

A Pattern for Young Men

Family Talk-Part 5

Titus 2:6-8

The Apostle Paul has assigned Pastor Titus to have nothing less than a family talk with just about every age group in the church body.

So far, as we've already seen together, Paul hasn't pulled any punches. His words have been both convicting and encouraging at the same time. He's skinned our hides, so to speak, while at the same time provided fresh vision and hope for our hearts.

He's raised our level of responsibility as well as our level of understanding.

Paul has also elevated and distinguished and applauded the roles of older men, older women along with young wives and mothers.

And now, the Spirit of God, through the Apostle Paul, focuses the lens of his microscope on the lives of young men.

As we've already noted together, this age group is virtually hanging in the balance. Young men, between the ages of 18 and 34 have been put on spiritual, emotional and even physical life support – and many of them may never be able to breathe on their own.

In fact, one of the most endangered species within the ministry of the church is a vitally engaged, responsibly active, spiritually maturing young man.

More than ever, the distractions of our digressing culture are claiming the attention of this core member of the family.

One article I read recently recorded recent statistics that single young men are wandering in a prolonged phase of adolescence. The

author writes, and I quote, "Once upon a time, video games were for young boys and girls. But those boys have grown up to become child-man gamers, turning a small niche industry into a \$12 billion dollar powerhouse.

Men between the ages of 18 and 34 are now the biggest gamers of all; according to Nielsen Media, almost half of young men in that category are playing on average, 2 hours and 43 minutes a day – which is 13 minutes longer than 12-17-year-olds who evidently have chores they have to finish.

The author went on to analyze these trends among 18-34 year olds, and then actually offered a hopeful challenge – especially for those who know and follow Jesus Christ.

The author summarizes by writing, "With no one to challenge young men to deeper connections, they swim across life's surfaces [without ever diving deeper]. Young men need a culture that can help them define worthy aspirations. Because, you see, adults don't emerge . . . they are made.¹

Long before the 21st century arrived with all its advancements and all its games and all its licenses and all of its corruptions and digressions, the Apostle Paul actually agreed with that author's summary.

Adults don't just happen . . . they are fashioned. Spiritual maturity isn't guaranteed . . . it must be modeled.

Which is why Paul begins his family talk to young men, in *Titus chapter 2*, by giving Titus a loaded command.

He begins in *verse 6* by telling Titus to **urge the young men to be sensible in all things.**

Urge them. This is the same word Paul used in *Romans 12:1* where he wrote, **“I urge you to present your bodies a living sacrifice to God.”**

This verb, to **urge** or plead, is from *parakaleō* (παράκαλεω) which means *to call alongside – to call beside.*

It’s a word used in the New Testament for preaching and it’s also used for the ministry of the Holy Spirit (*John 14:16*) and the ministry of Jesus Christ (*1 John 2:1*).

What Paul is commanding Titus to do is to **come alongside** young men in his preaching and in his personal pleading to urge young men to live a lifestyle he’s about to describe.

And it happens to be a lifestyle that flies in the face of everything they once knew on the island of Crete.

By the way, the Apostle Paul uses the present tense for this ministry of urging, indicating that this exhorting – this urging – this pleading – is ongoing. This is not a weekend seminar for young men.ⁱⁱ

That’s because Paul understands that one of the greatest dangers for Christian young men – and every other Christian, for that matter – was not a sudden moral blowout that everybody notices – but a slow leak that no one seems to notice.ⁱⁱⁱ

The enemy isn’t going to try to get young believers to deny God in some moment of time . . . he’s going to try and get them to forget about God over time.

So Titus . . . this is your calling – give it everything you’ve got as you plead with young men to follow a radically different pattern for living.

A pattern which Paul now begins to describe.

1. A pattern for the way they act

Paul begins with a pattern for the way young men are to act.

Notice again *verse 6*. **Likewise, urge the young men to be sensible in all things;** I also believe it should be translated in that manner.^{iv}

You could render it, **“In every aspect of life, urge the young men to be sensible.”**

And there’s that word again - sensible.

Elders of the church were to be sensible (1:8)

Older men were to be sensible (2:2)

Young women were commanded to be sensible (2:5)

And eventually Paul will get around to commanding the entire church family to live sensibly in chapter 2 and verse 12.

A synonym for **sensible** is “self-control”.

So, in all things, exercise self-control.

One author defined self-control – or sensibility – rather perceptively. He wrote, “Self-control is the ability to see a godly goal and choose that goal over and against competing desires.”^v

And this would be particularly challenging to young men who can be impulsive and passionate and ambitious.^{vi}

Self-control is the ability to see a godly goal and choose to pursue that goal even when other desires want to get in the way.

How appropriate is that – especially for young men – when their company or their campus offers temptation with a compelling voice; where they often have to study or work away from home and from the influences of their past heritage; where they haven’t yet taken on the responsibilities of a home or a family [to depend on their energy.]^{vii}

He doesn’t have obligations yet that will anchor his emotions; he has time and money for his own needs; he has a trainload of confidence with only a wagonload of experience.

Is it any wonder that Satan and the world system spends so much time and energy snagging and enslaving and shipwrecking the young man?

I mean, the world around you is saying, “You’ve reached the legal age – you’re on your own – you have now arrived.”

Well, that depends on where you intended to arrive.

Paul says, if you want to arrive at a godly place, if you want life to matter, if you want to follow a pattern toward making a genuine contribution for the gospel, then let self-control steer the ship of your emotions and desires and life.

And listen, let's admit it . . . self-control isn't exactly the most glamorous of virtues . . . but when a young man of passion and energy and vision and eagerness is matched and managed by self-control, something really great will come from that life.^{viii}

I love the way one author, Chuck Swindoll, paraphrased these verses to young men to read, "Titus, help younger men learn how to apply the brakes to life. Help them understand how to bridle their tongues and control their tempers. Help them know how to curb their ambition and to purge themselves of greed. Show them how to master their sexual impulses and how to follow their minds instead of their glands. Teach them to be responsible stewards of money rather than squanderers. Show them the rewards of unselfish leadership and the folly of self-centered pursuits."^{ix}

Self-control – this is the pattern for how you are to act.

Paul goes on to add a personal challenge to Titus and through Titus, a young man himself, Paul delivers more challenges to young men in general.

Notice in *verse 7. Show yourself to be an example of good deeds.*

Would you underline those first two words – at least in your mind? If you are going to be any help to young men – or to any younger believer in Christ, for that matter – you have to show them.

There is no such thing as armchair Christianity.

Become an example . . . live it out. A generation of younger believers is watching.

In fact, knowing the Bible without living the Bible will produce a generation who really don't even want to *know* the Bible, much less live the Bible.^x

Paul wasn't telling Titus to call in the plays from his lazy-boy. He was commanding Titus

to get into the game and play out the pattern of godly service in living color.

Titus – show them . . . don't just urge them . . . don't just plead with them . . . demonstrate what life is like when you stop playing games and start doing, Paul writes here, good deeds.

Good deeds, by the way, happen to be a theme in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus – both young pastors.

- Women were to adorn themselves in good works (1 Timothy 2:10)
- Widows were to have a reputation for good works (1 Timothy 5:10)
- Wealthy people were to be rich in good deeds (1 Timothy 6:18)
- Christians who lived lives of daily confession would be useful to the Master and prepared for every good work (2 Timothy 2:21)
- We're told that the Bible equips the believer for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17)

And then in the letter to Titus:

- Young men are told to be involved in good deeds (Titus 2:7)
- The church at large is to be zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:14)
- Christians should be alert and ready to perform good deeds (Titus 3:1)
- Christians should be careful to engage in good deeds (Titus 3:8) and Christians should be willing to learn how to perform good deeds (Titus 3:14).

Now don't misunderstand this emphasis. Paul is not defining how you become a Christian; he's describing how you live like a Christian.

In fact, in this letter to Titus, Paul will make it crystal clear that *we have not been saved on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy . . .*

we have been justified by His grace and made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5-7)

Our salvation is not earned by good works. None of us could do enough good deeds to compensate for our own sins anyway, and if we could, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on behalf of the guilt of our sin would then have been unnecessary.

Paul isn't telling Titus to urge unbelieving young men to live this way so they can *be* redeemed, he's telling those who've been redeemed to show the world they *have* been.

"Let's show the world there's another way to live!"

And it isn't about yourself – it's about doing good things – good deeds – for other people.

By the way, our fellowship has ample opportunities for organized deeds of goodness – whether it's volunteering with a Rescue mission, Converting Hearts ministries, working with college students who take crafts and games to a local mobile home park, serving on a crisis response team which has only recently been organized, serving with carpenters for Christ on one of their mission trips, serving in a variety of community service projects organized by our Outreach Ministry – And then INTERNATIONALLY – in fact, early yesterday morning two teams of adults and young people headed overseas – one team headed to China and another team to Africa – dedicating their own time, energy and offer their hands and their hearts and the gospel accompanied by good deeds to people so that they could demonstrate the grace of God.

This happens to be the pattern for how young men are to act.

2. A pattern for the way they think

Paul now moves on to provide a pattern for how young men are to **think**.

Notice the end of *verse 7 – Titus – you as an example and all the young men likewise are to have purity in doctrine.*

Pure doctrine literally means uncorrupted doctrine.

Young men are more likely to be carried away by doctrinal novelty than older men who've arrived at their conclusions after years of study in the word. What Paul is effectively telling all young men to get a head start on acquiring a comprehensive understanding of sound doctrine.^{xi}

Listen, this isn't answering questions on a test, this is a reference to developing a Christian mind.

You see, Paul knew that it was impossible to live like a Christian unless you think like a Christian.

Christian thinking is determined by and governed by sound doctrinal truths revealed in the Bible.

And our generation of all generations in modern history is in the process of abandoning doctrinal instruction, doctrinal preaching and teaching.

Everything today has to be relevant and creative and funny and quick.

And so our generation is now suffering from spiritual anorexia – a loss of appetite for doctrinal substance.^{xii}

And it's nothing less than the loss of appetite for the truth of God's word.

Listen to the thinking process of the Psalmist who wrote,

*Oh, how I love your law!
Your commands make me wiser than my
enemies, For they are ever with me.
I have more insight than all my teachers,
For I meditate on your statutes.
I have more understanding than my elders,
For I obey your precepts (Psalm 119:97-100)*

*My soul weeps because of grief;
Strengthen me according to Your word;
Remove the false way from me,
And graciously grant me Your law.
I cling to Your testimonies;
O Lord, do not put me to shame!
I shall run the way of your commandments,
For You will enlarge my heart.
Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall observe it to the end.
Give me understanding,*

*That may observe Your law and keep it with all
my heart.*

*Make me walk in the path of Your
commandments,*

For I delight in it.

I shall not forget Your word.

(Psalm 119:28-35 & 16)

Simply put, you cannot act like this unless you think like this and you will never think like this unless your mind and heart are saturated with biblical truth.

Titus, urge the young men to become devoted to sound doctrine. Tell them that they cannot have the wisdom of God without being in the word of God – why? –

Because you cannot be profoundly influenced by that which you do not know.^{xiii}

And let me add, men – read not only the Bible, but books that illustrate and dramatize and illuminate the Bible – good devotional works . . . books that inspire Christian leadership and thinking and living.

Did you know that in the Christian community that 3 out of 4 books purchased from Christian bookstores are purchased by women?^{xiv}

The truth is, our generation of men has stopped reading.

The average man buys a book and never gets past the 3rd chapter.

Think about it – you’ve decided to read through the Bible – which is why all of us have read the Book of Genesis more than any other Book in the Bible. Eventually you get to Leviticus and then into the Book of Numbers.

Frankly, it might be better advice to encourage our young men to instead of reading through the Bible in a year, to take one book of the Bible and study it thoroughly for a year. Which is what we happen to do together as a congregation. Sometimes we take a wee bit longer.

We will never become knowledgeable in sound doctrine unless we study it and read about it and become acquainted with it.

I would recommend going and buying:

- My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers. It’s a devotional with doctrinal teeth to it. Then go out and buy the biography of Oswald Chambers.
- Read Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret – it has influenced a tremendous number of Christians.
- Read A. W. Tozer’s The Knowledge of the Holy and The Pursuit of God.
- Pick up a copy of Charles Ryrie’s Basic Theology and read a chapter a week.
- Keep a Biography of some Christian from the past going – I’m making my way slowly through Warren Wiersbe’s classic compendium entitled, “50 People Every Christian Should Know” – which is one chapter summarizing the lives of great testimonies from the past.
- Purchase John MacArthur’s Right Thinking In a World Gone Wrong.
- Biographies, doctrinal reading, Biblical study and meditation and memorization, practical Christian reading, devotionals – all of them have a way of creating a biblical filter through which you can rinse your thoughts and cleanse your perspectives and develop wise decisions.

And you have to stay at it.

One author wrote, “The mind is like a garden. If a garden is not carefully looked after and cultivated, it quickly becomes a wilderness. So it is with the Christian mind. Leave it alone and it will swiftly become worldly in its thinking.”^{xv}

The mind apart from guidelines of true doctrine can justify anything – even inside the church:

- How can something that has brought me such enjoyment be wrong?
- God’s will is for me to be happy and doing what I’m doing has never made me happier;
- We need to accept everyone in the church, no matter what they’re doing;
- The purpose of the church is to meet my needs;

- My marriage was never God’s will in the first place;
- The problem with Christians is that they’re so judgmental – I’m not sinning any more than any other person.

Those are just a few perspectives and thoughts unfiltered by doctrinal truth.

The problem with the church is not that we’re teaching too much . . . we are teaching too little.

If we want young men to think correctly and to grow in Christ, then they must learn of Christ and become acquainted with the doctrines of Christ and understand the commands of Christ.

Now notice, Paul adds at the end of *verse 7* that ***young men are to be dignified***.

We’ve already encountered this word in our discussion on older men – they also were commanded to be dignified.

The word refers to a bearing of gravity, sanctity, dignity.^{xvi}

This word speaks of a willingness to be viewed as someone who is growing older and growing up.

It describes someone who is worthy of respect.

Now this doesn’t mean the Christian young man is a killjoy – a cold washrag whenever he shows up.

It doesn’t mean he can’t have fun and laugh. But it does determine what he considers fun and what he laughs at.

The dignity that Titus is to model for young men and for young men to model to their world is this balance of seriousness that earns you the right to be heard.

Your world isn’t going to take your Christianity seriously if you don’t . . . so what are they seeing and hearing from you?

Which is exactly what Paul has in mind as he moves to this third dimension of patterning godliness.

Paul not only delivers a pattern for the way young men act; and the way young men think, but thirdly, Paul now talks about the way young men speak.

3. A pattern for the way they speak

Paul adds in *verse 8*, ***sound in speech which is beyond reproach***.

Sound in speech – from the words hygiene – clean, healthy – and logos – for word.

You are known for clean words.

And for the Greeks, the term logos could have a number of connotations. Jesus Christ is called the Logos – the word from God.

In Ephesians 4, Paul uses the word to refer to daily conversation. And here in this context the issue is also one of normal conversation. This is day-to-day speaking with others.^{xvii}

This is a reference to a young man’s vocabulary.

You see, the pattern for a godly young man is not just about how he acts . . . and how he thinks . . . but even down to the nitty-gritty of how he talks.

And we who are older men, what kind of example are we setting for them?

Do we pray with the Psalmist, ***“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and keep the door of my lips.” (Psalm 141:3)***

Our world out there says with the unbelievers quoted in *Psalm 12 verse 4*, ***“Our lips are our own . . . who is lord over us?”***

In other words, “Who’s going tell me how to talk? I can say whatever I want to say – besides haven’t you heard about the first amendment?”

Freedom of speech?

The maturing Christian understands that our freedom of speech is not a license . . . we are not free to say things that discredit the gospel and hurt the reputation of Christ and His church.

Which is the direct motive of clean speech – notice the last phrase of *verse 8* – ***so that your opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us***.

Did you notice the surprising pronoun at the end of *verse 8*? You’d think Paul would have written, “so that the opponent will be put to shame having nothing bad to say about *you*.”

That’s not what he says . . .

You develop a godly reputation and guess what – the church ends up with a godly reputation.

And it works the other way around. Whatever you are like in your world – your world thinks that’s what we’re all like.

Our reputation as a body of believers is tied directly to each of our individual reputations out there.

If you are not acting like a Christian and not thinking like a Christian and not talking like a Christian, you have my permission to never tell anybody where you go to church.

Please, keep it a secret.

Don’t tell them you come here. Tell them you go to Providence. Don’t tell my friend David Horner I said that.

Here’s the exciting challenge. God’s method has always been to take a clean person and drop him into a corrupt culture where they reveal through their everyday conversation which is clean; through their thinking process which is governed by biblical truth; through the way they act in a sensible and dignified manner – through all of that, this clean person in a corrupt culture is able to demonstrate what it means to follow the truth and living God and to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

And you live with a growing awareness – and Paul wants the young men to grab it by the collar now – *it isn’t just about you – it’s about us!*

And ultimately, it’s about the character and nature and reputation and glory and name and honor of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

I love the way the Apostle Peter put it in his first letter where he wrote, ***“Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles – the unbelievers – so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God . . .”*** (1 Peter 2:12)

We ultimately show our world by our talking and thinking and acting that there’s something more to live for.

Something far better.

A few months ago I met a former professional football player . . . used to play for the Chicago Bears. He’s big. Six feet and about 7-8 inches tall.

After some initial conversation I invited him to church – just to see what his reaction would be. He immediately laughed and told me he preaches every weekend throughout the state of North Carolina on a circuit that includes prisons and juvenile detention centers. He shares his testimony and preaches the gospel.

So I asked him to share with me his testimony . . . he told me, “Well, I made it to the top of my professional career. I was living the dream. I was signed early in the NFL draft and played several years of winning seasons.”

He said, “The pinnacle of my career was against the Dallas Cowboys. During that game I rushed Troy Aikman, the Cowboys quarterback, and caused him to fumble the ball . . . I picked up the fumble and ran for a touchdown.” He said, “I remember spiking that football in the end zone – right on the Dallas Cowboy’s star – it had been my dream since I was a young boy to do that .” He said, “But in my hotel room that night – after the euphoria of running that fumble back for a touchdown and being responsible for my team’s victory, when I was finally alone, I was overwhelmed with the emptiness that I felt.” Carl looked at me and said, “I realized then and there that there had to be something bigger and more important in life than this.”

It wasn’t long afterward that he picked up a Bible and began to read it . . . eventually giving his life to Jesus Christ.

He told me – that moment in the Dallas stadium cannot compare to seeing young men and women give their lives to Jesus Christ as well . . . he said with a big smile on his face, “There is nothing greater than that.”

That’s exactly what Paul is saying to young men – don’t forget as you live your life and chase your dreams –

- there is nothing more important than the credibility of your testimony –
- there is nothing more vital than the delivery of the gospel –
- there is nothing more critical than the reputation of the church –
- there is nothing more ultimately glorious than bringing honor and attention and

praise to the Ancient of Days – to our
Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

I have decided . . .

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