

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 14 Aug 2022

Sermon Title : Let Your Life Speak

Speaker : Rev Shannon Chan

Text : Titus 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the next three weeks, we shall look at the Book of Titus, starting with Chapter 1 today on Leadership. Leadership is hard. If we think leadership in church is easier, the text on Titus 1 tells us otherwise. Paul wrote this letter to Titus, a Greek believer whom Paul had taught and nurtured and left behind in Crete to straighten out what was left unfinished and organize the church, appointing elders in every town as directed.

Although the letter was likely written in AD64 and directed to Titus, it is instructive for us even today in the 21st going on 22nd centuries we live in, as Paul then already warned that there will be false teachers who will try to lead believers away from the truth.

Paul emphasized 2 facets of leadership:

A. The Primacy of Godly Leadership (Titus 1:1-9)

Paul described a good church elder as one who must be above reproach, husband of one wife, his children are believers and is not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. He must not be arrogant or quick tempered or a drunkard, violent or greedy for gain but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

- From Titus 1:6-7 scholars conclude that the two different words – “elder” (*presbuteros*) and “overseer” (*episkopos*) can be used interchangeably. In Acts 20:28, Paul reminded the Ephesian elders that they had been made “overseers” to care for the church of God. Greek infinitive “to care” literally means “to shepherd” and is the verb form for the noun for “pastor”. So, some scholars believe the 3 words “elder”, “overseer” and “pastor” refer to the one office in church leadership.
- When Paul declared that an “overseer must be above reproach”, this first qualification about good character is seen in the rest of the list specifying what this entails. All these can be summarized as Christian leaders are to be blameless and to “Let their life speak”.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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Paul then went on to talk about false teachers. We tend to think of false teachers as those who teach wrong doctrine, wrong beliefs, and heresy.

- However, false teaching also comes in another form which is equated with behaviour, practice, or a way of life that is sinful or wrong.

Emily McGowin puts it this way: “Beware false teachers with good doctrines and bad ethics.” These leaders proclaim Christ in word, but they deny Him with their lives.

Over the past few years, famous pastors and preachers go through very public falls from enormous heights with allegations ranging from sexual harassment, abuse of power, moral failures including affairs, sexual abuse, intentional lifestyle of adultery, fiduciary failure, deceptive cover-ups, manipulation of weak and powerless over a period of time, allegations of rages with unrepentant pride creating a culture of fear and intimidation and even enabling financial mismanagement. Emily McGowin speaks graphically of these leaders – they had the right doctrinal content in their books, messages, teachings and sermons, yet they had been denying Christ and leading people astray with their actions long before their failures were publicly known. They confessed Christ with their mouths but deny Him with their bodies, their actions, their choices. They were and are a different kind of false teacher – false teacher of the heart.

When godly spiritual leadership is lacking:

- The sin of the leader impacts everyone under that leader negatively.
- The sin of the leader time and again leads other people into sin – individuals, families and communities are harmed by these leaders.

When we hear of these happenings, instead of finger pointing, we ought to examine our own life. As we re-read Titus 1 and in particular 1:6-8:

- (i) Reflect on each word and ask yourself if you are guilty of any one of these.
- (ii) Would someone looking at your behaviour, practice, or way of life be able to say you are above reproach? (May ask those who are closest to you if they see anything that you should be concerned about and point out your blind spots to you).
- (iii) Then ask yourself what you are going to do about it if the Holy Spirit puts His finger on it. This is a transformational question and to the degree that you respond to this question rightly, will determine how far you are willing to allow the Lord to transform you.

❖ **Let your life speak godly!**

B. The Priority of Courageous Leadership (Titus 1:10-16)

- To silence false teachers who insist on keeping external rules and rituals but neglect to address issues of the purity of someone’s heart.

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Paul also warned about false teachers especially those of the circumcision, called Judaizers who insisted that keeping external rules and rituals like diet or circumcision and washing are equated with purity. In today's context, it is like purity can be equated with regular church attendance, giving of tithes and offerings, serving in different ministries and other Christian rituals and rules.

A Christian writer declared: Morally impure things do not become pure just because our heart is pure. Hence, for example: pornography or promiscuity do not become okay miraculously just because Christians think they are pure enough to make it okay. Another example: Christians cannot naively dabble in the occult and think they can come out unscathed. That is why we must guard our hearts as they are the wellsprings of our lives and will determine the course of our lives. (Proverbs 4:23)

For false teachers, there are times when firm disciplinary actions and public rebuke are called for, in particular for the defiant, rebellious and deceivers. (Titus 1:10)

- To be qualified to address sin, the leaders must have a good reputation themselves, that is beyond reproach.

Leadership is leading downward, upward as well as lateral and inward

Downward leadership – To someone below us in rank and this may be easy

Upward leadership – To someone above us such as seniors; and if the senior is kind, leading upward may be easier, otherwise it can be tough (e.g. like trying to lead your boss).

Leading lateral/across our peers - Often challenging because of defiant or challenging attitude among peers, :Who do you think you are?"

Leading inward - The most difficult leadership task of all is self-leadership.

- Jenni Catron speaks of an essential truth that any good leader needs to learn – leadership begins with you. If you cannot lead yourself, you cannot lead others.
- For your life to speak truly the twin facets of godly and courageous leadership you must come to know yourself through self-leadership – this is marked by self-awareness and self-management. The key to this self-leadership is “steering by the Compass Above” (Edmund Chan).
- When you want to lead from the inward, you need to look upward – to God through His Word and prayer. Back to these basics which are the true compass to knowing yourself. Doing “Transformed by the Word” helps us to get back to the reading of God's Word, reflecting and meditating on it and allowing it to transform our lives so we can truly point others that they may know our God.

❖ **Christians know thyself so that others may know thy God!**

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CONCLUSION

Let our lives speak as Christians who lead through godly leadership. May we look upward to God and through His Word and prayer be truly transformed from the inside out to be above reproach and courageous in leading ourselves and others.

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read Titus 1 slowly.

- a. Why must a Christian leader who leads downward, upward, lateral/across or inward, possess the qualities listed in Titus 1:6-9.

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 3a. Why is courageous leadership important?

- 3b. Which type of leadership (downward, upward, lateral/across or inward) do you find the most difficult and why?
 - (i) What is one challenge that you are facing in the above-mentioned leadership role?
 - (ii) Has your leadership mentioned in (i) been godly and courageous?
 - (iii) What is one thing you can do to live out godly and courageous leadership despite the challenges?

4. "Beware false teachers with good doctrines and bad ethics." These leaders proclaim Christ in word, but they deny Him with their lives.
 - a. Ask someone who is closest to you if he/she sees anything in your life that you should be concerned about, and to point out your blind spots to you.
 - b. What are you going to do about it now that the Holy Spirit has put His finger on it?
 - c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 4b. above in the following week(s) till your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies, Prayer and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your experience of being led by a godly and courageous leader.

OR

Give thanks to God that when you read God's Word, reflect and meditate on it, and allow it to transform your life, your life will speak and others will know your God.

6. With a prayer partner, bring all that have been shared in 3b, 4b and 4c to God, seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance on how to lead by godly and courageous leadership in all areas of your life.

Pray also for your group and our church to know ourselves so that others may know our God because our lives speak.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

- 1) A Thousand Hallelujahs – Hillsong http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vR_sl9lkowA
- 2) How Deep The Father's Love For Us – Stuart Townend
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0CDqG5STPM>
- 3) O Jesus I Have Promised – Hymn <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73NHwbWX658>

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