

Mission 2: devoted to serve

Titus 3:12-15

MPS: The Gospel grows grace-fueled devotion through good works for godly living in a godless age.

OBJ: Every Christian can grow grace-fueled devotion for godly living by three reminders and four perspectives.

READ Titus 3:12-15

When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful. All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Titus 3:12-15

INTRO Life-saving club on a dangerous shoreline

A life-saving club was started on a dangerous shoreline where shipwrecks often occurred. Ships wrecked against the rocky shoreline and people would drown in the stormy waters. The people living in that area got together and decided they would try to do something about this tragedy that continued to occur. They formed a rescue club of people committed to help. They built a hut where rescued people could warm up and dry off until more permanent help could arrive.

After achieving some success in rescue efforts more people got involved. The more success they had the more demand was placed on the hut. The hut was rough and not very desirable, and became insufficient for what they needed. Members wanted to improve it, so they decided to make it nicer. The hut became so nice that people enjoyed gathering. Members began gathering more often to enjoy the rescue hut. But the gatherings had little to do with rescue missions and more to do with team members. Slowly, the members had less desire to go to sea to rescue. When a boat wrecked, they would clean the people up before they brought them into the hut because they didn't want to get the clubhouse dirty.

A small group tried to remind the members of their original mission, that the hut was a rescue house. The majority refused and told them to start a new mission hut. So they did. They went and built a new hut.

The new hut only included necessities, a place for people to warm up and get dry. A new membership of people committed to rescue operations was established. In time, this hut became insufficient for the demand they placed upon it. So, they made it nicer and used it for member gatherings. Again, the members slowly held less desire to risk their own lives to go to sea to rescue and more interest in gathering with members at the now called "club house". When a small group tried to remind them of their original mission the majority refused and told them to start a new mission hut. So, a few went and built a new hut.

Today when you travel the Eastern coast, nice marine clubs litter the coastline. Shipwrecks are still frequent, but most of the passengers drown.

TRANS This story demands we ask ourselves, **What are we becoming, as Christians and as the church? As long as a Christian remains on the earth, mission that multiplies disciples for increasing glory remains our principle focus.**

TRANS Today, I want to focus and summarize this Titus series, "The Church".

When we read Titus 3:12-15 the list of names jumps out. This is the only reference to Artemas in the New Testament. Tychicus is also mentioned in Acts 20:4. He was from Asia and served as a representative of the church there that accompanied Paul with their gift for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. Zenas was a lawyer that traveled with Paul's cohorts, but this is the only mention of him. Apollos is best known of this list. He was an eloquent speaker but needed help with his theology, which he received from Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus. He was with Paul when he wrote First Corinthians. Some think he may be the author of Hebrews. **Paul practiced active discipleship to develop leaders that equipped, encouraged and empowered people to devote themselves to good works.**

Christians grow and mature as they learn to devote themselves to serve. I want to offer three important reminders as

we begin today. **First, a Biblical teaching reminds us of God's plan.** God's plan for the Christian life is given in Titus 3:1, "to be ready for every good work". Grace at work in a Christian's life leads to deeper devotion in service, "The (Gospel) saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works." (.8) Leadership cultivates grace through the gospel for the people of God to learn devotion in serving, "And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful." (.14) **Reminder #1: Every Christian's personal growth and maturity depends upon serving God's mission to grow deeper devotion.**

Second, cultural patterns can create a BIG problem for us. We are far too enamored with "knowledge about" & "raising awareness", while abysmally absent in actually serving. You don't get points for knowledge or awareness if there is no dirt under your fingernails for serving. Paul exhorts Timothy, "Train yourself in godliness, for it holds value for this life and the life to come." (1 Tim 4:7b-8) **Reminder #2: Training in godliness requires the 'labor of mission' to grow, mold and shape a heart of devotion.**

Third, we must remember the impact of gospel sourced grace.

In our Titus study of the Church we've pursued the big idea, "godly living in a godless age." and learned...

1. The church must be led by qualified and competent leaders who teach and guard sound doctrine.
2. Sound doctrine centers discipleship through multi-generational relationships that deal with every area of life, exercising rebuke, encouragement and gospel reminders to align all of life to the truth of God's Word.
3. Discipleship, the relationally-networked training in which grace transformation by gospel application occurs, streams through mission to produce spiritual growth and maturity in every Christian.
4. Grace transforms in increasing measure into Christ's image as we increasingly devote ourselves to God's mission.

Grace that comes through the gospel trains and empowers us for godly living. True gospel conversion always produces a life distinguished by grace in Christ-like character, compassion and conduct. It is very difficult to overstate the value of serving to do good works with your life. It occupies all your life with a single focus. Devotion to do good works focuses all of life with a single purpose. When we focus on doing good that is "godly", devotion grows and doing evil or being divisive become increasingly difficult. **Reminder #3: Grace grows devotion through good works in gospel labors for godly living.**

TRANS With these lessons at the forefront of our minds, let us turn our attention today to learn to devote ourselves for 'godly living in a godless age'.

MPS: The Gospel grows grace-fueled devotion for godly living in a godless age.

OBJ: 4 PERSPECTIVES to train us to live godly lives in a godless age.

Perspective #1:

1. Godly living is a process of learning. "And let our people learn..."

When Paul says "let our people learn", he states that godly living is a process of learning. Titus 2 and 3 showed us that grace changes us. We are not who we were, even though we may not be all that we know we need to be or will be.

Christians mature in godly living as we engage a process to learn.

"Learn" describes a process of ongoing participation by the one who is learning. Successes and failures must be accepted as a regular part of training, while neither of them should be considered ultimate. We are quick to make final evaluations on individual occurrences. A momentary good should be celebrated for the evidence of grace it reveals and the encouragement it brings. The problem arises when we immortalize our successes to grow confidence in self. A momentary failure should never be overlooked, but neither should it be allowed to cast an ultimate shadow of condemnation over life. Satan uses our successes to bolster confidence in "me" and failures to destroy us. God uses our successes and failures for our good to redeem us. **Whether our successes and failures destroy or redeem us is determined by whether we trust self our Savior, Jesus.**

The process of “*learn*” demands a “right” context; a conducive environment that includes three “right elements” of right doctrine, right people and right conversations. This right context is the environment of discipleship we’ve described as the church. First, qualified leaders guard sound doctrine by preaching, teaching, counseling and training. Leaders understand the learning process and shepherd people to help them understand and apply right doctrine. Second, you pursue multi-generational “others” to get to know you so you will trust them when they rebuke, encourage and point you to Jesus. They don’t appear from nowhere. The right people are intentionally engaged in the church to help you in this way. Third, people in the process of “*learn*” are committed to right conversations that talk about real life and how the gospel empowers to walk in godly truth and wisdom. [The church forms a culture of discipleship for people to *learn* to live godly.](#)

Christian, remember that learning to live a godly life is a process of God’s grace changing you into Christ’s image.

Perspective #2:

2. Godly living grows devotion through serving. *devote themselves to good works*

TRANS Last week I mentioned that devoting oneself to good works is one priority for Christians. I repeat this direction today because Paul has given strong emphasis to it in Titus 3. But here a shift of focus is given. Verse eight gives emphasis to the “doing” aspect of serving. Here I want to highlight the value of serving to grow devotion in your heart and life. [The process of learning grows devotion to God through good deeds.](#)

Devote means “lead; manage; rule over”. Serving reveals what is ‘leading our lives’, what we ‘manage our lives for’, and what ‘rules over us’. God’s grace got us into this; remember it “*appeared*”, we changed and began to serve. Grace transforms us by exposing false idols, applying the gospel through repentance and rooting grace deeper in our lives to grow new devotions. The more and deeper that grace replaces false idols, worldly hopes, ungodly priorities, and faithless anxieties in our lives, the more we will devote ourselves to loving God by serving. [Learning to devote oneself to good works exposes false idols and plants gospel roots to grow grace-fueled devotion to serve and glorify God.](#)

APPL Many never serve long enough or significantly enough to learn devotion. Many have only served until it became inconvenient, painful or hard in some way, then bowed out. You’ve never served long enough or significantly enough to really find out what rules you, what manages you or what you are most devoted to. You’ve served enough to be inconvenienced and burdened, but stopped when we needed a schedule change or wanted a preferential shift. [When serving gets hard it simply means we’re getting to where it matters most in our life and grace can make its biggest “appearance”.](#)

Serving felt like death at one point to Paul.

For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many. 2 Cor 1:8-11

Difficulty that arises from serving God always identifies the end of self and the source of our trust, to help us root our faith more deeply in God’s grace. “*Learning to devote*” yourself to God’s mission picks a fight with competing devotions in your heart. The more we devote ourselves to God’s mission, the more our competing devotions will war against us. When we quit or walk away because serving gets hard, grace never gets planted any deeper than convenience allows, and devotion remains shallow in feelings, accomplishments, and clichés, but gets burned by any heat from life pressures. Instead of ‘bowing out’ you need to ‘press in’ to penetrate the ‘barrier of idolatry’ and plant the root of grace deeper for devotion to grow. I’m not telling you to simply “do more”. I’m telling you to dig deeper to find your true devotion and make sure the root of God’s grace runs the deepest in your heart. Sometimes we learn in serving that we are more devoted to our ‘doing’ than to being devoted to the One for whom we do our good deeds or we are more devoted to ‘doing for other goods’ than the One who is most worthy. [Struggles in serving and devotion are not a sign to stop doing good, but to press in to the gospel and align devotion from where it is to Jesus.](#)

Doing is easier than devotion, but it makes a terrible substitute. Let your serving grow and mature you. Let the gospel work in you while you work to serve by striving to know and make the gospel known. Consider your affections, attitudes and dispositions towards people, as well as your strengths and faults in serving. Where the fruit of the Spirit does not increase through serving, apply the gospel through repentance and faith to grow the fruit of the Spirit. [Serving takes on a greater purpose for your life when “doing” grows devotion.](#)

Perspective #3:

#3: Urgent needs deserve priority. *help cases of urgent need*

Ministry helps people by serving to meet needs. The person devoted to good works stands ready to help when others find themselves in need. You can always do some good by doing something good. “Margin” in our lives is necessary to be ready when urgent needs arise. Don’t just find something that you can do and only do that thing. Be prepared to help people that you find in need by addressing their need as best and in any way that you can.

ILLUS Urgency classified

Hurricane Katrina

Sometimes urgency arises from catastrophes, like Hurricane Katrina. Within a couple of weeks, LifePoint filled a racecar hauler tractor-trailer rig and sent it to New Orleans. We also filled a 32’ trailer with water and supplies, and almost lost three members and all the materials trying to get it there.

Poor and needy in our region

The poor are all around us, but good luck finding them. Ozark is an easy place to lose sight of poverty. People live in need with no real hope of any change. Our comforts from affluence and provisions must be used to fight against people who live in need. Yes, some are in need because life has been hard and some because they’ve been dumb. But they are still in need. And, the gospel doesn’t command us to judge the cause of their need, but to help them alleviate their need. We serve to stop immediate needs while we labor to correct patterns that create those needs. [Christians address poverty with the priority of urgency because people should not be without basic life necessities.](#)

Human Trafficking

LifePoint has engaged in significant ways over the last year and a half to address the growing trafficking crisis in our region. In some ways, this problem seemed unknown a couple of years ago. It makes you wonder, “**How an such a crisis arise so quickly?**” There are still people who deny it’s a problem. Whether its’ only just begun or recently exploded in occurrence is not the issue. The statistics that validate the crisis are staggering and created a prioritized urgency for us to figure out how we can serve to address it.

Perspective #4:

#4: Avoid unfruitfulness in your life. *...and not be unfruitful.*

God works to accomplish His mission by maturing His people in grace through service. We need to regularly assess and evaluate our lives to see if there’s any fruit. Every season is not the same and every season will not be a “fruit harvest” for you. Some seasons involve the tedious work of preparing the soil of our hearts. Other seasons we plant seeds of learning and understanding to strengthen and prepare us. There are even seasons where we tend the seeds and wait for growth. But in every season the work of cultivating continues in order to produce good fruit that of Christ-likeness. [Christians learn to devote themselves to good deeds to labor for and bear good fruit.](#)

Laziness in our Christian life is sin. But many are unfruitful in their lives simply because their too busy in life to focus on their ‘spiritual life’. [Busyness that causes unfruitfulness is as sinful as laziness.](#) Unfruitfulness is sinful no matter what the cause. We were designed and redeemed to bear spiritual fruit through service that glorifies God.

[The Gospel grows grace-fueled devotion for godly living in a godless age.](#)

CLOSE The goal for every Christian is to hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

What is keeping you from bearing good, strong, spiritual fruit in your life?