

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: August 25, 2019
Lesson Title: "Living to Do"
Lesson Passage: Titus 3:1-11

ABOUT THIS LESSON

In this week's Bible passage, Paul talks about how Christians should live in a non-Christian society. He begins by reiterating the advice he has given in Romans 13:1-7, to be submissive to rulers and authorities. He then counsels fellow believers to be courteous toward others, not argumentative, for Jesus was a model of goodness and loving kindness. He contrasts the non-Christian life with the life that has been renewed in the Holy Spirit and admonishes Titus once again to avoid stupid controversies, dissensions and disputes over the law.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain the contemporary meaning of Paul's advice, "be submissive to rulers and authorities," (2) From the lesson passage, draw three rules for appropriate conduct in church business meetings.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Begin by relating this anecdote: Several years ago a flamboyant Arkansas preacher was known for his aggressive methods in evangelistic visitation. "The best way to get people's attention is to make them mad," he boasted. "If someone is watching television when I go into their home," he said, "I just take off my coat and throw it over the TV, so they have to quit watching it." Some attributed that preacher's tactics to "boldness," but others called it "arrogance." Apparently, he had overlooked Paul's advice in this week's lesson passage, "show perfect courtesy to all men" (Titus 3:2). "Courtesy" is not a particularly bold word, but Paul gave courtesy a prominent place in his formula for Christian living in a pagan world.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Read Titus 3:1, then share these thoughts:* (1) As pointed out previously, the populace of Crete apparently had a terrible reputation for misconduct. (*Recall Paul's reference to this in Titus 1:12.*) This made it all the more important for Cretan Christians to "come out from among them and be separate" in the way they conducted themselves in public. (2) Paul begins his advice on appropriate Christian conduct by saying that followers of Christ ought to be law-abiding. The terminology, "be submissive to rulers and authorities," implies that Christians should recognize that government and laws are established for the common good and, therefore, supporting good government is a Christian duty. (*Refer to Rom. 13:1-7 and 1 Pet. 2:13-17, to reinforce this point.*) FOR DISCUSSION: There are occasions, as our Declaration of

Independence notes, when government becomes tyranny, and Christians are compelled to obey God rather than man. But these exceptional occasions cannot be used as an excuse for being indifferent to laws whenever it suits our convenience. APPLICATION: "Being submissive to authorities" in our present-day context would include respect for traffic laws on the highway, honest payment of taxes and regard for parking spaces reserved for handicapped people. (3) "Be ready for any honest work" implies that the Christians go beyond mere passive obedience to laws, to involvement in activities for the betterment of the community.

2. *Comment on 3:2:* In this verse Paul lays down four rules for relating to others. All of them would be useful for maintaining decorum in church and denominational business sessions: (1) "Speak evil of no one." Disagreements are unavoidable, but disagreements should not descend to the level of personal attacks. (2) "Avoid quarreling." Even lively debates need not become quarrels. (3) "Be gentle." This Christian virtue is expressed well in Eph. 4:32: "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another." (4) "Show perfect courtesy to all men." Courtesy is a quiet, modest, kindly, patient demeanor toward others; it is the opposite of irritability, harshness and arrogance.

3. *Refer to Titus 3:3-7:* (1) What Paul is saying here is essentially this: "Don't be too hard on those who don't live up to these standards of conduct, because we ourselves were like them before Christ transformed our lives. (2) But this was all changed when Jesus came and demonstrated goodness and loving kindness, teaching us how to respect and care for others. (3) In v. 5 Paul repeats a cardinal tenet of the Christian gospel, salvation by grace. (*Read Eph. 2:8-9.*) APPLICATION: In a Barna research study, 31% of "born again Christians" said that a "good person" can earn his/her way into heaven.

4. *Call attention to an alternative translation of Titus 3:8:* "Apply themselves to good deeds" might mean "enter honorable occupations." APPLICATION: Some occupations (e.g, gambling, drug dealing) are inherently wrong and obviously incompatible with Christian faith. But even honorable occupations (e.g., medicine, banking, preaching) can be corrupted by the way they are practiced. The way we conduct ourselves in our occupations probably influences the world more than anything we do at church.

5. *Note that in v. 9 Paul echoes the warning he has previously sounded in both of his letters to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:4; 2 Tim. 2:23);* "avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions and quarrels over law." All of these were subjects of theoretical arguments which drew attention away from the cause of Christ. Also, Paul advises, avoid individuals who create controversies (vv. 10-11).

CLOSING THE LESSON

Paul often urged Christians to have gentle dispositions, rather than displaying harsh, angry attitudes toward others? For example, Phil. 4:5

means, "Let everyone know of your 'gracious gentleness'." Good theology is no substitute for good manners.

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