

## Season 8: Titus

### Episode 4: Churches rooted in the good news

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**Sarah:** This season we're so thankful for the sponsorship of New Growth Press Publishers of a powerful little book by Ed Welch called A Small Book about a Big Problem. Meditations on Anger, patience and Peace. In his introduction, Ed encourages you to take the book slowly, reading one of its very small chapters each day, letting the challenge and truths within it really root themselves in your heart. And it is absolutely doing the job in mine. It's a heart-searing read, but in a really helpful way as he shows us more of our problem with anger, peace and patience, and more of the riches of the Gospel in Christ. It's a book that's changing me, challenging me, and comforting me all in one. Grab your coffee at [10ofthose.com](http://10ofthose.com).

**Felicity:** Welcome to two sisters in a cup of tea. My name is Felicity and I'm in the States, and this is my sister Sarah. She's in the U. K. And we are carrying on in our season in Titus, this episode winner jumping back into chapter one, verses ten through to 16. Sarah, great to see you. What is in the cup today?

**Sarah:** Normal cup of tea today, but I've had a bit of a biscuit disaster. It has to be said today.

**Felicity:** Wow. A disaster associated with you.

**Sarah:** Judge for yourself. So someone from our house group left some biscuits here last night, so I offered them to the kids at tea, and they're almond cookies, they're called. And the kids were like one of them was like, I don't like almonds. So exactly how much almond has it got in it? So I can be sure they want it or not. I thought, oh, you should just taste it. So I tasted some first.

**Felicity:** No.

**Sarah:** Can you just look on the ingredients and tell us? Okay, so I looked on the ingredients, and this is what it said. The first ingredient was wheat flour. The second ingredients was sugar. The third ingredients was pork lard. Yes, you heard that right. Pork lard. And it wasn't until the fifth ingredient that almonds came for an almond cookie. When did you ever think that you had to check an almond cookie for meat content?

**Felicity:** That is actually outrageous.

**Sarah:** I just did not expect any funny ever since, it just raises the question, can't believe there's been meat in my cookie tonight.

**Felicity:** Raises the question of how many other meat fueled cookies and biscuits there are out there.

**Sarah:** I don't even want to think about it. Awful. Just dear me, can't believe it. So I've thrown the rest away. Have you wowed them? No one touched them after that. And my husband's allergic, so safe to say no one but you could be.

**Felicity:** Robbing yourself of some future Biscuit Joy. I mean, we don't know how much meat there is in other biscuits.

**Sarah:** There's more than almonds in an almond cookie.

**Felicity:** There.

**Sarah:** That's enough for me. I'm done there.

**Felicity:** I see that right.

**Sarah:** We're talking about some questions this season. Aren't we? Of what it looks like to get the Bible open with others, whether we've been doing it for years or whether we might just be thinking about it for the first time. Felicity, our question today is the how question. How should I get the Bible APHEM with someone?

**Felicity:** Okay, so the how actually getting to the point of you thought it's quite a good idea, and you're thinking, how do I actually go about it? I would say the first thing, pray. Pray for

yourself, to have the boldness. Pray for wisdom as to who to ask. Pray for the opportunity to ask that person. So you've prayed and then you ask. And I think that asking can be something just as simple as, I really like reading the Bible, I like doing it with someone else. Do you fancy it or I heard about it on this podcast. They said it was a good idea. I've never done it. Do you want to give it a go? You can be as low key on that as you like and then pray again. I would say pray before you get the Bible open, because God is then going to work through his word and then actually just read a portion of Scripture, and that can be any bit of scripture, really. A great starting point might be to listen to this podcast together or separately, and then come together and discuss it. We know a number of people who have been doing that, and if that would help to kind of get you into doing it, go for it. That would be a really good way of doing it. What would you add, Sarah? Anything else?

**Sarah:** Yeah, that's a pretty good summary, I think, and emphasis on the prayer, isn't it? God's the one who's going to work and he's the one who's going to thrill your hearts as you open it together. I often just come with some simple questions to ask of a passage as I'm reading it. So asking the what does it say? Just reading it slowly. What does it say? Asking that of one another as you open it up together. Why does it say it? What are the whys? What's going on here? Why is the writer saying something and then asking the so what? So what for the readers then, and the readers now in this room as we chat over a cup of tea, what does it actually mean for my heart right now? So I think, yeah, just some simple questions to get you going. But, yeah, I think you covered it, really with what you said. Yeah. Should we do it? Should we get in?

**Felicity:** Let's do it, yeah. Would you mind reading for us, Sarah?

**Sarah:** I'd love to. So we're in chapter one and we're reading verses ten to 16. For there are many rebellious people full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the Circumcision group. They must be silenced because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach. And that for the sake of dishonest gain. One of Crete's own prophets has said it cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy, gluttons. This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply so that it will be sound in the fate and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. To the pure, all things are pure. But to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

**Felicity:** It's quite an ending there, isn't it?

**Sarah:** Doesn't mince his words.

**Felicity:** No, but let's go back to the beginning. So we have this contrast, don't we? So last passage we were being presented with, this is what is good, this is what a good Gospel leader looks like. And here we have the opposite. We have the problem, basically. So what is the rebellion? So we've got verse ten, therefore there are many rebellious people. Do you want to just help us see what the problem is?

**Sarah:** Yes. So I think the problem well, the problem is there's many rebellious people. They're full of nonsense, they're full of meaningless talk and deception. They're intentionally deceiving whole households by what they're teaching for the sake of dishonest gain. So the heart motivation, the character behind what they're doing is really deceitful, it's really disruptive, it's very dangerous in what they're doing. But the big surprise of the rebellion, if you read it at the end of verse ten, especially those of the Circumcision group, this is a group that look like they're doing good things. This is a group that are religious. This is a group who seem to be the obedient ones, the ones who are going above and beyond the law and who are not what you'd typically class as rebellious.

**Felicity:** Isn't that so surprising? I think for the listeners it would have been, because even in verse twelve we have this kind of one of Crete's own prophets said, cretans are liars, evil bricks. And I can imagine the Circumcision group, the religious kind of legalist being like those Cretans. That's what they're like. And Paul here is saying, do you know what? You belong in that crowd.

**Sarah:** Lumping them in the same box as the licentious kind of behavior of the culture around them.

**Felicity:** Yeah, which is I think that is so clarifying for us that both of those things licentiousness, meaning that you're just doing whatever you like and then legalism. So you're just sticking to kind of essentially human instruction or like religious instruction rather than grace. How would you define legalism?

**Sarah:** I think he does for us here in verse 14, he says, pay no to Jewish myths or to merely human commands. And what is it doing as they do that they're rejecting the truth. So actually, religious legalism here is the is a belief and your actions that are actually rejecting the knowledge of the truth that leads to Godliness. He kind of says that in verse 14 and it can he then kind of it gets more and more damning as he goes down, doesn't it? By the end, he says in verse 16, they claim to know God, but by their actions they deny Him. They're detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good. What an indictment by that point, I.

**Felicity:** Think that's really helpful. So going against the truth, like you're denying the truth. And what we've heard as we've been going through this chapter is the truth is the thing which leads to Godliness, and that's the gospel hitting the heart. And so then if you're not running with the gospel, which is essentially grace through Jesus, you're going for the externals rather than the internals. It's not that you're kind of vaguely on the same path, actually, that is taking you in an opposite direction.

**Sarah:** Yes. Because whilst your words may claim to know God, your actions you're denying Him. And that's just stark, isn't it? That is a really stark description, and I think it's really stark that he uses the word detestable. And I think we've just been in a big season in Deuteronomy, haven't we, where detestable was used frequently towards the hideous idolatry in the nations around them. And to use such a powerful word to describe the legalists here, to describe those rebellious people who are paying attention to human commands and Jewish myths over and above the knowledge of the truth is really dangerous, what they're playing with, isn't it?

**Felicity:** Yes. And I read that and I hear that and I think, oh, no, but I have some legalist tendencies, I think. Is it worth just clarifying that in verse eleven here?

**Sarah:** They're teaching things they want to teach.

**Felicity:** And that for the sake of dishonest gain. So it's not just we're all tempted towards legalism, aren't we? I'm just making a blanket assumption there that you're the same as me on this, but actually there is a malicious intent behind this in the kind of dishonest gain. There's a bit of a power play going on, would you say? Like, so there's a warning to us about our legalism?

**Sarah:** Yeah, definitely there's a warning, but you've got to take the motives behind this. Legalism are really dishonouring to anyone around them. They're disrupting whole households and it's for the sake of dishonest gain. There's nothing good about what they're doing and there's nothing, there's nothing. And I guess that's the striking thing, isn't it? How obvious was it? How obvious was it to the Church? Because they can't be displaying the characteristics of what we've just seen in the elders above, and yet they might have been kind of faking, some of them, you don't know. But actually what they're doing, he says it's unfit for doing anything good. It's completely worthless. If you're not kind of rooted in the truth, it's completely worthless. It's not producing anything that's good and it's not being helpful at all in any way. It's really sobering. But yeah, I think it's the motive behind what they're doing. I think like what they were saying last time, you can't just draw a straight line to the elders and you actually know, we were saying, actually the driving to our high is first pray for our leaders. And actually I think that is one of the applications again here because leaders need to be able to discern when there are false teachers in the midst, don't they? They need to be able to discern so that verse 13, they can rebuke them sharply. And actually, if you're not rooted in the truth yourself as an elder, as a leader of a church family, if you're not rooted and established and nourished by that gospel and continuing to grow in it, there's no way that you can spot when fakes are in your midst.

**Felicity:** Yeah, that's so true. And I love actually the second half of verse 13 there rebuke refute so that they will be sound in faith and will pay attention. There's a kind of bringing back, isn't there, like this rebuking, like discerning and spotting it and calling it out would then have the effect of bringing someone back to the truth, the real truth. So there's hope in the midst of it rather than it being a kind of that's it, you're done.

**Sarah:** Yeah, that's so right, actually. That is real grace, isn't it? It's not just rebuke them and be done with them, is it? Yeah, it's so that they will be sound in the face. Yeah, I hadn't really seen that in that way before. That's really helpful.

**Felicity:** So let's kind of drive it to our hearts a little more. So really helpful to get going on that idea of praying for our elders to have discernment and I think to have boldness to call out the false teaching. I think it's really helpful to see the impact of it that kind of prompts more desire for the truth, I think, for Godliness. I was thinking as I was mulling on it this week, while we're not quite in the same bracket as these kind of dishonest gain legalists, I definitely am tempted towards legalism or rule keeping externals in order to better things. I think this has prompted me to go back to the gospel, like go back to God's work through the truth rather than my own actions.

**Sarah:** Yeah. And I think that is it, isn't it? Like we're all tempted to kind of do that tick box part of our faith to say, oh, I'm done for the day, I've read my Bible and I'm afraid and okay, on with my day kind of thing. And that's just a very simple part of a tick box Christianity in that way, isn't it? But actually the fact that the power of changed hearts is all in the knowledge of the gospel and growing in our knowledge of the gospel. That is the thing that leads to Godliness in chapter one, verse one. That is the thing, that is the fuel, that is the motivation for any ways that we are going to grow in Godliness and do good to others. And the moment that we rely on ourselves and on a human command to enable that work to happen is the moment that we're actually denying the truth of the gospel, aren't we? That we can't do it without God at work. And I love just going back to chapter one, verse two. The gospel is from the God who does not lie. He is the God of truth. And so what these false teachers are doing, they're denying the truth by lying, being dishonest. And so of course Godliness isn't going to flow from that. And I think just the more that we grasp that Godliness can only flow from the gospel impacting our heart, the more that we'll want to strive to be growing in that gospel, won't we?

**Felicity:** Yeah, I think that's right. And I think if you take our passage today, in the passage last week, the attractiveness, the contrast between Godliness and ungodliness is so stark, isn't it? And it makes me want to be Godly, it makes me want to have Godly elves. It makes the Godliness that comes from the truth all the more appealing and so I'm more desiring of it. I'm prompted to run back to the truth again and again if externals don't bring about good. I really want good. I really want the Godliness that's described here in the first half of chapter one. So I think it kind of just pushes me back again to that same truth.

**Sarah:** Yeah, definitely. And pushes you back just trying to drive that a bit more to a heart actually. It pushes me back to realize I'm not those things without the Lord desperately at work in my heart because going back to that NIST in chapter one and the kind of general call in the letter for Godliness and doing good, I'm so far from that. But actually in his grace and by his strength I can strive to aim towards the blamelessness that we already are in Christ, isn't it?

**Felicity:** Do you want to pray for us, Sarah? In that way?

**Sarah:** Yeah, I'd love to. Father, we thank you so much that you give us these warnings in your word in these letters that help us to really see what's at stake when the gospel is not motivating and fueling hearts. Lord, we pray. We pray for churches around the world. We pray for our own churches. Lord, the gospel is at stake. Eternal life is at stake when false teachers pursue dishonest gain and are full of meaningless talk and deception. And so we pray for elders. We pray, lord, please, would you help them to be discerning that they would be so grounded in the truth that they would be able to rebuke those they see who are false teaching. Lord, you pray for real desire in church families to keep growing in Godliness as they see the value of rooting themselves in the knowledge of the gospel, because that is the thing that will lead to Godliness. Lord, you pray this for your glory. Amen.

**Felicity:** Amen. Thank you, Sarah. It's definitely not Deuteronomy, isn't it? We're already one chapter in. There's only two more chapters to go.

**Sarah:** But it's full, I think. Do you find in Deuteronomy we're doing that a few chapters at a time and we're suddenly only doing a few verses and it's different. It's a different kind of thing, isn't it? Talking about it, it just is a different vibe. And what's going to happen is that we'll just get into it and then it'll be like the end. Yeah.

**Felicity:** So true. So true. Well, if you've been enjoying this season or any season, please do leave us a rating and a review wherever you listen to your podcast, it just helps more people hear about us and get into the word for themselves. And we will see you next time. Looking forward to it.

**Sarah:** See you next time. Bye. We're so thankful for the sponsorship of New Growth Press this season.