

Lake Cities Community Church
Sermon Series: Take the Next Step
January 23, 2008
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The Model of the Mature

How old do you feel this morning? This list, put out by Beloit College, may make some of you feel a little older...

Today's college students were born between 1986 and 1989. They have grown up in mini-vans, not station wagons. They grew up drinking bottled water and shopping in big-box stores. Star Bucks has always been around the corner, rap music has always been mainstream and reality TV shows have always been on television. To them, Pixar, digital cameras and small white holiday lights have always been in style. They cannot remember a time before the World Wide Web was available, and they have always used the word "Google" as a verb. They have known only two presidents. U2 has always been a rock band (never been a spyplane) and Cary Grant, Liberace and Jackie Gleason have always been dead.

They do not remember a time when the Berlin Wall existed. They have no meaningful recollection of the Reagan era. They have never feared a nuclear war. They don't remember when cut and paste involved scissors. They don't know what a carbon copy is. Most have never "rolled down" a car window. They never saw Johnny Carson live on television and have never heard Jim Baker or Jimmy Swaggart preach on TV. American Motors has never existed and they have never put their money in a "Savings and Loan." They have never seen a Howard Johnson's with 28 ice-cream flavors. Television stations have never concluded the broadcast day with the national anthem.

Some of you kids are saying –you mean there wasn't always bottled water? I remember when bottled water first came out – why in the world would a person pay for bottled water when you can get perfectly good water from the kitchen sink? How times have changed.

Let me ask you this morning - How do you feel about getting older? Are you scared, excited, depressed. Do you believe that gray hair a crown of glory (Proverbs 16:31)? Over the next 18 years, every 8 seconds, one of the 76 million baby boomers will turn 50? Currently, over 30 million people adults are over the age of 50 and that number will more than double in a few decades.

Our society doesn't know what to do with older people – Our culture is all about youth and beauty. As you become older in our culture you become more “out of it” and irrelevant. And so we as a culture try as hard as we can to hang onto our youth – to look young, to act young. Americans spent \$29 billion on anti-aging beauty products and 15 Billion on cosmetic plastic surgery in 2007. Robert Redford the 71-year old Actor said, “When do we get past this? In the US there's an obsession with youth.”

Our culture is not getting past it, but the church must. This morning we will see that once again, the church is a counter-cultural place. If you have been tracking along in our sermon series through the book of Titus, you know that today Paul is going to have specific instruction to older people in the church. We will see that in the local church older men and women are absolutely vital to create a healthy, godly model for ministry.

Please turn in your Bible to Titus chapter two – we are in verses 1-3 this morning of chapter two. Today we look at older men and women, next week, younger and then slaves.

Titus 2:1 But as for you, communicate the behavior that goes with sound teaching.

Our new section is marked with a contrasting preposition – “but” – “but as for you.” The “you” is emphasized – Paul is saying – unlike the false teachers who taught incorrectly – completely unlike them – Titus - communicate the behavior that goes with *sound teaching*.

There are two major thoughts that govern this section – one - the behavior and, two - the sound teaching and they are linked. The behavior is to fit or be in line with the teaching. We have seen in previous week that there was a gap between the people’s walk and talk – the gap of hypocrisy. Paul’s instruction is highly applicable and specific. Verse two:

Titus 2:2 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in endurance.

Paul starts with “Older men” and so the first question we need to ask is – “Who are the older men and women” in our congregation? An older person is always someone older than me, right? I really will fit in next week’s sermon – about the young people. Well, in the time period of the first century Philo of Alexandria assigned the elderly period of life to those who were 50 years old or older. Another ancient writer said that the “elder” in society is 50 for men and 60 for women. That is not so different from today, is it? 100 years ago, Victor Hugo wrote: “Forty is the old age of youth, fifty is the youth of old age.”

But there is not specific age given and it would be a mistake to peg an exact age on the people Paul is addressing. Any mature adult could fall into this category. Commentator John Benton says, “He is speaking of those who have left their parental home some time ago, who have lived long enough to have had some experience of life and therefore are those to whom

others look for advice and example” (Benton, 77). So, with that background I think that we can safely say there is a group of us that Paul is specifically addressing this morning.

Men’s Character Traits: How are older men to behave? First they are to be “temperate.” This refers to sobriety in terms of a moderate use of alcohol and also in the sense of having a clear head – a person who has learned moderation and self-control. The older man has learned balance in his life. While extremism and overindulgence may reflect more typical sins of youth – the older man has learned to be temperate. Second the older man is to be “dignified.” There are few things as beautiful as meeting a dignified older man. Last week Tammy’s parents brought a bunch of old photos – and in those old black and white photos so often the men look so dignified. Whether that external dignity seen in posed pictures is also reflected in their character we don’t know. Paul is saying older men should be worthy of respect - he has endured through difficulty, has battle scars of life –but he has endured and is worthy of respect. So many older men we see in public life today - just seem foolish – they have not really grown up – they lack dignity. Third, the older man is to be “self-controlled.” This was the same word used of elders in 1:8 – where it was translated “sensible” It comes from the Greek *sofia* meaning wisdom – the older man, as he navigates through life he does so wisely – having a control of himself that is fitting for a Christian.

The first three characteristics are ones of restraint – temperate, dignified and self-controlled. The fourth characteristic is not of restraint but pouring out. Fourth – the older man is to be **sound in faith, love and endurance**. This is our trilogy – the Christian faith knowing it and showing it in love for God and one another. It is not a cold, aloof older man that is pictured here – but one who excels at showing Christ’s warm embracing love to other people. And who is

sound in his endurance or patience. Endurance or patience is not very far from the concept of hope which waits for the coming of Christ and the hope that is in him.

Barclay said: The senior man must have learned what can only be called the gravity of life. A certain amount of instability, of recklessness, of unthinkingness may be pardonable in youth, but the years should have brought their wisdom. One of the most tragic sights in life is a man who has learned nothing from the years (Barclay, p. 283).

Turn now to the characteristics of older women. Verse three:

Titus 2:3 Older women likewise are to exhibit behavior fitting for those who are holy, not slandering, not slaves to excessive drinking, but teaching what is good.

Like older men – older women are to “exhibit behavior fitting for those who are holy.” This phrase presents the image of a priestess in a temple setting. Paul is saying – your work – at home, or in the workplace – is a sacred work. “Reverence is to suffuse her total lifestyle because in Christ all of life is now becomes her spiritual worship offered to God.” - Benton, *Titus*, p.93. Whether you are changing a diaper, reading a book or running a company, the Lord has given you a sacred calling – and as an older woman you carry yourself with godliness.

Next – the older woman is to, **not slander**. Gossiping or slandering was a serious problem back in those days and is still today. It is often attributed to be a woman’s sin. John Calvin said, “Talkativeness is a disease of women, and it is increased by old age.” – though, of course men can be just as guilty of gossip. This is an area in which women are commanded to show self-control. Alan Redpath, a preacher of last century told his congregation to avoid gossip by thinking before you speak – Think: T--Is it true? H--Is it helpful? I--Is it inspiring? N--Is it necessary? K--Is it kind?

Second – Paul also mentioned women’s interaction with alcohol - **don’t be slaves to excessive drinking**. If you are keeping count, this is the third command about being careful about

alcohol and we would be wise to heed it. Once to the elders, once to the older men and now to the older women. The Government Institute for the Abuse of Alcohol states that An estimated 5.3 million women in the United States drink in a way that threatens their health, safety, and general well-being. Double that number to get to the number of men have difficulty with alcohol. It has been a serious problem for over 2,000 years and Paul's commands are as relevant as they ever were to the church.

Paul has said – use restrain and self-control with your tongue and alcohol and now and a command of positive action. Paul says the older woman is to **be teaching what is good**. This begins to set up next week's message – who does Paul want them to teach? In view here are the younger women of the congregation. The benefit of their age and experience are to be passed down to the younger women. This is the model of discipleship that Christ showed us with his disciples – it is to continue in the church life to life – old men with younger men and older women with younger women.

“There is a growth of character that usually only comes with time.” (Liefeld, 333). That character is found in older men and women are modeling the Christian life – they set the pace for the rest of us, because time has given them maturity and godliness that the rest of us need to learn from and apply to our own life. Now let's spend a few moments on application:

Application

An obvious application is: older people must have a place of honor in the local church. Paul, in this passage, honors older people and communicates they are of first importance. I hope it is characteristic of LCCC that this is a place where older women and older men feel welcomed and honored. We should be a church that provides the respect due to those who are older than

ourselves and recognize their contribution and value. I'm worried that the evangelical church seems to be following the broad culture in its adoration of youth and young people to the exclusion of older saints. Many new churches will do anything it seems to target young people – change the music, change the chairs, change the architecture and technology - anything to reach the young people. I'm not saying all those things are wrong – but who is thinking about the seasoned saints? I have talked with several older believers who have felt marginalized by our youth-driven churches – wondering whether there is a place left for them. Why is it that we do not also hear of strategies to reach the older people? One thing that I was so thankful to the Lord for when LCCC started was the diversity of ages. We had young married couples without kids, a bevy of young families, but also some older couples who kids were grown and out of the house. The church is meant to be a place of *age diversity* – that is a strength of the church. Where else in our society do young and old come together in this way? Paul has taught us this morning that the mature men and women of the church set the pace, they create stability and teach the younger generations. This leads to the second point of application.

Be our Role Models – If you put yourselves into this older person category let me tell you very clearly that we need you desperately to model for us the Christian life well lived. And not just passively – but we need you to take initiative in seeking relationships with those younger than you, formally or informally. The command is on *you* to teach the younger generation – it is your responsibility and we desperately need it. At the same time – we have a responsibility- children and young adults – our 20 year olds and 30 year olds – to seek out mentorships from older men and women. Why not ask an older man to lunch to ask his opinion on a decision? Ask an older woman to be your mentor – ask if you can spend time with her, at her house. There is a

learning between the generations that happens in the local church. The third application is for everyone.

Self-control is a key part of the Christian life. The primary, predominate characteristic we looked at today is self-control. Kids – listen to me – God wants you to learn to control your self – your anger, your tongue, your video game playing. Adults – self-control is perhaps the key sign of maturity. I grew up listening to a Christian record where a turtle sings, “Self control – is just controlling yourself – its listening to your heart and doing what is smart.” Ok and I found a Secular kid’s song: “How I act each moment Determines what I’ll be If I practice self-control I’m in control of me!” What is missing – probably in both of these – only that we can’t control ourselves without the power of God. We do not any good thing inside us to leverage against sinful desires. Peek down to verse 11 – **“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age.”** God’s grace will train us to be self-controlled. Do you see it? It is possible – because of Christ! His power in us, through us so that we might at the end of our lives be transformed people – a model to the next generation. Let’s pray.