

Lake Cities Community Church
Take the Next Step: Book of Titus
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What is a Community Church? Titus 3:1-2

Naming a church can be tricky business. For example, you want to avoid a name that may cause confusion, such as: Calvin Free Will Baptist Church (Calvin, OK). And perhaps the wrong fundraising assumption might come through at First Baptist Church of Cash (Cash, Texas). You could also take the name “Battlefield Baptist Church” to mean any number of things – depending on who is battling whom! And I think we can safely assume Little Hope Baptist Church (Little Hope, TX) was not trying to make a theological comment by its name.

Lest you think I am only picking on Baptist churches, these names may also want to consider a change – starting with: Boring United Methodist Church (Boring, MD), Suffern Presbyterian Church (Suffern, NY) and Gas City UMC (Gas City, IN). The award for the longest church name goes to New Liberty Apostolic Faith Church of the Apostolic Assemblies of Christ, Incorporated and the award for the most contemporary / non-religious name goes to “The Cool Church” in Tucson, Arizona – A cool church for cool people.

You see in today’s world church names are all over the map. Like the Cool Church – some churches select names that are intentionally non-religious. A friend of mine is getting ready to plant a church called “Discovery Church.” On the other hand, some still prefer a theological name - Like Trinity Fellowship Church, Grace Community, Faith Bible, Emmanuel Baptist. Another approach is to have the church name reflect its community - like Park Cities Presbyterian Church, or Lavon Drive Baptist Church or Rowlett Bible Fellowship down the street and that is where Lake Cities comes from – Lake Cities is a general description of the

communities around Lake Ray Hubbard. There is a Lake Cities softball team and realtor association, for example.

That explains the “Lake Cities” part, but what about the “Community Church?” What is a community church anyway? I am so glad you asked - because that is exactly the question the Apostle Paul seeks to answer in our text. What is a community church? No, granted, I do not mean Paul is explaining the complex world of 21st century church names, but rather he is talking about what should happen when a church wants to reach its community – when the church and community come together – in that sense – What is a community church?

If you have your Bibles out again, please turn to Titus chapter three. We are in verses 1-2. As you find your place, let me remind you that the book of Titus is a letter written from the Apostle Paul to his young apprentice, Titus, who is on the Mediterranean Island of Crete helping several new local churches get started. Paul has been exhorting them to take the next steps in their journey of faith and development. First step – appoint elders, chapter one. Elders to refute false teaching and confirm sound doctrine. Second step – teach the church godly living that is consistent with the teaching of Christ – chapter two. And now Paul gives the third step – the step into the community. Out of the sanctuary and into the marketplace.

Let’s Read the text together: [Titus 3:1](#) Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work. [Titus 3:2](#) They must not slander anyone, but be peaceable, gentle, showing complete courtesy to all people. From these two verses we will see that Paul has three expectations for the church as it engages its community.

A Community Church is a Good Citizen

Paul's first command is that when the local church enters its community, it "is to be subject to rulers and authorities – to be obedient." To the extent that the government is not asking you to do something immoral, you and I are to be careful to respect and to obey our civil authorities. Let's state this first point this way: A community church is to be a good citizen. One commentator put it this way, "There should be willing subjection to rulers and authorities. Christians must not let the sinful personal lives of rulers influence their submission. Governmental authority must be recognized as God-given. As a rule, civil authority operates to restrain evil and encourage good. Obedience to government obligates believers to observe all civil laws, from traffic regularly to payment of taxes. - Homer Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p.230.

For the believers in Crete, this type of obedience and respect for authority did not come easily, and I suspect there are some here who likewise struggle with authority. Authority can be abusive – it can be corrupt. It certainly was on the Island of Crete – the Cretan authorities were known as unjust and unfair. But nevertheless – Paul calls the church to submit and obey authority, as far as it is possible.

When I was in graduate school, getting my MBA, I was mentoring a young man named Shawn, who was an undergraduate freshman, from a Christian home in a wealthy suburban background. He was the star football player on his high school team, Homecoming King – a natural leader. But he had a very difficult time with authority structures.

I first began to see it when Shawn refused to get a parking pass. He lived off campus, but drove in every day for his classes. He would actually scout out the parking police, so he knew

where and when they worked so he could come and park with a low probability of getting a ticket. “Shawn – that is wrong,” I told him. “The Bible tells us to submit to authority and the University has rules!” He replied, “Why should I give the University more money, if I don’t have to?” But it wasn’t only with parking – in almost every situation he tried to bend the rules in his favor – with his apartment lease, library books. Free refills out to eat at places that didn’t give free refills. It seemed that he was the exception to every rule.

But these were only symptoms of a larger problem – which was his unwillingness to submit his life completely to God, the highest authority. It was devastating to watch him arch his back before God, and in the process drop out of school, lose his job and then his marriage.

God says that – yes I know authorities aren’t always perfect – but you have to trust me. Proverbs tell us: **The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD like channels of water; he turns it wherever he wants (Proverbs 21:1).** King David trusted God when even though he had been anointed to be King over Israel - He respected the anointing on King Saul and would not harm him even though Saul was corrupt. Jesus, the Son of God, trusted His Father and told the people – give to Caesar what is Caesar and to God what is God’s. He too worked within a corrupt political system.

If we are a church that want to be a true community church – leaving our walls and engaging the world – we must be prepared to be a good citizen and respect the laws of the land and the authority structures – because they are ultimately in place by God.

What does this mean? It means we pay our taxes. We follow traffic laws. We buy parking permits. It meant that when we sought occupancy here – we followed the rules and filed out all the forms. Even though it was challenging at times, we developed a good reputation at City Hall which brings glory to Christ.

A Community Church Engages in Good Deeds

A Community Church must be a good citizen – not complaining about every rule, but cooperating and obeying. Second, a community church is to engage in good works, “**To be ready for every good work**” (1b). That is - good works in the community. Donald Guthrie said: “The Christian should be ready to do whatever is good, in the community in which he lives. Where good citizenship demands communal action, he must always be cooperative, provided no question of conscience is involved.” - Donald Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 214.

This is a vital and practical message to us as a church that I am passionate about. I have personally been actively involved in the Rowlett Chamber of Commerce and the Rowlett Pastor’s Prayer group because I want people to know that we are a church that wants to be involved and engaged in the betterment of our community, to God’s glory. Later in the service Martin Jones will give an update as to some of our outreach plans for 2008 – some of these activities serve to fulfill this purpose – to do good works in the community, showing Christ’s love. John Wesley’s said: “Do all the good you can, but all the means you can, in all the ways, you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can – as long as you can.”

I pray together we will together give LCCC a positive reputation of a church that does great good in this community – because I brings glory of God and shows Christ’s love to a watching world.

A Community Church has a Good Attitude

Christ wants His church to impact its community. All churches in a broad sense are to be a community church. How? First, by being a good citizen – respecting and being obedient to the

laws and authorities. Second, to engage in good deeds for the betterment of the community. And, third Paul commands us to do all these things with a good attitude. Look at verse two: “They must not slander anyone, but be peaceable, gentle, showing complete courtesy to all people.”

Notice the four characteristics that are given for us. First, (1) we are not to slander people (lit: blaspheme), which is passing on negative information with the intent of damaging another’s reputation. This is especially easy to do to those in authority. Whether it is parents, church leaders or civil leaders, or presidential candidates! Be careful not to slander. The second characteristic is (2) to **be peaceable** – which in the Greek means, “don’t be a fighter”. In other words – if we run into conflict as we engage our community – we are to handle it as peacemakers. Remember Daniel and his three friends when they came into conflict with the Babylonian government about what food to eat – they didn’t start a smear campaign against them. They didn’t become rebellious in their actions. Rather they went to the authority figures with gentleness and courtesy and worked out a solution.

The third characteristic is gentleness, or meekness – a common description of Jesus. To be gentle is by definition a person who does not demand one’s rights all the time but is forbearing and kind. For the Christian, it may seem a paradox but it is true that our strongest position comes from our gentleness. Roman Catholic Bishop St. Francis de Sales said, “Nothing is as strong as gentleness, and nothing is so gentle as real strength.” Christ’s divine power was best captured in His gentle way – with his light touch loving voice.

Finally, fourth, we are to **show complete courtesy** to all people. This means our focus is on the other person and not on ourselves. Someone said this about courtesy: “I am a little thing with a big meaning. I help everyone. I unlock doors, open hearts, banish prejudice. I create friendship and good will. I inspire respect and admiration. I violate no law. I cost nothing. Many

have praised me. None have condemned me. I am pleasing to those of high and low degree. I am useful every moment. I am courtesy.”

Conclusion / Application

What is a Community Church? In the theological sense we have been studying today, it is a good citizen – that does the right things the right way. Ethical – respectful and obedient to rulers who we believe are appointed by God. Second, it is a church that engages in good deeds. Zealously – making a positive contribution on behalf of the gospel. Third, all this is done with a godly, good attitude.

But we can only be that type of church if you are that type of person. So this week – be mindful of the laws of the land. Watch your speedometer. Write a thank you letter to an elected official you admire. Obey the law. Follow the rules. Second, engage in good deeds in your community. Here I again want you to listen to Martin’s update later and pray about being involved as often as you can to show Christ’s love in our community. Do good! And finally, by God grace, be transformed to have the mind of Christ – no gossiping, not argumentative, gentle and considerate. That is Paul’s plan for a true community church, and I pray God will make it true of Lake Cities Community Church.