

## Season 8: Titus

### Episode 6: Women Loving with the Good News: A Conversation with Natalie Brand

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**Sarah:** We're so thankful to New Growth Press Publishers for sponsoring this season. And I'd love to tell you about a devotional they've recently published called Take Heart by the late David Powlinson. Drawn from his many decades of writing, teaching and speaking, take Heart is a year long devotional journey into the process of biblical change, as Powlinson characteristically grounds the truth of God's word into each and every corner of our hearts and minds. I've been reading one each evening and I'm really appreciating his grounded wisdom that clearly and faithfully helps me to fix my eyes on Jesus again and again. Grab your copy at [10ofthose.com](http://10ofthose.com).

**Felicity:** Welcome to two sisters and a cup of tea. My name is Felicity, I'm here in the States. I'm here, as ever, with my sister Sarah. She's in the UK and we're delighted to have with us Natalie Brand. Natalie is going to be helping us to dig into Titus a bit further and consider what it looks like to encourage one another in that sound doctrine that's been evident throughout the whole letter. Natalie, welcome.

**Natalie:** Thank you so much. It's a great privilege to be part of this.

**Felicity:** Well, we're glad to have you along. For those of you who don't know Natalie, she is a mum of three. She's a writer, she's a PhD holder. She used to lecture with Union School of Theology. I mean, you are someone with a multifaceted life. What is your everyday look like at the moment?

**Natalie:** Mostly pulling dirty washing out of the basket. Oh, my goodness. Been there for about a year. And stopping the machines and walking our dog and listening to Two Sisters and a cup of Tea on the dog walk. Yay. It makes those dog walks so much more edifying.

**Felicity:** Yeah.

**Natalie:** So picking up kids and delving into reading, that will inform my writing, but generally it's just kind of everyday stuff at home.

**Sarah:** Amazing. Natalie, do you have a particular cup of tea choice that you would go for to accompany you any everyday?

**Natalie:** Yes. Yorkshire decaf is the only tea I will drink.

**Felicity:** Decaf, really?

**Natalie:** Yeah. So I basically am addicted to coffee, but lawyerly covenantly related to tea, so I'm committed to tea. So coffee is like up to lunchtime, and then after that it's decaf tea and nobody can do it. Like Yorkshire tea.

**Sarah:** Very good. It's true, it's true.

**Felicity:** I would agree. We're Yorkshire.

**Sarah:** What about biscuit choice? Anything to go alongside your Yorkshire decaf?

**Natalie:** Well, this is how committed I am to you girls, because I went out and bought some biscuits yesterday, because we don't really buy biscuits because we have two CDX in the house, so we're a gluten free household. But I have got a gluten free Rich tea here for Dunk. Now, I'm but I'm Presbyterian, but when it comes to biscuits and tea, I'm fully baptistic.

**Felicity:** Oh, yeah.

**Natalie:** Interesting. Sarah?

**Sarah:** Yes, I am. But wouldn't do it, like, right now while I'm recording, because I feel like the mess situation might kind of.

**Natalie:** The.

**Felicity:** Drop off is the problem when you start with a crummy cup of tea.

**Natalie:** I know about timing. With tea any more than 10 seconds is dangerous.

**Felicity:** Some expertise over here. And I've never even thought about the gluten free aspect of impact.

**Sarah:** How does that impact the dunking? Actually, the gluten gluten I don't know.

**Natalie:** I think yeah, I mean, we were counting yesterday in prep for today, and I think it was all right. I mean, my little one was counting to 20 very fast avoid of counting. That's interesting. We maybe we need to do some experiments.

**Felicity:** We'll be employing you further in this matter. So, Natalie, the book that we have really enjoyed, we love that you've written more than one book, but the most recent book you've written is called Priscilla, Where Are You? And we've both really enjoyed this book. We really love the title and the subtitle. So. Priscilla, where are you? A call to Joyful theology. And for those of you who haven't come across this book, it's a little one published by Union. And Natalie, can you tell us why you wrote it? What's behind the title? What's your hope for this book?

**Natalie:** Thank you. Good question. So I was working for Union School of Theology, lecturing with them for about 1415 years. And then when the girls started school, I kind of became more of a faculty member, took on more of a weekly role, and people kept asking me, why should women study theology? This question kept coming up, could you do a talk on why women should study theology? Which made me think, okay, well, maybe we need a book on this. It's interesting that that's even a question. It seems obvious to so many of us. I wanted to write something a little that would encourage women to that role, to that vocation, to that appetite, if you like, of studying the things of God. But Priscilla has always been an amazing kind of legacy in the Word that I've seen a character that we see only glimpses of, but she has this interlude with Aquila and Apollo in Acts 18. And it's so profound because you kind of leave Priscilla, but you see Apollos then become this great apologist and evangelist and coworker of Paul's, and you kind of think, okay, they're in Acts 18. If Aquila and A, Priscilla hadn't drawn him aside, they saw this young, eloquent preacher. We read it in Acts 18 where they're in Ephesus. They've just left Corinth with Paul. They meet this chap. Paul's gone on to Asia Minor. They meet this chap. They hear he's eloquent, he's passionate, he knows the things of the Lord. But there were some deficiencies in his theology. He didn't know John's baptism. He didn't know that Christ had superseded John's baptism of repentance, trinitarian baptism in the Father of the Son and the Holy Spirit. And so Priscilla and Aquina pull Apollos aside and quietly kind of correct his theology. And I just think that's a profound thing because, you see, Apollos then wrote to Corinth and they recommended him, and he went to Corinth and he became this leading evangelist. Bruce says he was the leading chap to refute the Jews and to say that Christ was the Messiah. So this guy had amazing legacy, theological church legacy, gospel legacy, but it was rooted in Priscilla's because she and her husband, Aquila, took time to correct a brother in the Lord and see the gaps in his theology and lead him into places of truth. So I thought, you know, she's a great character and we need more people like her. We've never needed Priscilla more than we do now. So that kind of where the title came from, that kind of visceral. Priscilla, where are you? Where are the women who are standing up for truth, who are diving deep into Scripture, and they're not afraid to do the hard work. They want to exercise their muscles in their head and love the Lord in truth, with heart and with mind? So that's where the book has come from.

**Sarah:** That's wonderful. And it is such a helpful book. And what's really helpful is that you managed to kind of bring all that detail, Natalie, into a really manageable sized book. It's so rich. Every page, every paragraph feels so rich, and yet it's a short little book that you can pick up and really, you can read in one sitting, and it's wonderful in that way. So, Natalie, we're currently in a season in Titus, and as we've been reading your book, we've been struck how it seems to kind of spring out of the kind of Titus two themes. As people are commanded to love and serve one another with sound doctrine, I wonder whether you're just able to help us draw those lines between what you're talking about there and what Paul is talking about in Titus.

**Natalie:** Yeah, that's a really great question. Titus is obviously brought up in the book because there's so much in there packed full. So in the opening, in Paul's opening, he gives himself away. Why is he writing Titus? For the sake verse one of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, that's their doctrine which accords with Godliness, which is their spiritual life. So he's already connecting doctrine with the Christian life, and that's why he's writing to them. He's writing to Titus because he wants the church in Creek to grow in truth and to grow in Godliness. Those things are not disconnected in his mind. Yeah, and as

you say, the sound doctrine is a strong theme. It's there in chapter one, verse nine, and chapter two, verse one. And then he also uses the term sound faith, verse 13 of chapter one and verse two of chapter two. They're talking about sound doctrine of sound faith. The book is about discipleship, isn't it? I mean, I'm sure you guys have been doing. Your series have seen that it's about discipleship, but it's about sound doctrine being doctrine that is lived out in Godliness. So the discipleship is us growing in the things of the Lord, in God truth in fact about God reality about God and the gospel in Jesus Christ, and appropriating that, applying that in every moment of our Christian life. So how we are saved, our salvation is therefore linked and connected intricately with our spirituality. They're not separate things, they're entirely related. And sound doctrine is this word, the Greek root word is where we get the word hygienic. So it's healthy false. And doctrine, it's not false. There's no false teaching, there's no gaps, there's no error. It's germ free. It's biblical sound doctrine. And sound doctrine has to be lived out, doesn't it? Calvin says that in order for doctrine to be fruitful to us, it must overflow into our hearts, spread into our daily routines and truly transform us within. And that is the vision of what that's what Paul is saying to Titus, isn't he? That in sound doctrine and sound faith we're going to walk out mature lives, Godly lives, that will adorn the doctrine of God? Yeah. And so the book, Priscilla, there's so much stuff there that you see, I can see in Titus that there's this one another that you're discipling one another in truth and growing together in truth and in love for the Lord. Yeah, it's super profound.

**Felicity:** So helpful. And I think making that connection between sound doctrine, biblical truth, that kind of I love that phrase, germ free. Like this is exactly the gospel as it should be. And therefore then that then impacts the way we live our lives. When you were speaking earlier about what Priscilla was all about, you used the word theology quite a lot. Can you just draw theology through that? So when you say theology, I think many of our listeners, we think, well, I'm not a seminary, I'm not a theological college. What does this mean? How does theology kind of connect to what you're saying? Can you just kind of draw the meaning through there for us?

**Natalie:** Yeah, that's super helpful question. So theology is the study of God. It's where we get the word is theo is God and Logos word. So it's the study of God. So I would say that theology is a pursuit or an appetite of the Christian as we study God, as we seek to know the God that we love, the God who has redeemed us and made us his own. And doctrine is the thing that we study in the pursuit of theology. Doctrine are those biblical truths. I read something great this morning from Scott Swain. He says the trying God is the ultimate source of doctrine. So we study God in theology. That's the pursuit of God digging deep into the things of God. And doctrine is the truth and he is the source of that truth. He is that very truth and salvation in Christ and on all the lavishness that we have in our salvation.

**Felicity:** I love that. That is such a helpful that's such a helpful line to draw and taking us through to doctrines are really helpful. I think one of the things that come through Titus so much is this everyone has that truth and so therefore this pursuit of theology in terms of the love and knowledge of God and then also the living out of that doctrine that is for everyone who has the gospel. Therefore the impact what we've really noticed that we've been going through is just this kind of it's into every crevice of life. That the truth and therefore every person has that. And the impact is everywhere. We love that. You talk about joyful theology alongside this challenge to kind of robust, to be more robust and deep in that thinking that you're talking about. That theological thinking. But what does that look like in everyday life? I think we can sense it a bit in the way you're speaking there's clearly great joy as you've spent much of your life pursuing these things. But how can we grow in the joy? What's the source of the joy? I thought that was a really striking subtitle to the book there. So can you help us with that?

**Natalie:** Yeah. So just to back up a little bit on the prior question you said about people don't feel that they're theologians. Theologians are theologians for the vocational, the preachers and the academics and everything. I just wanted to say that one of the key things in Priscilla was this quote from John Owen and he says that all true Christians are God's theologians, which I think is wonderful. He's not just saying all Christians are theologians, but all Christians are God's theologians in a sense that we have been given our brains to put the sharp end of our intellect into who he is. That is why we have been given those

faculties. And we know that because the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Well, best do we do that by searching more about who he is and glorifying Him as we push hard into him. That's a great, great thing. Owen also said in answer to your latter question, he said that if we do not love God, we are outsiders to theology. So that means that there are plenty of PhDs and theologies walking around the halls of Cambridge and Oxford who aren't actually theologians because it's all about the academics. They don't love the Lord. I mean, there's plenty of those who do theology as a career, but they don't love the Lord. But Owen is saying if you love the Lord, then you are God's theologian. So we cannot disconnect love for the Lord and theology and yeah, I mean, so the one thing in the book that I really wanted to think about is kind of an illustration for what is theology. What we doing when we deep, deep, and that's exactly what we are. We're mining into the rock that is the Lord. And we get a pick and we get a shovel and we work hard, and sometimes it's strenuous, and you're like, I cannot make my way through all of this book. Which is why I tend to write small ones because I don't have very good stamina in relation to reading. I can't read a book cover to cover at all. So we're exerting ourselves. It is hard work. It's not easy. But when we hit gold, it's so rewarding. And that gold. The gold in theology is God himself. So there have been times in the last 1015 years of my study when I found something new about the Lord and just been driven to my knees in wonder. That's the gold in theology. Bavink said that mystery in theology is the lifeblood of the Christian life. And it's so true. There's nothing quite like when you're plodding spiritually and you're dry and you're lukewarm in your faith. It's really hard to be lukewarm in your faith if you're finding out these new mysteries and wonders about our living God and you hit this mysterious country of divine impossibility or divine simplicity or God never changes and God doesn't suffer. And what does that mean? And what's happening in the person of Christ as two natures are fused into this one person and all these great mysteries, that is how we love the Lord. There's this wonder that is just so thrilling and exhilarating spiritually as we seek to love the Lord. So, yeah, I think that actually theology can move you into more of a robust phrase and worship, and we're not spiritually bought.

**Sarah:** It's just wonderful to hear you talk, Natalie, and hear your enthusiasm. It's wonderful. But what I love in Titus is the sound doctrine overflows into everyday life with others, doesn't it? So, actually, to grow in this joyful theology, to grow in our sound faith, is to pass it on, is to proclaim it to others, is to live side by side with others and share the riches that you have found and discovered. But it doesn't stop with just you discovering something new, does it? And I love in your book, you kind of really take us to that as well. It's all about the digging of the treasure and then proclaiming it and sharing it with others. And it's just wonderful in that with the language that Titus uses of the women, teaching women and growing together, what are some really practical ways we can help encourage one another to grow in our theology together, and what are the benefits of doing it with others?

**Natalie:** Yeah, that's such a great question, because we all know the Titus team mandate. We all know that it's what we want to do. We want to see it in our churches. But what does that look like? And I think, like you say, I think women studying the Word together, whether it's just two women cracking over their Bibles, open their Bibles and praying and asking the Holy Spirit who inspired the Word, to illuminate it to them, I think that's a wholly profound thing. There's something about women getting together under the Word. I think the earth shakes when women do that because it's so profound. Like, women are hungry. So many women are hungry for truth, hungry for the Word, hungry to see how it appropriates in their life. So, yeah, I think the reason we do it together is because it's more enjoyable. We have fellowship. We confess our sins to one another. We open the Word, and the Spirit is tuning us and sanctifying us as he rides on the Word that we're reading. But we have to respond to that. And if you're reading it with a good friend or someone that you respect, you can say, actually, this is a real problem in my life. I've been really convicted, as we've been reading this, about this. You can't confess it to yourself in quite the same way we are told in the New Testament to confess our sins. So if you're reading it with somebody else, you can have that opportunity to actually verbally confess and ask for prayer and have that support. And. That's the Titus too. That's the let's grow together. Let's understand that this is a corporate book and we grow in community and stirring up one another to love and to good

works. Hebrews Ten. It's really interesting. If you look at verse 23, he says, let's hold fast the confession. So that's the theology. And then in the next verse, stirring up one another in loving works. So that's stirring up that's the corporate sense, being together in community. And then verse 25, not neglecting to meet together. So he's saying this confession, this working hard theologically, we do this together, we meet together. But also, if we're growing to become rock solid women doctrinally together, we're going to be doing what Priscilla did to Apollo. We can see holes in each other's theology. I love it when you guys are doing your podcast and you push back on each other and that's very warning like, oh, yeah, actually, I've never thought of it that way. Probably could have a Rich tea biscuit for every time I've heard you guys say that. That's why it's so important, because if we don't get that interaction or that dialogue when we're just studying by ourselves, but if we're somebody else iron sharpens iron, and we're able to correct gaps and cultural understandings that are not biblical and even heresy, and we're able to protect each other theologically. So, yeah, it's a profound thing.

**Sarah:** So helpful. That really kind of resonates with us, doesn't it feel? Because it's just so valuable getting together and cheering on God's Word and knowing that something extraordinary is happening as you open these or as the Coronation described it, these lively oracles of God. It is an extraordinary thing to get it open. Let me push you a little bit further, Natalie. A number of people would feel that just in a really stretched season, whether that's exhaustion, whether that's parenting, whether that's mental health, whether that's work pressures, just the reality of doing this feels a step too far. Adding something else into what is already a very overwhelming kind of life season. So thinking of that context but also thinking of the person who just really struggles to get a book open and read, actually for them that is a real battle and therefore this feels like there's a lot of barriers to be able to find this a joyful thing. I wonder whether you can just speak into those contexts and help think through what practically what every day this could look like for them.

**Natalie:** Yeah, I think we're so resourced now. We were almost over resourced in what we can do. 1012 years ago when I had a baby, there wasn't things out there now, so you can log onto a podcast such as this while you're literally sat down feeding a baby for 2 hours because they fall in asleep in the middle of the feed and your soul can be fed. Or like me, if you can go on a dog walk and you think dead time okay, I'm exercising, I'm exercising the dog, but I want to do something else. It's like log onto a podcast and have your tightest two women in your ears. And I think there's so much can be said about Audio Bible. I'm terrible for my mind wandering and I think, okay, I want to sit down and read this book of the Bible. But I always think about my list of things to do as I'm doing it. So I find I put David Sushi or somebody on YouTube to read it, and I'm reading it physically and he's reading it out loud. And sometimes they do get a bit, but that's just so much, so helpful in getting to the end of the book without thinking, okay, the machine's gone. I need to change machine node or whatever it may be or and now I need a cup of tea. If you listen to audio Bible app and read it along at the same time and it's amazing because it goes in multifaceted way, like your senses are involved and you see things in a different way and you hear things in a different way. And I would say that I think if you're meeting up with a friend and you're both juggling toddlers, but you really want to spend time in the word together once a week, don't feel you have to do a whole chapter, just do one verse. And that's okay, because it's actually about the word, not about how much of it you read. And there's nothing like and I know you guys would agree chewing over one verse and the word, and then you're able to memorize together. And even if you just do that for ten minutes, let's just talk about this one verse, and that is going to feed you so profoundly. So, yeah, podcast, small books, which I think believe ten of those are pretty good at small books.

**Felicity:** No, I think that's really helpful. And hearing you talk about essentially snippets in life you don't need because I think we hear your resume and we hear you talking about theology and things and it can maybe seem like you need to have some kind of level of qualification or you need to have chunks of time like you might have if you're in academia or whatever. But actually, the reality of theology can be done in because theology is the love and pursuit of the Lord and the joy that comes out of that and the sound doctrine that comes out of that, then that can be done in snippets. Like, rather than, you can do it in 20 minutes, you don't need an hour, 3 hours. And I think that's just a real game changer, isn't

it? I think in terms of the achievability of it, and as you say, God is powerfully at work through His Word. It's not about how long the Word is open for. It's, actually. God is at work through his word.

**Sarah:** And we're going to be, you know, as we meet up with people, we're going to be sharing what's on our heart, aren't we? That's the nature of who we are. So actually, the more we consume little snippets of God truth of theology, the more that we're going to be able to be edifying and helpful to those that we meet up for a coffee or a walk or just even quick voice note, whatever it is, actually just thinking actually there's a real opportunity to impact just through the little snippets of life. And I think that's the excitement of seeing it lived out in Titus, isn't it? That it's not just a Sunday service, it's the everyday moments, watching one another do life with sound doctrine playing out into being eager to do good works for the sake of the Lord. And it's thrilling in that, isn't it? I think it's really, really exciting. Natalie, time already has flown and we can wrap up already. Would you pray for us and our listeners, please, as we close?

**Natalie:** I would love that. I would love that. Thank you, Father God. We thank you so much for your word. We thank you for this sword, this living Word, that you are grieving us by Your Holy Spirit's power. We thank you for this gift that you have given us that is available to our touch every day, to our eyes every day, to hear every day. And Lord, help us love Your Word so that we may love you and glorify you in every aspect of our life. Lord, give us an appetite for theology. Lord, give us an appetite for Titus Two, that we can want, even just for five minutes, to share the Word together and grow up in that way, to be rooted and established in Christ in that way. Lord, give us this appetite that is natural to a Christian to know more of you and who you are and all your wonder and all your mystery. We thank you, we praise you, we adore you. You are the best and you taste better than anything else. And Lord, we pray for these girls as they do this great podcast. Thank you so much for them and pray that Felicity and Sarah would continue being tightest to women from this great podcast. We thank you. That and we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

**Felicity:** Amen. Thank you so much.

**Sarah:** Natalie.

**Felicity:** Just wonderfully helpful. Anyone listening and you're maybe thinking, okay, I'm inspired, I'm going to give it a go. We would just really encourage you. Grab a friend, give it a go. Like, what can go wrong? Pray and read the word. And do grab a copy of Natalie's book from ten of those.

**Sarah:** Natalie, thank you. Bye.