

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *Integrity*

**SERIES:** *Titus*

**SCRIPTURES:** *Titus 1:5-9*

**SPEAKER:** *Shaun Kipe*

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*\*Credit to Bible Gateway; Bible Project; John Ortberg (Become New), NT Wright, New Community Commentary on Titus*

Well good morning and welcome to Five Forks Church, to everyone here in the room and also to those of you tuning in to the livestream.

Have you ever been on the elevator here at church? Have you ever noticed there are buttons for three floors? There's the first floor, children's wing. There's the second floor auditorium. But there's one more floor as well...**the mysterious third floor**. It's often locked and inaccessible, and it's likely you don't know a lot about the third floor, never been there? Does it make you wonder, what is the third floor? What's up there? Why is it off limits? Kind of reminds you of the forbidden "West Wing" in the beast's castle in Beauty and Beast.

I wish I could tell you some kind of elaborate story to make things more exciting. But, the reality is the third floor is not actually forbidden...it's just really boring. It's simply storage space. That's it. And it's why you've probably never visited the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.

I was thinking that some parts of the Bible are familiar and common to us. We visit them regularly. We feel confident if someone would ask us what is the book of Matthew about. We could say, "Well Matthew is a story about the life of Jesus." But there are other parts of the Bible, that are a little more mysterious...obscure and

unfamiliar. The kinds of books that don't get a lot of "fanfare" or attention. They're certainly not forbidden, it's just that, like the third floor...many of us simply don't know, what's there? But as someone who follows Jesus it's good to know "what's there". So we're taking four weeks to explore one of these, mysterious, often overlooked books of the Bible.

## **TITUS sermon serious graphic.**

In this series we're trying to gain a better understanding of the book of Titus, what it's about and how that applies to our lives today.

If you were with us last week, we learned that Titus was the name of a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. And he helped to lead and instruct some of the early churches. And the book of Titus, is a letter Paul wrote to help encourage Titus in his leadership. Particularly to a group of churches located on the **Island of Crete (MAP)**.

This morning we want to take a look at the second section in the book of Titus. If you have your Bible, turn to Titus 1.

### **I. Titus 1:5-9**

**Titus 1:5-9 - <sup>5</sup> The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint<sup>[a]</sup> elders in every town, as I directed you.**

So Titus' mission on the Island of Crete is to appoint church leaders called elders. It's important to note that the word **elder** is often used interchangeably in Scripture with **pastor** or **overseer**. Over the next few verses Paul describes the kinds of leaders Titus should be looking for.

**<sup>6</sup> An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe<sup>[b]</sup> and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Since**

**an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>8</sup> Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. <sup>9</sup> He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.**

So, in this section Paul is describing for Titus...

### **A. Qualifications for church leadership**

Now, while Paul’s instructions are specifically related to roles of church leadership, I think that many of the concepts that we’ll talk about today apply to all of us, in all kinds of roles. Not everyone is called to be a church leader. But the character traits necessary for church leadership should be something that we are all striving for in our lives...as a parent, as a teacher, as a doctor, as an employee.

Paul puts these qualifications into three primary categories. The first one is related to family life.

#### **1. Marriage and Parenting**

**<sup>6</sup> An elder must be...faithful to his wife,** or more literally the text says, “*the husband of but one wife.*” ...**a man whose children believe<sup>bl</sup> and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.**

Now there are many perspectives on what exactly Paul means when he writes “that an elder must be **the husband of but one wife.**” This is one of those passages where well-meaning, Bible-believing, mature Christians disagree.

I even considered kind of avoiding this conversation. Because I recognize that sitting in this room, are people who hold differing opinions on this. I also know that this conversation can stir our emotions. But our theme at Five Forks this year, is seeking fuller maturity in Christ. I think more importantly than where you end up on this issue, maturity in Christ means is learning how to have conversations with people, with whom we disagree, without our emotions taking over.

I always think of James' instructions that we should be "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." I think that applies to this conversation.

So, perhaps the most prominent question that passages like this one bring up in churches today is the question of women fulfilling leadership roles within the church.

**Can women serve as elders/pastors?** Because the passage seems to assume that the elders Titus should be recruiting are males. There are other passages in Paul's letters that bring up similar kinds of questions.

That said, we have to be careful just drawing direct applications based on what might, at first, appear to be assumptions in the passage. Because there are other assumptions within the passage.

For example, some read this to mean that an elder can't be single, they must be married. Others read this to mean that anybody who is divorced cannot be an elder, especially if they are remarried. Others take it to mean that Paul is addressing the issue of polygamy. An elder can't have multiple wives, since polygamy was a much more common practice in that culture. Polygamy and promiscuity were so common that the ancient Roman ethicist Seneca once remarked, "Only the ugly are faithful."

Some suggest the passage seems to also assume elders have children. Does this mean, you can't be elder unless you have children? Or if you have children that are disobedient or choose not to follow Jesus, does that disqualify you from church leadership?

I told you all kinds of questions. And many of these assumptions and the questions they raise, don't seem completely valid. If an elder has to be married, it means that Paul or even Jesus would have been disqualified from being an elder, doesn't it? If it means you're children have to be completely obedient...any parents in here qualify?

So, again the prominent question is: can women serve in church leadership as elders or pastors?

There are two primary views on that question: **complementarian** and **egalitarian**. And this is gonna be a way-oversimplification of this conversation. But in general...

**The complementarian view** - would say, men and women complement one another in their roles, but they do not serve in the same roles. Men and women serve in separate or distinct roles.

**The egalitarian view** – would say that men and women are equal to each other in their roles and therefore can serve in the same roles.

Different denominations and different churches, sincere followers of Jesus, who are all seeking to take the Bible authoritatively and seriously hold these differing views and would point to different passages of Scripture and how they understand those passages to support their view. So let's just bring this closer to home. Where do the Brethren in Christ stand on this?

Since the early 1980's, going back over 40 years, before I was born...the BIC have held to the "egalitarian" view. If you get on the BIC denominational website there are several "position papers", describing where the BIC stand on certain debatable theological issues. There is a paper on "Women in Leadership" the opening paragraph says, ***"The BIC US fully affirms women in ministry leadership at all levels of church life. Women are ordained and commissioned as pastors,***

***bishops, deacons, denominational leaders, and members of local, regional and national BIC US governing boards.”***

Here at Five Forks, for example, you’ll know we do not call our leadership board an elder board. We call it our church board? It’s the same thing. For many years we have had women serving on our church board.

Again, the purpose of this is not for each of us to try and set everyone else straight and get people to agree with our particular position. Often times, I have found on these debatable theological issues, our clever arguments do very little to convince other people to join our side of the argument. The purpose is, one we’re exploring the book of Titus and this is one of the issues that comes up. And two, it’s good for you to be aware of the BIC stand on this issue. You may or may not agree with it and that’s ok.

More importantly than this conversation. It seems that Paul’s primary concern is one of authenticity. The idea here is that the way a person leads at home is a reflection of how they will lead in the church. I believe Paul is saying, an elder who is married must be striving for a healthy marriage and to be a good parent. The context here leads me to an interpretation that Paul is primarily concerned about character issues as Titus looks to find leaders.

And this kind of leads to the second important quality of leaders. Besides healthy family relationships, Paul says that leaders in the church must have:

## **2. Integrity of Character**

**<sup>7</sup> Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>8</sup> Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.**

Simply put, Paul is describing integrity of character. Integrity means, “what you see is what you get.” Integrity implies **consist right behavior**.

Pretty high standards for leadership in the church community. Why do you think Paul sets such high standards?

I was reading about when **Lewis and Clark** led their expedition across the wild, uncharted lands of America in the early 1800's. They faced frequent misbehavior from the soldiers who accompanied them – everything from fighting and drunkenness to theft and even desertion. But of all the inappropriate and illegal activity, one was labeled as the worst of all, so bad that it was actually punishable by death! Do you know what it was?

It might seem a little shocking but the worst behavior was when a soldier fell asleep during his assigned duty of protecting the camp. Again this might seem excessive to us, but to the explorers it made perfect sense. Why? If a soldier fell asleep on duty the entire community was in danger. The whole community was at risk. To be a guard was a sacred trust and if that trust failed the consequences were life and death.

It seems that this same principle holds true in the church community. Some people are called to positions of leadership and if they do not take this responsibility seriously, it can cause destruction for the whole group.

One writer says it like this: **What is the single most important trait of one who desires to truly make a difference in our culture and world today? Some might say intellect. After all, knowledge is power and many believe that the most important thing they can have in addressing the culture is intellect. Someone else might say intensity, a spirit of conquest, a passion that is contagious. Still others might say it is insight. That is, good old common sense and the ability to see through issues and use discernment. However, in the long run there's one**

**word which describes the single most important characteristic of one who finishes strongly and makes a lasting difference in the midst of a culture. The word is *integrity*. Now, more than ever, it is what our world needs.**

There's legendary story about when the Gestapo, German military were coming to arrest Dietrich Bonhoeffer to take him away and execute him, he wondered on paper what kind of people the church was going to need most when the last bomb had exploded and the last person had been killed. He said this: *"What the church will need, what our century will need, are not people of genius, not brilliant tacticians or strategists, but simple, straightforward, honest men and women."*

So Paul lists five traits that work against or compromise our integrity. We can use them as an evaluation of our own integrity.

First, Paul says to Titus that you should look for people who are...

**Not overbearing** - The idea here is related to the concept of not bullying in order to get "their own way." When you make decisions do you make them based on what you want and what you will get out of the decision or do you sincerely try to do what's best for the group?

He said it like this to the Philippian church...

**Philippians 2:3-4 - <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.**

And again, you can apply this concept to leadership in the church community, but I think it also applies to the decisions you make at your place of work or within your home. Leadership requires learning how to compromise well.



There was a famous conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein was once asked what the hardest instrument to play is. "Second fiddle," he replied. For people who like to lead, who like to be up front, who like to take the reins, who like to get their own way, consciously deciding to take backstage position to enable others to exercise can be difficult. Paul says look for people who know how to play second fiddle.

So this week, where can you let go of your desire to control and play second fiddle?

Second, Paul says to Titus you should look for people who are...

### **Not quick-tempered.**

Temper means to be moderated or to have an appropriate emotional response to circumstances. Quick tempered, or we might talk about losing our temper, is when we respond disproportionately to circumstances or situations in life. Does your emotional response match your circumstance. That is a measure of your integrity.

*There's a scene from an old movie called **Father of the Bride**, where the main character played by Steve Martin is in a grocery store and there's already a lot going on in his life. He's concerned because his daughter is getting married, and it's costing way too much money and it's getting way too complicated, and beyond that he has a deeper level of anxiety and fear because he fears he is getting old and losing the daughter that he loves. But what triggers him in the grocery store is that he is buying hot dogs and buns. But the hot dogs have 12 hot dogs in a pack and the buns have 8 buns in a pack and so he can't buy an even number of both, without buying way too many. And so he starts removing the excess buns from a pack of buns, until a grocery store worker confronts him and he loses his mind. And he says, "You understand the problem here, some big shot at the hot dog factory and some big shot at the bun factory got together and devised a plan to rip off the American public by forcing us to buy all of these unnecessary buns and dogs and I won't stand for that." And he ends up having to be bailed out of jail because of his quick-tempered behavior. (John Ortberg, Become New Devotional).*

How often does your temper get the better of you? Your kids are having an off day, it causes you frustration, you lose your temper. A person driving too slowly in front of you, you're in a hurry, you're running late...what do you say about that person? It's so subtle but it happens in so many ways.

It's interesting, one of the ways that the Jews talked about God's character is that he was "slow to anger and abounding in love." And so, Paul says, one of the marks of Christian maturity, Christian character, Christian leadership is a person who is not quick-tempered. "Slow to anger and abounding in love."

Where this week, do you need to be "slow in becoming angry"?

Paul then says, look for people who are...

**Not given to drunkenness.** And specifically, Paul is referring to some form of alcoholism. A person is controlled by their desire for alcohol, but the principle I think applies to other competing desires, patterns or habits that start to rule or control our lives.

This often happens when we have the priorities of our lives in the wrong order. Dallas Willard talks about this concept. You can think about it like this, if visuals are helpful for you. The right order of life is: **Will – Mind – Body.**

My will tells my mind what to do and then my mind tells my body how to behave. When I get messed up, it's usually because I have these priorities in the wrong order: **Body – Mind – Will.**

My body is in charge. I am ruled by my appetites and desires. And my mind becomes obsessed with what my body wants and my will becomes enslaved and gives in to what my appetites are. In our day we call this addiction, in the Bible it's called "idolatry."

Are you controlled by desires that compromise your ability to follow Jesus? That's what Paul is talking about here. So for some people, and certainly it seems to many on the island of Crete...alcohol was that competing desire. The same may be true in our day, but there are other competing desires, aren't there? It might be a desire **to buying things** and that starts to rule in our hearts. It might be **workaholism**. We might be a desire for the **approval**. We want other people to like us and think highly of us and we don't live lives of integrity because of this.

Pastor Bill, talked about this just two weeks ago, maturity in Christ happens when we make Jesus the primary desire of our hearts. Jesus said, "seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness and all of these things will be given to you as well."

**What are the competing desires in your life that are keeping you from a life of integrity?**

The fourth issue for Paul is the misuse of power. Paul tells Titus to look for people who are "**not violent**". Perhaps this character trait more than all others is unique about people who have joined Jesus Kingdom. So, often it seems that in our world, violence, intimidation, the use of force is the mode of operation in order to get our way or control other people. And Paul says, that's not the way leaders in the Kingdom of Jesus function.

When I was working through this sermon I was reminded of a passage in Genesis 6 before the flood, it says...

**Genesis 6:11 – 13 - <sup>11</sup> Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. <sup>12</sup> God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. <sup>13</sup> So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them.**

Violence is in contradiction to the Jesus Kingdom way of life. It is at the heart of the many wars being fought around our world, violence is at the heart of abuse that happens in homes and families, violence tends to be in our hearts when we are seeking to control other people.

Then fifth and finally, Paul says look for people who are not...

**Pursuing dishonest gain** – And here Paul is talking about **money management**.

In fact Jesus was pretty blunt about this one. He said,

**<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”**

This is why all throughout the Bible, when Jesus talks about wealth and possessions. He almost always says, *“Watch out. Be on your guard. Beware.”*

In general he does not say the same thing as consistently about other sins. Like stealing, or lying or adultery. But wealth, greed, materialism just gets inside of us so easily, without being noticed.

I'll just show you how quickly the allure of money get's inside of us.

I'm not much of a stock market person myself, but every once I have daydreamed to myself...maybe you do too: What if I'd have known that company was going to soar? Like Amazon or Facebook. What if I would have purchased stock in that company? John Ortberg describes it this way, he says take...*for example* **IBM (PIC OF IBM SYMBOL)**. *IBM first got listed on the New York Stock Exchange in 1915. Now, think about it: Just imagine for yourself, if you had acquired one share of IBM stock on that*

*day in 1915, how much would you be worth today? Go ahead take a guess...turn the person beside you give them a rough estimate.*

*Ready, correct answer: if you bought one share of IBM stock on that day in 1915, you would actually not be alive today, so would be worth nothing at all! (Ortberg)*

And our drive for wealth and materialism, starts to take over our lives and it can hinder our integrity.

Paul wrote to Timothy...

**1 Timothy 6:7-10 - ...we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. <sup>9</sup> Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**

Are you aware of your financial situation? How you handle your money says a lot about your integrity of character.

How are you doing on this integrity of character evaluation?

Ok, so Paul is describing for Titus the kinds of qualities he should look for in church leaders. He says it starts at home. He says integrity of character is of utmost importance. One final trait Paul says is important. And in many ways I think this is the key to everything else.

Paul says, look for someone who is...

### **3. Knowing, loving and following Jesus.**

**<sup>9</sup> He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.**

What is the trusty worthy message Paul is referring to? It's the Gospel. The life and teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus!

Where do you find the motivation and the strength to be a person of integrity with your desires, with your temper, with your resources, with your influence...in your personal and family life? You find it by surrendering your life to Jesus. Again, Paul said it like this to the **Philippians 3**:

**<sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ...**

And when I gain Christ, integrity comes right along with it!