

How to Study the Bible

Practice Lesson—Titus 1:5-9

Step #1—Pray

Step #2—Read

Titus 1:5–9

⁵ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, ⁶ *namely*, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. ⁷ For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸ but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹ holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Also read through the various levels of context and even all of Titus.

Step #3—Familiarize

- Author—the apostle Paul
- Audience—Titus, Paul's convert and co-laborer, who is organizing the churches in Crete
- Aim—Paul writes to give Titus apostolic authority and instruction concerning leading and organizing the new churches in Crete in the midst of opposition
- Themes
 - Works: 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 5, 8, 14
 - Sound faith/doctrine: 1:4, 9, 13; 2:1, 2, 7, 8, 10; 3:15
 - Salvation: 1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6
- Outline
 - Greetings (1:1-4)
 - Concerning Elders (1:5-9)
 - Concerning False Teachers (1:10-16)
 - Concerning Various Groups in the Church (2:1-15)
 - Concerning Believers in General (3:1-8)
 - Concerning Response to Spiritual Error (3:9-11)
 - Conclusion (3:12-15)

Step #4—Organize

Step #5—Question

V5 Questions

- What is the reason Paul left Titus in Crete?
- Why was Titus left behind? Why did not Paul stay with Titus?
- Is Titus alone on the island as a leader/pastor?
- Where is Crete? What is Crete like?
- What is that which “remains” (v5)?
- Are there Christians on Crete? How many? How did they get there? How long have they been there?
- What does it mean to “set in order what remains”?
- What is left over? Have any churches already been set in order?
- What does it mean to appoint?
- How is Titus to appoint elders? What does that process look like? Is he to act alone? Is there a vote?
- What is an elder? What are they supposed to do?
- Do any of the churches have elders yet?
- How many elders per church are there supposed to be? One or more?
- How many cities in Crete were there at the time? How many cities had Christians?
- What has Paul already directed Titus? Can that be found in the New Testament?
- Was there supposed to be one church per city?

V6 Questions

- Are only men allowed to be elders or is Paul speaking generically?
- What does it mean to be above reproach?
- What does it mean to be the husband of one wife? Is this talking about polygamy, divorce, or remarriage after the death of a spouse?
- Does the fact that wife is mentioned and not husband mean again that only men are to be elders, or is Paul still speaking generically?
- What does it mean to have children who believe?
- Are elders required to have children?
- Are elders supposed to be not accused of dissipation or rebellion, or does this refer to their children?
- What are dissipation and rebellion referring to? Spiritual or worldly matters?

V7 Questions

- What is an overseer? Are they related to elders? Is this a different office?

- What does it mean to be God's steward? What are the overseers stewarding?
- What does it mean to be self-willed?
- What does it mean to be quick-tempered?
- What does it mean to be addicted to wine? Is this a prohibition against drinking wine only or against all forms of alcohol?
- What does it mean to be pugnacious?
- What does it mean to be fond of sordid gain? Are overseers supposed to take a vow of poverty?

V8 Questions

- What does it mean to be hospitable?
- What does it mean to be loving what is good? What is the "good" to be loved?
- What does it mean to be sensible?
- What does it mean to be just?
- What does it mean to be devout? Is this talking spiritually devout?
- What does it mean to be self-controlled?

V9 Questions

- What does it mean to hold fast?
- Why is the word called faithful? To what does this refer?
- What is the teaching to which Paul refers? Is this Paul's teaching? Christ's teaching?
- Why is it important for the overseer to hold fast the word?
- What does it mean to exhort in sound doctrine?
- What is sound doctrine? Who determines sound doctrine?
- What does it mean to refute those who contradict? What is involved in this refutation?
- Are overseers to argue with opponents? Are they to be experts in apologetics?
- Who are these people who contradict? Why do they contradict? What are they claiming?
- Why is it so important that the overseers deal with those who contradict?

List of key words for further study:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| • Set in order | • Pugnacious |
| • Elders/Overseer | • Fond of sordid gain |
| • Above reproach | • Hospitable |
| • Believe | • Loving what is good |
| • Dissipation | • Sensible |
| • Rebellion | • Just |
| • Self-willed | • Devout |
| • Quick-tempered | • Self-controlled |
| • Addicted to wine | • Holding fast |

Step #6—Observe

Observations from Titus 1:5-9

- The reason Paul left Titus in Crete is explained in the text itself. The primary reason given is so that Titus would organize the churches and appoint elders in every city.
- The text does not say how large Crete is. Therefore there's no telling from the text how long this work would have taken Titus.
- Paul was obviously not able to stay in Crete, although it is implied from the text that he was once there with Titus. Paul had to move on, but he left Titus in charge of the remaining work. We get the impression that Paul is doing what he tells Titus to do, but only on a larger scale. He is delegating his own authority.
- It appears that elders and overseers are the same person. They are used interchangeably.
- As people became converted in Crete, they were at first disorganized and without leadership. Someone needed to give them the truth and lead them to Christ.
- While Paul was with Titus in Crete, some organization was done. Churches had formed and believers had gathered together. But this work was not finished. Paul and even Titus could not stay there permanently, so permanent leaders were needed, i.e. elders.
- From this passage, it appears that elders are to be appointed by an apostolic delegate. But with no apostles or apostolic delegates around anymore, the greatest authority rests with the existing elders. They should appoint other elders based on the qualifications given.
- The word elders is in the plural. This suggests that every city-church had a plurality of elders, not just one. However the word overseer is singular. But this appears to be because Paul is now talking about what any given elder or overseer should look like.
- Both elders and overseers are required to be above reproach. This appears to be the main requirement, perhaps summarizing the rest or setting some overall standard.
- Nothing in the text suggests that women can be elders. Masculine terminology is used throughout.
- It's not clear if Paul says that elders are required to be married with children, or if he is saying what their marriage and family must look like if they are. Seeing that Jesus was unmarried and had no children and so was Paul as far as we know, most likely he is saying that if married, the elder must have only one wife, and if a father, he must have children who believe.
- If elders are required to have believing children, their status must be based on their profession of faith and behavior, because there is no other way to truly tell if someone is saved.
- The issue regarding the elder's children seems to be their behavior and reputation. They are to be known for godly living themselves, or at the least not rebellious living. This may be rebellion against their father or against God. The elder must manage his household well.

- It seems that any man can become an elder if he meets these qualifications. No restrictions are given based on age, stage of life, profession, etc.
- Verse 7 marks a transition to a more generic description of the elder. Now the term overseer is used which relates more to his task. But the same primary requirement is found, namely being above reproach.
- Being a steward means that one is managing something that is not his. In this case, the elder is looking after the flock of God. The word steward teaches that this flock, or the church, is precious to God and God wants it looked after well. This explains the high calling of being above reproach.
- God owns the church. It is His church. No pastor or elder “has” a church, but rather is the mere keeper of that church for a time. But the church ultimately is God’s, which gives reassurance that the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.
- Five negative characteristics are mentioned in v7, followed by six positive characteristics in v8. The elder is qualified by the things he does and does not do.
- The terms in v7 represent the common vices of pride, impatience, drunkenness, anger, and greed.
- If the church does not belong to the elders, but to God, they must be concerned with God’s will for the church, not their own.
- V7 does not appear to restrict the elders from drinking any wine at all, but from being given over to wine, i.e. being drunks. It seems obvious that this would include other alcohol, not just wine.
- The church is going to be filled with many difficult sheep, so the elder must be patient and not given to anger and fighting.
- The church is going to be a place where money is collected from many sources and then redistributed according to the needs of the church. Elders must not be given over to greed or sordid gain, lest they violate the church’s money as well.
- Another character quality that will benefit the elder both personally and in the church is hospitality. The church will be filled with needy people and he must lead the way in giving help and showing hospitality.
- Several characteristics in v8 seem to relate to the overseer’s ability to govern the church. He must be sensible and just so as to deal with people in a loving yet right manner.
- The elder is not to be a mere business man or manager brought in to do a job, but rather must first have a personal devotion to the Lord. Many characteristics show his leadership will largely be through example.
- The elder is to be more concerned with controlling his own self than controlling other people. In his qualifications, no care is given to how well he can control people or produce numbers, but rather his godliness through and through.

- V9 transitions to the overseer's task. That chief task is being a man of the word. He must hold fast the faithful word, implying that some do not hold fast.
- The word mentioned in v9 is further clarified as being that which is in accordance with the teaching. This teaching is best identified with the sound doctrine mentioned in v9, which would qualify as the teachings of the Old and New Testaments.
- The overseer's primary task of devotion to the word is not an end to itself, but comes with two more duties, one positive and one negative.
- The elder's positive duty is to exhort in sound doctrine. The recipient of this exhortation seems to be the church.
- The church needs its leaders to guide them in sound doctrine. The church also needs to be exhorted to keep the word.
- The elder's negative duty is to refute those who contradict. This implies the presence even in the churches of those who contradict sound doctrine. Such contradicters must be refuted so that their contradictions will not influence or lead astray other believers.
- Doctrinal fidelity within the church is a primary concern. The church must be of one mind and all hold to sound doctrine.

Observations from the Context

- There are no hints from the context as to how large Crete is or how many cities there are.
- The faithful word of v9 likely goes back to the word mentioned in v3, which refers to God's word of truth, i.e. the Bible.
- The context immediately following this passage helps clarify the nature of the contradictions to sound doctrine taking place within the church. The culprit appears to be Judaizers.
- The elder must not be rebellious and his children must not be rebellious, in contrast to the many rebellious men around (v10).
- The next passage deals with false teachers who are motivated by sordid gain, which gives light to why this motivation is prohibited for godly elders. False teachers are often highlighted by their greed.
- The need for refuting those who contradict becomes more pronounced when it is discovered that these false teachers are upsetting whole families. The young, fragile church of Crete is at great risk.
- False teachers and those like them are known for professing to know God (v16) but denying God by their deeds. The picture of the elder is just the opposite. So much attention is placed on His character so that he can affirm God by his deeds.
- Titus himself is to exhort in sound doctrine like the elders (2:1).
- In chapter 2, all groups are exhorted to be "sensible." This word is repeated many times and is a simple standard of godliness.

Cross-Reference Observations

- The words elder, pastor, and overseer are used interchangeably throughout the New Testament. These refer to the same person.
- Paul left Titus in Crete chapter 3 explanation
- There are no examples of female elders, pastors, or overseers in the New Testament. To the contrary, women are prohibited from exercising authority over men in the assembly. Therefore the idea that only men are to be elders is supported.
- Polygamy is forbidden so being the husband of one wife certainly includes the prohibition against being married to multiple women at once.
- Essentially every character quality concerning elders/overseers can be found throughout the rest of the New Testament being applied to the average Christian. Therefore, this list does not represent a separate standard for elders, but shows that they have a greater accountability to the one and only standard of Christlikeness. Being above reproach is an expression of this higher accountability.
- Comparisons and contrasts between the elder qualifications in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3
 - Parallel qualifications: above reproach, one wife, manage household, hospitable, not given to wine, not pugnacious
 - Similar qualifications: temperate & sensible; prudent & self-controlled; able to teach & exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict; not contentious & not quick-tempered; does not love money & not fond of sordid gain
 - Unique qualifications in Timothy: respectable; gentle; not a new convert; good reputation
 - Unique qualifications in Titus: God's steward; not self-willed; loves good; just; devout
- Cretans were present at Pentecost in Acts 2, some became converted and returned home.
- Paul first became acquainted with Crete during his trip to Rome as a prisoner in Acts 27.

Topics for Further Study

- The travels of Paul and Titus
- The geography of Crete and number of cities
- Process of appointing elders
- Marriage and divorce

Step #7—Bridge

Part 1—The Historical Gap

In regards to the passage, look for facts from history, culture, geography, politics, religion, domestic life, and social life at the time to shed light on key words or phrases. The following stand out from Titus 1:5-9:

- Crete (History, Geography, Religion, Culture)
- Views on marriage (Domestic life)
- Views on alcohol (Social life)
- Views on money (Social life)
- Views on leadership (Religion, Social life)

Biblical information about the culture of Crete is limited. Titus 1:12 paints Cretans as full of lying, wicked, lazy, gluttonous people. They seem far from being above reproach, loving what is good, and not being addicted to wine. Elders are called to a higher standard.

Extra-biblical information:

<http://bibleatlas.org/full/crete.htm>

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=Tit&c=1&t=NASB&p=0#s=t_refs_1130005

Part 2—The Grammatical Gap

Word studies:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| • Set in order | • Pugnacious |
| • Elders | • Fond of sordid gain |
| • Above reproach | • Hospitable |
| • Believe | • Loving what is good |
| • Dissipation | • Sensible |
| • Rebellion | • Just |
| • Overseer | • Devout |
| • Self-willed | • Self-controlled |
| • Quick-tempered | • Holding fast |
| • Addicted to wine | |

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/Bible.cfm?b=Tit&c=1&t=NASB&p=0#s=1130006>

Outline:

See attached

Grammar:

There were not many grammatical questions of the text. In fact, only one: does “not accused of dissipation or rebellion” refer to the elder or his children? It turns out that all of the character qualifications in verses 7-8 (adjectives) are in the masculine gender, which is fitting since they describe the overseer, which is also masculine. However, “accused of dissipation” is feminine and “rebellion” is neuter. The nearest antecedent noun is “children,” which is neuter, so these descriptions belong with the children, not the elder per se.

Part 3—The Contextual Gap

Now is the time to do a more detailed study of the context to answer more questions. This includes the immediately surrounding context and even the context of the whole Bible.

V9—Those who contradict

- The passage immediately following helps clarify the nature of the contradictions to sound doctrine taking place within the church. See verses 10-11.
- Per our previous study, these rebellious men were identified as Judaizers, those who sought to add works to the gospel. They claimed that if Gentiles wanted to come to the faith, they had to keep the Mosaic law and be circumcised. This highlights a need for elders to know and understand the true gospel and its implications.
- The context also highlights the importance for elders to be above reproach. The false teachers were anything but above reproach. To the contrary, they were motivated by sordid gain. Elders need to set themselves apart from such deceivers both through their teaching and their character.
- Finally the context shows why it is so important for elders to refute those who contradict. These false teachers were not harmless, but were starting to upset whole families. The faith of weaker members was at stake, so elders must be quick to silence these sources of falsehood and ungodliness.

Elder qualifications

- Comparisons and contrasts between the elder qualifications in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3
 - Parallel qualifications: above reproach, one wife, manage household, hospitable, not given to wine, not pugnacious
 - Similar qualifications: temperate & sensible; prudent & self-controlled; able to teach & exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict; not contentious & not quick-tempered; does not love money & not fond of sordid gain
 - Unique qualifications in Timothy: respectable; gentle; not a new convert; good reputation
 - Unique qualifications in Titus: God’s steward; not self-willed; loves good; just; devout

- How do you explain the differences and unique qualifications in these lists?
- Upon further study, it becomes evident that essentially every characteristic required of elders can also be found throughout the rest of the New Testament being applied to the average Christian. Therefore, these elder qualifications do not represent a separate standard for elders, but show that elders have a higher accountability to the one and only standard of Christlikeness. Being above reproach is an expression of this higher accountability.
 - Paul was merely describing to Titus and Timothy some key aspects of this one standard of Christlikeness. He could have easily expanded his list and added more.
 - The differences reflect this. It's not that the elders in Ephesus only had to worry about being gentle, while the elders in Crete had to worry about being just. Rather the picture is that all elders must mimic Christ in general, and Paul described different specific aspects of this.

V6—the husband of one wife

- A study of the wider context of all Scripture helps us know what this means and does not mean.
- From other Scriptures, we know that Paul is not saying that the elder must be married. Paul was not married, Jesus was not married, Titus was not married that we know of. Instead Paul specifically says that the elder must be the husband of “one” wife, not “a” wife.
- Paul is not excluding widowers or those who have remarried from being elders. In Romans 7, he makes clear for instance that the death of a spouse ends the marriage covenant. The other party is free to remarry. The point is that elders must have a legitimate marriage.
- Polygamy is obviously being rejected here. But that was already understood by Titus and Christians. Even the Romans rejected polygamy. Rather the emphasis seems to be on the elder's faithfulness and devotion to his “one” wife. It's not enough that an elder be married to one woman; that does not qualify him. Instead he must be devoted in love to that one wife. God wants men to lead and love His church just like they lead and love their wife.

Step #8—Consult

If there are still unanswered questions or difficult questions, now you can search some commentaries to see what others have come up with in their studies.

V6—having children who believe

- There are two major views and translations: 1) that elders are required to have “children who believe” meaning their children must be saved; or 2) that elders are required to have “faithful” children meaning they are obedient and not wild and rebellious.
- The majority view is “faithful” children.

- The word in question is *pista* in the Greek. This word is found 66x in the New Testament. 53x it is translated “faithful” in the NASB, and 13x it is translated as “believing.” So this word can legitimately refer to both views.
- Some argue that this should be translated as “believe” since unbelievers are never referred to as faithful. But this fails to take into account the numerous times this word is used in reference to people in general without respect to them being believers or unbelievers. For instance, *pista* used in reference to a servant doesn’t have anything to do with whether or not they are believers, but rather that they are to be faithful and obedient. This word is often used of people in general without reference to them as believers or unbelievers.
- Ultimately the context will give the answer. Paul further defines what he means by *pista* in the rest of v6 when he says “not accused of dissipation or rebellion.” This phrase is in negative apposition to *pista*. Whatever *pista* means, it is the opposite of dissipation (drunkenness, wildness) and rebellion.
- Based on this contrast, the right view seems to be “faithful.” Paul doesn’t say that children must not be accused of unbelief or heresy, but not accused of wild, uncontrolled living. The child’s behavior in relation to their father’s authority is in view, not their salvation. God does not require elders to have saved children, but they must respect his rule. If he cannot rule his children, then how can he rule the church?
- This view appears to be confirmed in 1 Timothy 3:4-5. For a qualification as important as having saved children, it’s hard to believe that Paul would leave it out of the elder list in 1 Timothy 3.

Step #9—Interpret

With your passage, write out a **single past tense sentence** that tells what the **original author** wanted his **original audience** to know.

The apostle Paul wrote to his child in the faith Titus to direct him to appoint elders in every city on Crete and to remind him of elder qualifications.

Step #10—Principlize

All churches are to appoint leaders known as elders who meet certain family, character, and doctrine qualifications.

Step #11—Apply

For elders: Examine your life, ensure you are meeting these qualifications, seek accountability, and remain above reproach.

For individual Christians: Understanding that this passage represents a higher accountability to the one standard of Christlikeness, even though you are not an elder, pursue these qualities in your own life, simply to honor God and reflect Christlikeness yourself. Also, this passage tells you how to pray for your leaders, how to look for leaders, and how to hold leaders accountable.

For churches: This passage leaves a pattern for churches to appoint new elders themselves. Titus did not have the time to get to know every man in every church on a personal level and then find the godly ones to make elders. Rather he would have relied on the churches. As Titus communicated these qualifications to them, he would then have trusted the congregation to nominate candidates. The candidates would be evaluated and then as acting elder he would appoint them for service. Although there are no more apostles or apostolic delegates, the framework for appointing elders should be the same. Churches should nominate men based on these qualifications. Existing elders should then evaluate them and approve. For a precedent of this model, see Acts 6:1-6.

Step #12—Implement

Look over the qualifications listed in this passage. Highlight three that you will work on for individual growth. Plan to study these in Scripture next week and continually examine your life, repenting of sin and seeking to grow in godliness. Also, use this list to pray for your existing elders regularly. Set aside some time this week to pray for your elders using this passage.