesus is returning to judge the living and the dead grips your heart. The fear of the Lord governs your affections and actions. You feel the weight of eternity. You know the pleasures of this world are fleeting. Your supreme aim isn’t to please yourself, but to please the Lord. You must also be **dignified**. Paul isn’t about walking through the church really slowly or wearing a tie. It’s about the spiritual ballast, stability, and strength an older man should bring to his own family and the family of God.

A godly older man is **self-controlled**. You refuse to waste your life in front of a TV or coast through another week on the path of least resistance. You order your days to reflect God’s priorities and purposes. You give attention to your physical health, so that you have the strength you need to serve God’s people for decades to come. And you’re



not frivolous with your money. You channel all your resources toward the cause of God's kingdom, not your own.

In short, you are **sound in faith, in love, in steadfastness**. The cardinal, Christian virtues – trust in God, sacrificial care for others, and perseverance in the same – mark every aspect of your life. Older men, does that describe you? Carefully consider, where do you need to grow in practicing sound doctrine?

Older women, what kind of spiritual fruit should the gospel produce in your life? It's similar to the godliness required of older men. Hence the "Likewise" in verse 3. But what's uniquely important in your season of life? You must be **reverent in behavior**. In the word you speak, the actions you take, you're not driven by the shifting winds of emotion. A holy sobriety, a joyful gravitas, marks your life. To be around you is to be more aware of the face of God.

A godly older woman is **not a slanderer**. You don't spread rumors, half-truths, or third-hand information under the guise of "Bless her heart" or "Pray for so and so." You ruthlessly guard the integrity of the church and the reputation of her members. You make charitable judgments. The relational wake behind your boat is filled with encouragement, not criticism.

You must also not be a **slave to much wine**. Instead of seeking life in the bodily pleasures of food or drink, you find your life in the Lord. You're under the influence of the spirit. When life is difficult, you don't escape by indulging the desires of your flesh or zoning out on your phone. You turn to the Lord.

Paul actually invents a new Greek word to describe the influence of your words and deeds on the men and women around you. You are [καλοδιδασκάλους](#) (kal-od-id-as'-kal-os)– **a teacher of what is good**. The influence of your life stir up your church family to love and good works. Older women, does that describe you? Carefully consider, where do you need to grow in practicing sound doctrine?

Young women, you too are commanded in verses 4-5 to practice sound doctrine, to respond to the gospel by living in a distinctly Christian sort of way. If you're married, **love your husband** – not because he deserves it or still gives you goosebumps, but because of the way Jesus has loved you. **Joyfully submit to his leadership** (provided he isn't leading you into sin), because the God who gave him to you is worthy of your trust.



If you have children, devote yourself to nurturing and caring for them too. **Loving your kids** doesn't mean coddling them or making life easy for them. It means you relentlessly point them to Jesus and help them learn what it means to trust God and obey God, and why living for him is worth it! The world says your corporate career is where a real woman proves her worth. What does the Lord say? I may call you to start a small business or manage a team at Capital One, but loving your husband and children comes first. They are your highest priority.

That's not traditional or patriarchal. That's biblical and it's a beautiful thing in God's sight. We must not say that if a woman really loves her kids, she will take up homeschooling, bake her own bread, and remodel her entire home with pallet lumber. Instead, we say, a godly woman "Looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness" (Proverbs 31:27). That's what Paul means in verse 4 when he directs young women to be "**Working at home.**" Do you care for your family by caring for the place God has provided for them? Or are you constantly looking to escape into other activities that provide more immediate gratification?

You too must be **self-controlled** like every other believer. That includes upholding the integrity of your own family and your church family by walking in moral **purity**. Practicing sound doctrine means practicing a **kindness** that images the steadfast love of the Lord. Because he is slow to anger, so are you. Because he is full of mercy, so are you. Young women, does that describe you? Carefully consider, where do you need to grow in practicing sound doctrine?

It's possible Titus was still a young man at the time, which may explain why Paul addresses him alongside other young men in verse 6-8. What does practicing sound doctrine, living the truth of who God is, look like in the life of a young man? Paul chooses only one characteristic. Perhaps he knows guys like it simple. Verse 6, "Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled."

Throughout the history of the church, perhaps no other group has a more established reputation for lacking self-control than young men. You are uniquely prone to being ruled by your passions, ambitions, and physical desires, instead of being ruled by the Word of God. You assume if it feels good, it must be good.

Guys, what does the gospel teach us? The whole reason we need a Savior is because we're born into this world with a sinful nature. You can't rely on your feelings and



desires to tell you the truth. They must be tested. They must be regulated. They must be controlled by a more trustworthy authority.

Being self-controlled isn't about having a disciplined personality. It's about submitting yourself under God's rule instead of your own rule. It's about surrendering control of your life to Jesus instead of calling the shots yourself. Young men, does that describe you? Carefully consider, where do you need to grow in practicing sound doctrine?

The final group Paul addresses is slaves. He's primarily speaking to bondservants, men and women who had sold themselves to someone else to repay a debt or secure food and shelter for themselves and their family. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul outlines a biblical response to the 1<sup>st</sup> century institution. He basically says (a) God doesn't require you to leave your master, (b) if you can gain your freedom, do it, and (c) Christians are slaves of Christ, so don't sell yourself to other people.

Here in Titus 2, however, he's not addressing the institution itself as much as the individuals who are still living within it. What does practicing sound doctrine look like when you're in a relationship where someone else has authority over you, they may or may not have your best interest at heart, and you can't escape? What's a Christian to do?

Verses 9-10, "Be submissive to your own masters in everything...well pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith." Friend, there is no authority on earth except that which God has established. There's a lot of application here to the way all of us conduct ourselves in the workplace. Is your boss worthy of submission is not the question. Is God worthy? That's the question. And the answer is always yes. We submit to them for his sake.

Because we trust him to provide, we don't steal. Because we trust him to work all things together for our good, we don't raise an unholy ruckus if someone tramples on our rights. As what your company asks you to do isn't unbiblical, you work hard to advance their best interests, knowing you are ultimately serving the Lord.

Whether you're an older man, older woman, young woman, younger man, or a bondservant, we're all called to practice sound doctrine in the details of life. It's hard to read through these virtue lists and not see at least one area you can grow! Thankfully, God has done more than call us to practice sound doctrine in the details of life. He's ordained a specific means to help us get there.



## **2) WE PRACTICE SOUND DOCTRINE THROUGH A CULTURE OF DISCIPLESHIP**

I passed over a very important phrase in verse 4 earlier. “Older women...are to teach what is good, and so train the young women...” When Paul speaks of training he’s talking about explaining to someone what it means to practice sound doctrine instead of expecting them to figure it out on their own.

Ultimately, Paul’s urging older women to fulfill the mission God has given every member of our church in Matthew 28:18-20, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” How do we make disciples, how do we help people become wholehearted followers of Jesus in every area of life?

First, we go. We don’t passively wait for someone to initiate a spiritual conversation or ask us for biblical advice. We take initiative by inviting them out for coffee or into your home. Second, we baptize. As we move toward other people, we prioritize conversation about their relationship with God. We refuse to merely give life advice because we know our greatest need is a reconciled relationship with the Lord of Life.

Third, we teach. We use our words to explain what it means to trust and obey God’s Word. Or as Paul says in Ephesians 4:15, we “Speak the truth in love.” That’s not my job as a pastor. That’s our shared responsibility as brothers and sisters in Christ. And Titus 2 helps us understand what that looks like practically.

Did you catch how many times Paul uses the word “Likewise” as he gives instruction to all five groups? Why does he do that? Because there are similarities between what older men should be and do in the family of God and what older women should be and do. There are parallels between the way older women should relate to younger women and the way older men should relate to younger men.

And with Matthew 28 in view, we’re not surprised! The discipleship pattern Paul establishes for older and younger women is an illustration of a larger discipleship culture in the entire church. So why does Paul use a gender-specific relationship like older women and young women to illustrate that broader discipleship culture? Because gender-specific relationships play a critical role in teaching one another to obey all Jesus has commanded us.



In other words, Paul's giving Titus a ministry paradigm in verse 4 that's way bigger than women's ministry. He's casting vision for a discipleship culture where men take responsibility for helping other men mature in the faith by having intentional spiritual conversations. And women take responsibility for helping other women mature in the faith by having intentional spiritual conversations.

I'm not talking about hierarchy where every one of us is having coffee with 1 person who's more godly and one person who's less godly. I'm talking about being a church where doing spiritual good to one another in our conversations as men and women is normal. A church where we don't talk about everything but the Sunday sermon as soon as the meeting wraps up. Instead, we ask thoughtful questions, discover where God is already at work, and encourage one another to practice sound doctrine in the details of life.

I believe God wants us to grow this year in strengthening gender-specific discipleship in KingsWay. That's ultimately not something a program can do. It's primarily accomplished through informal conversations in all sorts of ordinary moments. I especially want to challenge older men and women in our church in this area. Create time in your schedule to interact with younger men and women where you are actively working to build them up in the faith and teaching them to practice sound doctrine. Invite them over to do yardwork. Pull them into a Bible study. Take a newly married couple out for dinner.

Don't say to yourself, "I really need to get to know this woman before we go out for coffee or invite this guy to read a Christian book with me." An existing friendship is not a prerequisite for fruitful discipleship. Friendships are formed through the work of discipleship. Some may become life-long friends. Other relationships may be seasonal. That's fine.

To this end, I'm excited to announce that later this summer, we're going to launch monthly men's and women's Bible studies and larger group gatherings to help us grow in being disciple-making disciples. Stay tuned for more information. We're also going to pray specifically for our discipleship relationship during our monthly prayer meeting next Sunday evening, including more friendships between older men and women and younger men and women.

Over the years, I think many of us have mentally parked Titus 2 as a "Women's ministry" chapter. I believe it's significantly more, brothers and sisters. God is calling all of us to





create a culture of gender-specific discipleship as spiritual fathers and mothers. And Paul reminds us why they ultimately matter – not once, but three times!

### **3) WE PRACTICE SOUND DOCTRINE TO DISPLAY THE WORTH OF JESUS**

Why does a guy who owns a collectible car spend hours waxing and detailing it? Why is a woman walking her new dog all too happy to explain the breed's characteristics to her neighbor? Why does a 9-year-old come running up to his father after work and say, "Dad, check out my new gel gun!" Why does a mountaineer love to share summit pictures with fellow hikers? Because part of prizing something is a desire to display its true worth and value to other people.

If a wife tells her husband, "I would really like some new clothes for Christmas," and he replies, "Isn't a garbage bag sufficient," why is he in serious trouble? Because he effectively told his wife that she's not physically beautiful in his eyes. For if she was, it would be a joy to see her adorned with a dress that compliments and tastefully displays her physical beauty.

Part of prizing something is a desire to display its true worth and value to other people. And that's exactly what compels us to disciple one another as Christians through our example and instruction. Practicing sound doctrine means discipling one another to *display the worth of Jesus* in every season of life. The three "That" or "So that" statements in verses 1-10 affirm as much.

Why should young women practice sound doctrine? Verse 5, "That the word of God may not be reviled." As a younger man, why should Titus practice sound doctrine? Verse 8, "So that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us." Why should slaves practice sound doctrine? Verse 10, "So that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior" or as the NIV says, "So that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive."

Motivations matter and none more so than the reason we practice sound doctrine. It's possible to live a godly life to quiet a deep sense of guilt and shame. It's possible to live a godly life so other people will like you or think you're special. It's possible to live a godly life because you don't want your parents to be disappointed in you or to take away your car keys.



But there is another motivation for living a godly life that glorifies God and will sustain you to the end, friend. It's a burning desire, a holy ambition, to make much of Jesus, to show the world through the way you live just how good and glorious he really is.

Brothers and sisters, you don't want your life to denigrate the gospel. You don't want people to see the way you live and conclude, "All that God stuff is a total joke," or "I knew it! Those Christians are just as selfish as the rest of us." No. We hunger and thirst for the exact opposite!

You want the mechanic in the next shop bay or the student sharing your desk to say, "You know what, there's something about the way you live that's different. You have a joy even in suffering that I can't explain. I've known a lot of Christians that made me want to run the opposite direction. You make me want to learn more."

Friends, no reason for living is more satisfying than seeking to make much of Jesus in all you do, to convince everyone around you that he really is who he says he is. He really is sovereign. He really is loving. He really is wise. How do we know Jesus is all those things? Because of the gospel. He's more than just God. As Paul says in verse 10, he's "God our Savior." When we practice sound doctrine, we adorn more than the truth about God in general. We adorn the truth of the gospel in particular!

**Practicing sound doctrine means discipling one another to display the worth of Jesus in every season of life.** That's why sound doctrine ultimately matters. It's not about following the rules or staying in line. It's about showing the world Jesus is better because we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good! As Jesus himself said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

May the Spirit make us that kind of people, brothers and sisters. A people who practice sound doctrine in the details of life. A people who practice sound doctrine through a culture of discipleship. And a people who practice sound doctrine to display the worth of Jesus. Let's pray for power to do it together.