

## Titus 2:1-8                      From Generation to Generation

Kent A. Tollakson, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Good morning, church!** It's wonderful to be with all of you this morning.

I've seen new faces lately, so I think I should introduce myself. My name is Kent Tollakson. I'm an elder here, I leading our youth ministry, overseeing small groups, and, together with my wife Karlee, provide Biblical counseling for those in need.

I also enjoy serving with our worship teams, children's ministry, Grace Marriage, and more. And a few times a year, I get the blessing of sharing on Sunday morning!

Lately, the book of Titus has come up in conversation multiple times, which led me to study it more than usual, and see a few things in Chapter 2 that I think we can gain from.

### Some Historical Context

Let's begin with a bit of background.

**Who was Titus?** Titus was a Greek—now a believer in Christ—converted during Paul's first mission (Titus 1:4). Soon after this he accompanied Paul to Jerusalem to address a false teaching, which was: *to be truly saved by Jesus, a person had to also practice Jewish customs—specifically, circumcision and dietary rules.*

Paul strongly disagreed and got everyone to travel down to Jerusalem to have the disciples decide who was right. The ruling was clear: **salvation is by grace through faith**—not through works or rituals. As Ephesians 2:8–9 states, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast.”*

But, as Eric reminded us last week, while works are not required **for salvation**, they are a required evidence **of salvation**. As James 2:26 says, *“Faith without works is dead.”* A transformed life is marked by fruit—**or works of love in response** to the grace we are freely given through faith.

That's why Titus is a great example to study. He received grace through faith, and then spent his life being fruitful for Jesus. He helped Paul with the church in Corinth, he established churches on Crete and later he took the gospel into the modern-day area of Croatia, Bosnia, etc.

### Understanding Crete

And what about Crete? The island Titus is working on when he got this letter? Crete is a long, narrow island—about 150 miles long and 30 miles wide—known then as “the island of a hundred cities.” With deep ties to Greek mythology: Mt. Ida, its highest

peak, was believed to be the birthplace of Zeus, Minos (a half-god, son of Zeus) and the Minotaur.

Christianity likely started in Crete because “Cretans” were present on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11). Then, Paul was on Crete as a prisoner en route to Rome (Acts 27:12), stopping there to winter, due to dangerous sea conditions.

Crete, was a melting pot of news, ideas and religions because of all the ships stopping at its ports. Picture a busy food court in a mall, with each culture offering its own “menu” of philosophies and beliefs.

Our world today tells us that having lots of faith options is good. But it’s not. It didn’t help the Cretans. They were famous for being “*liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons*” (Titus 1:12). In that environment Titus was to build a healthy church.

Doesn’t that sound familiar? Crete had lots of similarities to America today. Fast-paced, often chaotic, full of conflicting voices, and ripe with moral failures.

### **The Game Plan**

With Eric’s sermon from last week about being people who are bearing spiritual fruit ringing in my ears. I want to focus on a specific kind of fruitfulness that God wants us to create, but we shouldn’t jump into Titus 2:1-8, without touching on Chapter 1.

Paul’s first instruction to Titus was to **get the church in order**—starting with leadership. He told Titus to appoint elders—men of godly character who are:

- Faithful to one wife
- Able to lead their families in Christ
- Hospitable, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined
- Lovers of what is good

He was to avoid appointing men who are:

- Arrogant, quick-tempered, drunkards
- Violent or greedy for personal gain

God sees greed in leaders as especially seriously. Elders are NOT to “lord over” people but to **serve their people as examples**, giving sacrificially for the sake of the kingdom of God—not building their own kingdoms (1 Peter 5:3).

Jesus says the same in Luke 22:26, *“Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.”* In the kingdom of heaven, the last will be first.

It’s humbling to be called into leadership here at East Lincoln—and with all the amazing ways you help and support me, I’m pretty sure that in heaven I’ll be joyfully serving many of you snacks or mowing your angelic lawns... and I’ll be happy to do it!

Thank you for all the ways you already give and serve here at East Lincoln. I do try to be helpful and not a burden to all of you.

So how do men become qualified to lead like this?

Titus 1:9: answers...

*“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.”*

As one of your elders, I can honestly say that my fellow elders and I are striving toward this. We’re not perfect, but we desire to grow in godliness and repent of sin. We want to be faithful to what God has called us to.

OK,

Let’s dig into Titus 2:1–8.

This is a powerful section of Scripture where God offers practical guidance on how the church should live in light of the gospel. These are timeless principles—relevant then and now—they provide a designed plan to cultivate the faith from one generation to another.

Let’s read Titus 2:1–8:

1 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

2 Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine.

They are to teach what is good,

4 and so train the young women to love their husbands and children,

5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

6 Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.

7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity,

8 and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

### **Sound Doctrine as the Foundation (2:1)**

As Chapter 1 clarified, elders are to teach the bible, not their own preferences or human ideas, but the Word of God, especially the gospel.

And as I said, in a world full of different faith menus to choose from in this busy food court of America. Our gaze must be set firmly on the only menu that matters. The menu of the gospel - which offers the truth. That Jesus Christ—fully God and fully man—came to die for our sins, rose from the dead, and gives new life to those who believe in Him. The gospel isn't just the beginning of our faith; it's the foundation of our entire life. Without choosing Jesus as our bread of life and feeding upon His word, we're left vulnerable to "every kind of doctrine" and the deceitful schemes found on the endless menus of a confused world (Eph. 4:14).

### **Multigenerational Discipleship (2:2–3)**

Paul tells Titus to find Godly men and women to JOIN the ministry. Verse 2: "Older men (not necessarily by age, but by spiritual maturity) are to live uncommon lives: sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, grounded in faith, love, and endurance. These are not optional.

Verse 3: "Older women likewise..." They are also called to live uncommon lives: (sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, grounded in faith, love, and endurance), and given the reality of living on an island where lying and drunkenness was far too common, Paul warns them to avoid these things as well – do not be - gossips or drunkards. The lives of Christian men and women are to display (show the fruit – the works) of faith to help the next generation.

And then, the end of verse 3 says "THEY" as in, BOTH the older men and women – THEY are to be called TEACH what is good and to TRAIN the young men and women of faith in SOUND DOCTRINE. And now we get more specific....

### **Women's Discipleship (2:4–6)**

Verses 4–5: Older women are to train younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working in the home, kind, and submissive to their husbands—so that the Word of God is not reviled.

Let me pause here, because I know that reading things like— *be submissive, to your husband and work in the home*—can sound outdated or even offensive. But we must understand the biblical context. We need to see that Paul isn't giving permission to

dominate women—he’s working with the broken cultural, to lead men and women into better.

Here are 3 things to remember:

1. First, In that era, most women weren’t educated, (unfortunately). This was wrong, but Paul could not change this instantly. The average women would not be able to function well within the complexities of business, written documents and more. Therefore, Paul wasn’t demeaning women—he was protecting them and the church from failure.
2. Second, Paul’s instruction to husbands is even more radical. Paul does not just sit back and let men dominate and control their wives as the “one who wears the pants”. Paul teaches men to: Love your wife like Christ loves the church. That means self-sacrifice, humility, and putting her first (Eph. 5:28, Phil. 2:3–8). I think Gods design here is to have women enjoy being married to their husbands. A marriage where they are happy to “submit” to being of first importance and being loved with great patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Men, lets be real men, not boys, lets love our wives in this way.)
3. Third, Scripture consistently affirms women in ministry from Moses, to Jesus, to the Disciples and more. Something other ancient religions and cultures rarely did. The study of this in the bible is absolutely beautiful and I am still learning about women like Miriam, Deborah, Esther, Anna, Junia, Phoebe, Priscilla, Lydia, and many more.

Therefore Submission in marriage that is referenced here is not about control—it’s about respecting the realities of that day. And when we seek the full counsel of God, we find Christian marriage should be about deep mutual love.

And God wants men and women to be in partnership for “His will to be done” on earth as it is in heaven!

### **Men’s Discipleship (2:6)**

Verse 6 begins with “*Likewise.*” In other words, just as older women disciple younger women, so older men should disciple younger men. And what’s the core trait to teach? *Self-control*. Christian men are called to be self-controlled because it reflects the character of Christ. It strengthens their ability to master desires and emotions under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And it enables them to lead with integrity. Self-control guards against temptation, promotes wise decision-making, and sets a powerful example for the next generation.

## **Actions Matter (2:7-8)**

These verses call ALL of us—to model good works and teach with integrity, dignity, and sound speech. Why? Its simple. If we say we are believers but act in dishonest and inappropriate ways, as well as speak in jealousy, anger or with fowl language – we kill our credibility and make the church vulnerable to attack. And attack they will – as **John 3:19-20 says...** *“the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, because then their works will be exposed.”* Unbelievers oppose the morality of the Christian church because it confronts their personal desires, and they want truth to be flexible enough to make their sin ok.

So let’s take this challenge seriously. None of us will be perfect, but we can keep growing in Godliness together, helping each other repent and improve on doing what is right. As we do we will reduce or eliminate the ability for anyone to say evil things about us.

## **Final Emphasis: From Generation to Generation**

My main goal today is to help us see and engage in **multigenerational discipleship**.

Older men—again, not necessarily by age, but by maturity—are called to mentor younger men. Older women, mentor younger women. This is God’s design for growing a healthy church: the spiritual family investing in each other.

The Bible is clear about sharing leadership. Moses grew weary carrying the burden alone, and God directed him to appoint 70 godly, Spirit-led men to help him lead. Those 70 then cared for the families of Israel. And then...parents...Yes, parents are called to be the primary spiritual teachers of their children—Deuteronomy 6:7 makes that clear. But the church is also a family, the family of God, and we are called to help each other as Titus 2 is teaching. This is how God designed it. Psalm 145:4 says, *‘One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.’* This is not optional. It’s worship. It’s obedience. It’s how God’s story continues in this world – from generation to generation.”

## **Are we doing this?**

Yes—we’re trying. We have adults volunteering to teach Children’s Church, teens helping lead younger kids—it’s awesome. Adults are leading youth small groups, and that’s a beautiful thing. But the truth is, we are stretched thin. And we shouldn’t be.

Now "Let’s be honest—teaching youth isn’t for everyone. Some of you break into a cold sweat just walking past a group of kids, especially teens. If that’s you, there are other ways to help.

God gives different gifts for a reason—and not everyone’s gift is surviving a room full of caffeinated teenagers with grace and a smile!" But there are many in our church who *do* have the wisdom, maturity, and ability – who are not currently involved. And they should be.

I’ve said it before: We should have a **waiting list** of volunteers for children’s and youth ministry.

And let me say this: **This is not a huge ask.**

Jessica, now Molli, Nicole, and others—along with myself—we work hard to create a plug-and-play system for volunteers. The Sunday content is written out and sent to you in advance, rooms and materials often prepped for you. Wednesday night studies have the next weeks topic and scriptural reference provided beforehand and we use RightNow Media a decent amount which can be looked at ahead of time by anyone. Also, on Wednesdays I provide discussion questions, scripture lists, faith challenges, weekly prayers—a bunch of stuff. At a minimum, you can show up, be present, and have enough input to have meaningful conversations with students.

And our students *need this*.

With all the garbage the world throws at them, how are they supposed to stand firm in their faith if we’re not stepping up to help them gain the most valuable thing in life—the Word of God?

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” – 2 Timothy 3:16–17

How can our youth resist temptation if we don’t talk to them about putting on the armor of God (Eph 6) or keeping God’s Word in their hearts (Ps 119:9).

They need us to help them build their lives on the rock of Jesus Christ (Matt 7:24) and they need us to help them walk through a dark world with the light of God’s truth (Ps 119:105).

### **If You’re Single**

God wants you to make disciples like anyone else! Paul saw singleness as preferable because it allowed him to focus on discipling (1 Corinthians 7:32–35). Singleness often provides more flexibility. So get involved—model godly living, and help raise up the next generation of believers.

### **If You’re a Parent**

You’re already in a season of teaching. Therefore, teach your kids God’s truth AND

gather with other believers, so that you can spur each another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24–25).

If you have some maturity and decent ability to connect with youth—you *should be volunteering*.

### **If You're Older for Real**

If you connect well with youth, get involved.

If you know you can't deal with the bigger groups of kids and the energy, consider getting involved with one on one discipleship. Take them hunting, fishing, shopping....connect and talk faith while you do so.

If you don't connect well with youth - then help support those who are. By: Pray, praying for our efforts, share your story when you have the opportunity, babysit for those volunteering if needed, and help provide transportation, food or other needs. And of course, model and active life of faith that seeks more of God and strives to show other His love.

### **Conclusion**

The way to do better is right here in: Titus 2:1–8.

I love multigenerational ministry. I love spending time with our youth. I love how Scripture calls us into this work—and I love how modern research backs up God's wisdom.

The Fuller Youth Institute has done decades of research on what helps faith stick after high school. You know what they found? The most effective model—by far—is when 5 to 6 adults are connected to a youth before they graduate or leave for college.

And that's exactly what God is calling you to be part of.

So let me ask you plainly:

- Are you embracing God's call to disciple the youth of our church?
- Are you able, but avoiding?
- Are you currently uninvolved, but capable of helping?

I know the answer for some of you is *yes, I am able, but I am NOT doing this*...And I implore you to change that.

Get involved—on Sundays, on Wednesdays, or both. Karalee and I have done both for years, even after our own kids graduated out. Why? Because this ministry matters.

You don't need to be a Bible scholar. You have more wisdom than you think, and our youth could benefit from it. (AND YOU WILL BENEFIT FROM IT TOO!)

Join in. Volunteer. Be present.

And parents, don't let your kids' protests hold you back. Nearly every teen who once said "I don't want my parent there" later admitted their parent's involvement made a lasting impact on their faith. They *needed* you—even if they didn't know it at the time.

Yes, Sundays and Wednesdays can be chaotic. Youth ministry often feels like herding caffeinated squirrels during a laser light show. But you know what? God *still* shows up in the chaos.

Amid the madness, seeds of truth are continually being planted and cultivated. It's a marathon – not a sprint. And, every once in a while, within all the caffeinated squirrel energy, some of the most powerful, life-changing moments happen.

"We are commanded to make disciples. We are not asked to consider it only if we feel like it. Jesus made this crystal clear in the Great Commission – Matthew 28:19–20: 'Go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.'

That command includes our children. It includes our teens. It includes the next generation in our own church family. This is not someone else's job. It's yours. It's mine. It's ours."

So, for those of you who can, step into that noisy, messy food court of life with us—and help point the next generation to the only true menu that matters, the word of God. Amen?

### **Let's Pray**

Lord, thank You for who You are—our Lord and Savior.

Help us live out our faith in action, so that Your will is done.

Thank You for Your Word. It's not just for Sundays; it's for every part of life.

Transform our homes, our workplaces, our relationships, our church and most importantly, our hearts.

May our church be a place where men and women, young and old, help each other hold fast to Your truth and live it boldly.

We ask this in Your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.