

True Leadership, 1

Titus 1:1-2

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, January 20, 2019

I'd like to invite you to turn in your bibles to the book of Titus. That is the book we're in this morning in the Bible. We're going to look at the book of Titus.

And as you're doing that, if you're joining us for the first time today, we're on the front end of a series called the "How to Plant a Church" series that we started last week. So, if this is your first Sunday with us, you came at a good time. We're on the front end of this. And we're calling it that because like it was with all the churches back then in the first century, the church that Titus pastored was a church plant. It was brand new because all the churches back then were brand new. Before this time, the church didn't exist. I heard a pastor in Seattle say some time ago that Seattle was the least church city in the United States. It was very secular. And that may be true, but everything was secular when this book was written. The whole world was secular because the church had just begun. It was a brand-new thing in history. You could add to this – this is interesting for us, because Chilliwack is full of churches, right? We don't even know what it's like to have the first church in your town. This was the first church on the island of Crete.

Verse 5 says this particular church was in Crete, which was an island out in the Mediterranean Ocean. Which means it was totally isolated, making the plant even more difficult. It was surrounded by water and cut off.

We don't know how the church got there. It was kind of a mystery. Acts chapter 2 says they were Cretans in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached his famous sermon and 3,000 people were saved. So, it's safe to assume some of those people could have taken the Gospel back to this island and started the church there. Crete was about 600 miles from Jerusalem by sea, and it's located halfway between Jerusalem and Rome. So, if you look at a map and you take a straight line from Rome (well, for you guys) to Jerusalem, Crete is right in the middle of it. So, it was a major thoroughfare. Even though it was isolated, people went through there all the time. And it's safe to assume some of these people would have taken that message and started a church.

You can also tell that this was a church plant by the fact that the church in Crete was a mess. It was in really bad shape. It looked like it was planted on the fly with people who weren't really sure what they were doing. They were false teachers there. We're going to get into this in the weeks to come. There were empty talkers and deceivers. Verse 11 says there were legalists who were upsetting whole households. So, they were coming into a home and just splitting the family up. Chapter 3:10 says there were factious men who needed to be rejected. They were such a problem in the church that it says, "You need to avoid them." So, the whole thing looks like it was just thrown together because it was a church plant.

Chapter 1:5 says it was Titus' job to do something about it. If you look in chapter 1:5, Paul says, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains." That phrase "set in order" is one word in Greek. It's *orthos* from which we get the word "orthodontist". Some of

you hear the word orthodontist and you shutter, right? Anybody else wear a headgear growing up? Boy, you can't get a date when you wear a headgear. It just leaves a dent in your head and you're just permanently ... I have strong feelings about that. It's the same word – *orthos*, and it means “to straighten things out”. Just like an orthodontist straightens your teeth out, it was Titus' job to straighten out things in the church in Crete. He had to smooth them over, which would have been painful, right? If you've had headgear or rubber bands, those things ... you swallow rubber bands. I don't know why they put those stuff in your ... But it's painful to move your teeth. It's painful to fix a church. That was Titus' job. He had to remove the bad elements and build up good ones. He had to get the false teachers out, put in true teachers. He had to create some ministries, get some discipleship going. He had to do some outreach. In short, he had to change things. That was his job. Paul said, “I put you on the island to change things.” You guys have heard of the three rules of change, right? People hate change, change takes time and people hate change. That was Titus' job. “I'm dropping you on this island to change this church.” Wow! Right? “Leave a ship in the harbor for when things get bad, I'll get out of here.” That was his job.

To say it another way, the reformers actually had a phrase for this in Latin. It was *semper reformanda ecclesia*, which means “you're always reforming the church”. When the Protestant reformation was happening in Europe and men like Martin Luther and John Calvin and Huldrych Zwingli, were bringing the church out of the dark ages. They were reforming it. They said, the work is never done. You're always reforming the church. You're always making it better. You're always improving it. Just like you're always improving your walk with the Lord, you're always being sanctified, right? Like we're going to talk about next weekend - so it is with the church. It's always growing, it's always getting better - *semper reformanda ecclesia*.

I told you before, years ago, you might not remember about the church that had a basketball ministry that was doing well. It had a lot of success. So much so that they ran out of room in the gym. There was nowhere else to put people. So, one of the elders said, “I guess we'll just have to cut it off there and say there's no more room.” To which another one said, “Yeah, you're right. Why don't we just put up a sign that says we're all full in here, the rest of you can just go to hell.” That may be a strong statement, but you do get the point. You don't want to ever say that in a church. You don't want to ever say, “We're all full in here.” You always want to be open to change. We're always reforming the church, and that's what the book of Titus is about. This is a book about church reformation. It was written to a church that had already started and it needed to change or grow in its walk with the Lord. It needed some reform.

Verse 5 tells Titus where to start. This is where the reformation begins, the reforming begins. He says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city.” Paul says very plainly at the start of this letter, “This is where the change begins. This is where you start, you start with elders. You need to appoint some leaders for this church.” That's not the last change Titus would make as we're going to see. The work doesn't stop there, but it starts there. Because so goes the leaders, so goes the church, right? Do you guys get that? So goes the shepherd, so goes the people. People never rise above their leaders, not normally anyway. They never go past them. You go where your leaders go, you follow in their footsteps. So, Paul says at the start of this letter, “Choose the right guys. Put the right men in office.”

This is so important that Paul spends an entire chapter on this. I'm not going to preach through this to belabor the point, but I just want you to see how important this is in the weeks to come. You could actually make the argument that one third of the book of Titus is devoted to the issue of leadership. It's that important to Paul. There are three chapters in Titus. The first one is devoted entirely to that, because it's so important to the church.

I don't know how many churches have been destroyed simply because they put the wrong guy in office, or how many have fallen apart because they have bad leaders. The people were great, the ministry was great, they had good doctrine, they had good teaching, but one rotten apple spoiled the whole bunch. "And you don't want to do that," Paul says. "Choose the right guys."

When I first came to Grace Fellowship, I talked with a professor from my seminary about this, and I asked him, I said, "What's the number one reason church plants fail? What's the number one reason they fall apart?" And without skipping a beat, he said, "Power struggles. They fail because of power struggles." Because people fight for control of the church. And the way you prevent that is by putting men in office who won't do that. They won't fight for power. They won't say, "It's my way or the highway. It's got to be done the way I want or I'm out of here."

Which is important for us to remember because like I told you last time, we're getting ready to do this. We're getting ready to appoint elders as a church. It's a little ways down the road, but as you saw, I think you saw in your email this week, we're making plans to expand our elder board potentially sometime in the month of April or May. We have several steps to follow to get there. So, we're not there yet.

A couple of things I need to finish, the training process with the Advisory Council. They're a piece of work, so it takes years to work with those guys. I like picking on them. They give as much as they take.

Then we need to adopt some new bylaws so we can have a process to follow. As of right now, we don't really have a process for appointing elders in our current bylaws and so, we need to adopt some new ones to do that. And we plan on doing that. Lord willing, in the month of March, I'm going to walk you through that as we get closer to the time.

Then when all of that is in place, we would like to follow Paul's instructions here. We would like to appoint some new elders. I am an elder in the church. But the Bible calls for a plurality of elders, more than one. And so we want to do that here. Which means these are exciting times for us. This is a major, or good, step forward, one that we're really looking forward to.

I did some research on this as well. I've talked with pastors who say they don't have any elder-qualified men in their church. And they say, "We would like to do this, but we don't have the guys here. We're several years from that." This is a blessing to even be able to talk about this as a church. I've talked with other shepherds, other pastors who say they have the men, they have qualified guys, but the congregation isn't ready for whatever reason. They don't support that form of church government. So, it's a blessing to be able to talk about this as a church and to make plans for this sometime in this year.

But before we get ahead of ourselves, maybe we should ask this question to start us out this morning. Well, what do we mean by the word “elder”? That's a good question, isn't it? What do we mean by that term or maybe, particularly to this passage for this morning, when we speak of elder qualifications, what does that mean? What kind of qualifications are we looking for? Do we want the handsomest guys in the church? The richest guys? Do we want the ones with the most friends and the most votes? Do we want the tallest? I hope that's not a qualification, because I won't get that one. What are we looking for in an elder? And maybe more importantly than that, what does God look for? What kind of leader does He want the church to have? And to answer that this morning, I want to give you four characteristics of a true leader in the church.

If you're taking notes this morning, this is our outline for today, it's very simple. I'm going to give you four characteristics of a true leader in the church from the life of the Apostle Paul. This is an interesting passage that we have here today because the book of Titus starts out by giving us Paul's qualifications for leadership. As he goes on, he's going to give us the qualifications for everyone, the qualifications for every elder in the church, and he'll spill them out for us in a list. The list starts in verse 6 and goes all the way down to verse 9. But he starts the book off by giving us his own qualifications. Not to brag, but to tell us who he was and why he had the right to write this letter. And he gives us four characteristics of a leader.

And the first one is this, a true leader serves the church. This is where it begins. This is where it starts. Paul says that a true leader serves the church. We've talked about this a few weeks ago, but service is at the heart of leadership. It's at the heart of Christianity, really. Jesus served you and now you serve others. That's the idea of the Christian life. That's what it's all about. He gave everything He had for you at the cross, and now you give everything you have for Him in return. You're not earning your salvation, you're just reflecting it. You're showing your appreciation for what He did.

If you look in verse 1, the first couple of words start out this way of the letter of Titus. It starts off, it says, “Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Just to explain that to you, verses 1 through 4, form one long sentence in Greek. They give us one long thought in the mind of Paul. And that thought turns this way and that and it follows some rabbit trails, but it's one thought. And the thought is that, “This is what a leader looks like. This is why Paul was qualified for office.”

And he starts off by calling himself a bond-servant and an apostle. He does this, he gives us this long list because as far as we could tell, Paul never actually went to the island of Crete. The book of Acts never talks about a visit there and neither do any of his letters. In chapter 1:5, it says that Paul left Titus in Crete. That might mean that he visited it, but it could mean that he just was passing by and he dropped him off. And the point is that this is Paul's introduction to these people. That's why it's so long. It could be his first encounter with them. He gives us his list of qualifications that start off with a bond-servant and an apostle.

We've talked about the word “apostle” last week, so I won't say much about it here. But it was the highest office in the church. It was a place of greatest authority. You couldn't get any higher than an apostle. You couldn't get any greater than that, which is interesting because he puts it right next to the word “bond-servant” or “slave”. If you look in your Bibles, that word “bond-

servant” is *doulos* in Greek, which means “slave”. It's someone who's owned by a master. Paul actually puts it in front of the word “apostle” for emphasis, to show you that this meant more to him than that. His slavery was more important than his apostleship. His greatest honour was not the office. His greatest honour was his relationship to God, which was slavery.

Just a little background on that because we don't have slaves today (I thank the Lord). But slavery was very common in the ancient world. So, when Paul says he was a slave here, everybody knew what he meant, because everybody knew what a slave was. They'd all seen one and in fact, some of the people that were reading this for the first time, were slaves. So, they knew about it firsthand. It's been estimated that at this time in the Roman Empire, they were about as many slaves as there were free men. And some Romans owned thousands of them. There were stories of wealthy men back then owning as many as 20,000 slaves. It's enough to start your own army. One small island out of the Mediterranean had 60,000 of them on the island. And there were so many slaves back then that you couldn't tell who they were. They looked like everybody else for the most part. There were blue-eyed slaves and brown-eyed slaves. There were dark-skinned slaves and light-skinned slaves. There were well-dressed slaves. Some masters took very good care of their slaves, and there were poorly-dressed slaves. But they all had one thing in common, they served a master. They all had one thing in common, they were there to please someone else.

This is how Paul starts the letter, this is how he begins the whole thing - by saying, “I am a slave of God. I live to please God. I live for the master.” We should all say this, because this is what we do. This is our job. We please the master. But it's especially true of leaders in the church. No matter what your office, no matter how high it is, even if you're an apostle, even if you have the greatest distinction in the church, you are still just a slave. Amen? You're still just a servant. You serve the master too. You are not the master. You serve the master.

Which means you don't do it to make a name for yourself. You do it to make a name for Him. You don't do it so people can see you are the boss. You do it so they can see that He's the boss. And this is important for elders to remember. This is a great note to start the letter on because leaders have a lot of influence in the church, don't they? And it can go to their heads. It can make them proud if they don't watch it. The story is told of the time (it's kind of a funny story) Ronald Reagan gave a speech in Mexico. And after he finished, no one applauded. It was totally quiet. And so, when the next speaker got up, to show his appreciation, Ronald Reagan cheered with all his might. He applauded as loudly as he could until his friend turned to him and said, “Mr. President, you don't want to do that, because he's interpreting your speech. You're cheering for yourself right now.” There can be a temptation to do that in leadership. There can be a temptation to cheer for yourself, to applaud your own words, to think, “This is all about me. This is about my glory, my reputation.” And at the outset, Paul says, a true leader doesn't do that. He's not in it for his glory.

Another way to say this, is that a true leader is a low man in a high office. Do you get that? He's a low man in a high office. He's a humble man in a lofty position. The office is great, but he is not. The position is great, but he's not. He's just a slave. He's just a servant. He doesn't see his name in lights. He doesn't applaud his own speeches.

I love talking to (we call them) lay elders or lay leaders in the church. And the joke is that they're worth as much as we pay them. You guys will get that later. We don't pay them anything, they do it voluntarily out of their own kindness of their heart. They do it because they get this. They're a slave of Christ. I've seen men work hard all day, work with their families all day and then go counsel someone till 10 o'clock at night. They don't get paid for that. Sometimes, they don't get a pat on the back. Sometimes somebody is mad at them as they're leaving their home. And they do it because of this. They cancel their golf games, they cancel their hockey games, they cancel sometimes their vacations. I've seen guys come back from vacations, because they get this. It's what you want in a leader.

Another way to say this, when I first came to Grace Fellowship, we were talking about hiring an associate pastor. There was talk about expanding the staff, the fulltime staff, which really excited me because it meant we were growing, we were getting bigger, and it would look really nice on the website to have two pastors on the website, right? Then we lost four families in my first year. They weren't mad or anything. They just moved away. They moved to different parts of Canada. Then all of a sudden, we're not talking about that anymore. And my dreams of a glorious page on the website - we hired Jordan, the Administrative Assistant. That was great. That made that page look better. I didn't want just my picture on there. But when that happens, there can be a temptation to be discouraged, right? There can be a temptation to say, "Oh no, my church is shrinking." But you know what? It's not my church. It's His church. It doesn't belong to me. It belongs to Him. I'm just a slave. You're just a slave. We're just His property.

I mention this because as we're appointing elders in the months to come, we need to remember this. This is what we're looking for. This is the kind of man that we want, someone who is humble. Someone who is Christ's slave. Listen guys, if Paul could say this, what are we going to say about ourselves? Right? We're just a slave.

That brings us to the next characteristic of a true leader in the church. First, he's a slave. He serves the church like a slave would; with humility and lowliness of mind. And the second is this, he upholds the faith. He upholds the faith. He lifts high the Word of God. Not only does he serve, but he serves with a purpose to uphold the faith, to teach the Word of God. And if you read on in verse 1 it says, "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God."

That phrase "for the faith" is translated "according to the faith" in some of your translations. And the idea is that, "This is why I'm a slave," Paul says. "This is why I serve. I do it for the faith." Some of your translations say "for the faith of the elect" there. But the idea in that phrase is that, "I do it for the faith of those who came before me. I do it for the faith of my predecessors." If you noticed, there's a definite article there. So, Paul doesn't say, "I do this for 'a' faith, but 'the' faith. I don't do it for 'a' belief, my own personal ideas and thoughts, I do it for 'the' belief. I'm not a slave according to what I just made up. The church didn't start with me, it started with God's election. There's a legacy that I have to keep," Paul says. "There's a standard. It's not my job to make it up, it's my job to maintain it, to uphold it."

If you want to write this verse down in your notes, Jude 1:3 refers to this as "...the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints." In the New Testament, the Lord gave us a faith that

was once for all handed down. When the last apostle died, they gave us a collection of writings, a complete and finished Word from God. And it's not being handed down over and over and over again. It's not being modified every couple of years and changed. It's the same. And it's our job to protect it. It's our job to guard it with our lives. The seminary I went to has a phrase, "We train men because lives depend on it." And I think they do because they almost killed me in those four years.

You see this as the verse goes on, it says, "for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth." Those are a couple of ways of saying the same thing. It's a leader's job to uphold the faith and the truth and the knowledge that is found in the Word of God. Some of you have seen a relay race where the runners carry a baton and they go so far down the track until they get to the next runner, and then they pass it on. And then that guy goes so far down the track until the next runner and he passes it on. And then the next guy goes so far down, and he passes it on. That's what leaders do. They're passing the baton. We carry the truth so far and then we give it to the next guy so he can carry it and go so far and give it to the next guy. We didn't create the baton. It didn't start with us. It started long before us. We're just messenger boys. It's our job to make sure we don't drop it.

There's another word picture for this. It's the idea of standing on the shoulders of giants. You're not a giant yourself, you're just standing on their shoulders, so the next guy can stand on yours. People have died for this stuff. There is blood on your Bible, and therefore, you need to take it very seriously. Charles Spurgeon said, "We don't play at preaching, we preach for eternity. We take it seriously." Martin Luther said, "You should preach in such a way that men will either hate their sin or they will hate you." We do it for the faith of the chosen, for the faith of the Old Testament saints; Abraham, David, Moses, Samuel, Solomon. We do it for the New Testament saints; Paul, Peter, James, John. We do it for the men who came after them; Augustine, John Chrysostom. We do it for the Reformers. We do it for the men of the Great Awakening. We have some very tall shoulders to stand on, amen? That's our job.

Just so you know, I've been working very hard with the guys on the Advisory Council on this. Not only are they given opportunities to teach and lead and shepherd you, but they've also been reading a lot. I've been turning them into nerds. You've probably noticed they've started wearing pocket protectors and thick glasses to church and becoming less coordinated. It's beautiful, it blesses my soul. I remember I crossed a line in seminary when I had to organize my note cards. I said, "This is too far. I have boxes of note cards." But they're doing that because I'm passing the baton on to them and they're going to pass it on to you. I'm giving it to them. They're going to give it to you and you're going to give it to others. That's what an elder does. That's what a leader does.

It leads us to the next characteristic of a true leader in the church, and that is that he promotes godliness. A true leader serves the church. Like a slave, he upholds the faith, carrying the baton, for the purpose of promoting godliness. He does this so people will grow in their relationship to God. If you read on in verse 1, it says, "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth, which is in accordance to godliness." As you read this passage, it may sound a little confusing because there's a lot of prepositions in it. I think this is the seventh one in the passage. But Paul says,

“This is what a leader looks like. This is why I'm qualified to do ministry, because my ministry is according to godliness.”

Paul was a godly man. The word “godliness” here is *eusebeia* in Greek, which means “godly” or “reverend”. The idea is that Paul was reverent toward God. He was respectful toward Him. It seems to go without saying, but he didn't curse in the pulpit and tell crude jokes. That wasn't his style. That wasn't what he did. He didn't talk lewdly about things. When he was out of the pulpit, he was reverend. The Old Testament referred to this as “having the fear of the Lord.” Paul had that. A true leader has that. He fears the Lord. He walks cautiously in His presence. He comes boldly to the throne of God, but not brazenly, not arrogantly. He comes with confidence, but not with carelessness.

You can say it this way, a true leader takes his sin seriously. He takes his sin seriously. It grieves him when he sins against God. This is important to mention because I think a lot of leaders are forgetting this today. I'm still new to Canada in some ways, so I don't know if this is a problem here. But you've got preachers in America that take their sin as a joke.

Several years ago, the television station Oxygen started a new reality show called “The Preachers of LA” in which they documented the lives of several health, wealth and prosperity preachers in Los Angeles. We always make the joke that everything bad starts in Los Angeles and it goes east and north. And in one episode, they interviewed a pastor who was bragging about his fancy cars and his bank account and all the women he was flirting with, right there on television. You know what the Apostle Paul would say to that? You know what God would say to that? He would say, “You're not a pastor if you do that. You're not qualified for ministry, because that is not according to godliness. You're not taking your sin seriously. You're not above reproach,” as Titus 1:6 says, or “blameless” in some of your translations. That doesn't mean “sinless”, it just means without blame. Your life is free from public scandal and sin. To quote Charles Spurgeon again, he said, “Whatever call a man may profess to have, if he's not been called to holiness, he's not been called to ministry.” The call to ministry starts here. The call to leadership starts here. This is not an option. You don't get a pass on this just because you're a pastor or an elder or a deacon. It's just the opposite. There is a high standard for leaders in the church.

You know what, it's not just a high standard for their lives, it's a high standard for their ministry and their conduct and how they interact with you. And what I mean by that is when we're looking for leaders, we don't want men who just want to know how much Bible knowledge you have. They want to know how you're applying it. That's a true leader. He wants to know how you're living it out and putting it into practice. He doesn't want to just know how many tables you're stacking or how many meals you're serving. He wants to know how your marriage is doing, and how your family is doing. “Tell me about your prayer time. Tell me about your study time. What kinds of sins are you struggling with, and how can I help you with that?” That's what a leader does. He leads according to godliness. He's not trying to just fill the pews. He's trying to lead you closer to God.

It leads to one more characteristic of a true leader in the church. Just one more that we're going to get to today. Like I told you before, this is a long introduction. I've been inspired by this to start writing my emails this way. So, seven prepositions in the first two verses. You guys would like

that, right? But we'll have to stop in verse 2. But just to review what we've looked at, the first characteristic of a true leader is that he serves a church. That's why he leads, that's his driving motive for service. Second, he upholds the faith. He guards the faith, cherishes it so he can pass it to others. Third, he promotes godliness. He wants you to grow in your relationship with God. Bringing us to a fourth and a final qualification that we'll look at today. I like this one the best. This is a great note to end on this morning. And that one's this, the fourth qualification is a true leader is hopeful. A true leader is hopeful.

It's one thing to want you to be godly and it's another thing to make you feel like dirt about it, right? You guys know what I'm talking about? You make everybody walk out, "Oh man, I'm a piece of junk again." A true leader doesn't do that. He's hopeful. He's optimistic and positive about the future. He makes you come out of there and say, "Oh, I'm junk, but God is so good. God is so merciful." The introduction goes on and Paul says, "Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness in the hope of eternal life."

That's another preposition there. Paul says he does this in the hope of eternal life. The word "in" there is a locative word, which means it describes a location. When you go into a building, you change your location, right? You leave the outside for the inside. You leave the wind and the rain and the cold for the safety of somewhere else. And in a similar way, when you are saved, Paul says you change locations and come into the hope of eternal life. You leave the world for Christ, you leave the wind and the rain and the cold behind for the safety of a new life in Him. This means you have hope now. You have hope.

I talk to so many Christians who say, "I can't do this because I am sinful and I'm this and I'm that." Well, that's one side of the coin. The other side of the coin says that Christ is sinless, amen? And He's perfect and He's holy and righteous, and you can overcome that through Him. They walk around like Eeyore. My kids love Winnie the Pooh. And Eeyore, nobody wants to follow Eeyore, amen? You know, "Oh no. There's only one rain cloud in that whole hundred-acre-wood, it's over his head, wherever he goes." Who wants to follow that? You have hope now. You have a positive outlook on life. You have something to look forward to.

And even more than that, the word "hope" in Greek, it means "to expect something or wish it." But it means more than that. When we say "I hope something", we often mean, "I wish it to be true." But one Bible dictionary said this, it said, "The majority of the New Testament writers define the word 'hope' as a confident expectation or a solid assurance of something." This understanding is based on the Old Testament where hope is essentially synonymous with trust. To hope in the Lord is to trust in Him. Wishing for something (the way some people talk about hope), only produces anxiety and fear. Hope produces joy.

As Paul says, our hope is a hope that will never disappoint us because it's based on something solid. It is based on the Word of God and the fact that God does not lie. And again, to show you this, you see the definite article here. Paul doesn't say, "I have 'a' hope, I have 'a' wish." He says, "I have 'the' hope, the only one. It's a sure thing. I know whatever happens to me, Jesus died for my sins and I'm going to be okay." Amen? "Whatever I go through, no matter how bad things get, I can have a smile on my face."

This is something Titus needed to hear because Crete was a mess. We're going to see this in the weeks to come. It was a bad place. And there could be a temptation to step into something like that and go around the island saying, "Wrong, wrong, wrong all the time. What a bunch of idiots. They'll never amount to anything. Get me off this island." That wasn't his job. His job was to give people hope, to give them something to look forward to. That's what leaders do. They don't go around saying, "Wrong, wrong, wrong," all the time. They say, "This is wrong, but here's how you fix it. This is wrong, but let's see what we can do in the Lord together." I was talking with someone the other day about a problem they were facing, something pretty serious. And they said, "You really believe I can do this, don't you? You really believe I can get through this." I said, "Well, if I didn't, I wouldn't be here. There is hope for you." We need leaders who will say that to people. We need elders who will give us hope.

Let me tell you specifically how this applies to us today, to all of us and just give an application for this. We're a church plant, which means that everything is new here. It's extra messy. Amen? It's a glorious, sanctified, beautiful mess. I love it. Because it's new. We're still working the kinks out. So, there's plenty of opportunities for discouragement if you don't have hope. Think about it, our Children's Ministry is new, and our Nursery is new. Our Worship Ministry is new, and our Conference Ministry is new. Some of you didn't even know he had a Conference Ministry. It's new. Glad to fill you in. Our Outreach Ministry is new, and our Youth Ministry is new. Our Sound Team is new, and our Hospitality Team is new. Our ushers are new and doing a fantastic job. You have a new pastor and a new administrative assistant. The website is new, and the bulletins are new. In fact, the bulletins got a new look this week, right? So, they're extra new. They glow. They kind of ding as you look at them. It's all new, new, new around here, which is exciting and wonderful. But if you have the wrong attitude, you can look at all of that and say, "Wrong, wrong, wrong all the time." Right? You can just see issues and problems. You need to be hopeful. You need to be optimistic about what God can do in our beautiful church.

In an art gallery in Chicago, there was found a painting of an old shack in the mountains that had burned down until the only thing left standing was a chimney. Everything else was in ruins. And standing next to the chimney and the rubble, was an old man holding a boy who was crying. And underneath the painting, were these words, "Hush child, God ain't dead." I know our church isn't like that right now. We're not a burned-out shack. I don't feel that way at all. But if there's discouraging times, you have to remember God ain't dead. You need to remember, He's still looking out for us. Don't give up, don't quit, He will bless us in the end. And you need to remember *semper reformanda ecclesia*. We're always reforming the church. We're always making it better. This is a work in progress, it's a project in the making. And praise the Lord, He allows us to be a part of it. Praise the Lord, He allows us to be part of His church. Let me close this in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you so much Lord for this introduction to the book of Titus. We introduced it last week, but this is I guess Paul's introduction in his own words. And what an introduction it was, what a heart this man had for Your church. Some say he was at the end of his life here. So, this is an old man in his retirement years writing about the body of Christ.

Lord, we thank you for allowing us to be part of the church. We thank you for the privilege it is and thank you for the blessing the church has been in our lives. Not even just our church here at

Grace Fellowship, but our people come from so many different backgrounds and we can all look back and think of all the blessings that You've given us through the body of Christ.

Lord, help us to please You as we serve here today. Help us as we apply these things in our own lives and in the future. We look for leaders who have these characteristics. May Christ be glorified in all we do.

Thank you, Father, that we have hope. Thank you that we have a positive outlook in life. Help us to go from here today and apply this and to think hopefully about the future, and to praise You, Father, for what You're going to do in the life of Your people. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.