

Read Titus 1

For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. Titus 1:10

Jean-Claude Killy was desperately trying to hang onto his spot with the French ski team during the 1960's. After training with his teammates, he realized his performance wasn't setting him apart. So Killy consciously attempted new techniques during his practice runs and realized that sitting back on his skis during a turn, instead of forward as his coaches taught, dramatically improved his times. In the 1968 Winter Olympics, Killy became only the second skier to win all three gold medals in men's skiing simply because he was willing to question the way things had always been done.

Titus had a difficult job. Paul left him in Crete to help some existing churches that were focusing too much on the past. They were plagued by false teachers and those with personal agendas. The circumcision party was a group of Jews who were adamant in their belief that new Christians, especially those who didn't grow up Jewish, needed to take part in the Old Testament acts of covenant. Jesus never taught this, but these Jewish believers struggled to move past the way things had always been done. As a result, they robbed the joy from many new believers by asking them to give up freedom for rules. **We need to be careful to help unbelievers see that Christianity is about following the example of Jesus, and not religious rules. We also must be careful not to fall into legalism ourselves on how long we must pray, how much of the Bible we must read, or even how a worship service must run. Are you living a life of freedom in Jesus, or attempting to live out a set of religious rules? Discover the thoughts, words, and actions of Jesus Himself and live out that example.**

Read Titus 2

Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good. Titus 2:2-3

My wife and I went through pre-marital counseling, though I don't remember a lot about it. Our pastor was transitioned into a new church that was hours away, but had agreed to perform our ceremony and counseling. Those sessions were good, but not nearly as impactful as what Willis and Lorraine offered us. This senior adult couple offered us some furniture, and while we picked it up, they just talked with us about life and marriage. Over the coming months and years, they would continue to talk to us one-on-one, never in a formal way, but always in a lasting one. Willis' love for his wife was never in question, and he taught me to prioritize my wife in a way I've never forgotten.

This chapter is such a beautiful picture of what the church could be, but rarely is. The older generations of mature believers were encouraged to teach the younger generations in terms of marital and family responsibilities. In today's culture, people fear interjecting words into the life of a frazzled mother or impatient young man. What if it's not received well? What if they feel I'm judging them? If you're approaching the person with a Willis or Lorraine heart,

people will know it, just as Nikki and I did. We never felt they were calling us bad spouses, or later, bad parents. They had learned lessons of walking with Christ that had greatly benefited their family, and they wanted to pass those along. If you're willing to be transparent on your own failures, and the lessons learned, there are younger people trailing just behind you that would really appreciate hearing about them. **Who could you be teaching, training, and encouraging? Are you willing to be that transparent as to share from a place of failure instead of only sharing from how you did it right? The church has been brought together for the sake of the gospel, the sake of disciples, and the sake of families. Look for your opportunity to bless in every space.**

Read Titus 3

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

Titus 3:4

High School freshmen were always easy to spot during my Junior and Senior year. They were usually shorter, carried huge backpacks, and walked the halls glancing back and forth at their schedule and the room numbers above the classrooms. Picking on these kids and making fun of them was easy, as long as you were able to forget what it was like to be a freshman yourself. Those opening days of high school were difficult, feeling far removed from junior high, and I tried to remember what it was like myself when interacting with them.

How quickly we forget what we once were. Some of us have been Christians longer than others and over time we can forget how much Jesus saved us from. Paul calls on Titus and these believers to show courtesy to others. Paul wanted these Christians to remember that many of the unbelievers' struggles had once been their struggles as well. We can become complacent in our Christian lives when we forget how drastically Jesus changed us. **We are no better than the lost person, with Jesus' forgiveness being the only difference between us and them. Like the old saying goes, "But for the grace of God, go I." Let's remember that we were once lost too. Is there really anyone out there who is that much different than we used to be? Are we really better than the lost who live out their lives in the ignorance of God's Word? How is God calling you to look at unbelievers in a fresh and understanding way?**