

## Rare Words for Rare Women

### Family Talk-Part 2

#### *Titus 2:3-4*

Last Sunday I had probably the most interesting and embarrassing interruption ever in the middle of my sermon . . . if you were here, you witnessed it.

As many of you may remember, I've mentioned before that my father – now 83 years old and still working as a missionary full time along with my mother – calls me every Sunday morning right at 7:00am to pray with me. It's a wonderful privilege and I look forward to his call.

This past Sunday he and my mother had traveled to Minnesota and he simply lost track of the time change and then – doing something he never did before – called me later than usual.

And I just so happened to forget to mute my cell phone, which I normally don't have with me on Sunday morning!

In case (Since) you missed that memorable event – I thought you might like to hear the audio clip of that very moment . . . last Sunday in the first service around 8:45 . . . here it is.

#### Play clip

By the way, I talked to my parents this past week about that late phone call and how funny it was for it to be my cell phone ringing this time – and from my parents! And my mother said, "Well, we just wanted to see if you were doing what you said you were doing on Sunday morning."

Yea . . . I was!

The bad news is that from now on I can't get on to anybody for their cell phone ringing . . . and I need as much help remembering as anybody . . . so let's start a new tradition – all together, reach for your phone and turn it off . . . and reach for your Bibles and open them up.

In our last study together we began exploring one of the most significant family talks recorded in the New Testament.

The Apostle Paul is encouraging Titus to gather the church families together and to effectively have a family talk with all the older men and older women and young women and young men and even the household servants.

And the reason is clear. Paul wants to make sure that the culture of the church is not dictated by the lifestyle of Crete, but that the Cretans are impacted by the lifestyle of the Christians.

And isn't that the desperate challenge of our generation as well?

Ringling in my ears is a comment made by George Gallup more than 25 years ago when he said, "Never before has the Christian church made so many inroads into the society, while at the same time making so little difference."

That was 25 years ago.

What Paul is doing in this family talk is not telling Christians how to fit into their culture, but how to radically create a new culture, with new objectives, and new desires and new lifestyles and new relationships and new distinctives.

This is one of the most politically incorrect passages in the New Testament – it flies in the face of everything culture says older men and older women and younger women and younger men should be living for . . . and striving for.

If you want to carve out the key verse from chapter 2, it's down in *verse 14* where Paul writes that Jesus Christ *gave himself for us* – for two reasons – (first) *to redeem us from every lawless deed and (secondly) to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good deeds.*

The church tends to stop with the first reason – we've been redeemed . . . great – let's put a period there. No, keep going – we've not only been redeemed, we've been assigned . . . to a totally different way of living.

Now in our last study, we noted first and foremost the challenge given to older men – *verse 2* – *to be temperate, dignified, sensible, healthy or sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.*

Now Paul moves on and begins to address another part of the family – in *verse 3* – older women.

Paul effectively says, "Titus, I want you to tell older women what to do too." Now it's one thing to tell an older man what to do, it's another thing to tell an older woman what to do.

To make matters even more challenging both Titus and Timothy are young pastors . . . and this would be an intimidating assignment to challenge the older men and the older women.

Titus is to go into these churches, have the audacity to determine who the elders will be in the church, and then without any breather tell the older people in the church how to act.

Paul told Timothy earlier, to treat younger men like brothers, young women like sisters in all purity; treat older men as fathers and older women as mothers. (*1 Timothy 5:2*)

There's great insight in that text. The church is a family and every person relates in similar fashion and respect to family members.

This coming Thursday, I'm preaching the funeral of Brinker Beck here at the church, a charter member of this church along with his wife Caroline – who passed away just a year ago. They moved here to Cary from New York – along with the rest of you – and started coming to Colonial while we were meeting in East Cary Middle School.

I can still see her coming down the aisle after one of their very first visits to Colonial, coming up to me and saying, "Do you mind if I ask you how old you are?" I said, "I'm 28 years old." She laughed and said, "I have a son who's 28 and I would never listen to him preach to me." I said, "Yes ma'am." She said, "But I'm going to listen to you preach God's word." Within a few months, I hired her as my first secretary and the very first staff addition and she served here for some 21 plus years . . . in different departments and roles as we grew and restructured and developed our staff needs . . . always available . . . always a blessing to me – her second son."

What a privilege.

Titus, no matter how old you are . . . deliver to them this message. *Verse 2* reveals the basic challenge that older men need to model what matters in life – their perseverance in faith and love needs to spill over into the lives of others. Older men need not be ashamed to act their age . . . they are to show the dignity of their station in life.

And now . . . *verse 3. Older women, likewise . . .*

That word, *likewise* does not mean that older women were to act like the older men – the word *likewise* points back to Titus being told to teach the older women too.

Teach the old men and likewise, *teach the old women* – don't leave them out of this family talk.

**So here's that same critical question we faced last time – who qualifies to be an older woman?**

Who classifies here as an old woman?

I'm not answering that

I was sent a story a couple of weeks ago, and I believe this woman qualifies to be an older woman.

Four brothers had become successful in their respective careers of medicine and industry and law.

One evening, they reunited and talked over dinner about the birthday gifts they had given their 95 year old mother who'd just moved to Florida.

The first said, "You know I had that big house built for Mother – I'm sure she's enjoying it immensely."

The second said, "And I completely outfitted a large theater room inside her new home – she probably loves that room."

The third said, "I had a brand new Mercedes delivered to her garage – can you imagine her surprise."

The fourth son said, "Well, you know how Mom loved reading the Bible more than anything . . . and

you know she really can't see very well anymore and that reading was almost impossible for her nowadays.

Well, I met this preacher who told me about a beautiful large, white feathered parrot he had trained to recite the entire Bible. It took seven pastors and more than 10 years to teach that parrot to quote the entire Bible, references and all. The parrot wasn't cheap either . . . I had to agree to contribute \$100,000 dollars to his church. But it was worth it. Just this week, Mom got him and now all she has to do is call out the chapter and verse, and the parrot immediately recites it."

The other brothers were really impressed with that amazing gift.

Eventually all four sons received thank you notes from their mother.

She wrote: "Dear Milton, the house you built is so huge that I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole house. Thank you anyway."

"Dear Michael, you gave me an expensive theater with Dolby sound and it can hold 50 people, but none of my close friends live nearby and since I've lost my eyesight I really don't watch much TV. I'll never use the room, but thank you for the gesture just the same."

"Dear Marvin, I am too old to travel and I have my groceries delivered, so I'll never use that Mercedes, but the thought was kind. Thanks."

"Dear Melvin, you were the only son to have the good sense to put some thought into your gift to me . . . let me tell you, that chicken was delicious. Thank you so much."

Now she qualifies to be an older woman.

Actually the context here reveals that Paul is focusing on married women who are actually younger than you might imagine. She's only old enough to have raised her children.

She's older, in that she's an empty nester, so to speak. She could be anywhere from her early 40's to early 60's.

Frankly, the older the better, because Paul is referring to women who've lived long enough, like older men, to know what matters.

She might very well be the widows that Paul referred to in 1 Timothy 5 who *assisted those in distress . . . showed hospitality to strangers . . . washed the saints feet . . . and devoted herself to every good work.*" (1 Timothy 5:3-10)

Older women in the church became known for their rescuing of babies left to die by their parents. In 1<sup>st</sup> century Rome, these women would go out at night and search the city for abandoned newborns. They weren't the only ones on the lookout . . . others would take these infants and raise the boys to be slaves or gladiators and raise the girls for prostitution.<sup>i</sup>

The church in any generation has been blessed by the effort and energy and passion and service of older women.

They've earned the right to turn around and teach the younger women who are right in the middle of raising their family.

They know better than anyone the challenges and the pitfalls.

### **But they earn that right only if these 4 distinctives that are apparent in her life.**

Two of them are *positive* and two of them are *negative*.

And the first distinctive basically covers all the rest. Paul writes in *verse 3. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in their behavior.*

#### **1. Let me put it this way: the first distinctive is that there is a sacredness about her.**

*Older women are to be reverent . . .*

I have to tell you that as I worked through the Greek translation of these phrases – I was struck by the fact that several of the words used by Paul for older women were extremely rare words. In fact, I knew that I needed to title this sermon, "Rare words for Rare Women."

And this is one of those words.

The word for *reverent* never occurs anywhere else in the New Testament.<sup>ii</sup>

The Greek and Roman world had their multitude of temples and gods.

Many of the temples were served by priestesses who were specially dressed, trained in their deportment, taught how to serve their god within temple and even how to advise visitors to the temple who had come to seek out this particular god. They acted the part as this god's representative.<sup>iii</sup>

This is exactly the word picture Paul is describing for older women. Their lives are sacred representatives of the Living God.

Notice, Paul writes, *they are reverent in their behavior* – another word so rare that the noun form isn't used anywhere else in the New Testament.

It refers to their demeanor. In other words, their demeanor – their behavior is appropriate to someone carrying out sacred duties.

One author asks the question, “What is Paul expecting mature women in the faith to project through their posture and personality, deportment and demeanor? Holiness!”<sup>iv</sup>

Her life is lived in such a way, the King James translates it, “*as becometh holiness.*”

They are old enough to know that life can't be caught or bottled. Life is more than fashion and features and clothing and status.

John Calvin the reformer wrote 400 years ago that the problem with older women in his church was that they were trying to hold on to their youth and dress like young women. He wrote, “they demean their own maturity and attempt to dress culturally fashionable or even flirtatiously. Though there is nothing wrong with a woman adorning herself with pretty clothing, but a line may be crossed.”<sup>v</sup>

In other words, these older women have figured out the lie of Madison Avenue. They happen to know by now that younger women are in the process of getting ripped off, one author put it.

They know the dead end despair of women who are all about high fashion on the outside, but are settling for bargain basement on the inside.<sup>vi</sup>

And the pressures on . . . our world has pressed young girls and young women into its mold; and the mold won't let them go.

We have a generation that is chasing after something that refuses to stand still.

Like older men who need to say with dignity, “Farewell to being a younger man”, we need older women who will say with the reverence of old age, “Farewell to being a younger woman.”

Paul is effectively saying that we need older women who've finally figured out that their greatest contribution to their world and to their church and to their family and to the gospel is not their physical attributes but their spiritual attributes.

They've lived long enough to discover that that *charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who feared the LORD, she shall be praised.* (*Proverbs 31:30*)

And by the way men, it would probably help our sisters out tremendously if we men honored them

and respected them, not because of the condition of their face; but because of the condition of their faith.

You with me?

Listen, we're on a runaway train here. In this country alone, Botox has reached annual sales of 1 billion dollars.

Paul says through Titus . . . we're looking for some rare women.

Who are they?

They are women about whom is a sacredness of spirit and life.

One author described them this way: the tenor of their lives display a consecrated holiness to God; they exceed the ethical and moral standards of surrounding society. The call upon [their] life comes not from their neighborhood or their nation, but from the nature of God.<sup>vii</sup>

I got an email several months ago from an older woman in our congregation – and I've edited her note to be able to read to you . . . she writes, As I've been reading Titus daily, I note that godly character must be lived out in godly conduct. I NEED this reminder. When I step out of my domain and think I can do it better, I become a counterfeit message and not a complimentary message. I'm praying that our study of Titus will help me become a more godly older woman for the Lord.

She gets it . . . this is the first distinctive . . . there is something sacred about her.

**With that, Paul adds the first of two negative distinctives that would disqualify a woman from mentoring younger women.**

Notice *verse 3 again, Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips.*

If I could put this distinctive into a positive frame of reference, there is not only a sacredness about her.

## **2. There is a sweetness about her.**

The opposite of which is described here as malicious gossip.

Simply put, she refuses to tear someone down and instead chooses to build others up.<sup>viii</sup>

She refuses to become a grape on the grapevine. And if she hears a story she refuses to keep the story going.

Literally, Paul is saying that she's not among the older women who are malicious gossips. And Paul doesn't pull any punches here – in fact, the word he uses can be literally translated, *she-devils.*<sup>ix</sup>

The masculine singular form of this word is always used in the New Testament of the devil himself.<sup>x</sup>

So Paul is saying, older women shouldn't talk like the devil. And how does the devil talk? Well, for one thing, he's always accusing the saints – he's always running down the believer.

He's always taking the worst interpretation of someone's actions. Like Satan himself when he went before God and said, "I've been watching pious old Job and I'm convinced that the only reason he worships you is because you treat him so well. In fact, if you took away your blessings from his life, Job will curse you to your face." (*Job 1 and 2*)

Satan is the accuser of the brethren (*Revelation 12:10*).

Nothing is more destructive of the harmony in a local church than gossip . . . men are as guilty as women, but women tend to talk more to each other than men do and for that reason, perhaps gossip is a particular besetting sin for women – especially for older women who've seen it all.

And they allow their words to divide and slander; they actually join in and promote the agenda and the very work and enterprise of the devil.

Satan doesn't even need to show up.

We need older women in the family who will build the body up and not tear the body down.

There's sacredness about them and a sweetness about them.

### 3. There is also a sobriety about her.

The third distinctive is equally negative – Paul writes that they should not *be malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine*.

In other words, they should be in control not only of what comes out of their mouth, but what goes into their mouths.

The word Paul uses here for enslaved means exactly that – in fact, it's a word used to describe literal slavery.

It means to be held and controlled against one's will. This habit which they hoped would give them a place to withdraw from the pressures of life has become a prison.<sup>xi</sup>

We could broaden alcoholism to any addiction that masters your life – any habit that puts a distance between yourself and relationships and ministry and godly, holy living.

It might even be something good, but something you've allowed to grow into excess. I remember reading of John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, that he stopped playing Cricket because he found that he loved it too much.

What have we allowed to get in the way of holy living? Good or bad?

Here is that rare woman who is not dependent on a substance to face the day, but is instead dependent upon the Spirit to face the day.

And by the way, this ought to be encouraging in a round-about way because Paul is telling this to older, more mature Christian women.

This lets you know that some old habits die hard. And some of them may take a lifetime of battling and you may never feel like you can let your guard down for one moment.

*Like the Apostle Paul, they've learned to say, all things are things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. 1 Corinthians 6:12*

The island of Crete was known, according to historians, for their wine. Alcoholism and inebriation were rampant. Like America today where annual sales of alcoholic drinks have reached 90 billion dollars.

And every year there are reported cases involving 500,000 alcoholics between the ages of 9 and 12.

For this rare Christian woman of Crete – there is a sacredness about her; there is a sweetness about her; there is a sobriety about her.

### 4. One more . . . there is a seriousness about her.

Notice what Paul writes in *verse 3, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and their children*.

You see, this is the ripple effect of a godly woman's life.

This kind of teaching is both formal and informal – by word and by example.<sup>xii</sup>

Paul isn't even really talking about teaching here in terms of a position – as a professor – this isn't about a position, this is about a pattern.

These older women have earned the right to speak – to mentor – to disciple – to pattern – what it

means to follow Christ in their particular world or sphere of influence.

For the last several years my wife has developed and worked with the mentoring process of our seminary wives – there’s even less available for these women who will become pastors and missionary wives before too long – there’s even less available for them.

I’ve watched our women’s program here at church develop tremendous outlets for discipling and mentoring and evangelizing women. I got an email just a week or so ago from our women’s ministries leader telling me of an event held recently where 7 women accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Master.

The curriculum for what happens next is rooted in Titus 2. There are 7 disciplines of a godly woman found in this text – that will be our focus next time.

But for now, Paul asks and answers the question, “Where does a younger woman go to find a model? Where are the people that they can look up to and say, “You’re the kind of woman I wanna be like.”

In our culture, ladies and gentlemen, the pedestals are virtually empty.

Then they come to faith in Jesus Christ and are saved – *redeemed from every lawless deed and now in the process of being purified and made zealous for every good deed. (Titus 2:14)*

And Paul expects a healthy church to have older women who have refused to put their lives on cruise control; older women who train younger women for a brand new way of living.

It’s interesting to notice the disconnect in Titus’ pastoral ministry. He is to teach and preach to all ages; but you’ll notice that while he directly teaches older men and older women and younger men and bondservants, he does not directly deal with younger women.

In fact, the word Paul uses here in verse 4 for older women *encouraging* younger women is best translated *training* younger women.

It’s a word related to the Greek word for *self-control*. In the original language, this verb *to train younger women*, literally means to bring a person back to his senses.<sup>xiii</sup>

This is up close and personal training.

Why? Because culture has so messed it up that these women who are saved have no idea what it means to live for somebody other than themselves.

According to a recent study, song lyrics over the past 30 years have become increasingly self-centered. Researchers used a computer program to count the percentage of words in songs which refer to first-person plural pronouns like “we, us, and our” compared to first-person singular pronouns such as “I, me and mine”. They found that over the past 30 years, “we and us” have declined dramatically and “I, me and mine” have increased dramatically. One reviewer summed up the study by writing rather bluntly, “We might as well face it – we are addicted to self-love.”

And the first thing older women train younger women who are married is that life isn’t about self-love, it is about self-sacrificing love. And in that kind of love, a person actually finds self-fulfillment and joy in your marriage and in your home.

It takes an older woman to have lived through that kind of realization as she’s grown in Christ to be able to turn around and share it . . . teach it . . . model it.

The fact that Paul tells older women that they needed to teach younger women to love their husbands and children is because both of them were impossibilities, right?

That young woman has been married just long to learn how stubborn and difficult and insensitive and hardheaded her husband can be.

This is not a personal illustration.

She’s come to the conclusion that she married the only one God made that way. It takes an older woman to come along and say, “They’re all that way.”

That’s how they come out of the box . . . God’s gotta work on him as He purifies him and makes him zealous for good deeds and by the way, He’s got the same work to do on you.

Who can qualify to be this kind of older woman? Not perfect women . . . but progressing women, who are also being purified by Christ and made zealous for good deeds.

I close with this testimony.

For nearly 20 years, Elisa Morgan served as the president of MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) International; a wonderful mentoring program for young mothers that Colonial has fully engaged in, by the way.

Elisa writes, “I’m probably the least likely person to head a mothering organization that impacts thousands of Mothers lives for the gospel. I grew up in a broken home. My parents were divorced when I

was 5. My older sister, younger brother and I were raised by my alcoholic mother. While my mother meant well, most of my memories are of my mothering her rather than her mothering me. Alcohol altered her love. I remember her weaving down the hall of our ranch home in Houston, Texas, glass of scotch in hand. I would wake her at 7 each morning to try to get her off to work. Sure, there were good times like Christmas and birthdays when she went all out and celebrated with us children. But even those days ended with the warped glow of alcohol. [Elisa writes], Ten years ago, when I was asked to consider leading MOPS International, a vital ministry that nurtures mothers, I went straight to my knees . . . how could God use me – who had never been mothered – to nurture other mothers?

The answer came . . . “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9). God would take my deficits and make them my offering to Him . . . and find His grace to be sufficient in my weakness.<sup>xiv</sup>

That’s the kind of woman God can and will use in this ripple effect of godly living. She has about her a sense of seriousness; a sense of sobriety; sweetness about her and an overall demeanor of sacredness about her . . .

Her lips and her life are a testimony – not to herself – in fact a godly older woman will see nothing in herself worthy of imitation; and so she will ultimately testify to the sufficient grace of God.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 5/20/2012 by Stephen Davey.

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