

Launching Question

What are thought to be the qualities needed to be any kind of good leader?

Introduction

READ the passage

Why has Paul left Titus in Crete? (as well as 1:5, what about 1:10f)?

What are your first impressions about who'd be good as church leaders?

'Knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness'

Re-READ 1:1-4

What is Paul's job?

What phrase does he use to describe the gospel that he is to preach?

What is the link between 'knowing the truth' and 'godliness'?

maybe refer to other passages through Titus / *page 2 in these notes*

ask of each: what is the link here between belief and behaviour?

According to 2-3, what does this 'truth' depends on? how do we 'know' it?

What are the implications of our Christian faith depending on God's promise?

If our Christian faith has been brought to light through the apostles

preaching, how can we know it better?

What do these verses say that we need to do about the fact that all our Christian lives are probably not as godly as we'd like?

Do you believe the answer given in these verses? why/why not?

What practical steps will I take now to grow in personal godliness?

Appoint elders

Re-READ 1:5-9

What is Titus' job?

What kind of qualities are we to look for in a potential church leader?

What other qualities do we value and often look for instead?

From what we've seen in 1:1-4, why must we evaluate a candidate's life?

What are we actually aiming to discover? Is lifestyle an infallible guide?

Why do we look at a person's home life first?

What is the job description for elders?

Why is it so important that elders 'hold firmly to the trustworthy message'?

What will happen if they don't? (- several things)

Gathering strands

Make a list of the key thing to look for in appointing church leaders.

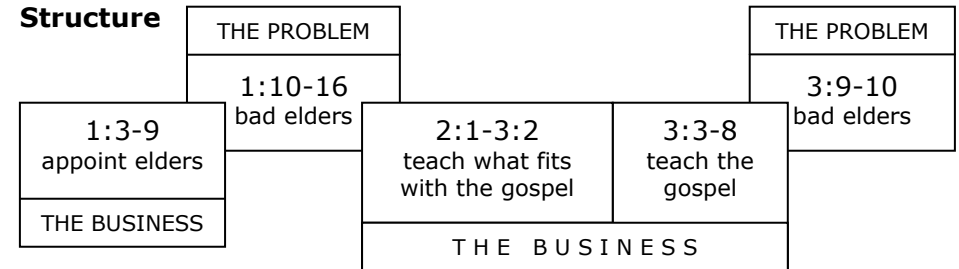
How can we find out if a person is like this? why do these things matter?

What does this passage lead us to pray for?

Background

Titus (and the two letters to Timothy) is written by Paul to his young protégé, sent as a trouble-shooter to the church in Crete (as Timothy was to Ephesus). Titus is to *straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders* (1:3). The urgent need at the end of the era of the apostles is that the gospel baton, *the truth that leads to godliness* (1:2), is passed on well.

Structure



Theme Sentence for 1:1-9

Church leaders need to know and teach 'the truth that leads to godliness'

Structure of 1:1-9

1-4 Greetings from Paul to Titus:

- the gospel is what has been promised to us by God
- the gospel is what has been preached to us by the apostles
- the gospel is what produces godliness in the Christian's life

5-9 Titus is to appoint elders who know this promised/preached gospel

- they show they know it by their godly lives
- they can encourage others with it / refute those opposing it

Ideas for application from 1:1-9

- The secret to a godly life is knowing the gospel. We tend to think it's about techniques, or rules, or anything other than that gospel of grace (that both saves and trains 2:11f). If my life is lacking in godliness, I need to know the truth better.
- The gospel is about what God promised and the apostles preached to us ... so listening to/reading/studying that word is vital.
- The church needs leaders who know the gospel well, hold onto it firmly (despite opposition), and will pass it on accurately - such a simple Job Description, but vital for my salvation and my godliness.

- 1b Paul uses the conventional letter style of his day, but exploits it to make clear his main theme: *knowledge of the truth leads to godliness*. There is a direct link between **the truth** that we 'know' (in the sense of believing, and building our life on) and **the lifestyle** that results.

This theme is reflected by the current leaders of the church in Crete. They *claim to know God* (1:16), but they're *mere talkers* (1:10) and (are paying attention to those who) *reject the truth* (1:14). Since they don't believe the gospel, of course, *by their actions*, they are *detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good* (1:16).

There is to be the same correlation between belief and behaviour in those elders that Titus appoints. He is to look for people whose godly lifestyle (1:6-8) will be evidence that they *hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught* (1:9).

It is for the same reason that Paul writes 2:1-3:2, listing all kinds of practical behaviour which is *in accord with sound doctrine* (2:1). For the gospel not only *brings salvation*, it also *teaches us to say 'no' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives* (2:11-14). If I know the gospel of 3:3-7, then you'll be able to see it; if my lifestyle is still like 3:3, I don't know the gospel.

But more than this, it is *the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness*; in other words, the power for a changed lifestyle lies in that gospel. If someone is living wrong, they need to be taught the gospel, and what is in accord with it. The gospel is what every Christian needs.

- 2-3 This *truth* – a fixed, given body of *sound doctrine* (1:9) – depends on:

- **God's promise**

There are two points here. First, that the gospel comes from God, and therefore has to be told to us (otherwise we couldn't know it): in our world where words and revelation are denigrated, this is significant. Second, the gospel (since it is about *promise*) looks to the future, and is about *the hope of eternal life*: again this is important in our world (and church) where 'we want it now ... it must work impressively now' rules.

- **the apostles' preaching**

What you must do when something has been revealed to you is convey it faithfully: God has revealed his promise-dependant *truth* via Paul (and by implication his contemporary apostles) to the world. So, whereas the scientist is always trying to discover new things, the Christian is always trying to discover old things: what was it that God promised, and has *brought to light* to us by his apostles?

- 5 Paul has left Titus in Crete with a job to do. Significantly, he is to *rebuke* (1:11), *teach* (2:1, 9), *encourage* (2:6), *remind* (3:1), *avoid* (3:9), *warn* (3:10). But chiefly, Titus is to complete Paul's unfinished business by appointing *elders*. Note therefore, that there's a sense in which Titus is not the elder: he comes in to appoint local leadership that presumably will outlast his time in Crete. So is it Titus or the elder who corresponds most closely to our contemporary church ministers?

Elders simply means 'someone who is older' (- virtually the same word as *older man* in 2:2), so we mustn't immediately import all our baggage about church structures and officers, and what status our 'elders' have. To avoid that, GNB gives the parallel passage in 1 Tim 3 the simplified heading 'church leaders': what should our church leaders be like?

- 6-8 Possibly the most striking thing about this list of qualities is how ordinary it is. There's a sense that these five 'vices' and six 'virtues' are no more or less than we might expect in any growing Christian. Every Christian ought to be faithful to their wife, not given to drunkenness, honest, etc etc. But this simply reflects what 1:1a says: we'd expect anybody who *holds firmly to the trustworthy message* to be godly.

There are some particular emphases too:

Blameless (6a, 7) doesn't mean 'perfect', but what 1 Tim 3:2a, 7 says: *without reproach, good reputation with outsiders*. It is essential that when the gospel is proclaimed by the church, its power is on public display: look here at *the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness*.

Church is a household, so how a person heads their household is a good indicator of whether they are competent to head the church. An elder must be reliable in their marriage, and must 'rule' (= *manage* in 1 Tim 3:4, 5) their children. It is to be a household built on faith(fullness).

The list is a very down-to-earth, 'ordinary' list of what it is to be spiritual: it's about solid, reliable character ... sensible, upright people.

- 9 But here's what is to mark them out. Up until 1:9, any growing, reasonably mature Christian would 'qualify', but the elders' distinctive role is to ensure the church keeps 'true truth' at its heart. The only way they can do that is if they have a firm grasp on what *has been taught* (rather than making up something novel), and the almost-stubborn quality of holding onto that doctrine despite the strongly blowing winds (cf Eph 4:14) of more popular teaching and teachers (2 Tim 4:3-4). As we've seen, intrusively examining someone's personal and home life (6-8) is one indicator whether they know *the truth leads to godliness* (1).

But the key thing is that they know these things not for their own sake, but in order to *encourage* and *refute* others (and of course, you have to *refute* in order to *encourage*). Their job is to pass on what was taught to them (2 Tim 2:2), so they themselves must be *able to teach* (1 Tim 3:2): this is their 'Job Description'.