

## Organizing the Mission "Hygienic Church" Titus 1:10-16

### Introduction

- [Slide #1] Who here wants a healthy church? Raise your hand. Ushers, will you take note of those who didn't raise their hands. Just kidding. We all want this. We all want a healthy church. But what is a healthy church? If I were to ask you, and I guess I'm asking you now, if I were to ask you to list for me what makes a healthy church what would you say? Just take a moment and jot some things down.
- As you're doing that let me help you out by listing some things that do not necessarily translate into church health. Some of the obvious things. Nice facilities. No correlation whatsoever to church health. Large budget. No correlation whatsoever to church health. What else? Attendance. The number of people in the seats, ability to draw a crowd, can be totally unrelated to church health. Excellence in music in the sense that the music is well-performed. No correlation to church health. Even engaging speakers. Not necessarily an indication of church health.
- Sometimes we define church health negatively. Church A isn't fighting. No fighting therefore it's healthy. In other words, there's no visible, outward sign of disease therefore it must be healthy. Not necessarily the case is it? Often times there are underlying, unseen diseases that don't show up on the surface.
- Or, sometimes we define church health in terms of how that particular church meets our needs. Church B has this for me and that for my kids, it's healthy. It has the style of music I like. But a church that has purposely catered to people's needs isn't necessarily a healthy church. If I as a parent catered to the so called "needs" of my kids they'd eat sugar cereal for breakfast, ice cream for lunch, play video games all afternoon, eat pizza for dinner and stay up way past their bedtime. Everyday. Their "needs" from their perspective would be met. Would we be a healthy family? Often times the metric "needs catered to" is not a good measure of church health.
- Let me ask it again, what makes a healthy church? We intuitively know what makes a healthy person. Man, that person is really sick. Sometimes we can see health, or lack of it, in people's eyes. It's much harder, much more nebulous to diagnose health in groups of people—especially something like a church.
- Here are some things that I think the Bible says make a healthy church. Compare your list to mine. There is a central focus on Christ. He is more than important. There is a passionate, first love for him that spills over into love for

others. Christ is talked about. He is sung about. He is preached about. The words of Christ, His commands are taken seriously. He is served. He is experienced in life. And ultimately he is changing lives. There is life transformation going on. People changed by the power of Christ, either moving from spiritual death to spiritual life or growing more and more to be like Jesus in thought and deed. That's a sign of a healthy church. Total and utter dependence upon God in prayer. That's a sign of health.

- Sacrificial generosity is a much better metric than a large budget. I'd take a small budget funded by a bunch of sacrificially generous people over a large budget funded by a bunch of stingy people any day. Care for the poor and those on the fringes of society. A disciple-making culture where it is expected that each and every follower of Jesus multiplies the life of Christ in someone else.
- Coordinated effort to sustain the mission Jesus launched. People being sent and released to carry on Jesus' mission here at home and overseas. A vibrant community life, not a social club, but a community life centered on the lordship of Christ. The ability of that community to express and explain the Gospel to people. Deeds done in faith—that's a huge sign of health. The faithful, ongoing proclamation of the word of God, in season and out of season, when it's favorable and when it's not—all signs of church health.
- And then you get to some of the things Paul's talks about to Titus. Leadership. **Titus 1:5-9**. The right kind of leaders are being developed and put into place. Not necessarily the best businessmen or the most popular but leaders with character; their lives and families have been radically altered by Jesus.
- All of these things, and this list isn't complete, there are certainly things I've missed. But at a minimum, these are the things that make up the RDA, the recommended daily allowance required to ward off disease in a local expression of the body of Christ.
- And there is one more. It's the most important. And it's the subject of **Titus 1:10-16**.

### **Big Idea**

- **The single biggest indicator of health in a local church is sound doctrine**
- I realize sound doctrine isn't the most glitzy or glamorous of the indicators of church health. I realize that for many of you sound doctrine is like the colonoscopy of church health diagnostics—you know it's important but you'd rather not have to deal with it. I agree. I'm with you. It's way cooler to focus on some of the other things I've already mentioned. Certainly sound doctrine is one of the hardest things to quantify because every local church

differs in doctrine and every one of those churches claims they've got the best doctrine. So how do you decide?

- Some of you may even disagree with me. Doctrine? Who needs doctrine? Just give me Jesus to remove my griefs and fears. That's well and good. But without sound doctrine how do you interpret what it is about Jesus that enables him to assuage our griefs and fears. Sound doctrine helps us do that.
- Let me define doctrine. Doctrine is what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic.<sup>1</sup> So, for instance, if someone were to ask me what does the Bible teach about prayer? And I were to respond, just read your Bible, you'll find out. That would be an insufficient answer wouldn't it? That wouldn't really help them, would it? But, if I were to survey the whole of Scripture and summarize for that person what the Bible says about prayer, that would be incredibly beneficial, wouldn't it? That's doctrine.
- What does the whole Bible say about Christ's death? What does the Bible say about the Holy Spirit? What does the Bible say about sin? Just reading your Bible piecemeal may not help you answer those questions. Doctrine, summaries of what Scripture says about those particular subjects, can. The single biggest indicator health in a local church is sound doctrine. If sound doctrine isn't there then everything else is contaminated. The trickle-down of unsound doctrine spoils everything else. How? Why?
- Think about it like this. [Slide #3] You know Pig-Pen of Peanuts fame? The kid with the cloud of dust always hanging around him. By the way, what's up with that? Who creates a cartoon character always clouded in dirt and gives him the name Pig-Pen? That's a bit creepy.
- In the early days of Charles Schulz's comic strip Pig-Pen is referred to as the only person who can get dirty while walking in a snowstorm. On another occasion (September 6, 1954), he managed to keep one side of his body clean and presented his clean side to Peppermint Patty. She thought he was clean. The cloud was just hiding on the other side. Once, after bathing and dressing in clean clothes Pig-Pen stepped outside and instantaneously became dirty. Despite his efforts Pig-Pen can't stay clean. The dirt follows Pig-Pen's every move; everything he does is tainted.
- Spin master Charlie Brown tries to get us to see the positive side of Pig-Pen's filth. "Don't think of it as dust" Charlie Brown says, "Just think of it as the dirt and dust of far-off lands blowing over here and settling on "Pig-Pen!" It staggers the imagination! He may be carrying the soil that was trod upon by Solomon or Nebuchadnezzar or Genghis Khan!" Whatever Charlie Brown. Not buying it. The kid's just filthy dirty. No two ways about it.

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<sup>1</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 25.

- Because of unsound doctrine many churches are just like Pig-Pen. They can do all the right things, go through all the right motions, participate in the best causes. But in the end, if the basic hygiene of sound doctrine isn't there a cloud will follow everything that church does. Everything is tainted. Without sound doctrine everything a church does is lipstick on a pig. Or lipstick on a Pig-Pen.
- [Slide #4] Please open your Bibles to Titus if you haven't already done so. The reason for the dirt cloud, the disorder in the churches on the island of Crete was because of false teachers. Poor doctrinal hygiene was causing all kinds of ills in the Cretan house churches.
- The way Paul instructed Titus to get rid of the cloud was by appointing elders so that those elders might teach right doctrine. **Titus 1:9**. *An elder must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. Very simply, sound doctrine leads to soundness or health in the churches. Look at **Titus 1:13**. Therefore, rebuke them sharply [meaning the false teachers] so that they will be sound in the faith. Sound doctrine equals soundness of faith.*
- It's interesting the word "sound" used by Paul in **verse 9** and then again in **verse 13**, is the same word he uses in **2:1**. *You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.* And then again in **2:2**. *Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith.* Is a word that means wholeness, wellness, health. And it's from this word that we get our English words hygiene and hygienic.
- An elder must encourage others by hygienic doctrine. Titus must rebuke the false teachers sharply so that they will be hygienic in the faith. In other words, the regiment prescribed by Paul to deal with the false teaching was a regiment of good hygiene—elder initiated, elder led teaching of sound doctrine. In other words, "when false teachers increase, the most appropriate long-term strategy is to multiply the number of true teachers, who are equipped to rebut and refute error."<sup>2</sup> That brings health.
- That's what clears up the Pig-Pen like dust cloud that causes all the other ills in a local church. In **2 Timothy 2:17** Paul refers to false teaching like the spread of gangrene; it's devastating for a local church. The most hygienic thing a church can do is guard what it believes and teach sound doctrine. If sound doctrine isn't there, then eventually everything else is tainted.
- In Titus **1:10-16** Paul gives Titus...

### Organizational Sentence

- **Two reasons as to why sound doctrine is the most important factor of health in a local church**

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<sup>2</sup> Stott, p. 179.

## Transition

Look at **Titus 1:10-13**. Listen. **First reason**. [Slide #5] **Your family will benefit greatly by having leaders with sound doctrine.**

- Paul says, *For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.*<sup>11</sup>*They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.* <sup>12</sup>*Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."* <sup>13</sup>*This testimony is true.*
- We don't know a whole lot about the nature of the false teaching on Crete. Since it originated with the circumcision group, **verse 10**, we know it was Jewish in origin. It was probably slightly different than the teaching of the Judaizers which plagued the Galatian churches. But we do know this. Paul characterized these false teachers as, **verse 10**, *rebellious, mere talkers and deceivers*. Unlike faithful elders who are to hold firmly to the trustworthy message, **verse 9**, the false teachers refused to submit to that trustworthy message. They were rebellious. And they used "impressive language with little or no solid content of truth."<sup>3</sup> They were mere talkers. Their teaching wasn't useful; it didn't lead people to godliness. Instead, it led people to, **verse 14**, *Jewish myths and the commandments of men*.
- And the result of their influence was that, **verse 11**, whole households were being ruined. Think about that. That's a pretty strong statement for Paul to make. And therein lies the application. Here's why sound doctrine is so incredibly important and the best indicator of health in a local church. The spiritual well-being of your family at stake. Your family will either flourish or suffer based on answers to questions like what does the whole Bible teach us today about preaching, or prayer, or Christ's resurrection. And if the family, the smallest expression of church, if that suffers, then any larger gathering of believers will suffer too, and the enemy wins. In this case, bad doctrine has a trickle-up effect.
- Don't ever make the mistake of thinking that doctrine is the stuff of theologians and academicians—as if doctrine is impractical and has little or no bearing on real life. Sound doctrine is personal. To you. False teaching ruins families. Faith can be overturned by it. Your family will be personally affected by the beliefs of those who lead you. And if the doctrine of those who lead you is unsound, in a worse case scenario, a la Crete, it has the potential to ruin your household.
- That's the warning. The good news is that the opposite, sound doctrine, good doctrine has the potential to give spiritual life and health. Think

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<sup>3</sup> Reinecker, p. 652.

personally. Think about your family, your spiritual well-being, the well-being of your kids. What does the whole Bible teach us today about sex? Marriage? Christ's return? And on and on. Sound doctrine can have a profoundly positive, hygienic effect.

- What this means is that as you pray about who to set apart as elders, of prime importance is the ability to teach sound doctrine. If a person is in all other ways qualified as an elder but they can't teach—they are not to serve as an elder. Period. Without the ability to teach an elder won't be able to transfer sound doctrine to God's people who really need good doctrine, whether they realize it or not.
- Do you want a healthy church? A hygienic church? A church free from spiritual disease? Then set apart elders who can lead you there. The other thing is that once you have elders who can lead you to sound doctrine, you have to be willing to be taught. You can have the godliest, best men, best teachers around but if you're not teachable, it's all for naught.
- Are you starting so see how sound doctrine might just really be the single biggest indicator of health in a local church? What does the whole Bible say about Jesus' work on the cross? For instance, you get that question wrong and the result is chaos and unhealth.

### Transition

Let's jump ahead to the rest of verse 13 and on to 16 for the **second reason** as to why sound doctrine is the best indicator of a healthy church. And it's this.

[Slide #6] **The effectiveness of your life and ministry in God's kingdom is dependent upon sound doctrine.**

- Listen. *13-16. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith <sup>14</sup>and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. <sup>15</sup>To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. <sup>16</sup>They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*
- The effect that bad doctrine has is so overwhelmingly pervasive it's able to render a person completely ineffective. I want you to see the progression of bad doctrine from mind (verse 15), to conscience (verse 15), to word (verse 16), to deed and action (verse 16).
- It starts in the mind. Bad doctrine rattles around up there in the cranial cavity and you start thinking wrong thoughts; the mind becomes corrupted. Wrong thoughts about God and about life eventually lead to a spoiled conscience. That's what Paul says, right? In other words, the product of bad doctrine leads to wrong thoughts so that you become less able to distinguish good

choices from bad choices. Your bad choices in life are ultimately the product of bad doctrine. You knew that, right?

- Choices, obviously, filter down to actions, [verse 16](#), and specifically actions that deny knowing God. *16They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.* And all this from bad doctrine. Which is why Paul says of the false teachers *they are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.* You could also put it like this. The result of false teaching, bad doctrine in your life is a lack of good works.
- Here's the point. There is an undeniable link between good doctrine and good deeds. You want to be a healthy church? You scream I scream we all scream for sound doctrine. Clamor for sound doctrine. **The effectiveness of your life and ministry in God's kingdom is dependent upon sound doctrine.** This is nothing new, right? The Bible "consistently links doctrine and life. They form a twin antidote to godlessness and shallowness."<sup>4</sup> You have sound doctrine and elders who are leading you into sound doctrine the result will be good deeds in your life. You will be fit for doing good. You'll be healthy.
- Think of Pig-Pen. Think of bad doctrine like dust, like dirt. [John Wesley](#) once said this, "As a very little dust will disorder a clock, and the least sand will obscure our sight, so the least grain of sin which is upon the heart will hinder its right motion toward God."<sup>5</sup> Or we could paraphrase Wesley like this. The least grain of bad doctrine which is on the heart will hinder its right motion toward God. Doctrine and deeds are linked. That's why a church that is unsound doctrinally is tainted in every area, every move. The dirt of cloud of bad doctrine always follows.
- Again, I don't want the case for you to care about sound doctrine to feel like making a case for a root canal or a colonoscopy. "It's for your own good." Except that it really is for your own good and should taste like ice cream going down.
- *20You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. 21Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.* [Ephesians 4:20-23](#).

## Conclusion

- Thanks be to God that through Christ we can put off our old self and that through good teaching that adheres to Christ God can change the attitude

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<sup>4</sup> Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work*, p. 56-7.

<sup>5</sup> John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Beacon Hill, 1966), p. 110

of our minds so that we aren't left to continually and helplessly think wrong thoughts leading to wrong actions.

- Are we healthy? Do we have good church hygiene? Are we sound doctrinally? I think so. Are we clouded with the dust and dirt of bad doctrine? Thankfully we're no Pig-Pen. Could your desire your for sound doctrine grow? Could we grow in this area? You bet. I realize the hunger for doctrine is a bit of an acquired taste so I think patience is in order. God will you give us a palette for sound doctrine. Is the push for a multiplicity of elders who can teach sound doctrine a wise investment in the future of this church? Absolutely. Will it do you and your family good? Unquestionably yes.