Living with Opposition

Believers are accountable for rejecting false teachers and teachings.

TITUS 1:1-5,10-16

MEMORY VERSE: TITUS 1:2

READ Titus 1:1-16, First Thoughts (p. 114), and Understand the Context (pp. 114–115). As you read, focus on how to stay true to the gospel no matter the circumstances.

STUDY Titus 1:1-5,10-16, using Explore the Text on pages 115–119. Develop a summary statement of what was happening in the churches of Crete that prompted Paul to write this letter.

PLAN the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 120–121). Tailor the plans for your group using More Ideas (p. 122). Consider creative ways to use the Suggested Music Idea (p. 122) that are appropriate for your group.

GROW from the weekly podcast on Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

GATHER the following items: □ Personal Study Guides. Prepare to display the following Pack Items: □ PACK ITEM 1 (Map: The World of Paul, Timothy, and Titus); and □ PACK ITEM 4 (Poster: 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9). Make copies for the group of: □ PACK ITEM 11 (Handout: Titus: A Snapshot); and □ PACK ITEM 12 (Handout: Paul’s Letters).
KEY DOCTRINE

Evangelism and Missions
It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ (Acts 10:42-48).

BIBLE SKILL

Create a chart of contrasts within a passage.

Create two columns. In one column, list the qualities Paul required of Titus and the Cretan pastors (Titus 1:1-9a). In a second column, write the characteristics of the Judaizers who were trying to corrupt the people (Titus 1:9b-16). What insights do you gain by comparing the two lists?

FIRST THOUGHTS

Whether we like it or not, truth contains a measure of intolerance. The gospel truth is graciously liberating and offered to whoever wants it, but it also has a measure of intolerance because no one can be right with God except by trusting His Son as Savior. People may view the truth as narrow-minded, but that does not change the reality of truth. We must remain faithful to the truth, knowing that some will reject that truth, and we are called to continue to love them regardless.

(In PSG, p. 100) In what ways can believers uphold the gospel message while respecting the rights of others who hold a different belief?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

TITUS 1:1-16

Letters written to long-time companions often combine personal sentiment and practical encouragement. Such was Paul’s epistle to Titus. Titus enjoyed a close relationship to the man who claimed him as his “true son” in the faith. Paul used a similar expression concerning Timothy, although Timothy had already become a believer before meeting the apostle (1 Tim. 1:2; Acts 16:1). In Titus’ case, Paul likely led him to Christ.

Like Timothy, Titus accompanied Paul on numerous missionary endeavors. Paul was grieved when he did not find Titus during his visit to Troas, but was comforted when he arrived in Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6). Titus represented Paul to the Corinthians and reported back to Paul their reaction to Paul’s letter (2 Cor. 8:6-18,23; 12:18).

Earlier, Titus accompanied Paul and Barnabas in visiting the apostles in Jerusalem some fourteen years after Paul’s initial visit (Gal. 2:1-3). A Gentile, Titus came under pressure during that visit because he was uncircumcised. Paul stood firm on Titus’s behalf as he maintained his mission to the Gentiles.

Although Titus would eventually be sent to Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10), his primary ministry took place in Crete. The biblical timeline places Titus, and perhaps Timothy, on a trip with Paul through Crete and Ephesus. Paul left Titus in Crete and Timothy in Ephesus while he traveled on to Macedonia. Sometime between Paul’s first and second letter to Timothy, he penned this pastoral epistle to Titus.

Similar to First Timothy, Paul’s letter to Titus established guidelines for Titus’s ministry. As a church planter, Titus was responsible for starting new churches around the island of Crete. Since these new believers needed guidance in the faith, he helped with the selection and preparation of the various pastors. Paul’s list of qualifications for ministers was similar to...
those mentioned in First Timothy. Unlike First Timothy, the opening chapter of Titus addresses only pastors. This omission does not mean that the churches of Crete would not have deacons.

Another resemblance between Titus and First Timothy involves Paul’s caution against false teachers and others who harmed the church. Certain greedy men had infiltrated the churches, teaching myths and superstitions to defraud the people financially. Consequently, both Titus and the pastors he appointed had to have impeccable character. This first chapter combines both sentiments within Paul’s opening instructions, providing encouragement for churches today.

**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

**SERVANT’S HEART (TITUS 1:1-3)**

**VERSES 1-2**

Paul began his letter in a style typical to his other epistles. He identified himself first as a *servant of God* and secondly as an *apostle of Jesus Christ*. The term *servant* refers to a bond slave of God. Tying the two phrases together, Paul indicated that his role as Jesus’ apostle was not a glory to be claimed but an assignment to be obeyed.

Paul’s purpose in both roles—as servant and apostle—was to benefit *God’s elect*. The word *elect* has been debated for centuries. In the Old Testament, a similar term refers to the Messiah (meaning “chosen one”). This same word described Israel (Isa. 45:4). Jesus used *elect* when speaking of believers who would be preserved in the end times (Matt. 24:22,31).

Risking oversimplification, we can understand *God’s elect* to mean persons who are saved. Paul employed the expression while writing about people who are justified by God through Christ (Rom. 8:33). The phrase glorifies God as Savior and identifies the elect as people who have received God’s salvation through Christ.

Specifically, Paul noted two aspects of the ways he was to serve. First, he was sent by Christ *for the faith*, that is, to share the gospel so people might believe in Jesus and be saved. Second, he encouraged the spiritual growth of believers by increasing their *knowledge*. Paul was no mere teacher of philosophy or worldly wisdom. His charge involved *the truth that leads to godliness*. Paul’s Jewish countrymen had zeal but lacked knowledge related to godly righteousness (Rom. 10:1-3). His divine commission involved helping people to know God through Christ (evangelism), and also to know God’s truth, resulting in right living (discipleship).

Paul ministered the gospel so people might live *in the hope of eternal life*. Such *hope* involves much more than wishful thinking. This word reflects confident anticipation. This prepositional phrase links eternal life with statements in verse 1. Paul’s service resulted in people having *faith* and *hope*. Their faith in Christ produced the confidence of eternal life.

Believers’ confidence rests in *God*. We can count on God’s Word because He *cannot lie*. His divinely righteous nature makes it impossible for God to
be false or to fail to fulfill His promises. Before time began, He promised eternal life to whoever would believe in Christ. The timeless nature of God looks back before eternity past while looking forward to eternity future. Scripture often refers to the enduring aspect of God’s plan of salvation. God’s kingdom was prepared for us from the foundation of the world (Matt. 13:35; 25:34). In his second letter to Timothy, Paul pointed to God’s salvation that was provided in Christ before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9-11).

VERSE 3
3 In his own time he has revealed his word in the preaching with which I was entrusted by the command of God our Savior:

**VERSE 3**

Although God’s plan of salvation began before the beginning of human reckoning, He revealed his word in his own time. In other letters, Paul likened God’s plan to a mystery that had been kept secret from the foundation of the world, but which had been revealed in Christ (Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7; Col. 1:26-27). In God’s timing, He chose to reveal this mystery through preaching (Eph. 6:19). Paul had received this truth by revelation from Christ and had been commissioned to share that revelation with the world (Eph. 3:3).

Paul understood the serious nature of this message. He had been entrusted with the gospel through the command of God our Savior. Paul did not merely wake up one day and decide to be a preacher. Paul was called by the God who saved him to proclaim this good news. He received his commission as a command and a charge from his Savior, and it became the passion of his life. Similarly, all believers have a gospel trust that must be shared with others.

Why does God’s call require us to exercise a servant’s heart?

**VERSES 4-5**

4 To Titus, my true son in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

5 The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town.

**PURPOSEFUL ACTION (TITUS 1:4-5)**

**VERSES 4-5**

Paul considered Titus to be his true son in the faith. Unlike Timothy, who already was a Christian when Paul met him, Titus probably was led to Christ by the apostle. Paul used the phrase our common faith to describe their mutual belief in and commitment to Christ. Paul loved both of these young preachers and treated them as his sons in the ministry.

Together, Paul and Titus ministered to the people of Crete, a Mediterranean island south of Greece and southwest of modern Turkey. The only reference to Crete in the Book of Acts mentions Paul’s being taken to Rome as a prisoner. Therefore, the citation in Titus must have described a different visit not recorded in Acts. It may have occurred during Paul’s travels after being released from his first imprisonment.

Paul recognized much of the work there had been left undone. His use of the phrase to set right appears to mean correcting something that had been done wrong. However, the term literally means to “set in order.” He wanted Titus to complete the work they had begun. He obviously did not
intend Titus to reside in Crete permanently, since he later asked Titus to come and help him when replacement workers arrived (Titus 3:12).

One aspect of the task to be completed involved insuring each church had competent leaders. Paul directed Titus in the specific manner for proceeding. Not only because of their personal relationship, but primarily due to his apostolic authority, Paul had the right to instruct Titus in his ministry.

Two terms could cause misunderstanding to the casual reader. The text appears to give Titus the right to appoint elders in every town. The word translated elder is one of three terms Scripture uses for pastors. The other two words, bishop and shepherd, describe the leadership and pastoral care aspects of the pastor’s ministry. Paul went further to describe the qualifications the pastors needed in order to be spiritual leaders of Christ’s churches (Titus 1:6-9).

A simple understanding of Paul’s instruction to appoint elders could be understood to mean Titus was exercising an extension of Paul’s apostolic authority in choosing pastors for the churches. Another approach could incorporate the idea of ordaining pastors as Paul did in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (Acts 14:21-23). Neither interpretation negates the involvement of the congregations in choosing their pastors, but recognizes the new Christians’ need for guidance.

God commissions believers to help establish and strengthen local churches. As churches choose and support their leaders, the pastors respond by faithfully caring for the flock of God.

(In PSG, p. 104) Why was it necessary for Titus to complete the work that Paul had begun? How do believers today build on the work of previous generations?

OPPOSITION ADDRESSED (TITUS 1:10-16)

VERSES 10-11
Paul highlighted Judaizers who were disrupting the Cretan believers. He characterized them as talkers and deceivers, dedicated to myths. Paul called them out, pointing to their behavior as evidence of their lack of credibility. Paul used several terms to describe them. First, there were many of these false teachers. Had the church only a few opponents, it may have had an easier time, but apparently the number had increased due to their constant campaign of interference.

Second, they were rebellious. Rejecting the gospel Paul had preached, these persons asserted teaching contrary to the truth. The word translated rebellious carries the idea of disobedience. They may have rebelled against God’s Word because they did not want to obey it.

Third, the opponents were full of empty talk. The emptiness of their dialogue was typical of idle, meaningless speculation. More malevolent
was their deception, suggesting they knew the truth but deliberately led people on a wrong path. Not possessing genuine truth, they used oratorical tricks to gain influence for personal advantage.

Paul partially identified the deceivers as being from the circumcision party. These people were like the Judaizers Paul addressed in Galatians and other letters. They insisted that anyone who wanted to be a Christian must also follow the practices and rituals of Judaism. By using the term especially, Paul clearly intended that others outside of the circumcision party also were involved in the opposition. Led by the Jewish proselytizers, a covenant of conspiracy combined several forces against the churches of Crete.

Paul urged Titus to silence these opponents. By refuting them with the truth of God’s Word, the young preacher would put them to shame. The truth of the gospel should quiet the error of his adversaries. Titus’ intervention was necessary because the false teachers were ruining entire households. Just as godly believers led many in their circles of influence to receive the gospel, even so these deceivers were affecting whole families.

Greed was the motivation for teaching what they shouldn’t. They wanted to get money dishonestly. Whether the households were individual families or some of the house churches, people often provided financial support for their teachers. Paul’s use of the word dishonestly indicates that the false teachers were not advocating a genuine ideology but were deceiving people to receive money.

VERSES 12-14

12 One of their very own prophets said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”

13 This testimony is true. For this reason, rebuke them sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith and may not pay attention to Jewish myths and the commands of people who reject the truth.

14 The indictment found in this verse should not be misunderstood as an ethnic pejorative, but should be seen in the context as Paul described the greedy false teachers. He quoted one of the indigenous prophets, likely a 6th century (BC) philosopher named Epimenides. Born in Crete, the writer described some of his people with three derogatory phrases. He called them liars, perhaps attacking their claims regarding guardianship of the tomb of a Greek god. Paul used this accusation to refer to the false teachers who lied for personal gain. The Cretan source also described the people as evil beasts and lazy gluttons, references to their proclivity toward wickedness and idle pursuit of pleasure.

The fact that Paul wanted them to be sound in the faith suggests some of them may have been believers. This was the reason Titus should rebuke them sharply. His goal was correction and redemption. Paul’s phrase rebuke sharply employed a compound word meaning to intervene preemptively lest the false doctrine continue its destructive path. To be firmly grounded in their new faith, the Cretan believers needed to embrace sound doctrine.

The goal also included warning people to not pay attention to Jewish myths. This statement refers back to Paul’s previous instructions to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:4). It also recalls his condemnation of the deceitful teaching of the Judaizers in verse 10.

Paul also wanted the Cretan believers to mature so they would ignore the commands of people who reject the truth. The term commands reveals that the dishonest teachers not only had deceived with false doctrine, but had used their influence to order the lives of their followers. In a second
condemnation of the false teachers, Paul highlighted the fact that they had encountered the truth of the gospel but had deliberately turned aside from it.

**VERSE 15**
In other places, Paul wrote about the issue of whether to eat certain foods, particularly meat that had been offered to idols. (See 1 Cor. 8:4; Rom. 14:14-23.) The immediate context of verse 15 relates to the Jewish teachers’ insistence that Gentile Christians follow Jewish customs, including dietary laws. Therefore, Paul’s admonition could refer to the eating of certain meat.

His point was that the person who had a pure heart saw the pure quality of other things. On the other hand, people who were defiled and unbelieving viewed other things and other people with their twisted perception. They saw nothing as pure because their mind and conscience were defiled. The word mind involves not only intelligence, but perception and ways of thinking. The term conscience goes further, describing a person’s ability to discern right from wrong. An unbeliever views the world without spiritual sensibility.

**VERSE 16**
Focusing specifically on the rebellious people who were deceiving God’s people, Paul attacked the validity of their salvation. They might claim to know God, but their greedy works revealed their evil hearts. Paul did not hold back in his condemnation, but used three strong descriptions to highlight their wickedness. They were detestable. Their deceit of the new believers of Crete was repulsive. They were disobedient. This term goes further than occasionally doing what is wrong. These people had developed a habitual lifestyle of disregarding and disobeying God’s Word.

Consequently, these degenerates were unfit for any good work. From their selfish motives to their sensual desires to their deceptive methods, the false teachers had proven themselves worthless when it came to godly service. Like Titus, modern believers must be willing to confront proponents of corrupt doctrine head-on and call them to repentance.

What are the dangers of believers failing to address false teachings head on? What might keep a believer from taking a firm stand? Do you think Paul was overbearing when he instructed Titus to rebuke sharply the false teachers? Why or why not?
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

INTRODUCE: As the group arrives, direct them to share examples of things that are inclusive and exclusive. Ask: In the examples provided, how can exclusivity be perceived as negative? Conversely, how can it be perceived as positive? Ask the same questions regarding being inclusive.

ASK: In what ways can believers uphold the gospel message while respecting the rights of others who hold a different belief? (PSG, p. 100)

HIGHLIGHT: Direct the group’s attention to Pack Item 1 (Map: The World of Paul, Timothy, and Titus) and Pack Item 11 (Handout: Titus: A Snapshot) as a way to introduce him and the letter.

TRANSITION: Today we’re going to look at Paul’s letter to Titus, one of the pastors he trained, and how he encouraged Titus to stay true to the gospel. Share your summary statement of why Paul wrote his letter to Titus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Titus 1:1-3.

EXPLAIN: Paul viewed the gospel as something entrusted to him. The gospel was given to be shared.

ASK: How does knowing that God is always truthful give believers confidence to share the gospel?

GUIDE: Paul was under the authority of God, and he was responsible to God for preaching the gospel to others. Therefore, Paul could say to Titus—and to all people who are saved by grace through faith—that God is Savior.

HIGHLIGHT: Call attention to the Key Doctrine (Evangelism and Missions) on page 103 of the PSG to emphasize how Paul’s introduction to Titus reflected his heart for evangelism and missions.

ASK: Why was it important for Paul to emphasize that the gospel has been entrusted to believers? How should viewing the gospel as a sacred trust impact a believer’s life? (PSG, p. 103)

TRANSITION: Not only should believers know that we have been entrusted with the gospel, but the gospel calls us to action to display its power in our lives.

READ: Direct someone to read Titus 1:4-5, while others identify how Paul addressed Titus.

CLARIFY: Point to the information under Verses 4-5 (PSG, pp. 103–104) to explain what Paul meant by calling Titus his son and the role Titus would have in Crete.

ASK: Why was it necessary for Titus to complete the work that Paul had begun? How do believers today build on the work of previous generations? (PSG, p. 104)

TRANSITION: The call of Paul to Titus relates to the exhortation in 2 Timothy 1 to teach future generations the gospel and godliness. Paul went further to address living for Christ means there will be opposition. Use Pack Item 4 (Poster: 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9) to help supplement this comparison.
READ: Call on a volunteer to read Titus 1:10-11, while the rest listen for the trouble makers Titus was to watch for in the church.

LIST: Highlight verse 10, and lead the group to list the characteristics of the people whom Titus was to be aware of in the church (rebellious, idle talkers, deceivers). Guide the group to complete the Bible Skill (PSG, p. 104).

STATE: Paul stressed that false teachers were adding unnecessary stipulations to salvation and disrupting groups of believers with precepts that weren’t necessary. His solution was to silence them.

ASK: What might motivate a person to distort the gospel? What are ways people distort the gospel today?

TRANSITION: Paul saw the need to teach Titus how to deal with heresies within the church.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Titus 1:12-16.

EXPLAIN: A forceful response to the false teachers was vital to the health of the churches based upon their description by Paul in verse 12. Paul’s goal was first and foremost redemptive and restorative, but he would not overlook the severity of the problem.

ASK: What did Paul say to anticipate how the Cretans would respond in verse 14? The sad but clear indictment of the heretics was that they rejected the truth. They had heard the truth of the gospel but turned away from it to chase after their own creation of truth.

CONTRAST: Paul gave a distinction of the motives of the pure and defiled churches. Create two teams. Direct one team to make a list of the characteristics of the pure and the other of the defiled. Call for each group to share. Lead the group to compare the lists, focusing on the fruit each produces.

EMPHASIZE: Paul’s strong critique was necessary because of the damage being done by the troublemakers. Since they preferred to resist God’s truth and rebel against His saving purposes, they proved themselves to be useless in His kingdom.

ASK: What are the dangers of believers failing to address false teachings head on? What might keep a believer from taking a firm stand? Do you think Paul was overbearing when he instructed Titus to rebuke sharply the false teachers? Why or why not? (PSG, p. 107)

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

SHARE: Lead the group to turn to a neighbor and share something from today’s study that gives them courage to stand firm on the truths of the Bible. Reference the chart “Major Themes in Titus” on page 107 of the PSG for guidance.

REFLECT: Lead the group to discuss the third question set from In My Context on page 108 of the PSG: Reflect on ways that your life and voice have been used by God to address false teachings. Thank God for that opportunity and ask Him to help you continue to be a voice for Him in the future.

PRAY: Close in prayer that believers will faithfully share God’s Word and look for ways to strengthen His church.
PRACTICE

• Email your group members and ask for a way that you can personally help them develop in their faith. Take one action that helps each person move forward.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

As an alternative Focus Attention, begin the session by telling of a time (or enlisting a volunteer to share) when your faith was challenged by someone who taught false doctrine. Explain how you handled the situation and what led you to truth. Then highlight today’s summary statement (from p. 113 in this guide): Believers are accountable for rejecting false teachers and teachings.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

• To enhance the discussion of the servant’s heart in Titus 1:1-3, view other ways that Paul introduced his letters for comparisons of how he described himself in relationship to Christ and the people he wrote to in his letters. Use Pack Item 12 (Handout: Paul’s Letters) to guide the research.

• To supplement the teaching of how Paul addressed Titus in Titus 1:4, challenge the group to think about their true spiritual children in the faith (not necessarily biological) and how they are developing those sons and daughters today.

• To support the teaching for Titus 1:10-16, help the group understand the history of Crete and the influence that Paul had in that region. Provide a Bible dictionary and invite a volunteer to scan the information about Crete. Some group members may want to do an Internet search using their smartphones or other devices.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

To wrap up the session, remind the group of challenges they listed on page 108 of the PSG prior to the group time. If they have not listed any, allow time to do so. Ask: How could you be better prepared to face that challenge in the future? (PSG, p. 108)

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA

Read the lyrics of the hymn “There Is a Savior,” by Greg Nelson, Bob Farrell, and Sandi Patty. Focus on the words in the song for believers to stay true to the gospel. Discuss how the words of the song echo Paul’s directions to Titus.