**Counter-Culture –** **Titus pt3 – Wolves among the Sheep.**

**He often came early to set up the chairs and get things ready. He sat on the front row – available when needed. Personal evangelism was his specialty – He knew the word – and practiced what he believed.**

**But this was different. Paul left him in charge – and gave him a mission: Establish new disciples into healthy churches.**

**(map) Titus on the island of Crete. After a successful mission is left behind - on an island known for being a pirate harbor - bad reputation. To Crete was slang for “to lie”**

* **How to live out a counter-culture faith in a difficult space.**

**Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness… 4 To Titus, my true child in a common faith… 5 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you**

**What is an elder? Pres-boo'-ter-os**

**Elder - Men who are appointed overseers of a local church.**

**Elder = Spiritual overseers to govern and lead the flock**

**Elders are referred to as a type of shepherd & Senior Pastors.**

* + **Our Elders: Ted, Tony, Mike, Stan, Sam, David**

Qualifications of an elder/shepherd

**What to look for in a pastor and church leader**

**Titus 1 & 1 Timothy 3 are instructions for church structure and order.**

**Paul then shares the qualifications: Titus 1:6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. 7 For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, 8 but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.**

**A Leader’s Private Life: Seen by our family.**

**\*\* Above Accusation \*\* A faithful husband \*\* A consistent Father**

**A Leader’s Public Life: Seen by those around you.**

**\*\* Above Accusation \*\* Not Prideful \*\* Not quick to anger**

**\*\* Not a drunkard \*\* Not aggressive \*\* Not money-hungry**

**A Leader’s Personal Life: Things only you know.**

**\*\* Loves people \*\* Loves what is good**

**\*\* Thinks clearly (emotional self-control) \*\* Innocent (eyes of God)**

**\*\* Righteous (pursues) \*\* Self-disciplined (self-control physically)**

**A Leaders Church Life: Seen by the church, leadership ability**

**\*\* Knows the Gospel \*\* Teachable \*\* Exhorter (in the word)**

**\*\* Discerns doctrine \*\* Comfortable with confrontation**

**#1 - A good reputation – at home.**

**#2 - A good reputation – with others**

**#3 – A healthy spiritual life**

**#4 – A clear calling to serve the body of Christ.**

**Overall, an elder – is one who patiently, gently, guides and leads the family of God in the truth and mission of God – by example.**

**An elder is not just a good guy, skilled guy, or willing guy– but someone who knows the Lord deeply and protects the flock.**

**Know this**

**\*\*\* Leaders are not perfect in faith – but they are practicing their faith.**

**We will make mistakes – and need guidance too. Last week.**

**But we must meet the elder qualifications.**

**Like a doctor – we practice what we know…**

**\*\*\* Leadership guidelines are your maturity goals.**

**The qualifications: Good reputation, faithful to spouse, consistent with your kids, servant's heart, puts others before self, humble, patient, self-control, generous, gracious, disciplined, knows/ holds the gospel of Jesus Christ faithfully, and knows how to share it. (sounds like the fruit of the Spirit – Gal 5)**

**These are not standards we expect only for leaders only – these are areas of maturity we are all to live by.**

**1 Cor 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.**

**If you’re not walking as a mature Christian – you’re not ready to be a leader. Don’t follow one is not living like Jesus.**

**Paul then addresses a real issue in Crete - and why elders are needed.**

**Titus 1:10 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. 11 They must be silenced since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. 12 One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”13 This testimony is true. (many of the people of Crete had little moral compass) Therefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.**

**(Paul then says something hard to understand) 15 To the pure, all things are pure, (A person made clean in Jesus is clean by Jesus alone) but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. (They always want to add things) In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. (A person apart from Jesus – their thinking is upside down. To them, purity is about control and rules.) 16 They (the wolf) claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good. Titus 2:1 You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.**

**Paul talks about the characteristics of a false Teacher – Wolves:**

**Wolf might not have all, but they have many of these characteristics**

**\*\* Deny scriptures - …insubordinate**

**Deny the apostle's authority - Insubordinate to their teachings**

**They deny the attributes and character of God and the Cross.**

**This is the first domino to go - the authority of the Bible.**

**\*\* Shallow - empty talkers (empty words)**

**They teach – but nothing is really being said that produces real growth. Platitude and empty promises.**

**\*\* Deceptive – deceivers**

**These are scripture twisters. Misuse the Bible and manipulate God’s word – usually for their own influence and power.**

**\*\* Legalistic - especially those of the circumcision party.**

**They add requirements to the grace of God – usually made by them. To really be one of God’s people – you must do this…**

**\*\* Self-centered teaching**

**teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.**

**Teaching that is self-promoting - Self-help – self-motivated – and self-wealth – be your best now.**

**Using their influence for their own advantage.**

**\*\* Divisive - upsetting whole families**

**Judaizers - you must follow Jewish customs to know Jesus.**

**Not the only problem, but one of them – we are superior**

**Where is your allegiance? “It better be with us.”**

**\*\* Twisted convictions**

**nothing is pure… both their minds and consciences are corrupted.**

**They have no conviction for their sin or deception. Calling what God says is evil, good. Ignoring God’s moral standards.**

**\*\* Hypocritical life**

**16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.**

**Smashed, foolish, foul, affairs, and misuse of funds**

**“but I got the power…”**

**1 Tim 4:16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.**

**As a result \*\* They are disqualified**

**V16 (they are) detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.**

**Not as a human – but as a leader. They are unhealthy and dangerous (Like a counterfeit coin – worthless)**

**What is a church leader to do? How a leader is to respond**

**For those who do this and to those who spread things like this.**

**\*\* Stop them - Do not let them teach - 11 They must be silenced…**

**Take them out of the pulpit. Do not permit them to lead a class or Bible study. Within your local church, remove opportunities.**

**Even if it’s a little bit right. A little corruption is still corrupt. They speak contaminated words. The mixture of truth and lies equals lies.**

**Water with just a little dirt/poison – is still undrinkable.**

**Even poisoned water refreshes the thirst, then kills.**

**\*\* Confront them - rebuke them sharply**

**Shine a light with grace – on the errors**

**Don’t be scared of what they say – confront them out of love.**

**\*\* Restore them - that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.**

**The purpose is - to get them on the right track - (Matt 18)**

**Galatians 6:1 If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.**

**We must be willing to address issues bringing confusion and division in the body of Christ. To restore if possible.**

**\*\* Correct them**

**Titus 2:1 You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.**

**One of a leader’s responsibilities is to know and protect the flock from the lies of wolves – encourage and correct sheep.**

**Let’s wrap up Titus 1 with –** Some Big Thoughts

1. **Never take church leadership lightly**

* **The desire to be a church leader– is a heavy burden**

**1 Peter 5:1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; (no one should be in a position out of obligation) not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; (At the heart is servanthood) 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.**

* **Leadership is not just doing stuff, but speaking into your life**

**Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. / 17 Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.**

**The importance of submission to church leadership.**

**Listen to us – test it to scripture – if it aligns, do it.**

* **Be careful and mindful of who you pick as a leader**

**1 Tim 3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. (Paul gives Tim a similar list he gave Titus - then) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.**

**There is to be accountability and a measure of expectations for leaders – the qualifications are requirements to ensure that church abuses, misuses, and deception are avoided.**

**How can you hold us accountable unless you know us? Some leaders are too distant from people to be held accountable.**

* **Those that are in church leadership should be valued**

**Eph 5:11-12 – God gives leadership as a gift to the church**

**1 Corinthians 16:15 You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord’s people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, 16 to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.**

**Valued and respected for their time, sacrifices, and calling – Very few pastors feel appreciated – they hang on by a thread**

**1 Thes 5:12** **Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.**

**Pray for us – encourage us – help us - we need it.**

1. **There are wolves out there trying to lead you astray from the gospel**

**Many of the NT letters deal with this – the reality of the spiritual wolf**

**Jesus - Luke 10:3 - Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. / Phil 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of false teachers. / Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through empty philosophy and vain deceit… / 2 Cor 11:13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.… (Gal 2-3, Phil 1-3, 2 Pet 2:1)**

**(Paul even warned) Acts 20:30 Even from your own number, men will rise up and distort the truth to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert and remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.**

**Leaders are to protect and guide the sheep through the brush - from false teaching and selfish actions of others.**

1. **Confrontation is hard but necessary**

**It’s never easy – but must be done - and restored if possible**

**Matthew 7:15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.**

**Some pastors refuse to address the wolf problem – they might offend someone - and the wolves reproduce and populate. Jesus mentions poser pastors who ignore or run from issues.**

**John 10:12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.**

1. **True gospel beliefs precede true gospel behavior.**

**Titus 1:1 for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness…**

**Again and again, Paul tells us in this in this letter.**

**They go hand in hand – we will see this again in next 2 chaps.**

1. **The purpose of the church is to introduce people to Jesus and help them to grow mature in Jesus – Don’t be swayed.**

**INTRO - Titus 1:1 (I am writing) … to further the faith of God’s elect (help us mature) and their knowledge of the truth (our understanding of Jesus) that leads to godliness (our walk with Jesus) 2 in the hope of eternal life, (the promise of heaven) which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time… 3 …through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior.**

**Everything – we do (as a church) is to be about preaching the good news and helping you further in the faith (maturity) and seeing it permeate your whole life. We must keep that our mission.**

**Doing everything we can to help you meet Jesus and growth in truth and godliness. We cannot be sidetracked by other things.**

* **Salvation - Been hurt by a church in the past**
* **Boldness to lovingly confront false teachers**
* **That we would strive for maturity together**