

## What Kind of People Should We Be? An Overview of Titus Titus – 2026 Cornerstone Women’s Retreat – DJB – Mar 27, 2026

### Introduction

At this point in my life, about a quarter of it has been spent in the Midwest and almost three-quarters in the South—GA and NC. But the years in the Midwest were significant ones. Birth to almost 8. College. Church internship. Our early marriage.

Anne and I are both “Midwesterners.” So, in my stocking this year she gave me a book called *The Good Land*. It’s the story of the Midwest in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Looks at the culture, politics, economy, Christian traditions, education of the Midwest.

It’s called *The Good Land*, intentionally not *The Perfect Land*.

One thing clear is that the Midwest we experienced was not random. It wasn’t accidental.

All those hundreds and hundreds of small towns dotted over the Midwest in states like OH are connected to the places around them, the history before them.

Those towns of nice people, libraries and schools, churches, communities helping each other...were part of a larger story. A larger geography.

Titus 2 is like that—a powerful set of verses. And yet verses given to us in the context of a letter the apostle Paul wrote to a church leader Titus.

And the letter of Titus makes it clear the life and faith being taught there in Titus 2 is part of something so much bigger and older and more connected.

That’s what we’re going to think about in my session. I’m the setup. The real stuff will come from Carla and Anne, then Elizabeth R, Jen H, Hannah N, Claire T.

I'm going to do a flyover of Titus to get us oriented to Titus 2. The question we'll answer is this: What kind of people should we be? Titus answer this in 3 ways: (1) A Gospel People, (2) A Relational People, (3) A Truth-and-Works People

Prayer

## I. A Gospel People

**Read Titus 1:1–3.**

Paul wastes no time in his letters. In Titus there's no small talk, chit-chat. Right from the start, we're into deep waters.

In this case, he's giving us GOSPEL, Good News, and it's the deep waters of the gospel.

Here I want to accent the timeframe of our gospel:

- “truth...in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began<sup>3</sup> and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted” (1:2–3)
- Future: “hope of eternal life.”
- Past: “promised before the ages began.”
- Present: “at the proper time manifested.”
- What we're doing now is part of an eternal gospel—eternal past, eternal future.

Then in chapter two: **A Complete Gospel.** **Read Titus 2:11–15.**

The completeness of the Good News is given here in maybe the greatest passage of Titus, 2:11–15.

- Notice that here it is “the grace of God” that takes center stage.
- We're used to thinking of “grace” as what we receive instead of God's judgment. And it is! But it's more!
- Grace invades our lives with a massive agenda.
- Grace comes like a hurricane into our lives.
- Grace brings forgiveness—but when grace for salvation comes, it's also GRACE: THE EXTREME MAKEOVER EDITION.

The result? Sinning less and being more holy.

- Or in the words of 2:14, we go from “lawlessness” to “zealous for good works.”

But this Gospel is truly a Gracious Gospel.

- Grace will do that work in Tit. 2:11–15—it’ll be customized, patient, unyielding.
- The exact formula of blessings, hardships, the horrible, and the wonderful in our lives is custom designed by God precisely for us.
- God does not treat us all identically, but his providence is personal.

## II. A Relational People

Benjamin this week was telling us recently about a friend who was a monk of some kind and just about to take a vow of silence.

- Something about that is so contradictory to the New Testament.
- So contradictory to the letter to Titus.

Titus reminds us that *a Christian is part of a whole web of relationships.*

At times this feels like a curse! But it’s the rich life. What God told Adam in the Garden is true for all people for all time: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen 2:18). Not that we can’t be alone for a couple hours here and there!

But it’s a reminder that we’re made to be part of a whole web of different relationships. In Titus we get a snapshot of that.

First, we’re reminded that we’re placed in the context of **a church**.

- A church that is to be led by a certain kind of men who serve as elders (1:5–9).
- It is to be a church that has an “order” (1:5) to it that mirrors the New Testament.
- The church—Christ’s church—is a powerful thing that even the devil cannot destroy (Matt 16:18).
- But a church—a local church—is also a delicate thing. That’s why Paul speaks so strongly about being “divisive.” Someone who is speaking in

such a way that divisions appear in a church is to be warned once and then twice, and then “have nothing more to do with him” or her (3:10–11).

Second, we’re placed in the context of **families**.

- Chapter two brings this out powerfully.
- We’re placed in relationship with fathers and mothers, children—each of them with obligations to one another. Each of them most importantly being accountable to God and under God as their true King.
- None of them gets to do whatever they want!
- That’s why “**self-control**” gets accented so much—first to the “older men, then to the “older women,” then to the younger women.
- In fact, it’s the only thing said to “the younger men”!!

The third context of relationships is in the **workplace**.

- “Bondservants” are commanded in Titus 2:9–10.
- In those workplaces we have obligations to those in authority over us.
- We act in a godly manner not just because God commands it.
- We also do it remembering the reason he gives: “**so that** in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (2:10).
- It’s part of our gospel witness when we act in our workplaces in a godly manner.

And then fourth, there’s the broad relationship we have in **the society as a whole**—“**rulers and authorities**” (3:1) over us as citizens. We are to submit to them.

It’s good to remember this web of relationships when we encounter the commands to “submit” to human authorities over us.

- Paul speaks to the issue of submission four times in Titus.
- In chapter one he rebukes those who are being “insubordinate” in the church, holding to false doctrine (1:10).
- Then wives are to submit to husbands (2:5).
- Then slaves are to submit to masters (2:9).
- Then all of us as citizens are to submit to civil authorities (3:1).
- All using the same basic root word.

Sometimes when we think of submission, we zoom in on one particular aspect of submission, as if it stands alone.

But submission is part of this whole web of relationships God has established.

In a society that reflects God's "order" (Tit 1:5), we would have clear places of appeal when an authority steps out of line and we're called to submit to that authority.

- A husband could be called to account by the church authority.
- An employer could be called to account by civil authorities.

But **the Authority above all authorities is God himself**. You can hear that throughout Titus as Christ is referred to as "**our great God and Savior**" (2:13; 3:4).

That's what we're saying when we call him "**the King of kings and Lord of lords**" (1 Tim 6:15). There are a lot of human kinds and a lot of earthly lords. But there is one King and one Lord over them all!

Nothing escapes his notice. No one gets away with sin and exploitation. He is the Defender of the weak and the weak in the Bible are regularly described as the widows, the orphans, and the poor. God threatens terrible things to those in authority who fail to take care of the weak.

So, whoever it is in our lives we are called to submit, we do it knowing that above every human authority is the God who possesses ALL AUTHORITY.

### III. A Truth-and-Works People

Back in the 1900s, we had these things called "quarters." They're worth 25 cents, ¼ of a dollar. No, you can't Venmo these to your friends. You have to just give it to them.

My quarter has George Washington on one side, as always. On the other? A state quarter, and this one has the name "Connecticut." It's from 1999.

If you asked, "How much is a quarter worth that has only one side?" Uh, what? "How much...?" There's no such thing as a quarter with only one side! If it's a quarter, it has two sides.

Or as Phil Sasser used to say, “No matter how thin you slice the bologna, there’s always two sides.”

Our Christian life has two sides. They’re totally inseparable. We sometimes call them “FAITH” and “WORKS” like in James. “***Faith without works is dead,***” James tells us (James 2:17). You’re not saved by your works, but the faith that saves will always have works.

In Titus, there’s a steady refrain of this phrase, “good works.” The grace of God has appeared, training us to be “***zealous for good works***” (Titus 2:15).

But these ***good works*** are just one side of the coin. The other side of the coin is ***truth***. They go together.

Titus says this in a few different ways.

In 1:1, Paul says he’s working for God’s people for their “***knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness.***”

And then in 2:1, he uses the phrase “***sound doctrine.***” “Doctrine” is the word “teaching.” “Sound” can also be “healthy.” Sound doctrine = healthy teaching.

The whole section is about “sound doctrine”—but this “healthy teaching” is all about how we live. I.e., *Good works.*

They’re connected!

Then there’s the same idea but in negative form back in 1:16. Of some unbelievers: “***They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.***”

On the coin of our Christianity, on one side is “KNOWING GOD,” and on the other is “WORKS.”

This way of seeing the Christian life is important.

- We are TRUTH people—teaching, the Bible, God’s Word.
- But we are also devoted to GOOD WORKS—application, holiness, obedience.

So, no, we’ll never choose between these, *because they go together.*

- So, we know TRUTH, because it leads to GOOD WORKS.
- And, we know GOOD WORKS, because they're defined by God's TRUTH.

## **Conclusion**

As you listen to the teachings tonight and tomorrow, remember what the book of Titus says to you. About what kind of people we are to be:

- A Gospel People
- A Relational People
- A Truth-and-Works People

As you listen to the teachings tonight and tomorrow, keep these in mind. The gospel of grace that trains us for good works will equip you to live out the good works you'll be challenged to embrace. You are being invited into a complex, wonderful web of relationships. All this is part of being truth-and-works people.

Let me read Titus 2:11–15 as I close.

Prayer. Well, I'm just the opening act. It's time for the real rock stars...Carla Mulligan is next.