

A Model for Married Women

Family Talk-Part 3

Titus 2:4-5

According to an article in the U.S. News and World Report, the aging of the American population has become a factor in every corner of society. In the last 25 years, the 50-and-older group grew by nearly 20%, while those under the age of 50 grew by only 4%. Estimates are suggesting that the median age of our country – which was 33 years of age in 1989, will increase in another decade or so to reach the mid-40's as the average age. One journalist wrote that this shifting in age is to be considered one of the most significant culture-shaping forces that we have ever seen.¹

And that could be a good thing.

By the time you've reached 50, most adults have recognized that there has to be more to life than a career . . . a car . . . a closet full of designer clothing . . . and either a credit card with a high limit, or a pocket full of cash.

By the time you reach 50, you've discovered that relationships matter more than they used to. You find yourself at restaurants watching the little children and young families, wondering if they know the treasure they have at their table . . . thinking to yourself how fast time flew.

When you're young you want time to fly. I can't wait until I can drive. I believe in the Rapture, but I don't want it to happen until I graduate from college and land my first job. Time won't move fast enough!

When you get older, you don't want time to fly – you've realized it did. You don't want to move into tomorrow, you want to reclaim yesterday. You want time to slow down . . . that's why you love taking or looking at pictures more and more because those

moments are frozen in time and they can't completely slip away.

You see, by the time you've reach 50 and up, you now understand that your days are numbered.

If you're over 50, you're thinking, man, this is depressing.

Listen, as far as God is concerned, when you begin to understand that your days are numbered, you develop a greater level of wisdom regarding life.

The Psalmist wrote, ***Oh God, teach us to number our days so that we may present to You a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:12)***

Knowing your days are numbered is fertile soil from which wisdom and discernment grow and bear fruit.

And that kind of wisdom and perspective from the life of an older believer is actually desperately needed in the church today.

Like our culture around us, the older believers can become the most significant culture-shaping force within the body of Christ.

In fact, Paul told a young pastor named Titus to go around the Island of Crete and put the churches into good order: organized, well led, well fed congregations.

He was to find and ordain elders as shepherds to lead the church and then very next thing Titus was told to do was to challenge the older men and older women on how to live their lives so that they would make a difference in the lives of those who were younger.

The older men were to model maturity, dignity, faith and love.

The older women were to model holy living and a sweet and sacred demeanor.

And then older women are charged by Paul to serve as hands-on mentors of younger women.

In other words, older women were not to regard their lives as less valuable as they grew older, but more valuable.ⁱⁱ

They were to represent a culture-shaping force within the Body of Christ – and primarily to younger women.

Let's pick up our study where we left off at *Titus chapter 2 and verse 3* where Paul challenges the older women to train women to love their husbands and children.

Keep in mind that Paul is simply dealing with the norm. The normal process in our world is for men and women to marry and most married couples have children, or choose to adopt children.

We know from I Corinthians 7 that Paul had a very high view of singleness. He didn't consider singles less than complete in Christ. In fact, if because you are single and somehow incomplete in your relationship with God the Father because of that, then Jesus Christ was incomplete as well – He never married.

Paul will stress in other passages the special opportunities for Christian service by remaining single.ⁱⁱⁱ

In other words, take full advantage of whatever state you find yourself – single or married – whatever it is – go for it – maximize it for the glory of God!

Now what Paul does in his letters, most often, is deal with the pattern God established for marriage and family – which will impact the majority of people in the church, according to God's plan.

And God's plan for marriage and motherhood will continually find less and less appreciation as culture moves away from God's design and chooses its own depraved, self-centered desires.

Frankly, marriage as an institution, in our culture, is actually fading away.

Pastors and evangelists used to preach that the greatest danger to the institution of marriage was divorce. We've lived long enough to know that isn't true. The greater danger to the institution of marriage is that it virtually ceases to exist.

Couples are now simply living together.

According to a recently released Pew Research Analysis, taken from the most recent U.S. Census; barely half of all adults in the United States are now married.

To put that into perspective, in 1960, 72% of all adults were married. Today just 51% are married.

Why? For several reasons; one reason is the failure, or perhaps even the inability, of young men to grow out of their adolescent lifestyle and welcome the responsibilities of marriage.

In one of my earlier messages, I mentioned that the National Academy of Sciences has already redefined the length of time for male adolescence – that period of time between the onset of puberty and adulthood; they have officially redefined it now to last between the ages of twelve all the way to the age of thirty.

One secular journalist put it – we are simply surrounded with grownups who haven't left childhood.^{iv}

But a greater reason for the lack of a marital commitment is the moral digression in our culture.

Couples who are living together are rapidly outnumbering couples who are getting married.

But of course they are!

Why bother with a covenant and a commitment for life when you can have the physical and financial benefits of marriage and maybe even a child or two, without ever closing out all your other options.

In fact, one statistic from this same Pew Research Analysis revealed nearly 4 out of 10 Americans now say that marriage is becoming obsolete.

But listen, none of this is really a surprise, is it?

We are simply observing the natural effects of a culture which has resisted and now finally and successfully banished the Bible from the public square.

And when the Bible is exiled, what has also disappeared is any kind of stigma with lifestyles and choices the Bible called sinful.

It's just not a problem anymore to live with a guy or a girl you're not married to. I've actually had a couple in my office who without any embarrassment tell me that they saw nothing wrong with living together – it made sense financially – and there were benefits to getting to know one another before they married.

Who was I to say they were living in sin. In fact, before our meeting ended, the guy told me that they both felt closer to the Lord than ever.

Enjoy that close feeling while you can.

One secular author wrote that we are watching today a tectonic shift in sensibilities within our culture today.^v

In other words, what's right and wrong has all been turned upside down.

Welcome to the Island of Crete.

This was their lifestyle too . . . older men were immature and self-centered, refusing to grow up and act their age; older women were gossiping drunkards, younger men were all about themselves and younger women were abandoning their husbands and children for their freedom.

Welcome to the 21st century.

Like Titus and these churches on the island of Crete, we are not living in a post-Christian world as much as we are living in a pre-Christian world.

They don't know which God is the living God; they don't regard the Bible any more sacred than the Koran or the Baghavad Gita or the Book of Mormon; they consider Jesus just another prophet in line with other prophets.

Do you know what this means?

It means that we are living at the perfect time.

We are living in a phenomenal age where we can display the gospel of Jesus Christ and the kinds of relationships within a family at home and in the church that mankind has abandoned, but still desperately wants.

The light can really shine now.

Paul talked about the depravity of the Cretan culture, but then provided his divinely inspired solution.

Verse 4 informs us that a big part of God's solution for transforming lives was older women encouraging the young women.

By the way, that word translated – **to encourage** – never appears anywhere else in the New Testament. It literally means to bring them to their senses – to train their senses.

In other words, show them true wisdom – you could translate it, “wise them up.”^{vi}

Their culture has turned everything upside down . . . now turn everything right-side up.

Now what Paul is doing here is providing the curriculum for mentoring young wives and mothers.

And there are 7 subjects in this curriculum. The first six are given as natural pairs.

The first two subjects are for the older women to **train the younger women to love their husbands and children.**

These are related to their relationships within the family.

The second pair in **verse 5, to be sensible and pure**, has to do with their reputation in the world;

And the third pair refers to their role in the home; they are to be workers at home and kind.

The final phrase in **verse 5, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored**, is a phrase which includes a mindset and a motivation.

Now for the first pair:

1. The Model for the Wife's Relationships in the Family

Paul writes, in **verse 4, so that they (the older women) may encourage – literally train – the young women to love their husbands and to love their children.**

The word for love here is from *philos* – which means to show affection or even friendship. It's the only time the word shows up in the New Testament.

And it strikes you as sort of odd, doesn't it?

How can you command emotion? How can you command affection?

What Paul is implying here is that love can be learned. In fact, you can so think and live that emotions are eventually corralled and governed by right thinking and not the other way around.

God tells us to do that often, doesn't He?

- He tells us to rejoice evermore (**1 Thessalonians 5:16**)
- He commands that we respond with joyful resolve in the midst of trials (**James 1:2**)
- He commands us to give thanks about everything (**1 Thessalonians 5:18**) for this is the will of God.

These are all commands that involve emotions which we might not have at the moment. But we obey His commands, and our biblical actions end up producing biblical emotions.

We're living in a fallen culture with a fallen nature that tells us our actions should be the result of our emotions – that our emotions are the engine that pulls along our actions.

God reverses all of that. He says, through Paul, submit to Him your mind – and act according to His commands – and your emotions will eventually follow.

And that's exactly how you're raising your children, by the way.

They feel like having candy for breakfast . . . I don't think so.

There was a time when my mother told me to eat my vegetables. I didn't want to . . . I didn't feel like I needed them . . . and I didn't like them either.

But I didn't get a vote. She knew what I needed, whether I felt like it or not. And it took most of my life before my feelings changed about them.

I can still remember one evening when Marsha was at an activity – I volunteered to fix dinner for our young children. How hard could that be? She made it easy for me by setting out a box of Tuna Helper – just boil water, pour in the box, stir, and – dinner!

I boiled the water, opened the box and as I poured it in, I saw all those little green peas pour out too . . . really hard peas and all shriveled up . . . they probably could have been shot from a BB gun.

I thought, man, I wish Betty Crocker hadn't put those peas in there . . . I don't wanna eat 'em . . . but the kids will be watching.

But seconds later, those peas just floated up to the surface in that boiling water and I was able to scoop them out – that was an act of God's providence.

But now . . . and it's about time . . . I happen to *feel* differently about vegetables, and salad, and fiber and fruit.

I see value in that – and now I act differently, no matter how I feel.

You see, the command of Paul through Titus is for women to act in such a way that ultimately produces feeling a certain way. But acting in obedience comes first.

Let me paraphrase this verse – Paul writes, Younger wives and mothers, allow yourselves to be trained to love by acting toward your husband and children with the affections of love.

By the way, and especially for the Jewish believers, and most of the rest of their culture, you need to understand that their traditions of marriage and parenting would make this command all the more profound – if not difficult.

In America, we have the little children's rhyme that goes:

Johnny and Susan sittin' in a tree – what?
K – I – S – S – I – N – G

First comes love,
Then comes marriage,
Then comes baby in a baby carriage.

Did you notice that? First comes love, then comes marriage.

For many of these people reading this letter in the first century, it was just the opposite - first comes marriage, then comes love.

And that's because marriages were most often arranged and the couple was betrothed to each other long before they met. Many times they didn't even meet each other until just before the wedding.

I've met several couples from other nations which still practice arranged marriages. One of our deacons and his wife, originally from India, met just before their marriage.

I met one couple from Africa who was introduced to each other on the day before their wedding – a marriage arranged by their Christian parents.

First comes marriage, then comes learning how to love each other.

One author wrote that bearing children in the first century of Crete – and around the world to this day – was the result of “dutiful performance” . . . in other words, children were considered the duty of a wife to bear and raise on her own, with little help from her husband. She could easily resent him and transfer it to them.^{vii}

Instead, these young wives and mothers are saved by faith in Christ and they are introduced to a new family called the church; a fellowship of redeemed sinners.

And they hear about new relationships and new priorities. The Christian home is something totally new to them. And these women are going to need to be trained to a new way of thinking.

And Paul wasn't telling them, “Listen, here's how you can escape from all of that . . . he was saying, “Here's how you go back into all of that . . . and make a difference for the gospel and the glory of God.”

They would have to be trained to think entirely differently; just as men and women need to be trained in this generation.

ABC News carried the story of a law firm that created a billboard in the Chicago area targeting the young, wealthy Gold Coast clientele. The billboard read, “Life's short – Get a divorce.” And on either

side of the words were darkened photographs of a scantily clad man and a woman.

Within a week, the city took down the ad citing technical problems. The truth was, enough people complained.

The legal firm defended it by saying, and I quote, “We find the advertisement refreshingly honest and insightful. It’s true, people are unhappy, there are plenty of options out there – get a divorce and get on with your life.”^{viii}

Again, if the primary purpose of marriage is self-fulfillment, then the ad makes perfect sense and it can be praised as, you know, really perceptive. I mean, if marriage or motherhood is slowing down your party, get rid of them.

Paul is cutting across that cultural mindset – this is a new set of priorities – a new kind of discipline – a new set of commands as well as a new set of privileges.^{ix}

And even though these young women were Christians now, they would discover that Christianity wasn’t some kind of miracle drug against marital and parental challenges.

Marriage was still the union of two fallen sinners and any children that were born to them or adopted by them, would soon be found out to be fallen sinners too.

And to make matters even more challenging, the present tense of this verb *to love* means that this will be the daily decision and the daily challenge of these young wives and mothers.

Listen, I know I’m preaching to the choir here, but mothers have the toughest job in the world, right? The phrase “a working mother” is redundant!

You are underpaid, undervalued, overworked and often simply taken for granted. And all the women said, “Amen.”

When your children are not feeling well or they’re hurt or when they are sick to their stomach and have to throw up, they never call for Dad – they call for Mom. And all the men said, “Amen.”

Mother’s don’t get much of a break.

I read just this past week about a Mom who wasn’t feeling well. Her 15 year old son came home from school and found her upstairs lying on the bed. He was suddenly seized with genuine concern. He said, “Mom, are you sick or something?” His mother responded somewhat weakly, “As a matter of fact, I’m not feeling too well.” “Aw, I’m sorry about that Mom.” Then after a long pause he said, “Look Mom, don’t worry at all about dinner . . . I’m

pretty big now and I’m strong and I’ll be able to carry you downstairs to the stove.”

Here’s the reality of Paul’s challenge – this was a call to these young mothers and wives that was nothing less than a call to women to abandon their cultural training that led them into self-love and self-promotion and self-centeredness into a love characterized by self-sacrifice.

While Paul elaborates on how the husband is to love his wife – in Ephesians – here in Titus he elaborates on how the wife is to love her husband and children.

And here’s the startling thing that runs counter culture – one author summarized it by writing, “Mature, godly love is not an emotion that wells up; it is a discipline that is worked up.”^x

And out.

Older women – first of all, train young wives and mothers as it relates to their relationships in their family.

Secondly, provide a model, and mentor them as it relates to their reputation in the world.

2. The Model for the Wife’s Reputation in their World

The second pair appears in *verse 5 – these younger mothers and wives are to cultivate – to be trained to be – sensible and pure.*

By the way, just as the qualifications of an elder in Titus chapter 1 provide an excellent standard of living for every man, whether they serve as an elder or not, these attributes here are for all women, not just those who are married or have children.

In fact, the word translated *sensible* is the same word Titus uses to challenge older men, younger men, and the entire church family to exemplify.

It has to do with balanced thinking – it’s a word that refers to right thinking.

These women are challenged to think biblically – and then act.

Paul also adds that they should *be pure*.

The word *pure* translates the idea of chaste or modest. It originally referred to ritual cleanness, but over time it shifted to the moral realm.^{xi}

She is effectively commanded not to attract attention to her body – to be discreet and modest; which implies that marriage doesn’t exempt women from either being attracted to other men, or attracting other men to themselves.

A wedding ring isn't a free pass and, well, it's all their fault out there if they look my way.

Part of a godly woman's curriculum is being taught that she's not only a part of a nuclear family, but a larger family and it is to her glory to be chaste and discreet – to develop the reputation of being pure.

You see, Paul knew that these young women wouldn't have a clue, having come in from the culture of Crete which flaunted sexual expression and freedom – where prostitution was legal and everything else.

They would come into the church and need instruction from the older women in this very practical regard.

Many of these younger women wouldn't have had believing, modest mothers to model pure and modest living.

This is why Paul openly challenged the women in his letter to Timothy as to the appearance of women when he wrote, ***I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly (1 Timothy 2:9).***

Let me make the same appeal to you, my sisters in Christ, on behalf of all of your brothers in Christ.

You would probably be surprised to know how many times I have had men in the church lament to me – the last guy only recently – telling me, “If only our women knew how difficult it was at times to come in here and try to focus on God while at the same time ending up battling my flesh over someone nearby who showed up looking like they did . . . the entire service became a tug of war and I have left church more defeated than when I came in.”

By the way, fathers and husbands . . . you would do your brothers in Christ a great service if you offered your wives and your daughters your personal opinion; which means you're going to have to take the blinders off.

Wake up . . . wake up to the way your daughters are dressing. Think through the impact of the way your wife is dressing – especially when you're heading out the door to a public worship service.

Provide some insight if needed that says, “Honey, you really look beautiful in that, but if you go to the church wearing that, the guys around you are going to have a hard time singing Holy, Holy, Holy.”

Of all places, go the extra mile to be discreet and chaste and pure, in the presence of your brothers in Christ.

This was a new message on the island of Crete, too. For women on the island and women throughout every generation, getting attention is the name of the game.

So Paul is basically saying, “Listen, if you want the right kind of attention – if you want to make a mark for Christ – if you wanna be known for the right thing, make sure it has to do, not so much with how you look, but with how you live.

Paul also implies in this curriculum, a wonderful principle for these younger women who were saved by Christ and came into the church.

You see, they came into the church with a past history that was anything but pure.

They're coming in fighting their own battles and many of them were probably wondering just how deeply did the blood of Christ cleanse them?

The island wasn't that big . . . many of them had been perfect little Cretans.

Paul tells the older women – teach these younger women to be pure.

You know what that means? Oh this is glorious – Paul is effectively saying to these younger women, “You may not have had a reputation for being pure, but you can now.”

The word, “purity” might never have been associated with your lifestyle, but that can change. That's the gospel of grace.

No matter what your past, the word “pure” can become your new reputation.

Here's the new principle of holy living . . . older women will provide the pattern for holy living . . . the Holy Spirit will provide the power for holy living.

Here's the amazing news to these young women – they may never have lived a pure life, but they could start living it now.

So, older women and younger women – here's a portion of your curriculum –

- You came into the church knowing about fashion, you're going to learn about conviction;
- You came into the church having lived for yourself, you're going to be given instruction on how to live for everyone but yourself;
- You came into the church living for the approval and pleasure of man, you're going to begin growing with a deeper longing to live for the approval and pleasure of God.

- You're going to learn how purity should affect everything about you, from the inside and even on the outside;
- You're going to be challenged to be sensible – to govern your actions not by your emotions but by your convictions;
- You're going to begin learning how to serve your children and your husband with the affections of self-sacrificing love.

Older women are to invite the younger wives and mothers to watch and learn . . . this is life as God intended it for you – it will return you to your senses – it will take you back to where you really belong and the kind of commitments and priorities that ultimately allow you to lean on the strength of the Holy Spirit and to live for the glory of God.

This is how to love . . . this is how to live.

Lord prepare me, to be a sanctuary
 Pure and holy, tried and true
 And with thanksgiving, I'll be a living
 Sanctuary for you.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 5/27/2012 by Stephen Davey.

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 - ii Life Application Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Timothy/Titus (Tyndale, 1993), p. 260
 - iii David Campbell, Opening Up Titus (Day One Publications, 2007), p. 58
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 - xi Kitchen, p. 520