

Teaching Plan  
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: August 11, 2019  
Lesson Title: "Living With Opposition"  
Lesson Passage: Titus 1:1-5,10-16

ABOUT THIS LESSON

This is the first of three lessons based on Paul's letter to Titus. The Bible passage begins with a meaningful greeting, then Paul discusses qualities desired in the church leaders called "elders."

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Interpret the greeting of Paul's letter to Titus. (2) Describe the false teachers in the churches of Crete and tell how Paul recommended dealing with them.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

*Comment on a striking difference in the forms of modern and ancient letters:* In the first-century Graeco-Roman world, it was customary to begin with the writer's name, rather than putting it at the end. Paul followed this practice in all his letters in the New Testament. *Then add this:* To us, the greeting in a letter is fairly routine; just a way to get started. But the greeting in Paul's letter to Titus is loaded with significant truths. *Ask class members to note the different ideas in the letter's greeting in Titus 1:1-4.*

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Explore the thoughts included in Paul's greeting in Titus 1:1-4: (1) THE APOSTLE'S CREDENTIALS: (1) Paul calls himself a "servant of God" (literally, a "slave of God"). Observe that he was in good company, and note that Moses, Joshua and prophets are all called "servants" in *Joshua 1:2, Joshua 24:29, Amos 3:7 and Jeremiah 7:25.* (Refer also to *Ps. 84:10.*) (2) Paul was also an "apostle of Jesus Christ." (Recall that an apostle was one "sent out" by a ruler as his personal emissary, empowered to speak and act in behalf of his king.)

2. The Apostle reveals the primary purpose of his mission in vv. 1-2: (1) "To further the faith of God's elect." (Faith, absolute trust in God, is the only appropriate response we can make to God's offer of salvation.) (2) "And their knowledge of truth." (Salvation is not just a matter of emotional response, walking with Christ calls for knowledge of the truth. (This means that evangelism must always go hand in hand with Christian education.) (3) "In hope of eternal life." (Eternal life is not just long life, it is a new quality of life--life with God. This is the Christian hope. The hope of eternal

life was promised even "before the world began," but was announced in "due time" ("Due time" is God's time. God does things on His own schedule.)

2. *Comment on the terms "elders" (v. 5) and "bishop" (v. 7):* (1) The office of "elder" probably had its origin in Judaism. Every Jewish synagogue had elders who presided over worship services and exercised fatherly oversight over the affairs of the community. The elders in Christian congregations probably had similar duties. (2) "Bishop" (literally, "overseer") probably referred to elders, since they were responsible for "overseeing" ("looking after") the congregation. (3) Titus was told to appoint elders in "every city." There was not just one, but many, congregations on the island of Crete; for Crete had many cities. (Acts 14:23 shows that it was Paul's practice to appoint elders in all the churches he established.)

3. *Note the list of qualifications for bishops in Titus 1:6-9.*  
*Comment:* (1) We tend to use this list selectively. For instance, we are often reminded that a bishop ("pastor") should be "the husband of one wife"; and we agree that pastors shouldn't be drunkards. But pastor-search committees seldom talk about the traits of hospitality and self-control. And what about "not quick-tempered" in v. 7? (2) Note that 1:9 contains two forms of the Greek word for "teaching," *didache*. The bishop must be able to teach what he has been taught. (3) Note that Paul refers to "the teaching," implying that the bishop was expected to master a body of belief that was held to be authentic by all the Christian community. That is to say, the pastor-teacher was not at liberty to invent his own interpretations apart from these generally accepted beliefs. In other words, private interpretations must be in harmony with the interpretations shared by the community of faith. APPLICATION: This calls into question contemporary religionists go off on a tangent, saying that God has revealed these things to them alone.

4. *Comment on Paul's concern about false teachers among the churches on the island of Crete, as expressed in Titus 1:10-11 and 13-16:* (1) These false teachers are characterized in v. 10 as "unruly" (flouting the church's rules of order), "empty-headed" (talking much but saying nothing), and "deceivers." In v. 16 he points out that they are hypocrites. They claim to know God, but they deny the character of God by what they do. (2) They were having a serious impact on churches, subverting whole families with their teaching (v. 11). Thus, Paul prescribes strong medicine. Their "mouths must be stopped," he writes. He tells Titus to "rebuke" them "sharply."

#### CLOSING THE LESSON

*For discussion:* Would you agree that Christian people are being too gullible when they go along with just anybody who invokes the name of God and insists, "God has told me thus and so"? (Is this one way of "taking the Lord's name in vain"?)

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