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NBC Women's Conference  
9-29-18

The Cornerstone of Discipleship  
Titus  
Series: *Adorning the Doctrine of God*

**Introduction:** Good morning! It is a true honor to be able to stand before you and bring the Word of God to bear upon your lives. It is no small matter to me that you have given up a Saturday to be here with everyone, and so I long to make this time worthwhile for you. But it seems like we kind of have a fundamental problem there don't we – seeing that I am a man speaking to a bunch of ladies about how to be Christ-honoring ladies? So, how is this going to be profitable for you? Well, I plan to take the Word of God at its word and believe that if we apply its truths to any and all situations and circumstances we will be profited and instructed and edified. So, I hope and pray to simply be your servant by unfolding the Word of God before you as we seek together to walk in the grace of Christ.

As the committee was planning this conference they asked me for suggestions for speakers because they were having a hard time finding anyone to speak. I gave them a few suggestions and then flippantly mentioned that if they couldn't find anyone and needed a relief pitcher I could do it for them. So, needless to say, I didn't really expect them to take me up on my offer, but here I am. And you still came – so I am grateful for that. As I chatted with the committee about what they desired for these sessions in the Word they landed on Titus 2 and the idea of inter-generational discipleship. This is one of the clearest texts in Scripture that lays out God's good design for the older and the younger and how they ought to relate to one another as they grow together in Christ. And so, we will focus our attention in these three sessions on the book of Titus, and particularly on Titus 2. At the end of the day we will have a short opportunity for Q&A, so write down your questions so that you don't forget them and we will have that time later.

So, men can be pretty slow students of women and often miss the most obvious hints about what is meaningful and helpful. But, one thing that most men clearly grasp about women is that they love to make stuff look beautiful. Men will never understand why you have totes of decorations to put up around the house to make it look festive and beautiful. And they may never understand why you spend the

amount of time you do getting yourself ready to go out in public. But at the end of the day, the answer is simple – they know that you love to make things look pretty and beautiful.

Well, as followers of Christ bought by his precious blood, we have the unique privilege of adorning the doctrine of God – of showing off its beauty to others. Paul writes this letter to his young protégé in the faith and ministry – Titus. Titus is on the island of Crete, which is not a place of refinement and social grace, but rather a place of idleness and ungodliness. And Paul writes to encourage Titus in his ministry to the local churches on the island of Crete. They were in need of further instruction and building up to be more mature and healthier. And so, this letter is Paul’s instruction to Titus about how to set these things in order in the church. And the letter is all about sound doctrine that is lived out in the Christian life based upon the grace we have been given in Christ. And when this grace teaches us how to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age – then it is here that we adorn the doctrine of God with our lives.

So, take your Bibles and turn with me to Titus 2 – Titus chapter 2. As you’re turning there I want to remind you of the broad sweep of this short letter. Paul begins the letter by explaining the type of men Titus should appoint as elders in every local church. He then contrasts that with the normal character of the people of Crete at the end of chapter 1. Then at the beginning of chapter 2 he tells Titus to teach the church those things that accord with sound doctrine. And this leads Paul to detail the ethics of a life shaped by sound doctrine. He addresses Christians in different roles to teach them how sound doctrine should be lived out in their specific situation. Then at the end of chapter 2 we have the doctrinal heart of the book as Paul explains the glorious grace of God. And then the book ends in chapter 3 with general instructions to all Christians about how we should live out this sound doctrine in everyday life. In other words, Titus is being called to set before the church the pathway of adorning the doctrine of God with lives shaped by God’s grace. And so, in verse 10 of chapter 2, Paul says – “not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.” This instruction is being given to slaves, but what is true of the least in the list, is certainly true of the rest. So, if slaves adorn the doctrine of God by walking in grace-shaped ways, then certainly that is true for those addressed earlier.

The word in the original for “adorn” is the word we get “cosmetics” from. It is the idea of placing things in order so as to display their beauty. It is used of arranging jewels in such a way as to make the jewels’ true beauty all the more obvious. That is what we are being called to here. The Gospel is the glorious jewel of the Christian faith. And a Christian life which looks like what is described in Titus is the necklace that arranges the Gospel for all to see its true beauty. In other words – what use is it to have a beautiful diamond covered by the muck and mire of dirt and grime? Clean it off and set it in a beautiful setting and show off its beauty. And what use is it for someone to claim saving grace in Christ to then live a life of complete ungodliness. This is the concern of this short letter. That we would adorn the doctrine of God.

And this is the cornerstone of discipleship. So, before we get to talking about the relationship between older women and younger women in the church, we need to stand firmly upon this cornerstone – that each of our redeemed lives must adorn the doctrine of God. Upon the cornerstone of sound doctrine being lived out we then build the structure of discipleship in the church family. So, let’s lay that cornerstone in this first session.

*We must adorn the Doctrine of God:*

**I. In Faith, Knowledge, & Hope – 1:1-3**

- a. First we see that we adorn the doctrine of God in faith, knowledge, and hope. So, look back at how the letter begins. Paul says to Titus that he is writing the letter “for the sake of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life.” So, the instruction of this letter is for the purpose of shoring up and encouraging God’s elect – Christ’s Church. And specifically, he writes to encourage their faith, and their knowledge of the truth, and their hope of eternal life. These three go together. Faith is the reasoned and settled confidence in the truth of God. It is taking God at His Word and believing Him no matter what it might cost or who might say otherwise. Faith is built upon the knowledge of the truth. This knowledge of the truth is the ever-increasing understanding of what is right and actually true. That which is true is that which corresponds with reality. And the knowledge of that which is true is the solid foundation of faith. That is why Paul says in

Romans 10 that faith comes through hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ. Faith is always founded upon the truth of the Word by which we know what is right and true about God – we truly know God. This pure and right knowledge of God through Jesus Christ then gives us the settled hope of eternal life. Because we know God rightly through Christ we then look to a future hope settled for us in the work of Christ. Faith, knowledge of the truth, and hope of eternal life – these make up the cornerstone of our Christian lives.

- b. And then notice, that these three accord with godliness. Specifically, Paul says at the end of verse 1 that it is the knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness. But, since these three are a 3-strand chord which cannot be quickly broken, I think we are safe to say that all three of these accord with godliness. Godliness is to be like God, to be God conscious and shaped to be more and more like God. It is essentially the process of sanctification where our position is being brought to bear upon our practice. Being redeemed and forgiven and justified in Christ, we are daily being conformed to the image of Christ. This is godliness. And this godliness necessarily goes together with faith, knowledge of the truth, and hope. Since these things come from God, as John Stott says, then they necessarily lead to God. “Any doctrine which does not promote godliness is manifestly bogus.” (Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, pg. 169)
- c. So, if we have faith in God which is built upon genuine knowledge of the truth of God which gives us hope that God will keep His Word and save us through Christ, then we will be drawn to God. And not just in some ethereal, hard to define or understand way. Not in some mystical or mainly emotional way where we “feel” closer to God. No, we will be drawn to God in godliness. We will look more and more like Christ as we grow in grace. This is why Paul is writing this letter, under the direction of the Holy Spirit – because the church needs to be firmly established in faith, knowledge of the truth, and hope which is accompanied by the necessary godliness of life.

## II. With Counter-Cultural Lives – 1:10-2:1

- a. This is especially true because of the godless culture which abounds around the Church in every age. So, we must adorn the doctrine of God in faith, knowledge, and hope, and we must adorn the doctrine of God with counter-cultural lives. Look down to verse 10 in chapter 1. I

am not going to read the whole text for sake of time, but verses 10-16 detail the godless and reckless culture in which the Church is to operate and grow. So, just to summarize, the culture has many who are insubordinate, empty talkers, deceivers – and especially those who are religiously deceptive for their own gain. They upset whole families with their deceptive teaching so that they can shamefully gain from others. The culture is known for being liars, evil beasts – driven along by the sensual passions of the flesh, and lazy gluttons. They turn away from the truth to myths. They are defiled and unbelieving, and nothing is pure to them. Their consciences and their minds are depraved and impure. They say they know God, but they deny him with their works. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work!

- b. That is quite the litany of evil problems in which the church is to rise from the ashes. And our day is no different. This description could be declared over any generation to some degree or another. And what is the antidote to the decadence of the culture? How is the church to thrive while these dangers of unbelief and defilement lurk in the darkness? Well, look at 2:1. “But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.” Titus – be counter-cultural. Don’t be stamped into their mold. But rather, teach what accords with sound doctrine.
- c. That word for “sound” means healthy or whole. It’s related to our word for hygiene, but it goes much deeper than just being clean. It speaks to the wholeness and completeness of top condition. It is often used in the Gospels to speak of people after Jesus healed them. So, the woman who had the issue of blood for 12 years was healed by Jesus and he said that her faith made her well, or whole, or sound – her body was put back into the order that the disease had wrecked.
- d. So, as it relates to doctrine, we are commended here to have the whole truth as opposed to the maimed or distorted truth of the false teachers. So, your doctrine – your knowledge of God and of His truth as presented in the Scriptures – your doctrine can be maimed where there are parts missing, or it can be diseased, where parts are not in the right place or are distorted. That is what is true of the culture around the churches of Crete. They do not have sound doctrine. Their view of God and His Word is maimed or diseased. So, the antidote to this is for the church to teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Notice, that the church is not just supposed to teach sound doctrine, but she is to teach what accords with sound doctrine. And so Paul goes on to meddle in the personal lives of the different categories of verses 2-10 as he tells them how they should live in light of sound doctrine. In other words, there is this unbreakable bond between Christian doctrine and Christian living. Doctrine is not the concern of the elders or the theologians or the paid pastors only. Sound doctrine is the essence of the Christian's faith, knowledge, and hope. And it springboards the Christian into the type of living which adorns the gospel. And this is the foundation point of discipleship. When we disciple someone, or are being discipled, we are essentially teaching them how to live out the truth of God. We are teaching them the fullness of doctrine and applying it to their lives.

### III. As Grace Teaches Us – 2:11-14

- a. And we do this as grace teaches us. So, not any one of us is completely whole in our doctrine or in our practice. We all need the ongoing work of the Spirit of God with the Word of God to conform us more and more into the image of Christ. This is what sisters do with one another as they walk through life together in the body of Christ. They help one another grow in sound doctrine, and in the life which arrays that gospel beautifully for all to see and admire the Savior.
- b. But, as we close this session, you must see that this all happens because of Christ. So, in 2:11-14 we have this succinct and jam-packed statement about the content of sound doctrine. And we find out that it is grace which teaches us and trains us. And this grace has a name, and His name is Jesus. So, Paul says this in 2:11-14:
- c. Paul describes the two appearances of Christ in these verses as evidence of the great grace of God. Remember that grace is demerited kindness from God to you. You have sinned against God and are deserving of his righteous punishment. But in your rebellion, while you were yet an enemy, God loved you and sent His Son to live in your place and to die in your place and to be raised in your place, so that you could be made right with God. This is grace – demerited favor, kindness, love, action to make you His own, to redeem you from your sin. This is what Paul describes here. Jesus came to save us and to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession. And this grace that appeared once is going to

appear again. He is returning in glory and honor and power. And we are waiting for this blessed hope – His soon return. And this first coming of Jesus which provides for our salvation, and this second coming of Jesus which completes our salvation have great effect upon us as God's redeemed children. We are taught by this grace. Grace grabs your spiritually dead corpse and causes it to be born again to a new and a living hope. And then grace teaches you how to spiritual crawl and then to spiritually scoot around hold onto the furniture, and then to take your first real steps of faith, and then to walk by faith one step at a time. Grace trains you to run the race of faith by teaching you what is bad and destructive and must be denied, and what is good and right and must be pursued. Grace parents you to more and more maturity in Christ. In other words, a life that is lived in accordance with sound doctrine is not possible without the work of grace. Without Jesus Christ and all of His grace we will never be like Him in this life, or saved by Him in the next.

- d. And this forms the only sure foundation for discipleship. I cannot follow Christ apart from grace. I cannot call others to follow Christ apart from grace. Therefore, the starting point for all discipleship and counseling is to establish one's standing in grace. If someone doesn't know this grace and walk in this hope then they cannot be taught godliness. This foundation of grace then forms the method of discipleship. We are dependent upon the grace of God to teach us how to be godly. We are not dependent, ultimately on a person or a method or a meeting time, but rather we are dependent upon the kind grace of God. So, the discipler is not the method nor the end model. Rather, they are simply a living example of the power and effectiveness of God's grace which teaches us godliness which accords with sound doctrine.
- e. From the heights of divine doctrine in verses 11-15, Paul descends to the normal and mundane realities of life in verses 1-10. And the two completely go together. Sublime doctrine transforms steady duty. The pedestrian and normal realities of life are touched by this glorious grace of God given to us in Christ. Doctrine matters. Godliness depends upon sound doctrine. And sound doctrine demands a transformed life. And all of it only happens because of grace!

**Conclusion:** So, in summary, we must all adorn the doctrine of God. We must all pursue lives which rightly displays the gospel we claim so that all can see its true and glorious beauty. We do this in faith, knowledge, and hope. We do this with counter-cultural lives, and we do this as grace teaches us.

As we close, let me give you a case study to think about. So, let's say that there is a younger girl in our church family – maybe in her early 20's. And I am going to paint an extreme example because this is totally made up, and I don't want you to think that I am aware of something that I am trying to counsel from the pulpit here. So, let's say this young woman comes to you and as you get to know her and invest in her life she begins to open up to you. One day as you are texting back and forth she divulges to you that she has really been struggling with thoughts about hurting herself. You drop everything and make time to get together with her that day. As you talk to her she unfolds to you her life story and lays at your feet all of her pain and agony and disappointment in life. And she tells you that it is all just too much. She can't take it anymore. She has actually tried some self-harm, and says that it makes her feel better – like it releases the pain of her past and the pressure of her present. What does this young lady need? How would you assess her problem? What is the core of the issue for her? And what does truth say to the core of her problem? We'll revisit this throughout the day, so just keep mulling over what you would say to her, to how you would help her. Let's pray together.