

Make goodness contagious again

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[0 : 00] Let's pray to God now and ask him to speak to us. Heavenly Father, thank you that you are a good God.

You always want what is good for us. And so this morning we pray that whether we are men or women, young or old, whatever position we hold in life, help us to receive your word today as good so that we might live good lives that proclaim your glory.

So strengthen us by your grace this morning we pray. In the name of Jesus, Amen. Now have you ever tried putting a key into a padlock? But try as you might, it just doesn't fit.

Your key gets stuck, you can't get anywhere, everyone gets frustrated. We hate it when things don't fit. And sometimes when you mix two things that don't fit together, like vinegar and bleach, for example, it can be pretty dangerous.

You produce some pretty bad toxic fumes. But what about when things fit together perfectly? Now that's different, isn't it?

[1 : 11] There's just something completely satisfying about a key that slides perfectly into a padlock and opens it. And when things fit together, it can even be beautiful.

Now just have a look at some of the following pictures on the screen. So here's a picture that someone took of a famous British landmark, the London Eye, through the window of a boat on the River Thames.

And it is so pleasing to the eye to see how it just perfectly fits the round window, doesn't it? Oh, here's another one. This is a 5,000-piece jigsaw puzzle, which just so happens to fit someone's dining table corner to corner, edge to edge.

Must have been incredibly satisfying for him. One more. I'm not sure if you can see it straight away, but there are actually two wedding rings in that picture.

And the wife's wedding ring so happens to fit perfectly inside the husband's one. How lovely. And all of this is true of a Christian as well.

[2 : 20] Let me explain. How many of you are Christians today because at school or at work, you got to know someone? And as you watch that someone, you begin to realise that there is something different about him or her.

You got curious. You wanted to have what they had. And because of them, you ended up at some church or Christian meeting or camp where you heard the Gospel, God opened your heart, and here you are today.

I'm pretty sure some of you have that testimony. You know Jesus because someone's faith and life fit perfectly together. But I wonder if you've also heard it said, those Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites.

Say one thing, do another thing, and no way do I want to associate with them or their faith in any way. Sadly, I have. And I bet a number of you have too.

Perhaps you even said it yourself. You saw that their lives and their faith didn't fit together, their walk didn't match their talk, and that was like toxic fumes to you.

[3 : 33] It put you right off. And that is probably why Paul says what he says in Titus 2. You see, if you've been here over the last few weeks, you know that Paul is on a quest to help Christians do good.

And his very first step to achieve that goal is to appoint godly elders. They exemplify and guard what is good.

But what's the very next step? Answer? Chapter 2, verse 1. You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.

Now notice Paul doesn't tell Titus, teach sound doctrine. No. He says teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.

In other words, don't just teach the contents of the faith. Teach a life that fits right with the faith you profess. Teach a life that fits the shape of the gospel.

[4 : 36] Now, Paul isn't asking Titus to make a mutually exclusive choice, as if Titus can only teach either sound doctrine or a godly life. That would contradict Titus 1.

Back in 1, verse 1, Paul says that the only way to consistently do good is to have a knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

And that is the overarching principle that frames the entire letter. And two weeks ago, in verse 9, Paul says elders must hold onto the trustworthy message.

Why? So that not only do they know what sound doctrine is, but they can then encourage with sound doctrine. So obviously, Titus must teach sound doctrine.

It can be left aside. It is where the grace of the gospel is to be found, and without God's grace, godliness has no anchor. But now, Paul says, don't just teach the theory without application.

[5 : 42] Show them what sort of lives spring out from the truth of the gospel. Show what it looks like. And it's true we all need that, don't we? Growing up, I heard plenty of talks about putting God's kingdom first.

Yes, I knew the theory. But it wasn't until I got to university that I began to truly understand what that meant. And that is because I could see it in the lives of the Christians I was around.

So I saw it in the guy who was willing to go the extra mile to befriend international students despite the language and the cultural barriers, simply because he wanted to love them and help them and introduce them to Jesus.

I saw it in the girl who worked hard, but at the same time didn't devote every single waking hour to her studies so that she could go and be a calming presence amongst her anxious friends while showing that getting a first class degree isn't everything.

They showed me how a life is to fit with the gospel. So how can we be trained to live such lives? Well, Paul knows that like with any physical training we do, we need guidance and we need goals.

[7 : 05] And so today he provides both in Titus 2, verse 1 to 10. He will show us what it takes to make goodness contagious again in a church and subsequently in the world.

So let's have a look now. And I should say the first point is where we will spend the majority of our time this morning. So firstly, let's look at the guidance.

How Christians are to live godly lives. Now, Paul doesn't just ask Titus to teach everyone in the same way. Instead, he differentiates between different groups of people.

Why? Because we have different opportunities and temptations depending on where we are in life. So what the good life looks like for each group won't be all the same.

So first up, Paul addresses the older man. Now, who are these? Well, let's try a thought experiment.

[8 : 09] What age do you think you should be when you qualify as old? I'm turning 39 soon. And I like to think that I'm not old. And actually, I know that a number of you still think of me as young.

I know that because I've heard some of you to this day still describe me to others as the young pastor. But to others, it is different. Just last week over lunch, one person who shall remain unnamed said to me, Ah, you know, that church we visited, they had a pretty young pastor.

Certainly not like you. So in some ways, who the older people are in a church can be contextual. The commentators suggest that these are probably people above 40.

And in our community, where we do have a substantial number of men of that age, that is definitely you. But if I am 39, so I haven't hit 40 yet, but I'm embedded in a Christian community where everyone else is in their 20s, then I think I should be paying attention to what is being said here as well.

And Paul says, verse 2, Here's the idea.

[9 : 35] If you are on the older side, that means the Holy Spirit has had a longer time to work on you. If you are on the older side, that means that you've been pursuing Jesus for more years than a younger man has.

And we should be able to see that. You should be a little closer to the finished article. Now, here is how it works. You shouldn't be saying, Hey, I'm an older man, so show me respect.

Rather, simply by the way you live, the people around you are already saying to one another, Ah, uncle so-and-so.

He's a man who is really Christ-like in everything he does, isn't he? I really respect him. I want to learn from him. Or as John Stott suggests, what you should have in two words are dignity and maturity.

Or from the other side of the coin, you shouldn't be someone who cannot be taken seriously. You should be sound in faith, meaning that by this point, you shouldn't be the kind of person who makes long-winded but childish comments during a Bible study or at a Q&A, at a Bible seminar.

[10:58] You know, the kind of person that makes other people go, Oh, I hope I'm not like that when I get to that age. But it is not just your doctrine that should be healthy, but your love and endurance as well.

Usually we are used to seeing faith, hope, and love as a common grouping in the New Testament. But here, Paul chooses to use the word endurance instead. And perhaps that is because he wants to highlight how godly older men can show others what it is like to keep going as a Christian, not just over one or two years, but over many years, even when there are trials and conflicts along the way.

So older men, you have a unique opportunity. You might not have the energy of your youth, but you can command respect by the way you model good judgment in every situation, by your patient perseverance, by your loving actions.

And so here is the encouragement for you today. Don't be that grumpy old guy. Rather be that gospel-centered old guy.

Be that guy whose second half of his life is just as all out for Jesus as his first half. And then Paul moves on to the older women, verse 3.

[12:24] Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderous or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. You see, if you are an older woman today, you probably have more flexibility.

If you had kids, they have grown up now. But that flexibility means that there is the possibility of using your newfound freedom in the wrong way.

You could pass the afternoons indulging in meaningless talk and simply satisfying your stomachs. But Paul says instead, be reverent.

The Greek term used here often describes female priests who behave with decorum in a religious setting. So the idea here, if you like, is of putting on your Sunday best, as someone nicely put it. And Paul now says to the older women, put on your Sunday best, but not just on Sunday. Live as if you are in the presence of God all throughout the week, wherever you are.

[13:38] Live intentionally and thoughtfully before God. Be reverent. And that will mean living not just for your own sake.

Live for the sake of others. Because if you are an older woman today, look at the end of verse 3 to see what else you are called to do.

You're not called to complain about whatever has gone wrong. Instead, you are to teach what is good. In other words, as verse 4 will make clear, living intentionally before God includes being willing to take some younger women under your wing and showing them what it means to live for Jesus.

So here is a word to the older women. you have unique opportunities too. You might have failing eyesight or be hard of hearing, but you can still help younger women fix their eyes on Jesus and show them what it means to listen to God's word.

But here is a question for you. How many of you have relationships with the younger women in our congregation? How many of you have intentionally cultivated such relationships?

[15:00] Verses 3 and 4 assumes you will. So let me encourage you to the young mums are often in the playground after service. Go get to know them.

Now perhaps you are a little scared of them. Perhaps you feel that you have nothing in common. but if you are someone who is truly godly, if you are sincere, I am certain the younger women would love to hear and learn from you.

And it is actually part of the reason why Sharon, our women's deacon, is piloting these women's discipleship groups which are meeting once every month at the moment. So these groups try to be as mixed age-wise as possible because we are trying to live out the vision of Titus 2 verse 3 to 4. And if you are an older woman who thinks, well, I'm not sure I know how to teach good, I'm not sure what that means, well, those groups are there in part to help equip you to do exactly that.

So go talk to Sharon if you want to know more. And then Paul moves on to the younger women verses 4 and 5. They are to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled than pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands.

[16:25] Now this might immediately raise a number of questions in your mind, so let's quickly get that out of the way first. Let's show what these verses don't mean. First off, these verses don't mean that young women must be married.

That certainly cannot be Paul's view. In 1 Corinthians 7 especially, Paul never conceives of the single life as second-rate or unchristian.

And if you're interested to hear more about that, you can go and search our sermon archives online for a sermon I preached on 1 Corinthians 7 a while back. Or check out the book *Seven Myths About Singleness* by Sam Aubrey in our church library.

But Paul simply addresses married women here because in that culture, that's probably 95% of his audience. Second off, Paul is not saying that if married, young women can simply accept abusive behaviour from their husbands.

That's not what it means to be submissive. Rather, Paul is simply advising the wife to play her part in living out the pattern of Ephesians chapter 5 where a Christian marriage is a picture of Christ and the church.

[17:38] And then third off, as we will see in a moment, Titus 2 verse 5 is not teaching a woman cannot work. So, what does a godly life look like for the young married woman then?

Well, if that is you, Paul says, be known for your love for your husbands and kids. Perhaps it helps to get an idea of what was going on in Greco-Roman culture at that time.

There was a movement of sorts amongst the women, which basically encouraged them to throw off all their responsibilities at home. It was the kind of movement that said, it's time to be liberated.

I live how I want, I love whoever I want, who cares what others think. It's time to only care about myself, my body, my rights, my life. And so, Paul is concerned that young women might be influenced to live a cretin rather than a Christian life.

But, if you are a godly young woman, married or not, you won't think in terms of just me, myself, and I. You will strive to love those closest to you the best that you can, which for married ladies means your husband and kids.

[19:00] You'll aim to faithfully steward what God has given you, even if that sometimes means making particular sacrifices. You'll be kind, you'll embrace contentment, and you'll be busy at home.

Now, the phrasing can make it sound like Titus 2 is calling for a return to a time a hundred years ago when many people thought that all women should be in the kitchen. Is that what we're talking about here?

Well, it helps if we remember what the home was in biblical times. What was the home? It's not just a place where your family lives.

It's a place of industry. Unlike today, where your workplace and your home are neatly separated, although that's changing now with the rise of hybrid work, women could be involved in trading or selling goods at home.

So think of the woman of Proverbs 31. Let me just read a little bit of what she's like. Verse 16, she considers the field and buys it. Out of her earnings, she plants a vineyard.

[20:10] She sets about her work vigorously. Her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable and her lamb does not go out at night.

Now, that's certainly a capable woman who can do all sorts of paid work, even from home, isn't it? And so Titus 2, verse 5, is not a proof text for whether women should go to work or not.

The stress is not on where, but how they work. And yet, in her endeavours, the woman, next screen, is to bring her husband good, not harm, all the days of her life.

So again, it's not mutually exclusive. She needs to be diligent at home in her work and in loving her husband. So here's the point. A mark of godliness in a young woman is a certain diligence that seeks to bless all those around them, whether it's loving her husband, loving her kids, in her work.

And then there's the young man. And poor issues just one command, verse 6. Be self-controlled. That captures it all.

[21:32] Now, that's not to say others don't need to be self-controlled. You can spot it as well in verses 2 and 5. But if you are a young man today, perhaps Paul knows from experience that that's what you most need to hear at this stage in your life.

Too quick to speak and jump to conclusions? Young man be self-controlled. Tempted to look at pornography? Young man be self-controlled.

Spending too many hours with the PlayStation? Young man be self-controlled. Getting too little sleep watching anime every night? Young man be self-controlled.

obsessed with making money on the stock market or making too many impulse purchases on Shopee? Young man be self-controlled.

And if you are self-controlled, you are making good progress on your godliness. And if Paul commands this, he seems to assume it is possible for the Christian.

[22 : 42] And then finally, a word to slaves, verses 9 and 10. Now, it might seem a little disturbing to us that Paul doesn't seem to criticize the institution of slavery, but don't forget, elsewhere in the New Testament, he does encourage slaves to win their freedom where they can.

And here, he subverts the institution in a more subtle way. For one thing, notice the way he talks to the slaves. He talks to them as equals, as brothers and sisters in Christ, and not as mere property, which is how the rest of society would have treated them.

He puts them on an equal footing to other groupings in church. And then for another, notice that even though they are slaves, Paul sees their potential to make great impact for the gospel.

He thinks in terms of what they can do, not what they can't do. He's telling them they have more influence than they think. And what can they do?

They can be completely trustworthy. They can be the guy the boss knows he can count on. They can give good feedback but not be that quarrelsome person.

[24 : 01] The idea is that on the job market, Cretan employers would be saying to one another, hey, go get a Christian if you can. They're honest and they're hardworking.

There's something about them that's different. And that is what every Christian worker today should strive for. And so that is the guidance.

That's what it looks like for every member of a church to live lives that fit the gospel. But having looked at each group individually, I just want us to zoom out a little and look at the big picture as a whole.

And I just want to make two more observations for our reflection. Firstly, while there is some differentiation in terms of how each group are to live gospel-centered lives, did you notice some repeated themes?

Two things stand out in particular in this section. Self-control and soundness. Now, because of time, we'll just think about self-control for today.

[25 : 09] Self-control, as we've noted already, is there in verses 2, 5, and 6. And even for the older women and the slaves, where it is not explicitly named, it is also implied in the core not to be addicted to too much wine and not to talk back.

And actually, next week, we'll see it come up again. So why might self-control be so important? The writer Drew Dyck suggested that is because self-control is not just another character trait.

Rather, it is foundational. Not in the sense that it's more important, but because all other virtues rely on it. So for example, he says, can you be faithful to your spouse without self-control?

Can you exercise patience with someone else without self-control? And although self-control might sound repressive at first, especially in a culture that prizes self-expression, in practice, it is actually freeing.

After all, if you are self-controlled, which in biblical terms means you are living in line with the Holy Spirit, that means you are not being controlled by alcohol or the approval of others or your emotions, you are free.

[26 : 29] And self-control isn't just about resisting what you shouldn't do, it is also about being able to do what you should. It is about directing your heart and your mind and your hands to be temperate or to teach the younger women or to love your husband or whatever else is suggested here.

Well, no wonder Paul stresses it. And then secondly, I wonder if you notice how Paul's vision of the godly life is communal and intergenerational.

That is, he expects that older Christians and younger Christians, however you precisely define old and young, will be having contact with one another.

More than that, the older will be a model for the younger. You see, how do you teach the godly life? You don't just do it formally via the classroom.

You do it informally in the many, many, many informal interactions you have with one another. And that is how children often learn from their parents, don't they?

[27 : 40] They don't just learn with their parents at the study table. They watch what their parents do, what they say, how they talk to them, how they react to them in different situations, how they discipline, how they handle stress in the family or outside with other people.

And Paul simply assumes that younger men will be looking to older men and younger women will be looking to older women as they do life together week after week.

Look, for instance, at how Titus is to set the example for the younger men in verse 7. 10. His own teaching is to show integrity in contrast with the false teachers in 1 verse 16 who claim to know God but by their actions deny him.

His own teaching is meant to show seriousness as opposed to the false teachers' meaningless talk in 1 verse 10. And it shows soundness of speech unlike the Jewish myths and the merely human commands of the false teachers in 1 verse 14.

In other words, Paul models his teaching both in the way he teaches it verbally as well as in the way he lifts it out. And that's the way goodness will become contagious in a church.

[29 : 05] And I think that is a challenging word for us this morning. Again, are we a church where this is happening? If you are in the older category, is this a priority for you?

Over the years that I've been here, I've tried to spend some time meeting one-to-one with some of the younger guys. In one case, actually, a guy who is slightly older than me as well.

And as I do so, I'm often systematically working through a book of the Bible like Colossians with them. But I'm also trying to share and to talk about life stuff with them as the word of God is applied. It is slow work, it is labor intensive, it is behind the scenes, but it is necessary. And I hope and I pray for fruit which maybe can only be seen after a few years.

And Paul says, godliness is a community project. if you are older, the truth is, like it or not, you are a model for someone.

[30 : 13] We younger ones are watching you. The question is, are you a good model or a bad one? And for those of us who fall into the younger category, are you willing to let someone further ahead in the faith come and walk alongside you?

are you willing to be teachable? Again, Titus 2 assumes that that is how you can make progress as a Christian.

And so that is the guidance. But let's now briefly think about the goal, why Christians are to live godly lives. In the end, what is the aim of living this way?

Paul tells us in verses 5, 8, and 10. It is so that, verse 5, no one will malign or defame the word of God. It is so that, verse 8, those who oppose you will be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about you.

And it is so that, verse 10, in every way you can make the gospel attractive. That is why we do all these. And so I suppose we can think of these goals as twofold.

[31 : 30] firstly, we live godly lives to protect the credibility of the gospel. Notice what is assumed in verses 5 and 8. Paul assumes there will be some form of opposition.

As we live godly lives, not everyone will like it. There will be some looking for every opportunity to tear us down and tear the gospel down.

But Paul says keep living this way. Because if you do, even if they throw mud at you, it won't stick. They might call you an extremist or a fundamentalist, but it doesn't matter.

Because if you live the way you do, people should find it hard to reconcile the bad things that some people say about you with the way that you act.

And they might say, I'm not sure about your beliefs, but one thing I can't deny, it impacts your life. The two fit together.

[32 : 36] And secondly, we live godly lives to make the gospel attractive. More literally, as the ESV puts it, it is to adorn the doctrine of God, our saviour.

And that word adorn there, in the Greek, is the word *kosmeo*, where we get our English word cosmetics from. But unlike cosmetics, what a godly life does is not so much to beautify the gospel, but to bring out what is already beautiful.

And Paul says it is godly lives that do that. Sometimes we forget that. You see, what do we often do to try to make church more attractive to people? We say, let's make our website world class, let's have the best band possible, let's put on fun events, and of course we might need to do some of

that to be good stewards.

But in the end, what is most attractive of all? It is actually our lives. It is lives that reflect the beauty of Jesus.

people can forgive music that perhaps isn't as great as it could be, or facilities that are a little bit tired if they can see that the people of God are loving, they show integrity, they are worthy of respect, they speak kindly, they look to the interests of others.

[34 : 07] And this also helps remind us that speaking the gospel and living out the gospel should never be separated out. As we live godly lives, we remember that the goal is to attract people to Jesus.

So that means that at some point, we actually need to share with them the whole reason we live this way. We have to verbalize it. But we must also show them that this truth leads to godliness.

We keep the two together, they fit. together. But before I finish, I must say one more G. We've mentioned the guidance, we've mentioned the goal, but I must speak about God's grace.

You see, in this sermon series, I've separated out Titus 2 verse 1 to 10 from Titus 2 verse 11 to 15. And I did that because verses 11 to 15 is such an important passage, it deserves a sermon on its own.

But at the same time, that was a dangerous thing for me to do. Why? Because 2 verse 11 to 15 is really the engine room for 2 verse 1 to 10.

[35 : 25] Without 2 verse 11 to 15, it is possible to think that the only way to achieve 2 verse 1 to 10 is just to redouble our efforts. But next week, we will discover that actually, the only way we can be trained for godliness is if God's grace becomes our personal trainer.

So make sure that you are here next week to listen to the passage that is really the heartbeat of Titus. And pray for our elder Dr. Hong Pak who will be taking us through that next week.

But for today, just remember Titus 2 doesn't end at verse 10. That's God's grace that we need to hear about. So let's aim for a life that fits beautifully with the gospel.

Let's do all we can with our lives to show everyone that Jesus is beautiful. Shall we pray for that now?

Let's pray. Father, thank you again for your word. And Lord, in many ways, this word is a challenging one.

[36 : 42] But Father, Lord, we know that it is what we need to hear and we know that it is good. So we pray indeed that we would live lives that are appropriate to sound doctrine, that we will seek to live godly lives in all these ways, whatever stage we're at.

And we pray that together we'll be a church that helps one another, whether we are young or old, to build each other up so that we might live lives which show the credibility of the gospel and which make you attractive to others.

So will you help us day by day to do just that? and by your spirit would you empower us to be able to do that not just this week, not just next week, but all the way until the Lord Jesus comes again.

We pray all this for his glory. Amen.