

## **A life that adorns God's teaching** **Titus 2:1-15**

How does a person come to live a beautiful life?

Last week, I was talking with a co-worker, and he was sharing his opinion about something with me. But, inside, I was feeling a bit of stress, so I wasn't really listening well, and then I came back a bit too strongly with an opposing opinion. And the day before that, I didn't listen well to my wife, Antonia, either. I think this is one of my tendencies, when I get a little stressed, I don't have enough margin to listen well to those around me, and I can end up hurting them. Last week, I was disappointed it happened twice. How can I change my stubborn heart?

There was a family that was experiencing difficult relationship issues, and it ended up splitting into two factions. Instead of speaking words of love and mercy, they were harsh towards each other. This type of situation is common not just in families, but also in churches. How can families and churches come back to love? How can they be changed?

Perhaps your workplace has experienced difficult situations like this. Your team may not get along well, and instead of encouraging each other and working together, you just try to keep your distance. You may even have become so accustomed to this kind of environment you feel there's nothing you can do about it.

In these types of situations, how can people change? How can they come to live beautiful lives?

Today's passage has this answer for us: grace trains us. And today's passage applies this grace to each individual's situation. How does a person come to live a beautiful life? Grace trains us.

What comes to mind when you consider the idea that grace trains us? You may have a vague idea of what grace is, but not a very detailed understanding.

The definition of grace is 'freely given love.'

For example, when I was in middle school, I played a lot of sports, and my father always came to watch my rugby games. But when I was about 13 or 14 years old, I was embarrassed of my dad, so I asked him not to come watch me play anymore. Looking back on it, it was super rude, and I feel really bad that I rejected him even though he loved me so much. But my father responded by telling me he understood, and for a while, even though he was the one driving me to my games, he waited in the car until the game was over and then took me home. He didn't respond to my rude and selfish behavior with anger, but rather made the sacrifice himself and continued to love me. It was freely given love.

The point of today's passage is that this kind of grace trains us, by this grace we can be changed. My stubborn heart, our complicated church and family relationships, our workplaces, grace trains us and grace changes us.

Let's read today's passage.

**Titus 2:1-15**

*2:1* "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. 9 Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

*11* For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

*15* Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you."

**Description of Crete**

The backdrop of today's passage is the island of Crete in the Mediterranean Sea. Has anyone here ever been to Crete?

The passage was written by a major Christian leader named Paul. It's likely that, after Paul was released from prison in Rome, he traveled to the island of Crete with a young Greek Christian named Titus. In Crete, they traveled to various towns preaching about Jesus. Through this preaching, many people believed in each town.

After that, Paul left Crete and went to what is now present day Croatia. But before leaving Crete, Paul asked Titus to build up church leaders in each town. A few years later, Paul sent this letter to Titus to help him in his ministry.

Titus experienced a lot of conflict on Crete. To begin with, Cretan customs were far from pleasing to Jesus. Cretans were known for lying, laziness, and gluttony (excess eating). Furthermore, there were false teachers in the region, who preached Christian-like teaching, but were really spreading unsound doctrine. And to top it all off, the number of Christians was very small, and he struggled to help the people around him understand Jesus correctly. In the midst of these struggles, Paul urges Titus to speak about God's teaching and its application, for the grace of God teaches, trains, and instructs.

**Grace trains us.**

Verse 11 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people."

The grace of our gracious God was manifested in many concrete ways in the life of Jesus. Paul describes the appearance of that grace in verse 14.

Verse 14, "(Christ) gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

Jesus redeemed us from our lawlessness, and sacrificed his own life for us on the cross. That is grace.

Verses 12 and 13 say, "training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

Here, grace is personified as a tutor or a coach. The word for 'to train' conjures up images of instruction and disciplining. Grace is much like a human teacher, coach, or mentor. Jesus' sacrificial love, God's grace, is our coach, our mentor, and our tutor. Grace trains us.

Let's hear about a coaching experience from Na san in this video.

Some people wear wristbands like this one, WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?) bracelets, as a way to remind themselves to stop and think about what Jesus would do in the situation they are in. Just like a coach, recalling God's grace can help you in your thoughts, assessments, and behavior in the moment. For example, let's say you have a misunderstanding with a co-worker, and instead of responding immediately, first you go to the bathroom and take time to recall how Jesus responds to your own misunderstandings and foolishness. We remember that Jesus doesn't give us a bad rap, but instead gives himself for us to meet our needs. If we recall the grace of Jesus, our heart's response will be more loving. Grace trains us.

Let's try and coach my hard heart with God's grace. Last week, I was not able to see how plans would fit together for things this year, and this caused me great stress. However, even if we cannot see how things will work out, Jesus can see. And he is the incredibly wise Creator. Indeed he even loves me so much that he gave himself up for me. Therefore, it is actually okay even if I cannot see how this year's plans will work out. It is not that bad things are waiting, or that I need to be fearful. Rather, even though I cannot see, Jesus can and he is guiding me, and he and his Father are loving me and will provide just what is needed. Grace changes my understanding and my heart, rescuing my heart from being an ungodly heart not centered on God. The truth in this passage was something that finally I came to understand and experience at the end of this past week. Even though my situation had not changed, my heart changed, and the stress dissipated, and I was able to have the room in my heart to consider the viewpoints and opinions of my colleague and my wife. Last week, like being trained by a coach, grace taught me.

What do you think? Have you had the experience of being changed by grace? Do you think it's possible, in the midst of challenging circumstances, for you, your church, your family, or your workplace to be changed by grace? Discuss in pairs or groups of 3. Just introduce your name, and then chat freely about your experience, your current situation, your issues related to today's topic. Whether you are Christian or not a Christian, feel free to share your thoughts and reflections freely about today's topic. You have about 3 minutes.

In spite of Titus' many struggles, Paul exhorts him to teach the grace of God and what is appropriate in light of that grace, in other words, how to apply it to life.

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

Titus, as well as all church leaders, teachers, and pastors, must not only teach doctrine, but also communicate how it is applicable to life. Paul himself proceeds to choose six categories of people and teach each of them what accords with sound doctrine. In

other words, he applies God's grace to their lives. Those six categories are older men, older women, young women, young men, Titus himself, and slaves.

Let's consider each of these together.

First, older men.

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

In first century Crete, a person considered to be an 'older man' would likely have been about 40 years old. It seems that men around this age and older face the temptation to live an 'unsound' or unhealthy lifestyle. Men can maintain a healthy lifestyle through the teaching of sound doctrine, the grace of God and its proper applications.

Let's consider Steve Sacks, an older man, and how God's grace produces faith, love, and steadfastness in Steve's life.

Let's ask his wife, Tomoko san, and see. Tomoko san, how do you see the fruit of God's grace in Steve's life?

Video: "I think that a result of God's grace can be seen in the way in which we fight together. Just after we got married, there was a time when Steve's anger erupted just like Mount Fuji. I asked him if rather than erupting with anger, he might more calmly display his displeasure. But he said "No, I often feel afraid of you and so find it difficult to say anything". But, I think that God has trained Steve over time both directly and through other people, to be able to speak honestly with love and wisdom and to control his anger. Because he has the security of being loved by God, he has been able to be trained like this. Of course, he is still a work in progress, still being trained. We still fight. But, our way of fighting has improved a lot I think."

Next, older women.

Verses 3-5 say, "Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled."

Because Jesus gave his life for older women, they no longer resist serving those around them. In fact, they desire to serve others because it pleases Jesus.

However, older women face the temptation to drink heavily, to gossip about others, to slander and hurt them. But when they experience the deep love of God in spite of their sin, instead of being critical of those around them, they can help them to grow. By doing this, they become good teachers to younger women, and as a result, the younger women's work and relationships will be filled with love. And the greater goal is that the Word of God will not be spoken of poorly. The lives of women, both older and younger, can testify to the reputation and truth of Scripture, and cause those around them to respect God's Word more highly.

Applying grace to an older women's life will result in her then teaching younger women in an attitude of service. More specifically, to teach younger women to love their husbands and children. If you are a woman who is married and has children, it is actually a really challenging thing to do, with many trials that come along with it. You need teaching and support to be able to love your husband well, and older women who have gone through the same trials are great teachers. In fact, I think it would be really

tough to learn that kind of stuff from a man. But, older women are encouraged here to teach younger women to work at home and be submissive to their husbands.

I wonder what women feel when they hear these words of Paul's? My wife Antonia is slightly uncomfortable when she hears this kind of language. What about you all? You might draw the conclusion that Christianity looks down on women. Some people think that being submissive to your husband is an old-fashioned, unequal, bad way of thinking, placing men in a higher position than women, and is the reason why women have been looked down upon for so long. Teaching women to work at home sounds like reinforcing that 'the woman's place is only in the home.' In today's society, men and women are viewed as equal, so this teaching can feel very uncomfortable.

However, if you read the Bible, you'll see that a woman's position is not low at all. Rather, gender equality is emphasized, and both men and women are said to be the image of God, totally equal. Both men and women are called to an intimate relationship with God, both men and women are to display God's character to the world, and both men and women have the role of being God's ambassadors. And according to Scripture, the paradigm for the equality between men and women is God himself. In God, we find God the Father and God the Son (Jesus). The Father and the Son are totally equal, however, they play different roles in accomplishing their work together. In the same way, men and women are equal, working together for God, but have different roles in certain areas. Obviously, it is the woman who physically gives birth to a child. And, according to the Bible it is the man who is responsible for leading the family. That leadership responsibility is to self-sacrifice and become like a servant, considering his wife and children's needs and serving them. Obviously, that responsibility for leading involves listening intently to the opinions and situations of your wife and children and discussing things together. But, the final authority and responsibility for making the decision is with the husband. It is a heavy responsibility. And the wife is to submit to her husband's sacrificial leadership.

Also, it may seem like Paul is saying here that women should only be housewives, but actually, at that time, many businesses were household businesses. The Old Testament, as well, presents women running a business as role models. Women need support from older women to manage their households, and perform their business dealings. Grace trains and equips these young women.

Next is the young men.

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

Young men, in other words, people under 40, need to be humble and think deeply about everything they do. It is often the case that young men in particular tend to think that their point of view is right, and have a tendency to act quickly. If they receive a complaint, they are quick to come back with a response. If they fall in love, they're quick to start dating. When they run into a problem, young people think they need to figure it all out on their own. It is much better, however, to take the time to talk to someone with more experience and proceed thoughtfully. Jesus is full of wisdom, so you should look at his life and see how it can be applied in your own situation. The grace of Jesus trains us.

Antonia and I started dating in August of 2005. I still remember our first date. It was evening, and we walked along the path by a beautiful river, had a lovely talk, and ate dinner together at a restaurant near a waterfall. I was 24 years old at the time. As soon as we started dating, I knew I wanted to marry her. So we started dating in August, and

in November, I asked Antonia's father if I could marry her. But his answer was, "Wait a minute. Could you take things a little slower?" I was so disappointed and wondered why I needed to wait. What was the problem?

But in retrospect, I think I was blind to any other point of view than my own. A big decision like marriage affects a lot of different people, and taking the time to consider a variety of wisdom and thinking ahead can help us make the best decision. We don't always have to act right away. It's better to take the time to think, to consider a variety of perspectives and positions before moving forward. Especially in the case of Antonia and I getting married, we were wanting to do Bible teaching ministry in Japan, which required a big sacrifice from our family as well as some financial instability.

When I considered the grace of Jesus, I realized that I am small and weak and sinful in many ways. So instead of relying on myself, I needed to become more thoughtful, through prayer and also by relying on the support and wisdom of those more experienced than me.

Grace trains young people to consider more thoroughly.

Let's get into the same groups of two or three and think about this together.  
What do you think? Which category do you fall into (older men, older women, young women, young men)?  
Is there anything that you have found striking? How can you apply grace to your life?  
Take three minutes to share together.

After older men and women and younger men and women, Paul addresses Titus himself as a leader.

Verses 7-8 say, "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us."

What do you think about when you read these words to Titus? I read the words to Titus, such as "be a model of good works", and think of how big the responsibility of church leaders is.

But thankfully, in the same way as the rest of us, church leaders are also deeply sinful people, and yet wonderfully and simply through the sacrifice by Jesus on the cross are forgiven and made into God's children and are freely receive God's love. And the church leaders particularly then have the role of displaying that grace and truth that they have experienced to the world around. In this way their actions as well as the words that they teach will display the grace of God.

Finally, Paul addresses bondservants.

Verses 9-10, "Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior."

Bondservants have an amazing role to play. Their role is to adorn the teaching about God our savior in their lives. I'm not sure what image comes to your mind when you think of slavery, but the Bible stands opposed to the slave trade where people are forcibly captured and enslaved. However, in first century Crete, people became slaves for many

reasons, and it's possible that up to a quarter of them were slaves. Furthermore, slaves were often tutors or civil servants, and they often managed the family's business. In today's society, in many ways they might resemble regular people working in a company. The master and slave relationship of that time can be compared to the relationship between superiors and subordinates in a company today.

The subordinate is to obey his superior in every respect, and seek to please him or her. This is a great thing. It is a beautiful thing to please one's superior and demonstrate that you can be trusted. In fact, Jesus did this. Even though he himself was Creator, he obeyed his Father, always praying and pleasing the Father in every aspect of his life. He demonstrated his faithfulness and trustworthiness. His actions adorned his teaching beautifully. As a result, many people heard about Jesus and the God who saves, and were able to understand God's grace more deeply.

One of my friends, called Akira Endo, has worked in Otemachi and the center of Tokyo for 40 years. During that time he has experienced many different situations. The company he worked for in Otemachi went bankrupt, which was an incredibly difficult situation for everyone. And he has experienced many disputes within teams and difficulties in team relationships. He became a Christian when he was a student, and so he began life in the workplace wanting to please Jesus. Understanding his own sin, receiving and rejoicing in the grace of Jesus, he worked trying to please Jesus in his workplace. He tried to serve his bosses as serving Jesus. He tried to love his colleagues as himself. In the midst of this, the grace of God has helped him to continue recognizing and confessing his sin and receiving forgiveness, and to continue trying to serve his bosses and love his colleagues. In the train on the way to work, there is a point when the train goes over a long bridge. And each day, at this point, he prayed for his boss in his heart, and prayed that he himself might be a trustworthy employee who can please his boss in his work. And each day he would pray for a couple of his colleagues by name. Indeed, reflecting on the grace of God, also led him to start spending a few of his lunchbreaks each week trying to love his colleagues. He would go out for lunch with his colleagues one-on-one, and listen to their struggles and think about pray about whether there was anything that he might do to help. The grace of God has coached this forgiven sinner over 40 years. And through this beautiful working life that the grace of God produced in Endo-san, the grace of God was displayed to various of his colleagues. And over the 40 years over 50 of his colleagues have come to understand and receive the grace of God for themselves.

How does a person come to live a beautiful life? Today's passage has one answer. Grace trains us.

And we have applied this grace to six different kinds of people. Older men, older women, young women, young men, a Christian leader named Titus, and bondservants. No matter your situation, grace trains us. Keep your eyes and ears open to this grace. Are you able to face your own sinfulness? Listen to God's grace. Is your family or church facing many problems? Let God's grace be the center of your life. Are you facing unhealthy corporate or societal culture? Rely on God's grace.

Let's pray.