

Invitation to Compassionate Community
Practices that Make Community Work
God's Invitations Series – Part 6

Titus 3:1-3
September 13-14, 2025

Introduction

- Evangelism seminar TOMORROW (Sunday) at 2pm. *We have to find ways of sharing our faith that are natural, winsome, powerful, and effective.* Pastor Rodney will lead us. I encourage you to be there.
- Tough Emotional Week - Tough week emotionally on all sides of issues with the *assassination of Charlie Kirk.* Unfortunately, *with everyone processing openly online there was a lot of added confusion and hurt.* I don't think that it's an accident the *passage* that *God designed* out today for us to study in our series, that was designed a year ago. It's all about how we interact as a godly community and why how we act toward one another matters so much.
- Let's appreciate our visiting pastor: *Pastor Andrea Coli!* Thank you pastor for leading us while I was out.
 - We are in part 6 of an 8 part series in Titus. *I'll be teaching the remainder of the series with you.*
 - Last week – pastor Andrea shared with us that in addition to the grace that God gives to save us, there is also a constantly present aspect of Grace, she called *Transforming Grace, that gives us the power to BECOME* and be transformed into the person God built us to be in His image. Paul gives Titus so many instructions on how people need to change and live differently, he needed to break to remind us that we aren't in this alone but the *Holy Spirit is working overtime* to help us make those changes.
 - This week – The apostle Paul turns the young pastor Titus' attention toward a plan on how to *train everyone to get along with each other both inside and outside the church.*¹ Apparently, things weren't going great.
- Why we need people so much – *The older I get the less I want to be around people.* That sounds terrible but it's true. I suppose it for a few reasons, but one of the reasons is that as a younger man I was filled with unending energy and people filled me up and I felt affirmed and made sense when I was with people. At this age I no longer need others to help me make sense of myself and I'm okay just being me, but when that was partnered with a lot of pain and frustration from people over 3 decades of ministry it leaves me wanting to isolate more and more. *But here's the problem. I'm not the best version of me alone.* I may not need people to validate and tell me who I am anymore, but I certainly need people to make me the best that I can be. *When I am alone I drop into my least version of self.* With no external accountability I am left with *justifications, rationalizations, and unnecessary darkness.* When I'm with people I push myself to be better. I push myself to be

¹ "Verses 1–2 form a single Greek sentence that sets out instructions in two parts. Verse 1 addresses the church in its public life (politeia) concerning its duties as citizens or residents of the empire. Verse 2 widens the scope of responsibility to include people in general." NICNT, Philip Towner

there for them. I push myself to bring God into the situation. **We need people so much because we were built to be our best around and with them.**

- The Butterfly Effect of our choices – Everyone knows the idea of the butterfly effect, yes? It's that **a tiny movement in one area can cause a massive ramification in another. That is absolutely true in the social sphere of life.** How we treat other people. How we act with other people. **How we engage with one another sends shock waves through our entire communities.** A few weeks ago we talk about how we live really, really matters. In the same way we need to realize that it's not just how we live individually or how we live in our own homes, but **it matters how we treat one another and the culture of our community we set.** If we are going to make a difference in this world, we have to work together to **create a culture** of power and strength and health.

Community requires COOPERATION

- Crete had a relational culture problem – notice that there is no real mention of the physical or actual problems of the people on Crete? Did they go through a terrible hurricane and lose everything? Did a blight hit their gardens and ruin their ability to eat? Were they a whole colony of slaves that were owned by terrible people? You don't hear any of that. What you hear Paul mention is that **they are relationally broken, morally damaged, selfishly askew. What this means is that their culture was their biggest problem and kept them from God the most.** To be even clearer, the culture was built on **selfishness and treating each other relationally poorly.** That was what was ruining their lives: **relational dynamics.**
 - The wisest strategists (cultural exegesis) – the wisest strategists trying to bring change to any situation is to **analyze why it's bad in the first place.** When it comes to fixing situations with people, usually the best course of action is to do what's called: cultural exegesis. It means to cut apart culture and pull out what's wrong and what's right and sift it to find a way to make it all right again. For a missionary to go into another country is mind-bending since totally different rules apply in that culture. Therefore the best thing to do for a missionary is to get to know the culture they are walking into as best as possible so they can know the right and wrong things to do to bring about change. **If they want to talk about Jesus' impact, there are ways to do that which will yield fruit and ways that won't.** A lot of activity that doesn't address the problems at hand is just a waste of time and may make things worse.
 - Broken people & healthy people² – **Paul knew that when dealing with a culture of broken people, broken in a relational way, the single most effective manner of outreach would be to live in such a healthy fashion that it's impossible to ignore.** To create such a healthy community setting that people would be drawn into it (eventually) and long for what it brings. They would be able to see the trajectory

² "Thus Christian life in the world is to present a vivid contrast to the criticized Cretan image. In the civic arena Christians are to be as responsible as the best citizens. Where believers, more generally, come into contact with other people, they are to embody the highest ideals of human virtue as they imitate the pattern of behavior embodied by Christ himself." NICNT

of their lives in comparison with the lives of those in the church and want different. It's brilliant.

- What Paul is about to ask of the Cretan church – Paul is about to tell Titus to instruct his Cretan church to transform society by making the least waves possible. He's going to tell him that **Christians were to make a difference by treating everyone with honor, being humble and submitting to authority, even if authority was bad and corrupt. He was going to tell them to stop arguing and pointing out everything they didn't like or disagreed with. And to win their culture with gentle kindness and unflinching integrity.** What an anti-American view. We feel the need to fight about everything. How do you feel about those types of instructions? What rebellious Christian stories are coming to mind to justify lighting up the society around you?
- Why are we so mad about the choices of others? – I'm clearly on a soapbox here and this shouldn't go into the sermon. But it's worth examining. Why are we so angry and want to fight those who see life different from us? We pretend that it's because we stand for righteousness, and we are offended by sin, but is that true? No matter which likely reason we are doing it (see below), I don't see much righteousness involved. There are only two reasons to be angry righteously and I'm not sure any of us are doing it for those reasons. Let's look at some possible reasons (think of a social narrative that irks you and tell me why you are so mad about it – I'll get you started...is it their perspective on immigration? LGBTQ? Politics? Welfare system? I'm sure you can take it from here):
 1. Because they are shoving it in your face – they are crossing a line with their bad behavior and its affecting the quality of your life. Their choices are causing your life to be harder and that's irritating.
 2. Because they are getting away with it – you actually would want to do the same thing but you feel guilty about it and don't. So you get mad at those who don't carry the same burden toward Christian living that you do. So, you are jealous. If you can't have fun then they can't have fun either. While you are struggling to do the right thing, they are coasting and doing the wrong thing.
 3. Because it's not your way – how many social issues are you irritated by the other side simply because it's not the way that you see it and want to do it. Different is the problem. You haven't even looked into it deep enough to see the merits of their choices or motivations for their choices. It's simply not the 'right way' to do it (which is your way). This even shows up when it's not your 'team's' view. This is a tribal motive. Think about politics and wanting your side to win in influence. The more the 'other team' advances or does things against your team's view, it's irritating. You are not even sure the negative reasons for it but you've been told its bad.
 4. Because it's harming other people – you are a defender of others and although it doesn't dramatically affect your life or impact you in any discernible way, you are agitated that it is making other people's lives hard and that makes you mad. They shouldn't have the right to make other people's existence more difficult.

5. Because it dishonors God – God is pure and holy and created His people to honor Him and interact with Him in obedience and when sin is not only done but flagrantly done it's an affront to God and it's like a middle finger in His face. We should be ashamed of our sin and usually that means we keep it quiet and silent so we don't make a scene of it.
- The next step of the exercise – now that you have discerned WHY IT is that it IRRITATES you so badly, the next diagnostic is to find out WHY we feel justified ACTING THE WAY WE DO to those people. It's one thing to be angered in your spirit. It's one thing to be offended. It's one thing to be horrified. But it's entirely other thing to behave badly in reaction to it. So, why do we feel justified railing at those we disagree with? Here's some options:
 - A. They need to be bullied back in line – they are out there doing things knowing it's wrong and they are arrogant about it, so we need to raise our voices and threats to scare them into submitting to our way. This is a power battle and the more they feel empowered the worse they are going to get so we need to rise up and knock them down first.
 - B. They are ignorant and need to be instructed – they would never act that way if they knew the truth and we are the ones to tell them. The more we give them information about how we disagree they may be educated and come up with a different viewpoint.
 - C. They are mesmerized by evil and need to be shocked out of it – they have been brainwashed by the devil or by society and they think they are doing the right thing, but it's only because they haven't heard the TRUTH clearly and forcefully. Once they do they can be stunned out of their way of thinking and think clear for the first time and change.
 - The sobering truth – there are some behaviors we are doing (not just getting loud) that cannot be justified. They come from a place of the flesh and are not righteous, no matter the attempt at rationalizing. Jesus didn't act like that, and we don't get to act like that.
 - People are people – it's tempting to ask the question in a passage like this that tells us to act a certain way toward people: **which people? Does Paul mean act like this to one another in the church or to my neighbor outside?** And truly there is a certain element of truth that we do things for one another in the family of Christ that we may not do for outsiders, but **when it comes to integrity and loving behavior there should be no difference. It's a false question.** It's a question looking for an out. It's a question wondering if we have to do something for someone that doesn't deserve it. **It's a question wondering if we need to try hard for the bad guys. But Christ set a tone about life that makes all of that unnecessary. Jesus treated everyone the same because it was who HE was, not who they were that dictated His actions and behavior.** Once unselfish love parameters were in place, we then and ONLY THEN saw Jesus adjust and compensate toward people depending on their relationship to Him (ex: did more for disciples than not).

Lesson

- Head Ache

- How the church should interact with societal authority
 - Titus 3:1a – “Remind them [the Christians in Crete] *to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient,...*”
 - Remind them³ – the Cretan church. Remind the Christians that how they live matters a lot and everyone is watching them whether they know it or not.
 - to be submissive⁴ – this is a word in Greek (hypotassomai) which means to be in subjection, and it’s an authority word. It means that the authority in the situation has a perspective and that perspective needs to be honored and submitted to. It means that the only proper way to do that is through obedience to what they are directing. The key is understanding that authority only makes sense in context, structure and system. There is no absolute authority that is held by a human being over another. That is God’s role alone. Therefore all human authorities are limited and partial. The goal is to find out what the system is and what things the authorities are in charge of and what systems they are setting in place.
 - to rulers and authorities,⁵ - In this context they/we are told to be submissive to rulers and authorities. Which ones? The ones in society or the ones in the church? At first, when he’s speaking to Christians it seems like he’s talking about the church, but when we see Paul’s point about changing the society around us with Christian impact it seems to point to societal rulers. But here’s the thing: It doesn’t matter who he’s talking to. It’s all the same. How?
 - Romans 13 is key – Paul also wrote the book of Romans and he talks quite a bit about this concept there. Let’s turn there quickly. We are looking for Romans 13:1-7. It says that we are to be in submission, subject to, obedient to governing authorities. Which ones? All of them. Why? Because God let them be there and is working through them whether they like it or not, whether they are in alignment with Him or not. When he’s done with them, He will remove them. Therefore they are playing out His plan. To rebel against them to rebel against God. God’s always the true authority.

³ “Paul sets Titus into the teaching mode again with another in the sequence of didactic imperatives: “remind them [the people]” (cf. 1:13; 2:1, 6, 15; see on 2 Tim 2:14). The choice of the verb suggests that the churches in Titus’s charge had already been exposed to this teaching. It was known widely in the church (Rom 13:1; 1 Pet 2:13), and corresponded to Greco-Roman ethics in general. The influence of the rebellious Cretan teachers—whose teaching and praxis reflected too much of Cretan culture, ran counter to the apostolic tradition and caused disruption—explains the need to recall earlier accepted teaching.” NICNT

⁴ “Titus is to remind them of an appropriate posture, defined with the verb hypotassomai (“to be in subjection”; Rom 13:1, 5; 1 Pet 2:13; see on 1 Tim 2:11), which calls for the recognition and acceptance of authority through appropriate attitudes and actions. Two dative nouns (“rulers and authorities”) combine to indicate widely that all official powers are to be shown subjection (and obedience), rather than to distinguish between levels of authority. This is followed immediately by the verb, “to obey” (cf. Acts 5:29, 32; 27:21). It occurs here without an object,⁷ which suggests that “obedience,” as opposed to disobedience, will be the general rule. Falling within the scope of this command would be specific actions and behavior (paying taxes, obeying laws) that exhibit the more fundamental posture of subjection.” NICNT

⁵ “There are two elements of background that illuminate this teaching. First, the entire tradition (cf. 1 Tim 2:1–2) grows out of the reality that dawned in the period of Israel’s exile that YHWH continued to be sovereign in spite of pagan dominion over Israel. This prophetic message fostered hope in God’s future, but also included the obligation to exhibit loyalty to the pagan state: “But seek the welfare of the city where I sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer 29:7; cf. Ezra 6:9–10; 1 Macc 7:33). This obligation of course ran counter to notions of religious and ritual purity and challenged the sorts of barriers (especially Jewish) put up to protect these things. And the theological and practical questions that this gives rise to have continued through the generations.” NICNT

- Romans 13:1-7 – *“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience.⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.”*
- But what if they are bad guys doing bad things? – what if they are doing things that are not only unkind and bad, but they have an anti-God agenda? BTW that was the reality for almost everyone that read the Bible through history and CERTAINTY for the original readers. **They had governments that made ours look like choir boys.** Well, God has a solution for that too. **What should we do** if we have a messed up set of governmental authorities (regardless of the context)? Pray for them.

 - 1 Timothy 2:1-2 – *“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”*
- to be obedient⁶ – what do we have to do? Be obedient. What? Those guys are yahoos! How can I follow someone like that? Honor and respect doesn’t mean you agree with their perspective, their rules, or their ways. It means that you are a person of high character who is honoring and respectful regardless of if it works for you or not.

 - Where is the limit?**⁷ – we see in Scripture times when God’s people didn’t follow the rule of the day and did social disobedience and were commended for it. So, clearly there is a limit to our obedience, right? Yes, there is. But it’s not a limit for you to do what you want to do and become the supreme authority (we are never that). **It’s when the lower authority is in violation of the higher authority. Once human**

⁶ “Some of the language here is the same as what is found in Romans 13:1. For the audience of this letter, “Paul’s directive implies that “rulers and authorities” are not commanding rebellion against God but generally fulfilling their God-ordained duties (see Rom 13:1–7). They are upholding social order.” (Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (D. A. Carson, Ed.; p. 538). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos.) There are, of course, examples of times when the people of God had to go against authorities. What are we to make of that today?”

⁷ “Paul is not blindly ordering Titus to enforce lockstep adherence to civil rule no matter what. He is confirming that, under conditions like those in Crete at that time, Christians should be exemplary subjects, even in a pagan social order. The special grace they have received in Christ should enhance, not curtail, their cooperation with the common grace of human government to the extent this is possible (see Rom 12:18) (Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (D. A. Carson, Ed.; pp. 538–539). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos.).

leadership demands that we do something in direct violation of what the Lord told us to do, we are going to follow the more senior official.

- **A great example** - Acts 5:27-32 – *“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”*

- Head’s Up

- A call to be alert to opportunity

- **Titus 3:1b** – *“...to be ready for every good work,...”*

- to be ready⁸ – one of Paul’s critiques of the **Cretan society was that they were so lost in selfishness, so lazy, so lost in alcohol and gluttony that they weren’t good for anything.** They brought no blessing to the people around them. They lived **lives geared only for waste.** Therefore, the **counter offensive was to have Christians be prepped and ready to do something of value.** We are not here to simply get through life. We are here to make a difference. We were built in extraordinary ways to do extraordinary things.
- for every good work – what are they/we supposed to be ready for? **WHATEVER good thing needs to be done at the time.** The problem with seeing ministry through a set schedule lens, is that it seems there are times when we are on and times when we are off. But the thing about being **salt and light** is that those are operating 24/7, 365. We are always on if the Lord brings up and opportunity can calls us to respond to that. A good work is anything righteous, godly, good act. We should be ready for whatever the Lord brings out way.

- Stop Being a Jerk

- An argument against an arguing spirit

- **Titus 3:2** – *“...to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.”*

⁸ “But here in another church setting, the command is generalized (“whatever, every”) and the language picks up the thematic use of “good deeds” in these letters to Titus and Timothy as a description of observable, Spirit-filled living (see 1 Tim 2:10 Excursus and note). Simultaneously, this phrase “ready to do ... good” intentionally strikes again at the moral weakness of the Cretan teachers who are “unfit for doing anything good” (1:16). With both the negative assessment of Cretan civil life¹¹ and the opponents’ Cretan-like tendencies in mind, Paul’s primary concern in this matter of the church’s subjection to the state and public behavior is the exercise of a visible Christianity that is free from the cultural taint.” NICNT

- to speak evil⁹ of no one, - This means slander, insult, attacking speech against someone else to tear them down. Christians don't get to do this. It doesn't matter what the other team did or said. We are limited to the destructive language that is used. We don't get to tear people down even if they are clearly bad guys. You can address people's behavior and their viewpoints, but attacking THEM is off the table.
- to avoid quarreling,¹⁰ - Again, read this in context. The false teachers that had invaded the Cretan church had stirred people up in debates and arguments and were enticing and encouraging quarrels and debates. Some personalities thrive in arguing and fighting. That needs to be channeled into a more constructive way. And yes, there are times when something needs to be combatted and the truth needs to be spoken of in debate, but in context, there had been enough of that and it was time to bring peace to the church and slow everything down. Enough of the arguing. Enough of competing. The problem with most quarrelling is that it's actually a prideful power struggle, not an attempt to get to the truth.
- to be gentle,¹¹ - again, in contrast to the culture around them and the false leaders who ruined everything, the church was to foster an atmosphere and culture of gentleness. This means a softening, not harshness. This means a reasonableness and not a lashing out. The greatest apologists for any argument I've seen in my life, have those who have cut the knees out of another person's argument through gentle truth (MLK was one of the best of all time). Fighting fire with fire and venom for venom is far easier, but we lose the moral authority on the way.
- and to show perfect courtesy¹² – This is actually the word 'meek' and was used of Jesus. I love this definition: "*Praûtēs*, according to Aristotle, is the middle standing between two extremes, getting angry without reason (*orgilótēs* [n.f.]), and not getting angry at all (*aorgēsía* [n.f.]). Therefore, *praûtēs* is getting angry at the right time, in the right measure, and for the

⁹ "First, "slander" ("insult, speak against"; 1 Tim 6:4; 2 Tim 3:2) is generally prohibited. The term can also mean "to blaspheme" (against God, his people, or his appointed servants; 1 Tim 1:13, 20; 6:1; Titus 2:5), but in view of the disputes about teaching and practice that seem to be a concern, the more general meaning is best." NICNT

¹⁰ "Second, "quarreling" is to be avoided ("be peaceable"). This theme seems to grow out of the disputes that characterize the rebellious teachers in each letter (note the use of the cognate terms for "fighting" in 3:9; 2 Tim 2:23–24). As a Christian virtue to be cultivated, this irenic, non-combative demeanor was to be found in leaders 1 Tim 3:3 (see note), and it runs quite counter to the rough Cretan stereotype embodied by the local teachers. Here it is applied generally to a life led in such a way that it causes no offense to other people." NICNT

¹¹ "Third, again in contrast to the roughness of the opponents and Cretan behavior in general, believers are to be "considerate" ("gentle, reasonable, forbearing, conciliatory, courtesy"; see on 1 Tim 3:3). In view of Paul's desire to claim the fulfillment of the Hellenistic ideal in Christ (2:11–12), he is again arguing that it is the gospel that produces a virtuous human being." NICNT

¹² "The fourth quality, "gentle" ("humble, meek"; see on 2 Tim 2:25), also occurs with "considerate" in that earlier description of Christ (2 Cor 10:1). While in English usage this quality is often thought to manifest itself in a quiet, passive demeanor that goes unnoticed, the command here calls for its positive demonstration "toward everyone [all people]." This broad applicability—"to all people"—corresponds to the social dimension of this instruction and indicates Paul's concern that believers, in the way they live, send a clear message to the world. The reason for this is not immediately given, but is almost certainly to be linked to Paul's evangelistic goals for the church (see 3:8 where Christian behavior is said generally to have benefits for "people")." NICNT

These instructions can sound like Paul is encouraging passivity, but he's not. "Peaceableness is a conscious mode of response that allows one to resist taking a violent course in difficult situations, often sacrificially, in order to save relationships. Gentleness (or consideration) is an attitude that quiets personal concerns to make room for the concerns of others. And meekness (humility) is that balanced perception of oneself that makes it possible to regard others as more important (compare Phil 2:3–4)...Paul is calling for behavior free of arrogance and proud cockiness, not a gentleness that is always deferential to everyone, a grotesque disposition that would define the Christian as a quailing caricature." (Towner, P. (1994). *1–2 Timothy & Titus* (Vol. 14, Tt 3:1–2). InterVarsity Press.)

right reason.” It’s power under control. It’s a metered response and a checked reaction. It’s doing what’s right in any given situation.

- toward all people – and here’s the challenge: **Do it to everyone even the ones you like the least.** Even nonbeliever and bad guys can act amazingly toward people they like. It’s a Christlike shine when we do it when people don’t expect it and we wouldn’t normally want to do it either.
- The Big Why
 - The reason for our proper responses
 - Titus 3:3a – “*For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray,...*”
 - For we ourselves were once – **why should we give people room to be human and do bad things and screw up? Because they are no different than we were.** The moment a Christian forgets what they came from they are less effective as ministers. It is the constant presence of mind that, ‘but for the grace of God go I...’ that allows us to act appropriately. **Pride and holier than thou is waiting around every corner for the believer.** When we begin to change we forget what it was like before that process. We assume that everyone has the same opportunities and benefits that we have to make those changes which may not be true. And even if it’s true that those ‘terrible people’ aren’t trying and they are just nasty people, remember that there were many days and periods of time when you did the same thing. Humans are humans and every human being, regardless of their maturity, is still made in the image of Christ and deserves a certain level of dignity.
 - foolish,¹³ - **There are three main reasons why we become bad guys and walk in opposition to God.** The first one is that we make stupid choices. It means that we are operating in **IGNORANCE**. We don’t know what we don’t know and we are too stupid to figure it out. It’s possible that we make choices that kept us in ignorance, but **our bad choices are not intentional, we simply cannot (in that moment) make a better one. Usually this means that someone is not aware or informed about God so they don’t live in accordance with God.**
 - disobedient,¹⁴ - The **second** major reason why we live in contradiction to God is that we do so **ON PURPOSE**. We know what is right and wrong and **choose to do the wrong thing**. We know who is in charge and we will not honor their authority to fall in line. We know the boundaries but refuse to remain within them. **This is directly due to a sense or belief that we are above their authority and are in charge.** It’s usually a pride issue.

¹³ “the adjective “foolish” (1 Tim 6:9) denotes spiritual obtuseness or ignorance specifically of God.” NICNT

¹⁴ “Second, the adjective “disobedient” (apeithēs) already used of the opponents (1:16; see on 2 Tim 3:2) forms a contrast with the charge to be obedient to rulers in 3:1 (peitharchein). It characterizes the old life (still being exhibited by the rebellious teachers) in terms of a conscious rejection of God and perhaps also Paul, his servant (Eph 2:2; 5:2; Col 3:6).” NICNT

- led astray,¹⁵ - The **third** reason we live in opposition to God is that we are led astray and were encouraged to make bad choices by **EXTERNAL forces**. This can be influences from people around us, or evil spiritual influences. **The Bible talks about how the devil has trapped, snared, blinded, veiled, the eyes of people so they don't know what they are doing.** It's not that people are just generally ignorant, it's an intentional blinding so that those people would be forced to oppose God.
- Out of Control
 - The impact of desires unchecked
 - Titus 3:3b – "...slaves to various passions and pleasures,...**
 - slaves – slaves means **under the full control of and owned**. It means that you are no longer in charge. It means that something or someone else is in control of your daily choices. It means that even if you wanted to make a change you couldn't.
 - to various passions and pleasures¹⁶ - what are we enslaved to? Our passions and pleasures. What does this mean? **It's when things of this world, things of the flesh, desires and drives have taken center stage and loyalty. It means God and godliness has been set aside for the pursuit of selfish pleasure. It means that the craving side of us has become a monster and is demanding allegiance.** It means that even if we wanted to stop doing the addictive behavior, the compulsive sin, we could not because we are no longer majority decision-maker. It's like our flesh went on autopilot and is driving the car. **We have said yes to our sinful nature so many times that it became a bully and turned on us.**
- Nasty
 - When resentment and hatred drive us
 - Titus 3:3c – "...passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another."**
 - passing our days – in this context it's reflecting on the current Cretan culture of 'good for nothing.' They are just existing and using things. They are consumers but not providers or producers. They are leeches off society. They are useless and benefit-less to others. But here's the thing, we too used to just 'live'. We too, before we knew the purpose of our existence here on earth as created Children of God for His glory, we too just lived for human reasons and it was foolish waste. But that type of self-obsession leads to a resentment of others.

¹⁵ "Third, changing to a participle, those who live this way are "deceived." This is true of all who live in sin without the knowledge of God (Rom 1:27; Heb 5:2; 1 Pet 2:25; Rev 12:9), but it is a special and ironic mark of rebellious Christian teachers in these letters who both lead others astray and are themselves deceived (2 Tim 3:13; 1 Tim 4:1). Both senses are probably meant in this description. This opening triad of character flaws underlines the helplessness of people outside of the sphere of God's grace." NICNT

¹⁶ "The first of these is "passions, desires" ("lusts"; 2:12; see on 1 Tim 6:9; 2 Tim 3:6), which, though neutral or even positive in some contexts, here indicate "passions" that have become abnormal in their insatiability. "Pleasures" (or "enjoyment") are evaluated negatively in the NT as having become the primary object of longing (2 Tim 3:4 "lovers of pleasure"), especially of those who either have no knowledge of God (Rom 1:24) or have turned away from God and live life on the visceral level (2 Tim 3:4)." NICNT

- in malice¹⁷ – the word for malice means that your **inner bent is toward evil. You wake up bitter and go to bed angry.** You have hate as a way of breathing. It's not so much a passionate anger as a demeanor of anti toward everyone and everything.
- and envy,¹⁸ - I love this definition, "it's **the mental outworking of dissatisfaction.**" It means that you are so bummed out by your life that **every good thing around you makes you mad.** You resent that others are doing well. You resent what they have and what they can do. Their joy makes you upset. You want it for yourself even if it costs them.
- hated by others¹⁹ – this nasty selfish demeanor **makes you horrible to be around and people resent you.** They see your perspective and they want nothing to do with you. Your yuck inside drives them away.
- and hating one another²⁰ - **And the feeling is mutual, you don't like them either.** You don't want good for them and they are just irritating you anyway so good riddance. You hate them just as much as they hate you. It may not be a passionate hate, it may just be a dull hatred and resentment. There's no point in getting worked up about it, they aren't even worth that.

Conclusion

- Community matters – **our community, our culture with one another, our way of life with one another is precious and needs to be cultivated.** It so easily, like an untended garden, can grow out of control. Too often we look through a solo lens only of how things interact with us, and forget the whole. But it's the whole that helps us be who we need to be for Christ. Tending the relationships around us is crucial.
- Beyond the Basics - **We need each other and when we let ourselves fall to our base instincts it just makes life harder on everyone. Everyone is hurting and we, as Christians, are to be part of the solution not part of the problem.** This life isn't about us getting what we want, it's about us providing what other people need based on our abundance we've received from God.
- Beyond pride – **never forget that without the grace of God getting us to be as good as we are, there's no chance.** The Holy Spirit is the one that is doing the hard work to transform us into a useful human being and shining child of God. Pride in our accomplishments are not just foolish but undo what the Holy Spirit's been working

¹⁷ "The first two are poisons that begin their work within the person. They occur here in a prepositional phrase that describes the manner in which we used "to live" or "pass our days" (NRSV) before conversion.²⁴ The noun "malice" ("wickedness"), when referred to in vice lists, depicts life turned towards evil. The related adjective links this characteristic to the Cretan stereotype (1:12)." NICNT

¹⁸ "'Envy' is also frequently identified as a flaw typical of unregenerate life (Rom 1:29) that believers are to shun (see on 1 Tim 6:4; 1 Pet 2:1; 5:26). It is the mental outworking of dissatisfaction, associated with "malice" in some cases (as in 1 Pet 2:1; T. Benjamin 8:1) and with hatred in others." NICNT

¹⁹ "The last two items "being hated and hating one another" are correctly regarded as results of malice and envy. Probably the first of the two terms depicts the response evoked in others by those who are malicious and envious, i.e. they are considered to be "despicable." NICNT

²⁰ "The second term, "hating one another," describes the mutual response of those who belonged to that former way of life. Thus the "former" life (still very current for those within Titus's sphere) consists of ignorance and active opposition to God and people. In contrast with the life to be pursued by believers, life outside of the influence of God's grace is destructive chaos that collapses in on itself under the weight of hatred. But this is not where Paul wishes to concentrate his thought; the good news is that a change has occurred in the world." NICNT

on. We must never forget that we too are capable of evil and yuck, that way we don't get holier than thou.

- Beyond assumption – there's a reason why people are the way they are. Most, if not all monsters, aren't born they are made. Instead of immediate rejection and hatred for the wicked members of our society, maybe we need to look a bit deeper and find out what's driving them. Sure, maybe it's selfishness and wanting to harm others for selfish gain, but what allowed them to think that way in the first place? What are they compensating for? What darkness is in their spirit that drives that? What do we have that they don't? How can we help them see life differently?
- What's our relationship and interaction with people around us? That's the bottom line here. What is our mark on society? Good, bad? Negligent? What's our reputation? How do people think of us? What influence are we having? Are we making things worse or better? Are we seen as people with fruit of the Spirit or just more angry people disappointed with how life is?