

**Women's Bible Study Spring 2011**  
**A Spiritual Legacy: Passing on What You Know**  
**January 12, 2011**  
***Watch Out For...* (Titus 1)**  
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It seems like everyone's talking about retirement planning these days. No one's actually retiring anytime soon, but we're trying to plan responsibly for it so that we have enough to live on and also have something to leave our children. And what we leave behind is our legacy.

We have called this series on Titus and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy "A Spiritual Legacy – Passing on What You Know." Legacy is important because it requires us to give thought to what we're transmitting to those we love. What we do is as important as what we say. So let's start by looking at:

### **I. The Foundation for Legacy**

God is the first giver of a spiritual legacy to his children, through his word and the work of his son Jesus Christ.

Here is what Paul tells us God promised to us. Please turn to Titus 1:1:

**"Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness – a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and at his appointed season, he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior." (Titus 1:1-3).**

Paul begins his letter by talking about the legacy that God has given us – "faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life." Often a legacy arrives in the form of a will, which takes effect only when the giver dies. God's legacy came true when Christ died, much as a will comes into play when its author dies.

God made good on his promise by delivering this knowledge of himself through the preached word. The need for preaching has always been present, but in the first century it was crucial because there was no formal New Testament – only a collection of letters. So God gives this knowledge of himself as a legacy – a legacy of faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life.

If legacy is what we leave, then here are

### **II. Three Pictures of Legacy**

First, is

#### **A. The Will**

A will is a legal instrument that allows us to bequeath something to our successors. A will is very good at transferring assets, but it cannot dictate how those assets are used. Imagine, though, that you could write a will that not only passed on your assets but all your hopes and dreams for the people you love. That's what God did when he promised us faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life. So think of spiritual legacy as a will that gives us not only assets but the ability to use them.

Here's another word picture of legacy:

### **B. The Seed**

Maybe most of us don't want to deliberately seed dandelions in our lawns, but I have to admit there is a wonderful moment in early spring when suddenly you see everywhere carpets of bright yellow dandelions nodding their heads. They're lovely until they go to seed. Then the wind disperses them and those thousands of seeds come to rest and reproduce where they land. A seed is a good picture of a legacy because it passes itself on by reproducing. Jesus noted this when he said **“ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” (John 12:24)**. So think of spiritual legacy as a seed that replicates itself many times over.

Here's a third picture of legacy:

### **C. The Baton**

The baton is what relay runners use in a race. A relay occurs in a certain order. The second fastest runner starts, and tries to establish a lead over the other teams. They hand the baton to the second runner, who runs to keep the lead established by the first. Next is the third leg, where the runner again maintains position and keeps from falling behind. In the last leg, the baton is handed off to the anchor, who's the cleanup person. Ideally, the anchor is fast enough to close the gap between other teams and increases the lead enough to win.

In a relay, the handoff is everything. The baton has to be exchanged within a certain zone, only about 20 meters long. The runner with the baton enters the zone, as you can see Kirsten Aderton doing at the left. The next runner, Monica Murray, is standing in position, hand outstretched behind her. The next picture shows the two running together while the baton is passed without either of them slowing down, yet without dropping the baton. You can be disqualified for dropping the baton, for moving out of your lane or for going beyond the exchange zone. They call it being “D.Q.ed”. A bad handoff can erase a substantial lead. And a good handoff, like the ones you see in the Olympics, is smooth as butter.

What interests me most about the word picture of legacy as baton passing is that first one runner carries the baton, then the two run in sync during the handoff, and then the second runner takes over. The transition must be done in tandem to be effective.

All of us in leadership are concerned about the kind of handoff we're doing. That is why I work with a team in Bible Study. That is why we are purposely giving younger teachers experience through guest teaching this year. There is no easy way to prepare women for the task of leadership without working alongside them for a period of time. I'm not going anywhere anytime soon, but when the Lord calls me elsewhere, I want to have a very smooth handoff for the next runner. And to do that we have to be running alongside each other for a period of time.

So spiritual legacy is of huge importance to us as believers. Whether we leave a will, plant a seed or pass a baton, we long to impart the most important lessons of life to those we love. Paul wrote these two letters, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy and Titus, at the end of his life. He knew he would die soon, and sure enough, he was executed at the hands of the Romans around 68 AD, within a few years of these letters. They were written after the events of Acts 28, and they address very different situations. Timothy was at the well established church at Ephesus, while Titus served the new, frontier church at Crete.

Paul loved these two young men – he refers to them as his spiritual sons. And here we see that a childless, single man like Paul exerted enormous spiritual influence over others whom he poured his life into. Perhaps you have never had children of your own. Yet you have the ability to change lives if you will befriend and mentor others. Maybe you have children, but they live far away or reject your spiritual views. You can leave a spiritual legacy by volunteering in the children’s program, by serving as a small group leader, or in almost any arena of service. We are God’s family. The spiritual relationships we form within the body of Christ are often deeper than those of our blood ties. We all have a spiritual legacy to leave.

Finally, as we’re discussing these letters, we should ask:

**d. Who’s got the baton?**

Paul is the runner passing the baton, and Titus is the next leg of the relay. Paul himself loved the metaphor of the race. He writes in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, his final letter: **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:7)**

So what is the setting for this baton passing between Titus and Paul? The book of Titus was written around 63 AD, after Paul had been released from his first Roman imprisonment (described in Acts 28). He evidently traveled to the island of Crete with Titus. Crete is the fourth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. While some of its folk were present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and encountered the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:11), the seeds of Christian faith also came from Paul and Titus’s visit.

Cretans were notorious for being dishonest. There was even a Greek word, “kretizein”, which meant “to lie”. Since the people of Crete claimed that the god Zeus was buried on their island, everyone knew they must be liars. Who could prove a tall tale like that? That may be why Paul says so emphatically “God, who does not lie...” in verse 2 – he is contrasting God’s believability with the Cretans.

So Paul and Titus introduced Christianity to Crete, and then Paul left Titus to establish the young church while he moved on, around 63-67 AD. Later still he was imprisoned again and beheaded at Nero’s command.

Titus isn’t exactly a household name for us, yet he’s mentioned 13 times in the N.T. Strangely, none of these references come from the book of Acts although he must have been part of those events. Some commentators speculate that Titus was the brother of Luke. Since Luke was the author of Acts he didn’t need to mention his own brother by name. But that’s just conjecture.

We do know that Titus was a non-Jewish convert who was under pressure to be circumcised in Galatians 2:3, in order to please those who thought that Christians needed to submit to Jewish law. Paul stood up for Titus’ right to remain uncircumcised, to make the point that faith in Christ alone was sufficient.

Titus also was one of Paul’s spiritual sons. Paul addresses this letter in verse four to: **“Titus, my true son in our common faith.” (Titus 1:4)** He had served with Paul in Ephesus during the third missionary journey. He was likely the one who carried Paul’s sharply worded “severe letter” to the Corinthians. Titus was the right man for the job, and someone that Paul trusted and also loved. He was a natural recipient for Paul’s spiritual legacy.

I recently deleted a bunch of text messages on my phone. The only people I text are my children. All their texts were full of information and affection: “I’ve boarded the plane.” “I got an ‘A’ on my test.” “I love you.” And all mine are full of admonition and encouragement: “Drive safely.” “Call me when you get there.” “I’m praying for you.” Paul sounds more like the mom here: “Choose good leaders.” “Cretans are not trustworthy”. “Watch out for rebellious people.” Paul tells Titus to look out for both good and bad, and first he says,

#### **IV. So Watch For:**

##### **Leaders you can trust**

Look at Titus 1:5:

**The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.  
(Titus 1:5)**

Paul and Titus had been in Crete together bringing the gospel. But conversion needed to be followed by the establishment of structure. Who would teach them? Who would lead when Paul was gone? So it fell to Titus, his trusted lieutenant, to finish the work in Crete by appointing elders, men who could oversee the life of the brand new churches. This was the New Testament pattern that Paul had established over the course of three missionary journeys. Rarely was Paul able to stay for long - the Lord had other work for him to do.

Notice that Titus is appointing elder(s) – plural. The N.T. model of church life is not a single pastor with an autocratic hold over the congregation. It is meant to be jointly governed, with godly leaders using their different spiritual gifts to provide wisdom for the church. But finding good leaders in such a pagan place would be a hard task.

So how would Titus decide whom to appoint? In verses 6 through 7 Paul explains that an elder must not be:

##### **A. Drunken, angry or greedy**

**An elder must be blameless, the husband of one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless – not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.  
(Titus 1:6-7)**

Let’s note a few things about these qualifications. First, an elder is blameless, not perfect. In other words, he’s a sinner who knows how to submit his sins to Christ. Blameless means that he should have a good reputation. He should not be immorally involved with women, but married to just one wife. His children, if they are still at home and under his authority, should believe and not be wild or disobedient. For how can a man give much wisdom to other families if he has an awful marriage and is disrespected by his children?

The reason he has to be blameless or above reproach, is that he is entrusted with God’s work. This doesn’t mean he is God’s mouthpiece. But in the same way that you and I represent Christ, so even more does the elder, because he’s part of the public face of the church. So if he’s

going to do God's work (by that Paul means the work of spreading the gospel), he must be LIVING the gospel – its effects must be seen in his own life. The effect of the gospel, then, means that the overseer isn't enslaved to someone other than Christ. He's not in bondage to his temper. He's not addicted to alcohol, although notice that this verse does not say that he cannot drink in moderation. And he's not entrapped by this world's goods.

That's what he shouldn't be like. Instead, he should be

### **B. Hospitable, disciplined and wise**

Look at Titus 1:8-9:

**“Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” (Titus 1:8-9)**

Hospitality is a remarkable destroyer of barriers. This past weekend we had the unique experience of hosting our daughter Emily's fiance's family for two days. We had never met them. They had never met us. But after two days together, even though our worldviews and habits are quite different, his mom and I parted with tears in our eyes. Maybe they were tears of relief! But I think it was the sign of what I hope will be a lasting friendship. My sister Paula wisely remarked that almost no one can resist genuine warmth and hospitality. It is barrier breaking. This sort of relationship building could not have happened over a two hour meal in a restaurant, even though that might have seemed more logical for our first meeting. Was I looking forward to this adventure? No! I was terrified. But sometimes God requires us to do what is right, not what is comfortable. And look what was gained – the transformation of strangers into allies and friends.

So elders should be hospitable. The gift of hospitality is primarily directed at strangers, not those we already know and love. What an important gift in a church, where everyone begins as a stranger and must quickly be enfolded into the family of God so that they become part of the whole.

Another hallmark of the overseer is self control. He mustn't be enslaved to violence or temper. Most importantly, though, he needs to grasp sound doctrine. He must understand the truth and be able to articulate it.

Before we leave this section, I also want to point out that this passage describes a male overseer, or elder. In keeping with Titus, our church has an all male elder board. However, this issue of whether women should be in spiritual leadership is hotly debated by evangelicals. It seems to be no impediment to God's blessing; a church like Willow Creek is egalitarian, treating women and men equally on the basis of their spiritual qualifications, and a church like Bethlehem Baptist is complementarian, believing that God designed men and women for specific spiritual roles. Yet God has blessed the work of both of those large, influential churches.

For my part, I believe that we are being biblically faithful by using men in leadership. This Bible study, for example, is run by a group of women, but we have a pastor, Dan Farm, who is our advisor. His role is not to dominate or dictate, but to advise and help. Yet I am also thankful that our church recognizes the spiritual giftedness of women and encourages them to use those gifts in a pastoral setting. Karen Anderle leads us in prayer and visitation. Karen Foster helps members to discover their place of service and their own spiritual gifts. So without going into the whole

doctrinal debate about the role of women, I would rather leave you with the statement that it is our responsibility before God to search the scriptures for ourselves, and to discover what he has for us to do. If we're spiritually gifted with leadership, he'll provide that arena. If we are spiritually gifted in teaching, opportunities abound to hone that gift. We are warned in the third chapter of Titus to avoid foolish controversies and quarrels about the law. I believe that the same spirit of argument on secondary doctrine can deflect us from our true calling, which is the knowledge of the truth – a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, as Paul puts it in Titus 1:2.

Once Paul tells us what to watch for, he then tells us to

## **V. Watch *Out* For:**

### **Leaders you can't trust**

Look at verse 10:

**“For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. (Titus 1:10)**

The reason the church at Crete needed proper spiritual leaders was because many people were trying to lead at once in different directions. And some of these were ungodly, false, and wicked. Their true character was exposed by their methods. First, they were

#### **A. Manipulative**

Look at v. 11:

**They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach – and that for the sake of dishonest gain.” (Titus 1:11)**

Without exception I can say that ANY TIME a teacher, pastor or leader manipulates others for the purpose of personal gain, they are sinning. But apparently low character was terribly common on the island of Crete. Look at verse 12:

**“Even one of their own prophets has said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. (Titus 1:12-14)**

Paul was quoting Epimenides here, who was a well known poet from Crete speaking about his fellow citizens. And one reason they were thought to be liars concerned the whole controversy about the god Zeus supposedly being buried on Crete. We call it “prejudice” when someone makes a sweeping characterization of a whole race or nation. So can Paul state his prejudices in divinely inspired scripture? There are two takes on this verse. One view says that Paul is humorously referring to a national characteristic. Because his words are translated we can't see nuance – this would be the equivalent of making an “Ole and Lena” joke to Norwegians or teasing a Scotsman about being cheap.

Another view suggest that Paul was telling it like it is. These people were difficult, sinful, mendacious, but they were not beyond the reach of Christ to transform them. In other words, if God thought that Cretans were worthless, he wouldn't have sent Paul and Titus to minister to them. And if Paul really thought that all men from Crete were despicable, he wouldn't have been wasting his time evangelizing and he never would have told Titus to find decent men as overseers. It also happens in scripture that the writer occasionally expresses his own view, as in 1 Cor 7: 11, where Paul writes:

**“To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord)... (1 Cor. 7:11)**

In other words, Paul occasionally distinguishes between his own opinion on a subject and God's unalterable truth. So Paul tells Titus to watch out for manipulative leaders.

He also condemned those who were

### **B. Impure**

Look at Titus 1:15:

**“To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.” (Titus 1:15)**

I think this is an astoundingly wise remark. Our worldview and inner person really controls how we interpret the actions of others. If we are very sensitive we will have chronic hurt feelings. If we're suspicious we will not trust anyone. So if we often struggle with rage or hurt or jealousy or envy, then it's time to ask Christ to help us live according to our new nature, not our old one. Look at what John says:

**“But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, as he is pure.” (1 John 3:2-3)**

It's our destiny in Christ to be pure, because he is pure, and he has given us his nature in salvation. Now, in the process of sanctification, he'll help us live that way.

Last summer I got a flat tire on my bike at Family Camp. I had it repaired, and two weeks later, I got another flat. This time the bike shop looked really carefully at my tire. There was an almost imperceptible sliver of glass protruding through the rubber outer tire which created a tiny, slow leak in the inner tube. The inner tube of a tire is meant to be a completely airtight compartment. Once it's breached, it can't do its job. And I could fix that tire a thousand times, but until I got rid of the sliver of glass or got a new outer tire, it was not going to work. In the same way, a Christian who has a complete moral blowout usually has an unnoticed small moral leak preceding it. This verse on purity provides us with a good self check for that small moral leak. Are we getting cynical? Are we finding sin funny, or desirable? Those attitudes about purity reveal a lot about our inner condition.

Finally, Paul says to watch out for those who are

### **C. Hypocritical**

**“They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.” (Titus 1:16)**

This is the simple truth that what we do reveals more truly who we are than what we say. James put it like this:

**“Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:15-17)**

We don’t do Christlike things because we’re trying to act like God. We do them because we love him and it flows out of his nature in us. True faith is always reflected in the life and in the mouth, by our words.

So that brings us full circle back to the question of spiritual legacy.

## **VI. What Are We Leaving to Those We Love?**

Nine days ago I entered the church sanctuary to read scripture, as our congregation began the new year by reading the Bible out loud to saturate our building with the word of God. You pick up where the last person left off, so you have no control over what passage you’re given. That day I began with Deut. 28 – blessings and cursings. The blessings come first – you will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country, in the fruit of your womb, your basket and your kneading trough, blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. You’ll be safe from your enemies, established as God’s holy people, leaders in the world. And the blessings finish with the words “Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you.” (Deut. 28:14). Yet the blessings are followed by pages of curses, which are promised if the Israelites reject God.

Four days later I returned to the sanctuary to read again. This time my passage began with Lamentations 3. The horrific events of Lamentations concern the siege and fall of Jerusalem, which led to famine, cannibalism and exile. These terrible events were a direct consequence of Israel disobeying God’s word. They were eerily similar to the curses promised in Deut. 28 as a consequence of following other gods. Yet Jeremiah could still write these words:

**“I remember my affliction and my wandering,  
The bitterness and the gall.  
I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.  
Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:  
Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed,  
For his compassions never fail.  
They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lam. 3:19-23)**

The spiritual legacy that generations of Jews left their children was unfaithfulness to God. That choice resulted in generations of suffering, at the hands of Babylon and Assyria and Canaan. What spiritual legacy are we leaving those we love?

Paul says that God does not lie. He promised before the beginning of time. He gives us both **faith** and **knowledge**. Our belief in him is not just wishful thinking, but objective certainty founded on the historical fact of Jesus' death. What legacy are we leaving? I pray that we will leave the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. Here is what Paul himself left as a legacy:

**“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:7)**

What spiritual legacy will you and I leave?

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