

God's Ideal Man
Titus 2
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Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, what does it take to be a man? What is the real measure of a man? The answer to that question varies, of course, depending on who you talk to, depending on where you look for answers.

If you talk to someone who subscribes to the 'tough guy' culture, you'll find that being a man has to do with being strong, with showing no pain, with being sure of yourself, with being able to hold your liquor, and knowing how to handle the ladies, with never admitting your faults.

But if you talk to someone from a 'sensitive guy' culture, you'll hear that a real man is someone who understands, who's willing to listen, who's not ashamed to express his emotions, or to admit weakness, or to confess that he is afraid, or to stop and ask for directions when he's lost.

There's even the red neck version of what it takes to be a man: you have to drive a pick-up, wear flannel shirts, listen to country music, watch Nascar, and chew tobacco. Now to a certain degree, those descriptions are stereotypes; but the truth is, there are forces (trends) in our society and culture that shape the way we think, that (whether we realize it or not) cast us into a mold.

And let's not fool ourselves, as our young boys and as our young men grow up in this world, as they go through their formative years—which is a very brief period—as they reach adulthood, they are constantly being exposed to all these outside influences.

They are constantly being *pressed in upon* by the world, by its messages, by its images, by its philosophies and ideas. Like I said a moment ago, when it comes to manhood, our culture, our media, our TV programs and movies have all kinds of suggestions and images and examples for our kids to follow—so that if we don't teach them, if we don't instruct them, if we don't set them a Godly example, then you can be someone else will, and we can be sure it won't be good.

Beloved, the Apostle Paul was also aware of the danger, of the perils of letting the world shape the way we think, and act, and live life. That's why Paul wrote what he did to Titus, so that

Titus would not allow the worldly atmosphere there in Crete to wrongly influence the church, to allow the worldly culture to shape and form the lives and attitudes of God's people in the church. Throughout this letter, from beginning to end, Paul emphasizes Godly character and Godly conduct in every area of life. He has something to say to men as well as women, but since last week we dealt with God's ideal woman, we are going to be looking specifically at Paul's instruction to Godly men.

Here in Titus 2, **The Apostle Paul Provides Sound Instruction for the men of Christ's church.** He provides sound instruction:

- 1) **To Older Men (vv. 1-2).**
- 2) **To Younger Men. (vs. 6).**

1) **To Older Men**

Congregation, as I said a moment ago, in writing this letter to Titus, Paul was warning his spiritual son to guard himself (and the new church in Crete) against the corrupt and ungodly influences of the surrounding culture.

Although Acts does not record a missionary visit to Crete, it is evident that Paul and Titus must have preached the Gospel there, for there were converts on the island. Crete was the fourth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, and it lies south of Greece and Corinth.

Titus 1:5 tells us that Paul left Titus in Crete so that he could appoint elders for the churches and 'straighten out what was left unfinished'. The King James gives a little more clarity to that phrase. It says, *to set in order the things that are wanting* (shortcomings in doctrine and life?). So, the first thing Paul does is to lay before Titus the qualifications for a bishop, for elders. In order for the church in Crete to grow and to prosper, Titus must appoint spiritual leaders, men of spiritual integrity and sound doctrine.

Then in verses 10 and following we see what Titus and the church in Crete were up against. Paul points out how there are many unruly people, vain talkers and deceivers, false teachers from the circumcision group. They were teaching things that should not be taught.

Then in verse 12, Paul adds some harsh criticism to back up his charges. He says that these deceivers are acting true to form. He says the testimony that was given about Cretans (by one of their own philosophers) is true, at least in the case of these false teachers.

Cretans had a nasty reputation for being *liars*, for being *evil brutes*, for being *lazy gluttons*. Paul is suggesting that these false teachers give that saying men some credence (it fits them to a ‘t’). What’s more, it turns out that their lies, their false teaching, their vain words were ruining entire households. Men such as these had infiltrated the church—they were members of the church in Crete—vs. 16: ***they claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.***

So it is in direct opposition to these false teachers, to their corrupt lifestyle, that Paul directs the words of chapter 2. Although the text of our pews Bibles doesn’t show it, but Paul actually begins this second chapter with the word “but”, and there is an emphasis placed on the word ***you!***

Paul literally says to Titus, ***But as for you, teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.*** We might paraphrase it like this: ***But as for you, Titus, in contrast to what those false teachers are teaching, you are called to teach what is in keeping with sound doctrine.***

Even that word ***sound*** is purposefully chosen, because that word means *healthy*. It gives us the idea of ***healthy, uncorrupted*** doctrine, as opposed to the sickly, defiled doctrine that the opposition group was teaching.

Now keep in mind, even though we’re only considering Paul’s words of instruction to the men here, this chapter is dedicated to restoring sound doctrine within the ***entire household***. It starts with elderly men, moves on to elderly women, then to younger women, and younger men, and even to slaves who were part of the family household.

But First, Paul directs his instruction is to elderly men—to men who in their 40’s or 50’s. It’s no accident that Paul addresses the elderly men first. He does so because of the leadership aspect of the man’s calling. Sound doctrine must begin at the head of the family, the leaders of the church, and it can naturally flow outward from there.

It is only right to expect that sound doctrine will be *cultivated* and *nurtured* and *modeled* by the older, wiser men of the family and congregation. Paul writes: *Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, and self controlled* (those three things are grouped together), and then Paul mentions the three other virtues: *to be sound in faith, love, and endurance*.

The command to be temperate is often used in connection with a person who drinks too much. He is told to be temperate, to remain sober. But that is not the only context where that word can be used. Here, it functions as a kind of a general admonishment--*to be moderate*. Elderly men are commanded and expected to be moderate in all things.

Remember Paul's point of reference. He's writing in light of the fact that Cretans were liars, brute beasts, and gluttons (lazy bellies). Even though the people receiving this letter were most likely Cretans, Paul's point is that their character and conduct was no longer to be shaped by their reputation or their culture!

No. Their conduct and character was now to be shaped by Christ; by the Godly doctrine that they had been taught from God's Word, that they heard in the preaching, that they saw exemplified in the lives of Paul and Titus. The elderly men in Christ's church are called to be temperate; not over-indulging in anything, even as Christ our Lord was temperate, moderate in all things.

Elderly men should not find themselves enslaved to sinful habits. That certainly includes wine, but it applies to other things as well, like food for instance. Gluttony is certainly in view here (an obsession with food). A glutton is someone whose god is his belly. All that person does is think about what they are going to eat next—about their next meal.

So, elderly men ought to be temperate. The following virtues listed there are closely connected to this as well. For, to be self-controlled is to exercise Godly discipline over your body; and as we'll see shortly, this has a lot to do with how you think, how you evaluate issues, how you evaluate yourself, how you adjust your life accordingly.

Paul states that an elderly man is to be worthy of respect. Another word for that would be *dignified*! Elderly men are to be dignified, doing nothing that would upon bring them shame or

embarrassment. That makes sense, right? We expect that when men reach a certain age--when our side-burns start to show shades of gray, when our hair thins out on top--it's a sign of (not only of physical maturity) but mental maturity and spiritual maturity.

The brash spirit of ones youth is departed, and in its place is a spirit of modesty, humility and wisdom. In the church, God's young men grow up to become elderly men who are dignified in nature. To know how rare this character is, just listen to this.

A few years back I recall reading an article in World magazine entitled *Fatherhood Canceled in Primetime TV*. The article stated how the concept of a *dignified father* has been lost to families of our generation. A trustworthy, reliable, dignified father figure is a thing of the past.

Back in the 50's and 60's there was *The Ozzie and Harriet Show* (1952-62). Ozzie Nelson was the kind of respectable father figure that America could look up to. He was the picture of dignity and most worthy of respect.

Then there was another show called *Father Knows Best* (1953-62). The father was portrayed as a *kind, caring* father who *guided* his children through the turbulent years of adolescence. The whole plot of the show revolved around the fact that when the kids got into trouble, encountered an obstacle, they could go to dad for help. For Father knows best—he's wise, he's mature, he's sensible. Dad was the leader of the family who was worthy of respect, looked up to!

But in our generation today we have a void, a vacuum at the head of the family. In fact, it has become fashionable to poke fun of dads, to laugh at dads, to expect failure from dads. In the 90's one of the favorite TV dads was Tim the tool man Taylor.

That show was designed to be a comedy, but it also served as a commentary on our culture—on our movement away from a father who was capable, competent, sober-minded, and dignified, to a father who was a goof ball, who didn't solve problems, but only made them. He's a man who was good for a laugh; who was played for a fool; he wasn't worthy of respect (Homer Simpson).

While there's nothing wrong with dads and elderly men who have a good sense of humor, who can laugh at their own mistakes, the point is clear. Christ's church desperately needs the leadership and the Godly example of wise men, men of dignity, men who are respectable and worthy of being looked up to.

Three final virtues are grouped together; *They are to be sound in faith, love, and endurance or patience.* These are men who know their Bibles, who know their doctrine. They are men who can discern truth from error. That's vital, because these men are to be the spiritual heads of their household, and the leaders of the church—who serve in office (similar qualifications for office).

These men are to be sound in love: love toward God, toward their neighbor; toward their spouse. And these men are to be sound in endurance. They are to be patient, as the hymn says, *enduring wrong, reproach, or loss, with sweet and steadfast will. Loving and blessing those who hate, returning good for ill.*

Not many men are willing to swallow their pride, to endure wrong or loss for the sake of peace. Not many men are willing to turn the other cheek and hold their tongue when wronged. Not many men are willing to peacefully endure injustice and inequity.

Men in our world would say: *You have to stand up and fight; defend yourself; have some backbone; don't be such a door mat.* But in Christ's church, even the men are called to check our human pride at the door. We don't look to our culture for an example, but we look to Christ who, for the sake of our salvation, humbly and obediently endured the injustices of his enemies.

Jesus endured the reproaches and insults of men. He endured their scoffing and mocking. Jesus did not lower himself to answer insult with insult, or threaten violence or retaliation. No, the Bible tells us that Jesus entrusted Himself to the one who judges justly.

Even in his shameful, humiliating, undignified suffering, Jesus remained dignified and respectful. He did not follow the example of sinful men, rather he set the example for His Church; and in so doing He rescued us from our sins, and secured for our very salvation.

So beloved, all six of these traits are to be evident in the life of a godly man. They are absolutely essential in building godly leaders of today. Our homes, our churches, our society needs Christian leaders whose faith and life, doctrine and practice stand in balance and harmony.

2) To Younger Men (vs. 6).

So that is the instruction given to older men, to the leaders of the church today. But then, what is Paul's advice for molding the lives and shaping the hearts of the young men—of the godly leaders of tomorrow?

Here we look to the first part of vs. 6. There, it states *Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled*. Now interestingly enough, congregation, of all the virtues listed in our passage, this is the only one that Paul directs to every category within the church. He calls the older men to be self-controlled, the older women to teach the younger women to be self-controlled, and now lastly, he directs this to the young men as well.

So, very simple what this means is that while we spend the rest of this sermon considering the meaning and the application of this word for young men, it most certainly pertains to all of us—no matter who you are in Christ's church, no matter what category you fall into.

We are all called to exhibit and demonstrate self-control. Now then, what does this word mean? I am going to defer once again to the King James Version which translates this word to mean sober minded. We might also think of this as *serious*, someone who is of a *sensible mind*; *someone who has the ability to think clearly, to think accurately, to be clear minded*.

This word is actually used in Mark 5:15 to describe the state of mind of the man whom Jesus healed of demon possession. Here was a man who (when he was demon possessed) was so deranged that he lived alone among the tombs, he would cut himself with stones and cry out; the people there lived in fear of him, they avoided coming anywhere near there.

But it says that when Jesus cast out his demons (into a herd of swine), the people of the town heard about it went out to investigate. When they came to Jesus they saw this man sitting there who had been previously possessed but now was dressed and in his *right mind*.

His mental faculties had been fully restored. Again, this is the very word that is used in our text for self-controlled. So what is in view here is a great deal more than the control of our temper or out tongue or our passions. This is just as much about being sober-minded.

Now, let's be honest, we don't usually think of young men along these lines, do we? We don't usually equate clear-mindedness and seriousness and straight thinking with the youth of our day. No, in fact in our generation we almost expect the opposite. We expect our young men to be *confused* at this time of their lives, unable to think things through, susceptible to bad decision.

We expect anything but clear-mindedness from our young men. But here again, we're reminded that God's Word calls us to be different than the world. We don't live according to the standards and expectations of the world, but according to the standards and expectations of Christ

So the young men (and women) of Christ's church are to be thinking men (and women), they should have the ability to look at things in the world and evaluate them critically, Biblically, weighing the issues before them carefully; wisely pondering the options that lay before them.

I hope you can appreciate how radically different that is from the current youth of our age. Young people today are known for (even praised for) their *lack* of serious thought, for their reluctance to weigh the issues, for their 'act first, think later' approach. Society covers for their immaturity and irresponsibility and wrongs: "he's only a young man, he's not accountable."

But those excuses are not accepted in Christ's church. The baptisms we witnessed today are proof of that. Our children are to be brought up in the fear and knowledge of the Lord. We parents are bound to instruct our children in the doctrine of salvation.

A vital part of that instruction is teaching our children how to see themselves, how to assess themselves from a Biblical point of view--to see themselves as sinners standing in need of God's grace; to see themselves as sinners who've been washed in the blood of the Lamb; to see themselves as sinners who (by God's grace) have been adopted as God's children and heirs.

And as our children are taught these things, as they come to understand it more and more, it makes an impact on their lives. It changes not only the way they act, but even more importantly, it changes the way they think, it changes their outlook on life.

Then they are ready for profession of faith. So, that's where the battle for holiness, for sanctification, for spiritual maturity must also be waged. Christianity isn't only a religion of the heart; it's very much a religion of the mind!

As God's people we have to be sober-minded, serious thinkers. Being self-controlled, being sober minded means thinking through the issues of life accurately and carefully. Granted, we don't do this in our own power. We cannot think accurately and Biblically without the grace of our Lord, whose Spirit gives us wisdom and insight and direction.

Also, being self-controlled goes beyond mere 'thinking'. It also requires **responding**, it requires action: self-discipline. The truth is, we can carefully think through all our options on any given issue, and in the end, we can still decide to do the wrong thing (it happens all the time).

We can know the consequences of our actions, of our sin, but sin has a way of temporarily blinding us, of making us think that it won't be so bad, we can get away with it, or no one will see me. So we need self-discipline to be part of our self-control.

I think for example, of I Timothy 4:7 where Paul instructs Timothy to have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives tails; rather (he says) train yourself to be godly (exercise yourself toward godliness!). That exercise takes the form of self-discipline, training your mind, your body, your will to submit to God's Word, not following the desires and passions of this world

Also, think of I Corinthians 9:27. In that passage Paul compares the Christian life to that of an athlete competing for the prize. *I do not run like a man, running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air (shadow boxing, punching for play). No. I beat my body and make it my slave...*

Self-control means carefully thinking through the issues, being serious and sober-minded, but it also means beating our life, our will, our body into submission to God's will. It means that we do not give in to the temptations and desires that are so popular in our world and in our culture.

So while other young people your age are indulging themselves in all kinds of immoral and ungodly practices, things we're told that "everyone does" that are natural for young men at that age, the sober minded man of God resists the temptation and says 'No' to sin, to ungodliness.

The young man of God beats his body into submission to God's Word, to God's will. That takes work. That often means forcing ourselves to doing things that we might not want to do. Many of us have such a hard time doing devotion, making time to read the Bible and pray.

We say, "Right now I am struggling with my Bible reading and prayer life, but later (when I get older) I hope to get into a more steady habit. But you forget that when you're young is when you want to create and establish those Godly habits; and when you're young you are also facing temptations and sins that if you're not careful, will stay with you the rest of your life.

So you need to force yourself to do the things you have a hard time doing, exercise your yourself toward Godliness; You need to read God's Word daily in order to beat your body, beat your mind, beat your thoughts, beat your passions into submission to God's Word, making every part of your being a slave unto righteousness.

Again, beloved, this is not just a word to young men. This applies to each and every one of us here. And the power, the motivation, the incentive to do this is clear for us to see—the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

That salvation has appeared to us, and Christ has applied it to us. Because of our salvation, because of what Christ has done, He calls us to be different than our world, different than our culture. That goes for the older men who are called to be dignified and sound in doctrine; that goes for the younger men who are called to be self-controlled, self-disciplined; and that goes for all of us who bear the name of Christ. Amen.