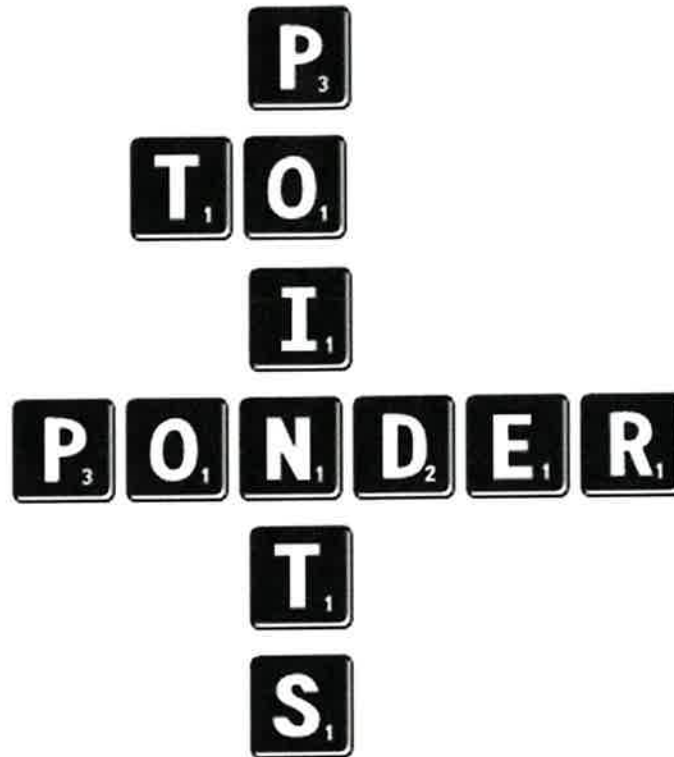




2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: Aug 31st - Sept 6th

Sermon: August 30th



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
building community > equipping believers > serving Jesus

August 31

1 Thessalonians 4:3

The obvious implication of verse 2 of Titus 2 is that God is expecting that others in the church will be “teaching” besides Titus himself. Paul’s admonition is certainly to Titus in 2:1 as he is the elder left to put things in order in the church (Titus 1:5). Part of the teaching of Titus was to train up others in the church by helping them grow as disciples of Christ and thereby able to join in the work of ministry. Although the word “teach” is not explicitly stated in verse 2, it is most definitely implied and stated more clearly in verses 6 and 7. Not only were the older men to teach in word, but they were also expected to teach by way of example as it is written in verse 7, “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your *teaching*...”.

I remember in the first church where I pastored, an episode when a lady was talking to some of the children in the church. I heard her say to them, “You do as I say, not as I do.” I was young but I knew well enough to know that was a ridiculous statement, detrimental to the development of those children, and certainly not proper teaching from God’s Word. I found it interesting when I began my sermon prep for my message coming soon from this passage, that when Paul first mentions the importance and expectations for the older men in the church, he said nothing about teaching. There is no blanket admonition that says any older man should teach younger men. I hope we would all agree that there are plenty of men around us with gray hair who should never be allowed to teach young men anything.

Please don’t fail to see that God’s plan is ideally for older men to teach younger men. He desires that all of us would grow in spiritual maturity, knowledge, and wisdom. It should go without saying that every believer should be advancing in godliness and holiness; Simply because God’s will is our sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3). Spiritual growth and maturity are not reserved for some elite class of Christians. We should all be beholding Christ daily so that we could continually be transformed into His likeness from one degree of glory to the next (2 Cor. 3:18). That being said, how you live in each moment matters. The old adage, “Do as I say, not as I do”, is a horrible and ungodly way to influence people.

Friend, if you think your words have any meaning apart from your actions, you are demonstrating a level of foolishness that reveals your lack of wisdom and distance from God. The reason Paul writes to Titus in 2:2 about an older man’s character with no mention of teaching is because it is of the utmost importance. An older man who demonstrates those qualities is the one who is ready to have godly influence in the younger men’s lives in the church. Make sure dear ones that you are growing in the Lord and walking with Him before you try to tell or influence someone else to do so.

September 1

Proverbs 25:28

Isn't it interesting that after everything Paul writes to Titus concerning the areas of importance that older women are to teach to the younger women, he says regarding the teaching focus of the older men to the younger men, "Urge the younger men to be self-controlled" (Titus 2:6). I want to encourage you to recognize a truth about God's Word as it relates to His admonitions to both men and women. It appears to me that God speaks to each gender based on their greatest needs or areas of greatest temptation to sin and weakness. Let me try to explain.

In Ephesians 5:33, God tells a husband to *love* his wife while He tells the wife to *respect* her husband. Why doesn't He tell the wife to love her husband? The obvious answer is that He doesn't need to. Her tendency, because of the way God made her, is to be loving, caring, nurturing and the like. This is why mothers are so good at what they do. Men on the other hand, need to be admonished to love their wives in accordance with all that Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25-33. We have to be reminded and told to do this because it doesn't necessarily come naturally.

The other side of that is God tells the wife to respect her husband because there exists something in her that resist doing that. It goes all the way back to Genesis 3:16 where Eve is punished for eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden and sinning against God. Part of God's judgment against her was pain in childbearing. He also states that she will have a sinful desire that is contrary to God's plan for husbands and wives in marriage (Gen. 4:7). So, in her sinfulness, submission is going to sound like a dirty word.

Now, my point again is that God addresses in each gender what is most challenging to their nature. So, for a young man, it will be that he is tempted and prone to live recklessly and be given to harmful passions that rule his heart and mind more so than wisdom. Within the lesson of self-control, many other godly attributes would grow and take root. The first step then for a young man under the tutelage of an older man is to bring his fleshly desires under God's control.

Solomon wrote in the Proverbs, "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls" (25:28). The point in this proverb is that a life lived without self-control is one destined for harm and destruction because without self-control there is nothing to stop you from making horrible decisions that lead to your own demise and that of others in many cases. So, Paul tells Titus to tell the older men to teach the younger men to be self-controlled because so many other strengths hinge on that ability.

September 2

1 Corinthians 15:58

Today I will zero in a bit on two of the attributes mentioned in Titus 2:2 that must be true of an older man if he is to be trusted with teaching younger men. Paul writes that the older man is to be “sound in faith and steadfast.” I want you to see the clear correlation between the two. Simply put, in order for a person to be steadfast, as a mature Christian, he or she must be sound in the faith.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians these beautiful words of challenge, “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58). As we always say, the fact that this verse begins with the word *therefore* tells us something. We are to look back at the preceding verses to see what we are to base our obedience to verse 58 upon. In other words, why should we be steadfast, immovable, and abounding in the work of the Lord? That is a tall order and there must be good reasons for such an admonition. Fortunately, there is!

The entire fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is about the resurrection of Christ and what that means to us as believers. Paul is encouraging his readers to hang in there and press on in obedience because when it is all said and done, we win; even death and the grave has been conquered by the sinless life, substitutionary death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, it is reasonable and wise to remain steadfast, immovable, and abounding in the work of the Lord.

So, when we go back to the book of Titus, we understand that for an older man to be steadfast, he must first be sound in faith. You see, it is faith that fuels obedience. If I believe that God’s Word is true, then I am far more likely to obey what He has communicated to us. I must trust His promises which give me good reason to be steadfast rather than giving up when the going gets tough. Sound in faith also means that what I am believing is grounded in and informed by the Bible.

My faith is not in faith and genuine life transforming faith is not conjured up in my head based on old wives’ tales and unbiblical, emotional foolishness. Sound faith has for its foundation and basis the written Word of God. My faith is in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. It is also in His promise that He is coming back, that He is making all things new, and that, as His follower, He will take care of me now and always. I need not worry, but that too takes real, biblical faith. The bottom line is that if a person does not genuinely trust God and believe the Bible, he honestly has no grounds for remaining steadfast. Be sound in faith dear ones and you will have no problem remaining steadfast, immovable, and abounding in the work of the Lord. When you live this way, you will have no problem teaching younger folks behind you to love and trust the Lord; it will naturally flow from your own relationship with our Savior.

September 3

Titus 2:2-8

We had the privilege of hearing brother Daniel preach this past Sunday. It strikes me that he is a great example of the kind of fruit that Paul desires when he writes these instructions to Titus regarding training men. Daniel's progress over these past several years is obvious to all and I pray that his sermon was a wonderful illustration of the joy and fulfillment that awaits the church who takes the Word of God seriously and seeks to pass it along to others. Because Daniel preached, I write (prior to the sermon) with little idea what points in the passage he may choose to emphasize. Consequently, I want to give you a brief overview of some of the high points of this text, understanding that some of this might be a bit redundant. Notice today that Paul exhorts Titus to instruct the older men in the church to teach the younger.

The fact that this is a universal (and otherwise unqualified) command has always fascinated me. Paul does not make a distinction here between the kinds of younger men who should be trained. He does not say that we are to train our biological children or grandchildren alone, instead he assumes that the church is the family of God which means that any younger man who comes into our fellowship is to be encouraged and instructed accordingly.

It seems to me that there are two responses to the presence of young people in a congregation, at least generically speaking. One response is distance and judgment. Sometimes the older generation can rightly see the immaturity in the younger folks and decide that they would rather talk bad about them than try to help! It is much easier, and far more convenient, to critique from a distance after all! The other response is proximity and investment. The biblical reaction to the presence of those who are less mature is discipleship! This takes time and patience and intentionality, and it requires us to get our hands dirty as we consider how to best walk with those who need our help. Sometimes the people we are investing in don't even realize they need help, but this does not change the truth that the immature and less wise require time and attention. Immature people are... immature! They are not finished products; they need someone to point out the basic and to call them to accountability for practices that are sinful. This is not always easy, but it is critical to the discipleship process.

Paul wrote to Titus as one who had credibility in this arena. Obviously, the relationship between the disciple making elder and the young man Titus was forged over years of investment. There were certainly struggles along the way. I'm sure there were moments that tried Paul's patience, but the fact remains that he chose proximity and investment and the result was beautiful!

September 4

Titus 2:2-8

Yesterday I wrote about Paul's example to the older generation as it relates to the way to invest in the younger to make disciples. It is critical that those who are more mature in the faith don't run away from the immature who need help! Instead, we must choose proximity and investment, even when it is costly.

Today, I want to turn the tables and discuss the necessary response of the immature to discipleship efforts. The fact is that many older folks have tried to invest only to be rebuffed by a generation of people who have been discipled to think that older folks are irrelevant, out of touch and backwards in their thinking. There are many disturbing cultural trends, near the top of the list must be the way that our culture has shamed and diminished the contributions and wisdom of older folks,

Advertising firms and big corporations routinely demonstrate a disinterest in serving and employing those with experiences, often in the name of relevance and cutting-edge efficiency. Unfortunately, this way of thinking has permeated the church which has negatively impacted the wisdom and maturity of congregations nationwide.

Younger folks, it is imperative that you understand that you don't understand everything! There is nothing inherently wrong with being less advanced in your faith in your early years for the precise reason that faith in Christ leads to maturity which means that realizing maturity requires time! The easy thing to do is to believe that you know everything, or at least you know "enough". If this mentality creeps in, you will be completely closed to the advice and instruction you may glean from those who are older.

Additionally, it is very easy to neglect relationships with our elders because those relationships are not grounded in worldly commonalities. Young people, most of our senior adults (or even middle-aged adults) aren't listening to the same songs, watching the same shows or pursuing the same extra-curricular activities but this does not mean they are not aware of how to walk with Christ! You must make yourself available to people who are not exactly like you, understanding that they have an investment to make in you that the world knows not.

Take the time to make relationships in the church with people outside of your peer group. Do what you can to cultivate connections with those who are more advanced in the faith and eagerly lean in when they give you instruction. This is the biblical path to maturity and, when followed, it is gloriously rewarding.

September 5

Titus 2:2-8

Today and tomorrow's devotions will be dedicated to a few word studies within our passage from the previous Lord's Day. It is entirely possible that Daniel covered one or both terms which means that this would turn into a bit of review. If that is the case, praise God for the opportunity to think about His truth for a second time. If it isn't the case, know that your pastors think these two traits really matter and, therefore, I pray you will consider them as they are applied to your personal life.

Today's word is "dignified". The term is utilized by Paul in v. 2. It means noble or worthy of respect. The admonition is clear, Titus is to exhort the older men to invest in the younger men, training them to be respectable. In some ways, this word is further defined and illuminated by the other words used in the surrounding context. To be dignified is to be "sober-minded" which simply means to live with a mind that is trained by the truth and unaffected by all that would seek to disorient or distract.

Likewise, dignified men are "self-controlled". They are not prone to fly off the handle, saying or doing things which do not glorify God or communicate the strength of conviction in God's Sovereign Providence. Additionally, dignified men are sound in the faith. They know the truth and live in accordance with the convictions that a deep study of the verities of Christianity supply. Finally, dignified men are loving. They love their wives, children, church and nation. A man who loves is sacrificial with his time and dedicated to the prosperity of those who are under his authority. He is known for his gracious disposition and identified as one who is willing to go the extra mile for his neighbor.

Dignified men are sorely needed in our world today and they are also strategic. I have observed that our current culture takes note of dignified men. In fact, it may be one of the most astounding sights for the lost to see! Several times a month someone will make a comment to me about all the godly men in our church. The fact is that we are richly blessed in this arena. There are scores of men of all ages who are imperfect but genuine disciples of Christ. Their presence and the fruit of their investment in their wives, children and church are obvious for all to see. The goal of the Christian ministry, in part, is to reproduce this kind of dignity in others so that our witness is multiplied and the effect of salvation is made even more clear for the world to see.

Men are you dignified today? If not, I would exhort you to find those who are and walk with them. Ask them to help you, spend time in their presence, observe their ways and pray that God would use their investment to bring you to maturity so that you can invest in others.

September 6

Titus 2:2-8

The second word we are going to examine is the term “steadfastness”. Steadfastness means perseverance or endurance. Paul says that godly men are to be steadfast, and this implies that there will be resistance. You and I don’t need to persevere when things are going smoothly! I have never thought about enduring a wonderful vacation or time with friends, but I have considered what it would take to persevere through a surgery recovery or a moment of conflict.

The reality is that Paul is telling us something about what the Christian life will require when he uses the term steadfastness. He is telling us that there will be a struggle and that we will need to be able to endure if we are going to be found faithful. I wonder if we parent young men with this thought in mind. It seems to me that many (perhaps most) Christians understand that the world is a bit... nuts! They realize that there are multitudes of people who are opposed to our Lord and hostile to our way of life. I would agree with that observation, but it is rather worthless if there is not a subsequent response!

What should we do in the face of darkness? Train our young men to be steadfast! This means that we don’t bail them out at the first sign of trouble. It means that we require them to face the rightful consequences for their actions, expect them to work to provide and do not shield them from conflict in all circumstances.

Additionally, our understanding of the hostile nature of the world should inspire us to invest in those behind us because of our conviction that the battle is more than likely going to continue past our lifetime! If the Lord does not return, the generation that is currently young will be old... are they going to be steadfast?

Just like an athlete must train with resistance to build physical strength, so the church must inculcate an abiding steadfastness through dedicated instruction and intentional service to the body and in the world. We must give men the opportunity to serve, we must teach them when they make a mess of things and we must encourage and expect them to keep moving forward even when times are tough and their strength is fleeting. The world does not need weak, quitters. The world needs men who are emboldened by the Spirit and strengthened by His presence to take ground for the Kingdom, and this will only happen as the older generations train the young men with the truths and experiences that God has given them to share.