

**Lake Cities Community Church**  
**Series: Take the Next Step**  
**Book of Titus**  
**January 13, 2008**  
**Pastor Craig Schill**



### **Picture This**

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Let's say, for fun, that this puzzle is a picture of *the perfect church*. It looks perfect doesn't it? The painting is by Christian artist Kim Norlein and is an idealistic, peaceful and beautiful picture of a church building with flowering trees, a tranquil pond, swans. We will assume that such a perfect church building would also hold perfect church people – godly, patient, peaceful, speaking the truth – yet with love, kind, showing *hesed* love to one another. The title of the painting is “Sanctuary”. That fits well, doesn't it? A sanctuary is a holy place. To become sanctified as a Christian means to become holy – Changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the puzzle – the Holy Spirit is one of eight hidden pictures you can find – in the form of a dove just above the church steeple. To enjoy the perfect church, you just have to put the pieces together 1,000 pieces – This is the world's longest 1,000 piece puzzle – over 3 feet long! Wow!

Men and women, boys and girls - If this is the perfect church – than this (pour puzzle onto floor) is the church on the Island of Crete. That church – the church we are studying in our new series through the book of Titus - was not perfect – in fact it was a mess! Disorganized and chaotic, they had no authority structures. They were straying from the truth of the gospel and were overrun with false teachers that led them to argument and conflict. There was a gap – a gap between what they say the believed and how they behaved. As a result they had a poor reputation in the community. The church was not perfect – but rather what we might call a fixer-upper. A handyman's special.

How could they take the next step toward – maybe not perfection – but toward maturity and love and obedience? Who would help them fix the problems? The great Apostle Paul and his colleague – Titus who is there at Crete to address the issues head on. They are going to try to pick up the pieces, to set in order what had been scattered. Paul is going to deal with authority structures. He is going to rebuke false teachers and correct sinful behavior so the church would once again bring glory to Christ’s name and not shame.

This morning we continue in our study of Titus and so if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Titus chapter 1. We will be in verses 5-9.

## **Exposition**

### **Verse 5**

Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was to set in order the remaining matters and to appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

Paul begins by reviewing Titus’ commission. That is a good thing to do every now and then. Why are we here? What are we doing? Paul says: “The reason I left you in Crete was to set in order the remaining matters.” You see, Titus was to pick up the pieces and set them in order – the church was not organized, there was disorder and confusion. Titus was to take care of the remaining matters – those things left unfinished by the Apostle Paul, who only had a short time to instruct the Cretan church when he visited. Where would Titus begin? Sometimes when something is a mess – we are paralyzed by the enormity of the task, but you have to begin somewhere. Paul is clear what must be done first - end of verse five, “appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.”

Notice that Titus has responsibility for multiple churches in various towns on the Island. Each church needs elders. Titus was to appoint them – or put them in charge – How they were

selected is not dealt with in the text and churches have employed countless processes for the appointment of elders throughout church history. Note also, elders are plural. The intent was to have plurality of leadership – not just one person, but a group of men. Paul stresses – *as I directed you*. Apparently this is reminder for Titus. Why had he not done it? I believe it was because the people didn't want this authority, the church had a culture that opposed spiritual authority – Titus knew it would be an unpopular move, so he had procrastinated. Paul says – “Get to it, Titus!” Look at verse six.

### Verse 6

**Titus 1:6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of one wife, with faithful children<sup>8</sup> who cannot be charged with dissipation or rebellion.**

First, an elder must be blameless or above reproach. This is the summary word for an elder. How do I describe an elder in the church in one word? Blameless. We think of the prophet Samuel who was in an awkward position as power transitioned from him to the new King, that the people wanted to be like the other nations. Samuel said to the people: **1Sam. 12:3 “Here I am; bear witness against me before the LORD and His anointed. Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it?”** And then the crickets chirped - The people could find no cause for blame to fall upon him. He was above reproach. He was a Teflon prophet – nothing could stick to him, because he lived with integrity.

Let me clarify. I am not saying that elder are perfect. Certainly as we have gotten to know each other – you know that I am far from it. But, in one of my favorite books *A Scruffy Husband is a Happy Husband* the perfect man is described. The perfect man keeps his family cars running to perfection but also cooks four nights a week. He helps with laundry and vacuuming but never gets behind on home repairs. He holds his own fast-track career, but never misses one of the

kid's activities. He works out 7 times a week and helps his kids with their homework. He coaches his son's Little League team, loves to entertain people at home, and initiates social engagements. When planning vacations he suggests taking his wife's parents with them. He does the dishes, plays the piano, reads the Bible through every year, and has found the perfect balance of family, marriage, church and work. And he doesn't exist! The perfect man is a myth! We are not looking for perfect, but mature. Not perfect, but as far as is possible by God's grace, a person who is blameless and beyond reproach with a deservedly good reputation. The rest of the passage will tell us what it means to be blameless. We will observe three broad categories – (1) Beyond reproach in his family life, (2) His personal life and (2) In His doctrine. Let's look first at family life requirements

**Family Life.** First if he is married, he must be the husband of one wife – or a one-woman man. This is a debatable phrase – what did Paul mean? It could be a prohibition against polygamy, which was still practiced in those days, or against an elder having been divorced, or a prohibition against remarrying should his spouse die as the early church interpreted it. We don't know exactly what Paul had in mind, but what we do know that it means the husband must be faithful to his wife. If you can believe it – impurity and adultery were even worse in the first century than they are today! Study that period and you will see a very tolerant society in terms of cheating and running around on your spouse. Paul says, “Not for elders in the church – the elder must be faithful to his wife!” And if there are children the children must be faithful – it may or may not refer to them technically being Christians as they grow older – but they are not children who are wild and disobedient. In other words, the man must have taken responsibility in his family before he can take responsibility in the church. If a man has been a successful leader in

his family – he qualifies to be considered for leadership in the church. The first category of qualification is in a man’s family life. John Calvin said, “A pastor shall have prudence and gravity, it is proper that those qualities should be exhibited in his family; for how shall that man who cannot rule his own house — be able to govern the church! – John Calvin. The second category of qualification is a man’s personal life – his moral character. Look at verse 7:

### **Verses 7-8**

Titus 1:7 For the overseer must be blameless as one entrusted with God’s work, not arrogant, not prone to anger, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy for gain. Titus 1:8 Instead he must be hospitable, devoted to what is good, sensible, upright, devout, and self-controlled.

Paul repeats that an elder – (here a synonym “overseer” is used) but again be blameless – as one entrusted with God’s work – a steward. An elder has taken responsibility for the church, as a steward would have done for a large estate in the ancient world – or a manager for a business in our day.

**Personal Life.** Also, from a personal moral standpoint, he must not be arrogant – or self-willed. God is opposed to the proud, and God’s leaders must be humble to experience God’s working. He must not be prone to anger. Proverbs tells us a hot-tempered man stirs up conflict – not what is needed in the church. When I was doing research on this topic, I found some church meeting minutes of an elder installation – The minutes said, “Hal eliminated by a majority vote of the review committee based on low support and a known problem controlling his temper.” He must not be a drunkard, not violent and not greedy for gain. On the other hand, verse 8, he must be hospitable – that is he cares about people and enjoys interacting with people and engaging with them. That does not mean every elder is a touchy-feely group-hug type of person – but he is a person who reaches out to people and takes the initiative to develop relationships. He must be devoted to what is good. That is he just really is bent on doing the right thing. Many elders have

been called “goody-two-shoes” or are teased for being so upright. The elder is sensible – a man with common sense wise – from the Greek *Sophia*, upright or righteous – right living, and devout – meaning holy – sanctuary sanctified and self-controlled.

*You see leadership in the church of Jesus Christ is radically different than leadership in the world.* In the world the message is this – “I don’t care what you do in your private life, as long as you get the job done at work.” Have you heard this?

Rudy Giuliani is running for President and has had well publicized personal and moral failures in his life. The country is really struggling on whether that should matter. Giuliani says, "We all have personal lives, we all have things that go right and wrong in our personal lives," he told me. "The real question is how does it affect how you can perform? - Rudy Giuliani (4/6/07, interview with Roger Simon, *The Politico*). Another example: Charlie Wilson’s War is a popular movie that idealizes Texas congressman Charlie Wilson’s truly amazing job in helping to defeat the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Should it matter at all that “Good Times Charlie” had few morals when it came to women, drugs and alcohol? As long as he got the job done? Focus on the Families web site “Plugged In” said it well – “But while it’s fine to acknowledge the achievements of a flawed hero, let’s not—as Charlie Wilson’s War would like us to—ignore the damage the flaws can cause. Let’s not ignore the fact that heavy drinking is dangerous; that drug abuse is illegal.” His constituents who reelected him 12 times to office. One more example: Tony Romo has a big football game today, but personal life has been the focus of the news media. Now, I don’t know what relationship he has with Jessica Simpson, but most fans, I think would agree with this blogger on Yahoo: “I don’t care what he does in his personal life– as long as he is winning games!”

That is the standard in the world - As long as his is winning games, winning the war, improving the economy – we don't care what he does in his family life – or his personal life. But that is *not* – the standard for the church! Think about it. Do we know if the elders' that Titus is going to appoint great tentmakers? Award winning camel traders? Gold smiths? Rich importers working at the Cretan Harbors – We don't know and we don't care! What we care about is that they are men who love their wives and take care of their children, and who have moral integrity and self-control. Sensible men who work well with people and solve problems, rather than creating them. Men who have a good reputation in the community.

Paul is, in essence, going to say to the young men, “Do you need a picture of self-control?” Look at your elders. He is saying to the older women – “Do you need a picture of the correct way to handle alcohol” – look at your elders. He is saying to the young parents – “Need a picture of someone who has had sought to raise his children in a godly manner?” Look at your elders. He is saying to those struggling with materialism and greed - “Look to your elder as a person of moderation.”

*The elder is a picture of the godly living Paul is exhorting the very people in the church to emulate.* This is what it should look like when the pieces are put together. And that godly living comes from where? From sound doctrine – true teaching, verse nine.

## **Verse 9**

**Titus 1:9** He must hold firmly to the faithful message as it has been taught, so that he will be able to give exhortation in such healthy teaching and correct those who speak against it.

**Sound Doctrine.** The elder must be blameless in his family life, in his moral life and now in sound doctrine. He holds firmly to the faithful message as it has been taught. The same message Paul is preaching in verse 3 – the gospel message – the life, death and resurrection of

Christ. This he must hold onto firmly. Why? So that he can teach that message to others, positively, winsomely, to encourage them to godly living and good works. And second, as a protector of the church, that he can correct those who speak against the message. This sets up the next several verses, which introduce us to the false teachers that were plaguing the church. That is where we pick up the story next week.

### **Application:**

Our application comes right in front of us this morning doesn't it? This morning, in just a few minutes, we will install Micah Foster as an elder of this church. That is a big step for Micah and his family. It requires much from him. And it is a big step for us – it requires from us as well. To respect and submit to godly leadership – as sheep need a shepherd – so do we need godly authority.

Micah is not a perfect man - I think he only cooks dinner three nights out of the week – but he is an example of a person who is seeking to set a godly example in his life. He is a faithful husband to Rhonda – treating her with respect and love. He has shown leadership in home and the thoughtful raising of his children. Micah has a very good common sense, wisdom and self-control. He holds firmly onto the faith and is able to teach God's word.

What a joy it must have been during those services at the Cretan church, where those first godly men were appointed. And now 2,000 years later so much is the same. We enter into that joy by taking our next step – appointed our next elder – as we have been directed to do. Let's pray.