

## Season 8: Titus

### Episode 3: Leaders nourished by the good news (1:5-9)

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**Felicity:** We're thankful for New Growth Press sponsoring this season, and I found this book anxious about Decisions by Michael Gambola really helpful. Gambola walks his reader through the biblical basis of decision making, but he doesn't stop there. He delves into the different areas of life in which we struggle with decisions, whether it be marriage or work or anything else. And with pastoral care. And wisdom applies administers God's word to those decisions. He speaks with a counselor's wisdom who knows his God and longs for his readers to be free of unnecessary anxiety. Grab your copy at 10offthose.com.

**Sarah:** Welcome to two sisters in a cup of tea. My name is Sarah, I live in the UK. This is my sister Felicity, she lives in the States. And we are two sisters who decided to press record on our conversations in the Bible back in 2021. Do check out our website to hear more of our story: twosistersandacupoftea.com. But today we're getting into Titus, chapter one, looking at verses five to nine and Felicity, I'm excited. Are you?

**Felicity:** I am excited. I'm excited for Titus. And on a lesser level, I'm pretty excited about my cup of tea.

**Sarah:** What is your cup of tea?

**Felicity:** Well, what I have here is decidedly royal. It is smoky. Earl Gray loose leaf, no less.

**Sarah:** It's the one I gave you. How is it?

**Felicity:** It's good. It's good. And now what? The reason I say it's royal is because this was the late Queen's favorite copper.

**Sarah:** I bought it from a shop where you smell all the teas before you buy it's. Like, smell what's? The try before you buy smell before you buy it was that kind of vibe.

**Felicity:** That sounds like a very good thing. This smells. It's definitely smoky. Most definitely. I feel like I have to sit up a little straighter when I drink it, and it's in my most kind of elegant cup I have.

**Sarah:** Very sophisticated. Yeah. I mean, I was a bit smoky versus floral. I mean, our mum was with us at the time and she said you should go for smoky. Yes.

**Felicity:** I'm glad.

**Sarah:** I'm glad.

**Felicity:** Especially after all your talk of flowery teas. And they were underwhelming, to say the least.

**Sarah:** I know. I'm so sorry about that.

**Felicity:** Tea aside, let me ask you a question, Sarah. We have been talking this season about how, why, what it is to get the Bible open with someone else. Let me ask you a question now. Who should we be getting the Bible open with?

**Sarah:** Brilliant question. The who? I think anyone who just is happy to be talking about the Bible in everyday life and just have that conversation about what are you reading at the moment in your time with the Lord, and how is that for you? I think that's quite a good kind of tells you someone is wanting to talk about things and whether you could talk about it more with someone and get the Bible open with them. I think reading with someone who's really hungry to grow and learn is always a really encouraging thing to do and just it's a really wonderful kind of training opportunity to go deeper. I think reading with someone who's struggling and who is struggling to get the Bible reference themselves is a really beautiful pastoral necessity to get alongside people and just to be that person who's going to open the Bible and tell them and speak that word of truth with them. And then there's reading the Bible with people who don't yet know Jesus, but actually asking them to just look at one of the accounts of Jesus with you and see where it goes. And that's also really thrilling and really exciting. So anyone? Is my answer. You've got anything different to that?

**Felicity:** No. It'll be weird to say that I think anyone is absolutely right. And what's happening as we do that is we're essentially creating kind of word fueled friendships and

knowing that God's Word is powerful, then why wouldn't we want that to be the case that he's at work in those relationships? So it's just so exciting. It's so exciting to do it. I'd really go for it. But talking of word fueled sisterhood, as we have here, let us get the Bible open. So we're in Titus, chapter one, verses five through nine. And just before I read, let's just say we do pray before we press record. We don't do it on air because we only have 20 minutes and our simple aim really, is to get into the text and to drive it to the hearts. But we are praying before we come to the Word. So let me read this. Chapter one, verses five through to nine. The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedience. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless, not overbearing, not quick tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable one who loves what is good, who is self controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that he can encourage others by a sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

**Sarah:** Thank you, Christine. Wonderful. Is it worth just reminding ourselves of the context in which Paul is writing to Titus? Last week we had that wonderful kind of summary phrase, didn't we? That knowledge of the truth leads to Godliness and he's writing to Titus, who's on the island of Crete. And the context actually is given to us in this first verse, isn't it? The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. So Titus is there for a very specific reason in oversight of these churches and to put things into order. What we have here is the instruction. What's interesting is then, it's not instructions of how to do that. The instruction lands on the character of those you're seeking to appoint. And I just think that's a really interesting first musing, as I was looking at it again today.

**Felicity:** Yes, absolutely. Because you'd expect a kind of a little bit of a manual, wouldn't it, how to order churches in this really challenging context. But actually, the character that comes about through holding to the truth that's been spoken of back in chapter one, verse one, as you said. And so, actually, everything that fuels the leaders is what fuels essentially Godliness as a whole. So the good that's going to come about through these churches, through what is happening here in Crete, it all comes back round to that same thing, doesn't it? That the gospel which then shapes character, the character which then brings about order and leadership and healthy churches. Really, I think that's what Titus is being instructed about, is how to order so that they're healthy churches.

**Sarah:** Yes, but isn't it interesting that the first things that he talks about are the home and character and then doctrine? So, yes, his aim is healthy churches, but he starts with healthy home life for these leaders. He starts with half, starts with healthy character for them. And that's just really striking, isn't it, that actually you can't have one without the other. You can't have a healthy church if the rest of life is detached and not also displaying that knowledge of the truth that leads to Godliness in those areas.

**Felicity:** Yeah, so true and so helpful to think about the holistic, the whole person. There's no kind of separate aspect of leadership, but it's the whole person, the whole character, which is the person who leads it. I love when he says in verse seven, since an overseer manages God's household. That the idea. Home and God's household. That's almost kind of conflating the two, isn't it, that this is God's home, and therefore it makes sense how you are in your home will be the same as how you are in God's household. And it's challenging as we read this. I don't know, it's quite a tall order. It seems like quite a tall order for this character.

**Sarah:** Yeah. It says you must be blameless. What does he mean by that?

**Felicity:** Are you asking me?

**Sarah:** Yeah, I am. I mean, does that mean you're not sitting give us a quick view of the word blameless in the Bible. Yes.

**Felicity:** Okay. I think the word blameless comes back to who we are in Christ. Without Jesus, no one is blameless, but in Christ, we are righteous because of him. We're blameless because of him. So actually, the person elder must be blameless faithful to his wife. I wonder whether that really means the elder is the one who is firmly anchored in Christ and

as a result is seeking to walk Christ's way. It's not that he never stumbles, never sins, but actually he's eager to walk that way. And that then is what spawns this kind of character that is being described here. What do you think?

**Sarah:** Yeah, definitely. Well done. It's living out the identity that he's already been given in Christ, isn't it? But there is a striving nature to these commands, particularly thinking about the nature of being self controlled. And there's the knots as well as what you are to do, isn't there? And there is a real kind of emphasis on the self controlled and disciplined, not pursuing dishonest gain, not being violent, not being quick tempered, all of those. There is a striving towards a real kind of letting the gospel really impact every part of your character, every part of your being. And let that be from the moment that you speak to your toddler in the morning, to the moment that you say goodnight to your wife at night, and anyone in between, whether you're married or not, for this elder, it encompasses all relationships in all of life, doesn't it? And I think that is a very challenging thing, but also very encouraging, because you're like, yes, this is who we want leading our churches, isn't it? This is a beautiful picture of someone who is willing to put others first, someone who is willing to walk as Jesus walked and to hold firmly to that trustworthy message. So that the gospel is so saturated in their heart and mind and hands and feet that they're holding firmly to it. And there's no kind of swerving there.

**Felicity:** Yeah, I think you're right. That's so attractive and that is contrary to so much of what we see in the world and so that's a desirable thing. What about as we're reading this, the majority of us are unlikely to be elders, those who are listening, like you and I, what do we do with this, then? Because this isn't for me. I think there's an overlap between the character that is spoken of in the rest of the letter, so it's not entirely separate, is it? So this is a call to Godliness and we're all called to Godliness, but I don't know, sometimes I'm tempted to skip over these verses because I'm that is a really tall order and Phew, that is not for me. What do we do with it as we're listening to it?

**Sarah:** Yeah, I think it's a really good question, isn't it? Because actually, we do know that Paul is writing to Titus as a leader, as an overseer here, and this is the kind of requirements for the leaders. I don't know about you, but I've been sitting in this for a couple of months now. I've been doing with my women's bubble study as well, and just the challenge and spur to be praying for the leaders in our midst in this way. And I feel like my prayer life has shifted in the way that I am seeking to now do that almost daily for not only my husband, who is an elder, but also his fellow elders. And to see my responsibility to love them in that way is to pray for them diligently and to pray that they would be holding firmly to this trustworthy message and that it really would be seeping out of every part of their life. And I think we do ourselves a disservice if we don't think this applies to us in that way.

**Felicity:** That's so helpful and such a challenge, isn't it? Because how quick we are to want to just apply it directly to ourselves, but actually that this would spur us on to pray for that. I love verse nine, that he must hold firmly to this trustworthy message as it's been taught, so that he can encourage others and refute those who oppose it. So, as you were saying, the Gospel which then shapes this character and every part of that then enables a leader to encourage and to refute, which is just so essential to persevering, to keeping going, to being Christian, essentially. I feel like that then really spurs me on even more. I'm like if I want to see Godliness in the church, in the world, even, I need my elders to be like this. And so I want to pray for that more and more.

**Sarah:** Yeah. And then you also want to encourage them, don't you, actually? What does it look like for you to encourage your pastor or your elders with how the gospel is at work? In them, maybe, or in you? And in your life over the last month, the sermons that you've heard, actually just taking a minute to write them a note or to catch up with them at church and say, thank you so much. This is the way the Gospel is impacting me at the moment, and I'm really thankful for that. How much encouragement you can give to a pastor's heart in those kind of ways. And I say that I need to do that more with my husband, who is our pastor. But there's so many ways that we can encourage them to keep being nourished in the Gospel themselves so that that would overflow to those who are receiving it.

**Felicity:** Yeah. So true. So true. I love it in verse eight where we get the positives, we kind of talked a little bit about the nots but the positives as we read this list. We must be hospitable one who loves what is good, who is self controlled, upright, holy and disciplined,

looking out for those characteristics in our elders and encouraging them in that and praising for and delighting in that. Like having a real joy in this character being evident in those that God has put in charge.

**Sarah:** Yeah. And praying for that in up and coming guys, isn't it? And actually, Paul is wanting order to be put in this place and churches to have the right leaders in place. Actually we need to be praying. We want that. We would love that, we would love more churches in our area but actually we've got to be continually praying that people would be raised up to want to serve in this way and for their characters to be blameless in these ways.

**Felicity:** I think it's reassuring, isn't it, that God is in the business of creating the character in this way? Because I know there's a huge disappointment, isn't there, when a leader doesn't do what we expect him to do or in all our current climate. And so coming back again to this is the work of the Lord as the gospel is held out that characters would be shaped in this way and leadership would look like this and so then it again prompts us to pray all the more.

**Sarah:** Prompts us to yeah. And I think that's the heart check on us, isn't it? As we really drive this to our hearts. Actually, am I holding this up as a checklist on my current elders at church and kind of going, oh, I'm not quite sure the clipboard on a Sunday or is this driving me to pray for them and to love them by praying for them and encouraging them to keep striving for this picture. And I think that it might not look very different on the outside, but that heart posture of how I'm choosing to sit under them and encourage them is really important, isn't it, if we want them to lead and serve in this way.

**Felicity:** Well, yes, so true. And will build us up as a result as well. Because if we go the other way just kind of like eats away, doesn't it?

**Sarah:** Yeah. I think we're going to get more into the refuting those who oppose it next time, aren't we? It kind of leads on to the next bit of the chapter but I think just I feel like I'm rambling away today. But one of the last points that really struck me again today was actually to be able to encourage people in sound doctrine is also to be able to refute, isn't it? So to be able to the positive, to be able to encourage, you have to be able to do both to refute it as well and that involves again, being saturated yourself and as the leaders, for them to be continually growing in the gospel themselves. Nourished, in the gospel themselves, that is only going to benefit those who need encouraging and those who need refuting. Yeah.

**Felicity:** Which brings about the discernment which enables both of those things to encourage and to refute.

**Sarah:** Yeah.

**Felicity:** So all in all, a whole lot of prayer, thankfulness for the truth and the work that God is doing through that. Shall I pray for those?

**Sarah:** Yes, do.

**Felicity:** Heavenly Father, I praise you that you give us the gospel.

**Sarah:** Thank you.

**Felicity:** That through the gospel, you shape character and bring about Godliness. Thank you for leaders who reflect that. And we pray, Father, that you would provide more and more leaders who embody that gospel character that we read of here. Please, Lord, would you do a deep work in our hearts in our hearts that we might be praying for that and in the hearts of elders all over the world that this might be true of the leadership of the church. Amen.

**Sarah:** Amen. Thank you, Felicity.

**Felicity:** So much to dwell on.

**Sarah:** I'm excited as we get going in Titus. So next week we're going to be in the next part of chapter one, but in the meantime, do head to our website, Twosistersonacupper Tea. And if you scroll down to the Titus season page and this episode, you will find some show note questions. And there there are just some three or four questions to just help you start the conversation with whoever you decide to talk about Titus with, we really hope they're helpful, and we look forward to seeing you next time.

**Felicity:** Looking forward to it. See you then.

**Sarah:** Bye bye. Bye.

**Felicity:** We're so thankful to New Growth Press for sponsoring this season.