**Raise a Generation**

Titus 2:1-15

Paul’s letter to Titus is very ***similar to his letters to Timothy***, which is why this letter is grouped with those two as the pastoral epistles - letters written to pastors overseeing churches. Here is how Paul opens his letter to Titus:

“To Titus, my true child in a common faith… This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town.” Titus 1:4-5

It seems that **Titus was from Crete** and was among the early converts there as a result of Paul’s ministry. Before long Paul was bringing Titus with him and sending him on assignments, as he had with Timothy. Just as Paul told Timothy to entrust what he had learned to reliable men who would also be able to teach others, so Paul here instructs Titus to appoint elders to oversee matters in every town.

The early church needed leadership - so young men like Timothy and Titus were essential for its health and expansion. Paul followed the example of Jesus in raising up the next generation of leaders for the church. And this remains our calling today: to identify godly young people, to invest in their growth and development as leaders and to entrust leadership responsibility to them. Here in Titus 2 we will see three keys to empower next generation leaders. First:

**How to Empower Next Generation Leaders:**

1. Customize Training for Each **Individual**

“Teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men… Older women… young women… younger men… bondservants…” Titus 2:2-6,9

Paul modeled and used this kind of **individualized instruction** in all of his letters. He frequently addressed specific situations and usually used names. ***Euodia and Syntyche*** are forever recorded in Scripture for fighting. Can you imagine being singled out and named in a letter to a church because of an ongoing feud with another church member? Who knows what they were fighting about, but it went on long enough and word got back to Paul that it remained unresolved, so Paul called them out by name and basically said, ***“Come on ladies. Work it out!”***

Ephesians and Colossians both contain ***household codes*** with instructions for married couples, servants, and masters. And here we see explicit guidance on training people in different life stages. When you look at the lists of what people need to learn it’s pretty funny.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Older Men | Be dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, love, and steadfastness |
| Older Women | Be reverent, not slanderers or drinking too much; teaching what is good |
| Younger Women | Love your husbands and children, be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, submissive |
| Younger Men | Be self-controlled |

***Self-control must have been a common issue*** for everyone in Crete, but all the categories get some other specifics to work on - except the young men. Guys, if you can get this part under control we will then move on to other things. But for now - let´s just focus on self-control, ok? Some things never change!

And look at Paul’s instructions for slaves:

1. Customize Training for Each **Individual**

“Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that in everything they may ***adorn the doctrine of God our Savior***.” Titus 2:9-10

What a ***beautiful outcome*** for those who accept their place in life, even if for a time it involves servanthood: to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior! This is our great privilege, whatever we are going through, whatever place in life God has currently assigned to us - we can adorn the gospel and glorify God by working hard, being honest and showing integrity in our relationships!

This is our calling and challenge as disciple-makers: to come alongside people ***right where they are*** and help them adorn the gospel in their current **life stage and life situation**. This is one reason our Discipleship Groups only involve 2 or 3 people, at the most 4 - so the training can be customized to what those believers most need at the time. We have lots of recommended resources to choose from, so each D-Group needs to discuss where everyone is and decide what resource will be most useful.

That’s the first key to raising up next generation leaders. The second is closely related:

**How to Empower Next Generation Leaders:**

1. Connect **Life Stage** Mentors

“Older men are to be sober-minded… Older women likewise are to be reverent… and so train the young women…” Titus 2:2-3

This is one of the great **blessings of a church like Oakwood** - one generation can care for and train the next. The usual trend in American churches is *affinity groups* - so Community Groups tend to be made up of people who are all in the same life stage. Most Oakwood Groups follow this trend to help people make friends and find others with common interests and experiences.

The downside of affinity groups that cluster people in the same life stage is a lack of mentoring from one generation to the next. This kind of intergenerational mentoring happens at Oakwood in our Men’s Ministry, Women’s ministry and our various ministry teams. It also happens in our Discipleship Groups.

I like this distinction between discipleship and mentoring:

1. Connect **Life Stage** Mentors

“Older women likewise are to be reverent… and so train the young women…” Titus 2:3

* Discipleship is the intentional **Training** of another believer
* Mentoring is the long-term **Influence** that sometimes results

***Discipleship*** can be short term. ***Mentoring*** tends to be long term. Discipleship is planned. Mentoring is eventually recognized over time. You can assign someone a discipleship leader. You cannot assign them a mentor - a mentoring relationship either develops over time or it does not. It’s like friendship that way - you can put people together and sometimes they will become friends. Similarly, as discipleship goes on, sometimes mentorship will result.

So really this point should say Connect POTENTIAL Life Stage Mentors. But you get the point. As we make disciples and equip them to make more disciples, one of the outcomes we pray for is long term mentoring relationships. ***You know someone has become a mentor to you when you call them at key moments in life.*** You want to process a big decision; you are in a crisis; you are facing a new problem; you sense a new opportunity.

I am blessed that in my life I have had several key mentors. Two weeks ago, I talked about Manny, my first youth pastor who I have stayed in touch with for over 30 years now. I also consider ***Kristin´s Dad*** one of the great mentors of my life - a godly man I love to consult with new ideas and to process things like this with. One of the cool connections between me and Oakwood is that Kristin´s Dad was the Pastor of Congregational Life here in the late 90s. He introduced a training for small group leaders that many of our group leaders still today remember and were shaped by. At the same time that some of you were going through that Lay Pastor training with Mike and Kathi, I was learning the same content from him as I prepared to become a youth pastor, and also to marry his daughter.

**My own Dad** is another long-term mentor in my life - the one I still call when there is a problem with the house or a car. He gave us his old CRV when we were living in Chicago and after driving it for a few days I noticed that the gas gauge didn’t seem to be registering anything. I shrugged off that little concern and just kept driving. Until I was coming back from the grocery store with Kristin, and we turned into our neighborhood, and the car sputtered to a stop. I called Dad and said, ¨Hey, the gas gauge says half a tank, but the CRV is acting like it´s out of gas.” Dad calmly responded, ¨Oh, yeah, it always reads half a tank. It IS out of gas.”

Thankfully we weren´t far from home and had a gas can there. But that was one of Dad´s better pranks, for sure.

My Dad, Kristin’s Dad, and Pastor Manny have been long term, really ***lifelong mentors*** for me. But I have also had more ***short-term mentors*** in the different churches I have served. At the two larger churches I served I reported to Executive Pastors who coached me and helped me grow as a leader and a pastor. Both of the Senior Pastors at those churches also invested intentionally in me.

***I hope you´ve experienced this in your life!*** And I hope that right now you have one or two people a life stage or two ahead of you that you consider mentors. If you are in that category Paul describes here as an **“Older” man or woman**, you have a special opportunity to come alongside the next generation to help share your wisdom and experience! Our society generally prizes youth but Scripture very much values age and wisdom.

Look at the assignment for older women!

1. Connect **Life Stage** Mentors

“Older women likewise are to be reverent… and ***so train the young women*** to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive…” Titus 2:3-5

That is quite a list! Quite an assignment! A lot of ground to cover! You can see how important it is to customize discipleship for each individual. Of course, not all younger women are yet married. Not all women have children. Some work at home, others work at work. But the principles apply - to come alongside a younger believer **to provide TRAINING**. that’s the key word in all of this discipleship talk - training.

Usually what we consider discipleship involves academic learning - Bible studies. That is not the same thing as TRAINING. Paul does not exhort the older generation to just teach Bible truth. He exhorts them to model godliness and to train the next generation in what it actually looks like to love and honor God.

**Ladies, I’m sure these are the kind of topics** you get into on your retreats and in your meetings. This again shows the value of small Discipleship Groups and the Unveiled Friends program that connects ladies one on one. To get into issues like loving your husband well and raising your children requires some individualized attention and training. You can only get so much from a Community Group or Bible Study on how to make your marriage better or how to deal with your specific children. That is where discipleship is so important! And when discipleship grows into a mentoring relationship, that is such a blessing!

So Ladies, you have some work to do there! But men, we are certainly not off the hook!

1. Connect **Life Stage** Mentors

“Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled… Urge the younger men to be self-controlled.” Titus 2:2,6

You cannot teach someone else to be self-controlled if you yourself are not self-controlled. The list for older men is longer than the one for younger men, but both include that **DISCIPLINE** issue. Are we raising a generation of young men who even know what the word DISCIPLINE means? More and more kids are raised without any sense of submission to authority in the home or in school. Discipline in terms of overt correction or even consequences is fading into history. But we must not lose discipline and self-control within the church!

Older men must train the younger generation in how to live holy, upright, godly lives in this increasingly dark, twisted world. I did have mentors through my teen and college years, but one of the challenges I struggled with was being mostly ***surrounded by PEERS WHO HAD THE SAME PROBLEMS I DID.***

One of the reasons pornography remains such a chronic problem in the church is that we tend to connect those who are struggling only with others who are struggling in the same way. No recovery program would ever do this! You would never connect a struggling alcoholic or drug addict with another guy who just fell off the wagon too. They might be in the same group together, but one would not be a sponsor for the other! Both guys would be paired with older sponsors who had been sober for 10, 20, 30 years!

The blind should not try to lead the blind. Jesus said that’s a bad idea. Imagine a hospital that did their training this way: putting ***one intern in charge of the surgical training of another intern***. They cut someone open in the operating room and both are consulting their Med School books and saying, ¨Yeah, I think that’s the appendix…” ¨Yeah, it must be - it certainly looks all red and nasty…” You wouldn´t do that with a plumber or electrician either! Why in the world do we do that in the church?

We need the older generation who has fought these battles and learned how to win to train the next generation. Again, it’s not just an issue of teaching - **it’s about TRAINING**. Training involves practice, repetition, review, feedback, improvement, and more practice.

**This is our goal for men’s ministry** - we host breakfasts and events, like the conference we just went to - as opportunities for relationships to form that will connect men into Discipleship Groups and eventually into long term mentoring relationships. Don´t wait for the next event to get involved - if you want to connect with some other men just contact me or Jason and we will suggest one or two guys you could contact.

**VIDEO WITH DAVE AND BOB**

That is one example of how a Discipleship Group can work - and the blessing of connecting men in different life stages. If we want to empower next generation leaders, we need to be doing this kind of thing regularly. Customize training for each individual; connect life stage mentors, and one more key:

**How to Empower Next Generation Leaders:**

1. Communicate **the Gospel** as the power to change

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness…” Titus 2:11-12

Here again is that **key word TRAINING**. But notice it is not a person doing this training - it is the grace of God! ***God’s grace to us in salvation is the ultimate training tool!*** The gospel calls us away from sin and toward holiness like nothing else! Being forgiven - released from the unpayable debt of sin is the strongest possible motivation to live a life of holiness. And the gospel not only announces our forgiveness, but it also announces our freedom and power in Christ. ***And it promises our eternal life with Him!***

1. Communicate **the Gospel** as the power to change

“Training us to renounce ungodliness… waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior.” Titus 2:12-13

***The gospel is 3 dimensional!*** It addresses our past, washing away our sins. It is power for our present - connecting us with the Holy Spirit. And it is joy for our future - looking ahead to the return of Christ and the eternal glory that awaits us!

Gospel passages like this one are intentional resources Paul gives to his apprentices, and to all of us, to remind us that the GOSPEL is the power of God for salvation from beginning to end. **It is not only the gospel that saves us**, it is the gospel that sanctifies us and that secures us in Christ throughout our lives.

We must be careful as we make disciples and train them to make disciples, that we keep the gospel clear and central. There is always a twin danger in the Christian life - like walking up the ridge of a mountain. You can fall off either into legalism or laziness. On the one hand, even if you start by depending on God´s grace you can begin to lean on your own efforts and to trust in your own wisdom and strength to grow and serve. That is one kind of life in the flesh - a falling off to the right if you will.

But there is an equal and opposite danger, a falling to the left, by saying ¨It’s all grace, it’s all about God, it’s not about my efforts, so I don´t have to do anything!” That is a lawless form of self-indulgence. ***The gospel calls us away from both self-reliance and self-indulgence to the middle way of self-discipline!***

From the first moment you understood the gospel you had to realize your own weakness and sin - and your inability to save yourself. Hold onto that humility throughout your Christian life! We are no more able to sanctify ourselves than we are to save ourselves in the first place. Every breath, every prayer, every act of service must be done in dependence on the Holy Spirit and for the glory of Jesus - not ourselves.

The church tends to swing like a pendulum from one error to the other. I was raised in a high discipline time in the 80s with a heavy emphasis on holiness and discipline - but I didn´t hear a lot of grace and joy and dependence on the Lord. Now we hear a lot about grace and the gospel but often without the accompanying call to holiness and discipline.

The two naturally go together and must not be separated! Justification by faith alone should always lead to sanctification in Christ. To be united with Jesus by faith is to begin a lifelong process of change. And that change will only come as you know, experience, believe, apply, and walk in the truth of the gospel.

“Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works.” Titus 2:14

Paul is giving Titus **GOSPEL MOTIVATION** to be holy and to be diligent in the work of disciplemaking! May we hold on to both the motivation and the discipline! May we follow this exhortation to self-control and zealous commitment as we raise up the next generation of disciplemakers.

We are inviting younger believers into a rigorous training program that we will customize for each one. We will connect them with life stage mentors who can coach them through the challenges they are facing now. And from beginning to end we will communicate and focus on the good news of Jesus Christ. He not only redeemed us, he is purifying us and empowering us to good works! Central to those good works is DISCIPLEMAKING.

May we be about that work as we look to the return of our Great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Let’s pray.