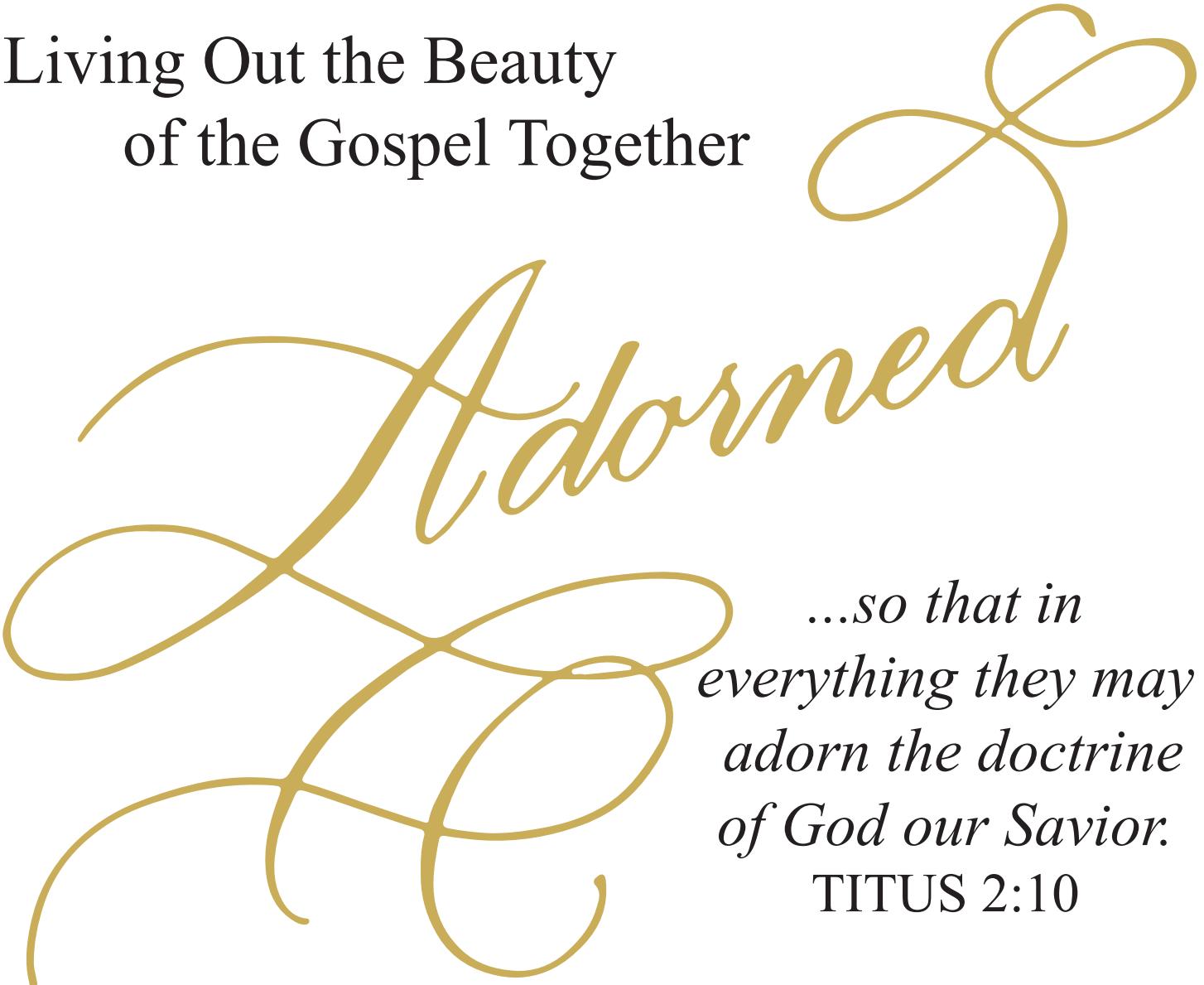


Living Out the Beauty
of the Gospel Together



*...so that in
everything they may
adorn the doctrine
of God our Savior.
TITUS 2:10*



WEEK ONE

Chapter 1

A Woman Adorned and Adorning Beauty Secrets of Titus 2

...so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

Titus 2:10

Many people believe it's hard to be a Christian in today's world. The same was true in the first century when Paul wrote his letter to Titus. Titus was on the island of Crete which was controlled by the powerful Roman empire. The evil tyrant Nero had officially outlawed Christianity. Many Christians were wondering: How are believers supposed to think and act in such times?

How can we keep from being deceived by false doctrine and teachers?

How can we pass our faith on to the next generation, rather than seeing it become extinct?

How can the church not just survive, but thrive, in a world that is hostile to our faith?

How can we effectively fulfill our mission to reach a corrupt world with the beauty of Christ's gospel?

Sound familiar? Those questions are still with us. Which is why we still need the book of Titus today. We may not live in Nero's Rome, but

we do live in a decadent, deceptive culture that threatens the church of Christ with its allure as well as its accusations and attacks. We need help to see how our lives can portray the gospel so beautifully that others see in us the transforming power of Christ and are drawn to know and follow Him. We need help keeping His gospel attractive enough to ourselves that we—who claim to believe it—will actually trust Him, obey Him, and experience the power, peace and joy He promises, even while living as exiles on this earth.

We all need to understand how to adorn the teaching of the gospel of Christ with the way we live—and to help each other do the same. And that's exactly what Titus 2 provides us. It lets older women know what is most important to share and younger women know what they're called to aspire to become.

Our goal through this study is that women, of all ages, grow ever more beautiful as the gospel of Christ adorns our lives. That we adorn the gospel by the way that we live and do it all, step by step, together—the Titus 2 way.

On Your Own:

What does adorned mean?

Read Titus 1:1-4.

- Who is the writer of this letter? Who is he writing to? Explain their relationship.
- Based on verse 1, why is he writing this letter?
- What is godliness? Why is godliness something readers of the letter should aspire to attain?
- How do you hope to grow in godliness through this study?

Read Titus 1:5, 10-16

- What was Titus' assignment in Crete? What problems were the people of Crete facing?
- How should Titus respond to the people of Crete?
- What would be the result of detestable practices?

Read Titus 2:1-5, 10

- Based on verse 1, How was Titus to be different from the people of Crete?
- Who were the people assigned to help Titus in his mission? What were these people to do?
- How would these actions "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior"?

Discussion Questions:

- Share about a time you felt the most adorned, the most beautiful.
- When was the last time an older woman imparted encouragement and exhortation to you? Tell us about it.
- You were not meant to adorn the gospel on your own. What "tools" has God given you to help you accomplish this task?
- Who are the younger women in your life? How can you give to and invest in them?
- What older women do you know? How can you receive from them?



WEEK TWO

Chapter 2

Doctrine, You, and Titus 2 The “What” and the “Now What”

Do not settle for a wimpy theology. It is beneath you. God is too great. Christ is too glorious.

John Piper

So what's your first reaction to the word doctrine? Sound dull? Dry? Divisive or disagreeable? Doctrine simply means teaching. It's the content of what we believe, the understanding of reality that shapes our faith. Like soil in a garden, doctrine provides the context for growing character.

The soil of the doctrine in which we're planted can make us beautiful and help us point others to the beauty of Christ and His gospel. But only if it's the right doctrine.

The culture in first-century Crete, where Titus served as a pastor, was the furthest thing from good or godly. Paul described unbelievers there as being “detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work” (Titus 1:16). As is invariably the case, rampant false teaching went hand in hand with the irreverent lifestyle that was so prevalent in Crete.

So what were those first-century believers to do in light of such pervasive unsound teaching and godless living? And what are we to do in similar circumstances today?

Paul gives Titus the answer in Titus 2:1 “But as for you,” Paul said to Pastor Titus, “teach what accords with sound doctrine.” That's it? Teach God's people how to live according to the truth? That's it. That is God's plan – truth and light overcoming deception and darkness.

The Cretan culture was in desperate need of believers and churches that valued right doctrine. Our culture has the same need. Because where such doctrine is taught, believed, and put into practice, the gospel of Christ is put on display; it is proclaimed with power and becomes believable.

Sound doctrine is a means of keeping us healthy. It's wholesome. It's life-giving. It helps make spiritually sick people well in every way that matters for eternity and their lives show the difference good doctrine makes.

Lived out, sound doctrine is radically transformational and changes everything about us. It tells us: who we are, who God is, what it means to be a Christian, what the gospel is, who Jesus is, why He came, why He died, why He lives again.

So Paul urges Titus to “teach what accords with sound doctrine” (2:1) – that is, make personal and practical application of the truth. Sound doctrine is not just a collection of abstract theological concepts. It is always connected to duty. It requires, motivates, and enables us to live lives that are pleasing to the Lord.

Without sound doctrine, we have no moorings, no firm footing for our lives. If we are not grounded in sound doctrine, we will be

easily deceived and led astray – susceptible to false doctrine. We won't know how to discern truth from error when we hear a popular preacher or read a bestselling book that is not fully aligned with Scripture. Without sound doctrine, we can't know how to live in a way that pleases God.

Don't think you can dress up your life with better behavior or become the beautiful woman you're hoping to grow into without grounding your life in biblical truth.

It seems that every failure and flaw in our lives flows out of some sort of doctrinal deficiency. Either we haven't been taught and really don't know the truth God has given that enables us to obey and enjoy Him. Or (worse) we know the truth, but we aren't walking according to what we know. It's one or the other. Because only sound doctrine, steadily applied, will keep our thinking and our living on the right track.

Sound doctrine is safe. It's hygienic. It's pure. And it's absolutely indispensable to a healthy heart and a godly life.

Now, knowing and embracing sound, biblical doctrine doesn't candy-coat the spiritual warfare that we face or guarantee we'll never blow it. But when we do fail, it tells us where to turn – it points us back to the cross, calls us to repent and to cast ourselves anew on Christ, and assures us of His mercy.

Our purpose for pursuing Titus 2 character, relationships, and ministry is not merely to be better wives, moms, and ministry leaders, to have a better reputation, or to be able to

sleep better at night. Our ultimate purpose is to make much of God. We do that as we experience, enjoy, and reflect the loveliness of Christ, making Him known to a world that is starved for true beauty.

There is simply no more powerful tool of evangelism, no more effective means of bringing about social or systemic change, than for Christians to believe and demonstrate the doctrine and gospel of Jesus Christ.

If you're a younger woman...get started now learning to pursue, grasp, and treasure the sound doctrine of God's Word, knowing it will shape the person you are today as well as the person you will one day become. And be sure you're connecting with godly, older women whose love for Christ and His Word will increase your appetite for sound doctrine and your understanding of the difference it makes in every area of your life.

Older women, let's be sure we never leave the basics – the pure, undiluted Word of God. Let's become living epistles of sound doctrine, both learned and practiced. Enough with the allurements and distractions of the world. It's time to show those coming behind us the beauty of God's truth and its sufficiency for the challenges of our day. Each time you're obedient to this calling, you'll be able to watch Him paint your life with bigger and bolder gospel colors than you ever imagined possible.

When God's Word is learned and lived out by older and younger women together, the outcome will be stunningly beautiful. Utterly captivating. A mirror reflection of Christ.

On Your Own:

Read Romans 3:10-20

What does this passage tell us about who we are?

Read Gen 1:1, Ps18:30, John 3:16, 4:24, 1 John 1:5 (use additional passages you know)

What do these passages tell us about who God is?

Read John 1:14, Mark 1:10-11, John 14:6 (use additional passages you know)

What does this passage tell us about who Jesus is?

Read John 14:26, 16:9, Rom 8: 1-17, Gal 5:16-26 (use additional passages you know)

What does this passage tell us about the ministry of the Holy Spirit?

Read Matt 16:24, Heb 10:25, John 13:34-35 (use additional passages you know)

What does it mean to be a Christian?

What is the gospel?

Discussion Questions:

- How could you encourage a younger woman in your life to be more intentional about "planting and watering" her heart in the soil of good doctrine?
- What steps could you take to deepen your grasp of God's Word and to saturate your mind, heart, and life with sound doctrine?
- Do you think you're more susceptible to believing wrong doctrine or to being "all head, no heart"? Explain your answer.
- Nineteenth-century German philosopher Heinrich Heine said, "Show me your redeemed life, and I might be inclined to believe in your Redeemer." What are some ways our lives can make those around us more inclined to believe in Jesus?

Don't Give Up on The Modeling Career Aging Beautifully-at all Ages

*Somebody old who had walked a long time in the path of righteousness is a treasure –
a treasure of experience and a treasure of understanding.*

John MacArthur

As we take our first dip into verse 4 of Titus 2, where Paul's instructions regarding older women begin, you'll notice almost immediately a word that causes us to pause before moving on.

"Older women," the verse begins, "likewise..." Likewise? This word leads me to believe that what Paul wrote to older men in the previous verse was meant to apply to older woman's character as well. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. These are not cafeteria-style qualities we can pick and choose. No, these are trademarks of all spiritually mature believers. None of them are optional if we are to become Titus 2 models.

Whether you're young and aging or not so young and aging, you can be a vibrant, thriving, fruitful model for as long as God gives you breath – provided you stay sound and constant in your walk with God as your birthdays add up.

One commentator has said, "Old age strips the body of its glamour in order to emphasize the beauty of the soul." It's true. When we're young, we may be able to gloss out some of those pesky character defects with the natural blush of our energy, good looks, and personality. But as we get older, our physical sparkle begins to fade. And those same character shortages, if not dealt with and sanctified, will only become more pronounced and visible.

But if we persevere in the Titus 2 prescription for adorning the gospel, we'll become

more and more like the "righteous" people described in Psalm 92, the ones who:

*Flourish like the palm tree and grow
like a cedar in Lebanon...
They shall bear fruit in old age; they
are ever full of sap and green,
to declare that the LORD is upright...
(Ps. 92:12,14-15)*

Older woman, don't listen to what your feet and fatigue are telling you. Listen to what your faith in God and His Word are telling you. You were destined to be a model, to live a life worthy of respect that is worth following. To become a person of whom others say, "That's what I want to be like when I'm her age." To model the heart and character of Christ.

Younger woman, whether you're twenty-six or whatever "younger" means in your case, the godly woman I hope you want to become is not as far removed as you think from the young woman you are now. Begin now cooperating with the Holy Spirit to cultivate these qualities in your life.

Whatever your age, remember we're all aspiring models, following Christ and making others long to know and follow Him. Women of all ages adorned – made beautiful – by the indwelling Christ. Women whose lives adorn the doctrine we claim to believe, making what is already beautiful even more attractive to everyone we encounter.

On Your Own:

Read 1 Peter 5:8. What does it mean to be sober-minded?

What does Romans 13:13 and Colossians 4:5 teach about being dignified?

According to Galatians 5:22-23, where do Christians receive power to exercise self-control?

What scripture passage portrays a person who was sound in faith? Sound in love? Sound in steadfastness? State the passage and how they exhibited the trait.

Have you seen age-defying beauty modeled by an older woman? Describe her beauty.

Share an example of how the choices made by a younger woman might affect the older woman she will be someday.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you tend to gravitate to peers, to the exclusion of women in other age groups? What steps can you take to develop intergenerational relationships?
- As you face your next birthday, how can you plan to grow in spiritual health?
- A wise woman once said, "The older I get, the more I understand that finishing strong means finishing weak." What does this statement mean to you? How can you depend more on God in your current season of life?

WEEK THREE



Chapter 4

Grow Up and Step Up Teaching and Learning Life-to-Life

Here is the challenge to you spiritual mothers: Will you allow God to use you to help others learn from your knowledge and experience, your mistakes and your victories?

Cathe Laurie

In the part of the passage we are exploring this week, Paul says that older women are not to be slanderers. They are not to use their tongues to spread lies or evil or to wound or tear others down. Instead they are told to use their tongues to teach what is good. To speak words that are true, words that bless and build others up. And in the process, train younger women in the life of faith.

Proverbs 31:26 puts it this way: She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

If you're an older woman, teaching good things to younger women is part of your job description. God has a purpose for you in this season of life that is vital and that no one but you can fulfill. The assumption is that you have learned how to apply the sound teaching of God's Word to your behavior, affections, relationship, priorities – everything – and that you are committed to take what you have learned and pass it on to others. This should be the norm, not the exception.

Younger woman, this passage raises important questions for you: Who are you learning from? Who are your teachers? Are they mostly your peers? What online communities are saturating your thinking and shaping your relationships? What celebrities are influencing your values, your sense of identity and purpose?

You see, Titus 2:4 is not just a call for older women to teach what is good. It's also a call for younger women to learn what is good from their older, more experienced sisters. The truth is, you're always teaching, simply by the way you live. Your conversation in unguarded moments teaches. Your response to gossip teaches. Your reaction to an unexpected problem teaches. The question is not whether you're teaching; it's whether you're teaching "what is good."

Sometimes we look at our inconsistencies and battles in our own lives and think how can God use me to make a difference in anyone's life? But the truth is, none of us measures up to what we long to be. But don't let that stop you. Teach out of your failures. Use them to point others to the amazing grace of God and to a Savior who came to redeem sinners.

The words Paul wrote to Titus some two thousand years ago are timeless in their impact and relevance. More important, they are God's recipe for the thriving and fruitfulness of His women, essential for the successful passing of truth to the next generation and to our world. And it starts with you – imperfections and all – available to teach and to be taught what is good.

On Your Own:

According to Matthew 28:20, what should be the content of our teaching? Specifically.

Colossians 3:16 sets a prerequisite for teaching. What is it? How have you practiced this in your life?

Read Hebrews 5:12-14 and paraphrase the passage in your own words based on what we've been studying in this unit. Does this passage bring conviction or confirmation to you?

Do you believe God has a purpose for you in this season of life that is vital and that no one but you can fulfill? Why or why not?

What are some life experiences you might be able to share to encourage or teach a younger woman more about the ways of God?

Discussion Questions:

- A younger woman once said, "Our generation is so prone to think we have all the answers, that there's nothing an older person could tell us that we really need to hear." Do you think this is true? Why or why not? What do you think young women really want and need today?
- What are some questions you could ask to strike up a conversation and encourage a possible mentoring relationship with an older/younger woman?
- What are some life experience you might be able to share to encourage or teach a younger woman more about the ways of God?

Chapter 5

Revival of Reverence Living in Sacred Service

This older woman sees life, all of life, from God's viewpoint and understands that even the mundane routines of life are important to God...Watch her walk through her day in order to see what is next to God's heart. Her life revolves around things that matter to Him.

Rochelle Fleming

The ideals contained in verses 3-5 of Titus 2 – reverence, love, purity, kindness and all the rest – are qualities we hope to see cultivated in our lives as God's Spirit works through our surrendered hearts. But they also form a practical discipleship plan for those we're teaching and training in our woman-to-woman, heart-to-heart relationships.

There's a lifetime of wisdom and growth to be gleaned from these few verses, and there's no time like today to begin walking it out. Let's begin with reverence. It is the fountainhead from which springs the other graces to which we are called and to which we aspire.

To be reverent means living with the constant, conscious awareness that we are in the presence of an awesome, holy God. And God's presence isn't a place of dullness and drabness, with no dessert on the table. Rather, it's a place of abundance, of soul-satisfying pure delight. A place as the psalmist declared, where there is "fullness of joy" (Ps. 16:11).

Stay aware of God. Realize He's here. Devote your worship and attention to Him until you begin to adjust your thinking, planning, scheduling and lifestyle to match this glorious, eternal reality. Until we become what God, through Paul, calls us to be.

Reverent in behavior. Reverent in worship. Reverent in lifestyle. Reverent in what we read and listen to and how we entertain ourselves. Reverent in where we go, what we do, and who we admire. Reverent in what we wear and what we love, what we say and what we don't say. Reverent in a way that adorns our lives and the doctrine of Christ.

Reverent all the time – not just because God's cameras are rolling, but because He is worthy of our wholehearted devotion and obedience. And because He has made pleasing Him the most pleasurable life on earth.

On Your Own:

To be reverent means living with the constant, conscious awareness that we are in the presence of an awesome, holy God. What does scripture say about the presence of God? (Ex. 33:14, Psalm 145:18, Hebrews 4:16, Zephaniah 3:17).

Read Luke 2:22-40. What lessons can we learn from Anna? What blessing did Anna receive for her life of reverence to God?

Consider 1 Timothy 2:9-10. What is the true admonition in this passage and how would you share that with a younger woman in your life?

What does the Bible say about reverent speech? (Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 4:6, Psalm 141:3)

According to 1 Peter 2:11-12, what is the result of reverent behavior?

Christians' lives are always on display – and that's a good thing if we're living to glorify Christ. Is there any attitude or behavior you wouldn't want people to see because you know it wouldn't please the Lord?

Discussion Questions:

- What are some ways believers might misrepresent God's character by the way they live?
- Where does reverent behavior begin, and what are some practical tips for doing so?
- Do you agree that younger women need older women to be reverent more than they need them to be relevant? What are the implications this idea has for you as an older or a younger woman?

WEEK FOUR

Chapter 6

You Don't Say Abstaining from Slander



We are stewards of the treasure of each other's good names.
Let us seek to silence the ... slanderer within and graciously give and receive others help when one of us slips, perhaps unaware, into slander.

Jon Bloom

Paul's admonition in Titus 2 against slander and sins of the tongue hits many of us close to home. It's easy to find yourself starting to say something to a close friend about a third party – a report that was unnecessary and would not have put the other person in a good light. This is the very thing Paul says older women who revere the Lord should not do. Thankfully, we have the Holy Spirit to restrain us from passing along potentially harmful information.

As a clue to how serious this matter of slander should be to us, the word translated "slanderers" in Titus 2:3 – which other translations render as "malicious gossips" or "false accusers" – is the Greek word diabolos, from which we derive our English word diabolical. This word appears thirty-eight times in the New Testament. And in all but four of those occurrences, its used to refer to Satan. Essentially, slander is devilish.

This connection between slander and Satan shouldn't surprise us. The first time we meet him in Scripture, he is slandering God's nature and character to Eve in the garden of Eden. Slandering God to humans is one of Satan's trademark tactics. The apostle John called Satan "the accuser of our brethren" in Revelation 12:10. He constantly brings slanderous accusations about us before the

throne of God, refuting what Christ's sacrificial death has accomplished in declaring us holy and righteous in the Lord's sight. Satan is a liar. An accuser. Satan is a slanderer. And I imagine Satan watches and cheers as we bite and devour one another, rather than being like our reconciling, life-giving Father.

We must adopt a "don't say it" policy when the Spirit tries to restrain us or we're not sure what's motivating our drive to speak. Then, we will be in a position to make peace and to make a difference where we live. People will know from experience, "That woman can be trusted with my heart, my vulnerabilities, my confessions, and my imperfect story, because I know she would never slander me to others."

The groom in the Song of Solomon praises his bride for how she blesses him and others with her words:

Your lips drip sweetness like the honeycomb, my bride.
Honey and milk are under your tongue. (4:11)

This woman doesn't babble on like a flowing brook. She doesn't gush everything she thinks. Her words, like honey, are measured. They are thoughtful and sweet. Her tongue has

filter. Her words strengthen and encourage the hearts of those who hear them instead of causing harm and contention.

With God's help, let's us our tongues to build up those around us rather than tearing them

down. Above all, let's speak words that make much of Christ. Words that adorn His gospel and put His loveliness on display. Words worthy of women whose hearts have been won by His amazing grace.

On Your Own:

Define slander.

What does the Bible say about slander? (Eph. 4:29, Ex. 20:16, Prov. 18:8, 11:13, James 4:11)

How can we defeat slander? (Ps 51:4, Eph. 4:31, 2 Cor. 10:5, Ps. 19:14, Prov. 10:19, Rom 14:19, Ps 141:3)

Which of the above verses is most convicting? Which is most helpful to you?

How does Psalm 19:14 help train your heart against gossip and slander?

Is there anything in your natural disposition, your upbringing, or your environment that makes you more inclined to fall into slander? How can you actively battle and overcome this sin?

Discussion Questions:

- Jesus included the sin of slander in the same list as murder, adultery, and sexual immorality (Matt. 15:19). Do we think we view the sin of slander as seriously as we do these other sins? Why or why not?
- What are some ways our lives can slander or misrepresent the character of God?
- How might our interactions look different if our underlying desire was that others would think more of Jesus?
- Why is this warning so important in our discussion of older woman/younger woman relationships?

At Liberty Experiencing Freedom from Bondage

Looking this addition straight in the eye has brought me to my knees – to the cross.

Renee Johnson

This directive is not just about alcohol, it's about freedom. It seeks to plumb and expose the hidden depths of our hearts, the chains that keep us from being free to portray and proclaim the gospel.

We live in a highly addictive culture. At some level, most of us struggle with enslavement or sinful bondage. The prohibition against being "slaves to much wine" could more broadly include any behavior, practice, or craving that we have allowed to enslave us. Our reverence to God is to be reflected through our tongues and our temperate lifestyles.

Paul tells us not to be slaves of "much wine." That's an important part of this all-too-human tendency. If we have a little of something, even something good, we tend to want a lot of it. Indulgence turns to overindulgence. In particular areas of our lives, we may find ourselves wanting more and more of something until we reach the point that we depend on it – we must have it.

Being "slaves to much wine" - or "slaves to much" of anything else other than Jesus - is the opposite of being sober-minded (temperate, self-controlled) a virtue Paul upholds repeatedly in this short epistle. So, in considering what the Spirit is saying to us through this phrase, we might begin by asking whether there are any areas where we are given to indulgence and excess. Are we driven to have too much of anything?

But Paul is speaking about something even deeper than overindulgent lifestyles. He's concerned about our tendency to become

enslaved to certain substances or habits or activities – anything – that we deem essential to our happiness, sanity, or survival. That word slave in Titus 2:3 means "to be held and controlled against one's will." And that's exactly what happens when we are enslaved by a substance or a behavior. We can't stop. We can't do without it. We cannot get away.

We call such slavery by many names – habit, obsession, compulsion, dependency, addiction, stronghold. Each term has a specific nuance, but they're all about slavery – and we're all prone to it.

However, thank God, through the power and presence of Christ in your life, you can be free from whatever holds you captive. Free from the "innocent" pastimes that have you hooked. Free from the substances and behaviors that have lured you into idolatry. Free from bondage to (so-called) pleasures that can never truly satisfy. That freedom comes not by willing yourself to obedience, but by yielding yourself to your Master.

Escaping your enslavement may be the hardest thing you've ever done – though God's deliverance is available to you on a moment-by-moment basis. Jesus came to earth to set the captives free. May one of those captives be you. And being liberated from every earthly enslavement, may we be wholehearted, grateful, adoring slaves of Christ. There is no greater liberty.

On Your Own:

What warning does Romans 6:16 provide?

According to 2 Corinthians 10:5 what leads to freedom from bondage?

What warns does Scripture provide about overindulgence in alcoholic beverages? (Prov. 20:1, Prov. 23:29-30)

Where does true liberty come from? (Luke 4:18-21)

In what areas of your life do you tend toward indulgence and excess? Are you driven to have too much of anything? What lies are you believing about these issues?

Have you been set free from enslavement in a certain area? Describe your journey and how you experienced God's grace in the process.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some compulsions that enslave many women today?
- How are addictions a worship issue?
- How could transparency about your own struggles with areas of bondage encourage another woman and give her hope?
- How much "victory" do you think a woman needs in these areas to be helpful to another woman?
- How might seeking out a godly, older accountability partner help you in your struggles with habits that enslave you?



WEEK FIVE

Chapter 8

A "Sophron" State of Mind Developing Self-Control

Without self-control, we become the slaves of all our enemies (the world, the flesh, and the devil) and become incapacitated, unable to serve God and one another or even our own best interests. We end up not only serving ourselves, but we become slaves to our appetites.

J. Hampton Keathley III

Self-control. This is a daunting requirement – an impossible one, apart from the gospel of Christ. It is this gospel and this Savior we seek to adorn; and it is the same gospel and Savior that empower us to “live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age” (Titus 2:12).

The clear implication is that self-control is both a lifetime need and a lifelong pursuit.

The ramifications of self-controlled, sound thinking and living (or lack thereof) are deep and wide. Notice how Paul’s reference to self-control sits right in the middle of his curriculum for younger women: “Train the young women,” he says, “to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind...that the word of God may not be reviled” (Titus 2:4-5).

In other words, if you don’t have a self-controlled, sound mind, you won’t be able to love your husband when he’s not lovable. You won’t be able to love those children of yours amid all the laundry and lunches and trying to get everybody to bed on time. You won’t be able to sustain purity in your habits and relationships. You won’t be able to see the value or the necessity of caring for your home. You won’t be able to show kindness toward those who are unkind to you.

You’ll storm out and check out and flame out and wimp out on every bit of resolve you can muster. And ultimately your life will cause others to reject the very gospel you claim to believe. Unless you have self-control.

A sophron lifestyle begins with a sophron state of mind – a way of thinking that affects everything about the way we live. A sensible, sound, self-controlled mindset will result in sensible, sound, self-controlled behavior.

Christ is our only hope of ever developing a sophron lifestyle. We can do everything conceivable to force mature behavior from ourselves. We can make promises and mean well. We can even cram Scripture into our heads on a daily basis. But unless we lean on Jesus for the power to put these truths into practice, we will not be able to find sustainable victory over our rogue thoughts and emotions.

Spirit-produced self-control will elude us unless we’re continually calling out to Him for the transformation He alone can bring about. The enemy of our souls is doing a number on the minds of women today. Only the presence and power of Christ can restore us to our right minds. Only He can make us sophron and to be sophron is to be adorned with the mind of Christ.

On Your Own:

According to 2 Peter 1:5-7 what virtues are necessary before one can develop self-control?

Read Luke 4:1-13.

What lessons about self-control do we learn from Jesus' time in the wilderness?

According to Galatians 5:22-23, what help do we have in living a sophron lifestyle?

How do you typically react when you experience fluctuating emotions and mounting pressures?

How would you like to respond?

Discussion Questions:

- What motivates you the most to pursue self-control?
- Think of a recent time you weren't "thinking sensibly." What was the result? How might operating from a sophron mindset have changed that?
- Identify an area in your life where you need to be more sophron. What practical steps could you take (including asking another woman for counsel) to acquire more self-control in this area?

Passionate about Purity Pursuing Holiness in an Unholy World

O Lord, keep our hearts, keep our eyes, keep our feet, and keep our tongues.

William Tiptaff

Be holy is one of the great, recurring themes of Scripture and is a calling for every believer. It touches every part and particle of our lives - what we do, what we say, how we think, our attitudes and motives.

"Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit," Paul urges in 2 Corinthians 7:1. No type of impurity is insignificant. Hidden sins are no less defiling than more obvious sins of the flesh.

The Cretans were "slaves to various passions and pleasures" (3:3). They were not free, but bound to fulfill the lust of their flesh. We see this everywhere we turn today. It's hard to overstate how mainstream impurity has become in our culture.

However, we who belong to Christ have been saved - rescued - from our former life. We have been washed from sin, cleaned up, purified. We are different from unbelievers, and that difference should be obvious to everyone.

This applies to all Christians, of course. But Paul makes the particular point that Christian women are supposed to stand out by being pure. Pure from every fault, pure from defilement, immaculate, not contaminated, without moral defect or blemish.

This is not an easy calling for women in a raunchy culture that celebrates promiscuity. In fact, to modern ears, this may sound antiquated, extreme or just not realistic in today's world.

But consider the upside of pursuing a lifestyle of purity:

- the joy that comes from being fully surrendered to God and satisfied in Him alone
- the freedom that comes from living inside His loving borders of protection
- the depth of relationship with others that is possible when the barriers of impurity and impropriety are removed
- the unity that takes place within marriages when honesty and transparency replace secrets
- the impact in the lives of sons and daughters who witness their parents actually living what they claim to believe
- the opportunity to point others to Christ and the purity that is available through Him

Purity can indeed feel like an unattainable standard. In fact, it is - apart from the indwelling, enabling power of the Holy Spirit. But the very fact that Paul urges older women to teach younger women to be pure suggests that purity can be learned by watching the example of mentors and by listening to what they have learned in their pursuit of purity.

When we begin to take purity seriously, our consciences become sensitized to things that we once let slide. Off-color humor. Innuendos. Questionable entertainment. And other issues that the Sprint brings to our attention. The thoughts and practices that once crowded out God's ways in our lives begin to be displaced, making room for pure thoughts, pure worship, and a purer freedom than the world's ways can possibly provide.

On Your Own:

What is the blessing of positional purity that is provided by faith in Christ according to Matt. 5:8?

What help does 2 Cor. 10:5 have in regards to pure thoughts? How have you recently put this verse in practice?

Read Luke 11:34-35. How does this verse challenge you?

What personal hedges have you put in place to help you in your pursuit of holiness?

Discussion Questions:

- How would you describe the world's thinking and attitudes in relation to purity?
- How have you seen purity lived out in a way that brings glory to the gospel?
- What benefits have you seen to pursuing purity? What lessons have you learned in this area?
- Share your personal hedges that you have found helpful.
- What areas do you need to establish new hedges?

WEEK SIX

Chapter 10

Taste of Heaven Cultivating a Heart for Home



Love and labor, home and work - these concepts need an eternal perspective.

Carolyn McCulley

Older women...are to... train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands... (Titus 2:3-5)

It's interesting that Paul apparently assumes the qualities he highlights don't come naturally. He says younger women need to be trained in these important areas. They are skills to be taught and learned - one generation passing them on to the next.

Paul's list reminds us of the priority God places on the home. One important takeaway from this passage is that God cares about what happens inside the walls of our houses. Our home life - far from being a separate compartment from our spiritual life and witness - is a foundational way we express the love of God and the beauty of the gospel.

We can't separate our home life from our Christian life without missing something that is critical to our fellowship with God and our usefulness to His mission in the world. When we minimize the importance of Christ-centered homes that put the gospel on display, we shortchange the enormous kingdom impact our life at home is supposed to have.

When Paul exhorted older women to train young women to be "working/keepers at

home," he was living in an entirely different setting than this post-Industrial-Revolution world of ours. It is important that we understand this in order to avoid interpreting passages such as Proverbs 31 and Titus 2 only through the lens of our modern cultural context.

Paul is not mandating that women are only to work at home or that the home is to be their only sphere of influence or investment. He is not prohibiting women from performing tasks outside the home or from being compensated financially for such work. He is not implying that women have no place in the public arena or that they should not contribute to their church, community or culture.

"Working at home" makes clear that women are to work. They are to be gainfully occupied.

The apostle's instruction affirms that the work we do at home matters - not just to ourselves and our families, but to the wider community and to the cause of the gospel.

Even if our culture does not validate the significance of that work, God values it. And even though we may not be rewarded tangibly for it, God will reward our labors. The work we do in our homes has eternal value. So Paul is being strategic for the gospel when he says to women "Don't fumble what matters in eternity."

On Your Own:

Read Psalm 68:5-6. How is God a homemaker?

Read John 14:2-3. How is Jesus a homemaker?

What positive or negative thoughts come to your mind when you read Paul's instructions concerning homemaking?

Where are you tempted to place your identity? In something outside the home or inside the home? Or both? Explain.

Discussion Questions:

- How can homemaking and hospitality point others to spiritual realities and adorn the gospel?
- How can you apply these instructions concerning homemaking to your current season of life?
- What insights and practical skills have you learned in managing your home that you could share with others?
- What are some ways the gospel and the heart of Christ could be put on display through your heart for home?
- In what area could you use some encouragement, training, or practical help to be a more effective keeper/worker at home?

Need Help Lovin' That Man Training Our Hearts for Relationship

*Love through me, Love of God, There is not love in me;
O Fire of love, light Thou the love that burns perpetually.*

Amy Carmichael

Loving husbands is right at the top of the list of what Titus 2 instructs older women to teach young women (v. 4). This is a vital way that married women and mothers live out their commitment to sound doctrine. This is how they adorn the gospel.

Keep in mind that this specific kind of training isn't just for married women. It is a gift for those who contemplate future marriage to glean insight from women who've steered successfully through the marital rapids. Even those who never marry or don't expect to can learn how to develop appropriate relationships with men and how to bless and support the marriages of their friends and family.

This passage is not about physical, romantic love. Instead, the language conveys the idea of being a friend to your husband, being fond of him, acting affectionately toward him, and treating him with your utmost devotion. Enjoying him, finding pleasure in his company, liking him, and loving him. Loving your husband well does more to honor Christ and make the gospel attractive than all our other words and actions combined without that love.

Marriage at its heart is a sacred covenant between a man and a woman designed to display to the world in Technicolor the covenant-keeping character and faithfulness of God Himself. Just as the Bible is the story of the heavenly Bridegroom faithfully seeking out and staying true to His chosen Bride, human marriage is a story intended to draw people toward the gospel, showing them the

love of God through two imperfect individuals whose lives become one in Him and who are devoted to one another for better or for worse, for life.

So, older woman, here's your chance to do something transformational with those hard-fought lessons you've learned as a wife of many years. By passing along your firsthand observations and experiences to a younger woman (married, soon to be married, or one day hoping to be married), God can use both your good days and your bad days to help create better days ahead for yourself and for someone you care about.

Younger woman, you should crave this kind of input, objectivity, and time-tested wisdom. You will be a better wife to your husband and understand him better than you ever thought possible by making use of another woman's experience. Just think of the roadblocks and hurdles you may be able to get past with the coaching and assistance of someone who has walked this path before you.

Ultimately, marriage is about so much more than romance and passion and the discovery of a soul mate. It's about making a covenant commitment to love and then, with God's help and the help of mature women He has placed in our lives for this purpose, getting trained in how to do it. It's about representing the grace of God to your husband as well as to others who watch your devotion in action.

It's about adorning the doctrine of Christ by giving the world a picture of love that never fails.

On Your Own:

Read Proverbs 27:6.

Married women: In what ways are you a faithful friend to your husband? How can you grow in this area?

Single women: Are there times you struggle in the area of holding back the truth in the name of "loving others"?

What warning for relationships do you personally receive from Proverbs 14:1?

Why do you think Titus tells us that women need to be trained how to love their husbands? Doesn't this come naturally?

Do you agree that a wife can learn to love her husband no matter how he acts, what he says, or what he does? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions:

- Can you think of a Christian couple who models strong loyalty, friendship, and love? As you observe them, what can you learn about how that kind of love is cultivated?
- Married women: would your husband say you are his encourager or his editor? What are some practical ways you could encourage and affirm him?
- Single women: How can you honor others' marriage and/or your future marriage through the ways you relate to men?

An Unexpected Blessing Discovering the Strength and Beauty of Submission

*Both women and men get to “play the Jesus role” in marriage.
Jesus in his sacrificial authority, Jesus in his sacrificial submission.*

Kathy Keller

Let's explore God's wisdom in relation to this question of submission in marriage. What does it mean? Why does it matter? How are our lives adorned as we submit to our husbands? How does our submission adorn the doctrine of God?

If you're unmarried and perhaps starting to feel left out, please don't check out. Instead, be grateful for the opportunity to cultivate a submissive heart as a single woman. The principle of submission applies to all of us in one way or another, and understanding it will help you in many different relationships - with parents, children, employees and employers, church leaders and perhaps a future spouse.

We accept the Bible as the pure, authoritative revelation of God and His will. It is the operator's manual for our lives. Therefore, we don't get to pick and choose which parts we like. Submission was God's idea and we can trust that God's ways are good. This is good news. For who better knows how life should function than the Creator Himself?

For a wife, submission means accepting God's good order for her life, just as a husband submits himself to God in accepting God's order for his life. It gives her the privilege of representing the mystery and the beauty of the Son's submission to the Father and of the Church's submission to Christ. Wives, together with their husbands who love them selflessly and sacrificially, put the gospel story on vivid and compelling display.

Our good, wise, loving God would never ask of us something that is not for our ultimate

benefit. If we abandon or reject His good plan, we do so to our own harm, as well as to the harm of others and the gospel itself.

Regardless of how we may feel about it at times, biblical submission is a gracious gift from the Lord. A good thing. A beautiful thing. It's a heart attitude and a way of life to be embraced not only for the glory of God, but also for our own blessing and the blessing of others.

Much of the resistance to this idea comes from a faulty understanding of its meaning. We must confront the misconceptions that exist around this subject. We must align our understanding and practice with what scripture really says because biblical submission - properly understood, faithfully followed, not twisted by abuse - working according to God's design causes blessings to flow from heaven.

Submission has been used as an excuse and cover for bullying or for a kind of spineless acquiescence. We cannot allow those distortions and perversions of submission to derail us. Instead, we eagerly await the day when our great God will right all wrongs and will reward faithfulness to His callings.

He calls us to follow in the steps of our Savior, to hope in God, and to train each other in this biblical truth, trusting in His wisdom, goodness, and love, and experiencing the surprising beauty and power of humble submission.

On Your Own:

Read 1 Cor. 11:3 and Eph. 5:22-23. What do these verses tell us about God's order and submission?

Read 1 Pet. 2:21-3:6. In a healthy, non-abusive relationship, how can a wife apply the example of Christ to their role as a submissive wife?

What do these verses say are the benefits and rewards for submission?

How would you explain submission to a friend who doesn't see it as a blessing?

The principle of submission applies to all of us in one way or another - married or single. Is there a particular area where you need to cultivate a more submissive heart?

Discussion Questions:

- What are some ways you have struggled with biblical submission in your life and/or marriage?
- What does biblical submission look like for you?
- What suggestions do you have for a woman who is struggling with her husband's decision?
- How might a proper understanding of submission to the will of God help you?



WEEK SEVEN

Chapter 13

Life-Givers in Training Embracing the Gift of Motherhood

Mothering is at the essence of womanhood. To live out a life as a nurturer in this self-centered, godless culture will cost you. But the rewards are rich indeed.

Barbara Hughes

If you're a mother - a birth mom, step-mom, adoptive or foster mom, or anyone else actively involved in nurturing children - Titus 2 can help you remember that you've got a vital calling and ministry right in the house with you. It will assure you that your efforts in raising those little ones for His glory are not in vain.

Paul instructed the older women to "train the young women to love their husbands and children." And the kind of love he was talking about was fondness and affection, friendship and enjoyment, taking delight in the objects of our love and finding pleasure in their company.

You may be in the parenting season where delighting takes a back seat to meeting the demands of your children. This can turn the joy of loving children into nothing more than a series of repetitive, thankless duties to be fulfilled day after day. Most people will never see the sacrifices you make to parent your children. Be careful not to let these days pass by without being determined to use them for God's highest and best purposes. Remember the real reason you're doing all this. Don't let the blessings He intends for you in this season to slip through your fingers.

Also remember you have help. You have God's help through His Spirit and God has

chosen to work in your life through other women - Titus 2 women. Women who've been down this road, sharing life lessons they've learned along the way, providing support and encouragement to help guide you through the long days of parenthood.

Older woman, your hardest mothering days may be behind you, but your job is not done yet. Following in your steps are some tired young moms who need you! They need your voice of encouragement calling them to press on in the race. They need your wisdom gained in the trenches. They need your time perhaps to offer them an afternoon break. They need your helping hands to hold a crying baby. They need your love for Jesus and your love for them, inspiring them to love Him and to love their husbands and children.

We women, we givers of life, are called to give life to one another as well as to the children He entrust to our care. When the days are difficult, as they often will be - or even when they're just ordinary and entire days seem to be lived on autopilot - moms can find strength, courage, and wisdom by walking together with other like-hearted women.

As older women train and encourage younger women, the next generation will experience the beauty of Christ's love and their hearts will be captivated by it.

On Your Own:

Read 1 Thess. 2:7-8. What character traits does Paul associate with motherhood?

Which of these traits do you need to cultivate in your life right now? How will you begin?

Read Hebrews 10:24-25. If you are not currently caring for children, list ways that you can support and cultivate relationships with other's children. If you have children, list ways you would love to be supported.

What does it mean to make children a priority but not to put children first?

Discussion Questions:

- Do you know a young mom who is angry or frustrated about mothering? What can you do to encourage her?
- Whether you're called mom, auntie, grandma, or friend, your life can make a difference in another woman's life. Examine your relationships. How can you step up your teaching or mentoring influence in her life? How can you live and encourage her or offer some practical relief?
- Who are the women in your life you can call on for counsel and encouragement?
- How might another woman's insight, prayer, or practical help encourage you right now?

Instruments of Grace Showing a Deeper Kind of Kindness

*Pure kindness flows from God's saving grace and colors our lives
with a joy that is winsomely contagious.*

Mary Beeke

Am I a kind woman? In heart attitudes as well as outward actions? This is a question that pierces us when the Bible holds up a mirror in our family rooms, kitchens and hallways, our cars and minivans and workplaces. At times, instead of kindness and goodness, what we see reflected back is harshness and criticism, barking and berating, touchiness and irritability.

God is not only interested in what we do, He is equally concerned with how we do what we do. He cares about the heart behind our actions.

Paul included an admonition about being kind right in the middle of his core curriculum for women in the church. In fact, "kind" falls right on the heels of "working at home." Paul is saying it's not enough to tend to the tasks and people assigned to us. God also cares about our motives and our disposition. He cares how our service is carried out and how we treat and respond to others.

Older woman, many younger women in your life are tired, frustrated and feel alone in their efforts, as if no one cares about the sacrifice they are making. Their relationships at home and elsewhere are frayed. You are called to model kindness for them and to train these young women to develop a kind heart.

Younger woman, this quality is essential to learn if you want to honor the Lord. It flows out of a sophron mind and a heart that is fixed on Christ, and it makes all the difference in the world, both in your personal well-being and in the atmosphere you create around you.

If we wish to progress together toward the Titus 2 model for women, if we want to adorn the doctrine and gospel of Christ and His beauty to the world, we need a different kind of heart. A "kind" kind of heart.

The woman whose description we know so well from Proverbs 31 is a lovely, biblical model of kindness in action. Wherever this strong, gifted, diligent woman goes, she leaves a trail of goodness and she ministers grace to everyone around her.

Note who benefits first from this woman's industry and goodwill. Her kindness begins at home. With her family. With her inner circle. With those who share her daily life. Her kindness toward her husband is displayed in a daily commitment that remains undiminished with the passing of time.

Kindness at home takes extra effort. Home is where we experience most acutely those daily annoyances and disappointments that tempt us to develop an attitude. Kindness at home requires an extra helping of grace and daily dependence on God and the support of our Titus 2 sisters.

Our kindness may be the window through which those around us are enabled to see His beauty. Kind women, younger and older, paint an exquisite picture of the gospel. Our lives put on display the riches of God's kindness that is meant to lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). This kindness can bring about true transformation in those who experience it through us. This kindness adorns us and the gospel we proclaim.

On Your Own:

Read Luke 6:35. How did Christ model kindness for us? What do we learn from His example.

Read Gal. 6:10. Kindness isn't passive. What are some proactive ways we can bless others?

Read Eph. 4:32. What accompanies kindness? What is the motivation for kindness?

What does it reveal about our hearts when we are kinder to strangers than to those who are related to us?

Discussion Questions:

- Dorcas showed the kindness of Christ by helping the poor and needy around her. How might you use your skills and gifts to show kindness?
- How could you reach out in kindness to a younger woman in a way that would encourage her and help lift her load?
- Would the people who live in your home and work with you consider you a kind woman? Why or why not?
- When we get stretched and overly busy with tasks, it's easier to be cranky than kind. How could meditating on the kindness of Christ be an encouragement and motivation to show kindness when you're in that place.

