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Discover Your Bible Series

*Discover*  
**TITUS AND  
PHILEMON**



**LEADER GUIDE**

**LEADER GUIDE**

*Discover*  
**TITUS AND  
PHILEMON**



by  
Deb Fennema

  
**FAITH  
ALIVE**  
Christian Resources

Grand Rapids, Michigan

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ISBN 1-59255-181-5

10987654321

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# To the Leader

## Prepare the Lesson

This leader guide is meant to assist small group leaders, not to substitute for your own personal work. As you prepare to lead each lesson, work through the questions in the study guide first. Then use the leader material to enrich your understanding of the passage.

To avoid giving the impression that you have an answer book or that you know all the answers, we recommend that you not take the leader guide to the Bible study session. After all, the answers are in the Bible, and you are a guide to help your group find the answers in God's Word.

Prepare thoroughly before each group session so that you can lead without frequent references to notes. This approach will leave you free to concentrate on leadership responsibilities. You will also be able to keep better eye contact and to listen more carefully.

## Get Ready to Lead

Learn to think in terms of questions. As you prepare the lesson, ask yourself questions and discover the answers yourself. This approach will help you prepare to anticipate group members' questions and thus help others discover truths from God's Word.

## Lead with Questions

Use questions to direct the discussion. Draw out positive contributions with questions. Break down difficult or unclear questions with smaller, concise questions. Respond to wrong answers or problems with questions. If you learn to lead others to the truth by questions, you will be a good Bible discovery leader. The questions in this study are designed to be used with the New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

## Help to Apply

Gently help group members discover the meaning of God's message for their own lives. Be careful not to be judgmental of those who are not yet applying the truths you encounter together. It's the Spirit's work to apply God's Word to people's hearts. Tactfully let the group know how the Spirit is applying the Word in your heart and life. Pray faithfully for the Spirit's work in others.

Keep application low-key. Be careful not to put pressure on group members to apply the truths discussed in your sessions. Simply try to help group members see that there is a relationship between the Bible and life. Avoid the use of direct pronouns during group discussion. For example, instead of asking, "What does this mean to you?" ask, "What does this

mean in our lives?” or instead of asking, “What will you do?” ask, “What action does this passage suggest?” Allow time for personal reflection or one-to-one sharing about the questions for reflection at the end of each session.

## **Leadership Training**

If more than one group in your setting is using this Bible study, we strongly encourage leaders to meet regularly for discussion of the lessons, for prayer, and for mutual support.

If this study is being used in a Coffee Break Small Groups program, each leader should have a copy of the *Coffee Break Evangelism Manual with Director’s Handbook*. This book is a basic “how-to” guide for establishing and leading a Bible discovery group. Reread the book or portions of it periodically and review it at the beginning of each season.

*Leading with Love* in the Coffee Break Core Values series is another important tool for leadership development.

Leaders will also find it helpful to attend one or more of the many leadership training workshops offered each year in connection with small group ministry.

### **For more information,**

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# Introduction

The apostle Paul wrote many letters—to individuals as well as churches—and several of those letters are preserved in the Bible. In this study we'll be looking closely at two of them, now commonly known as the New Testament books of Titus and Philemon.

Titus, a young man whom Paul had met in the early years of his ministry, had become a fellow worker and faithful companion on Paul's missionary journeys, and Philemon, a well-to-do householder whom Paul had met later (probably near Colosse), had become a faithful, generous supporter of Paul's ministry and had opened his home so that other believers could worship there. Paul considered each of these men a close friend.

While the brief letters Paul wrote to Titus and Philemon are addressed to them individually, it's clear that these letters are also intended for the groups of believers (churches) who worshiped and associated with them. In both letters Paul speaks of godly living, but in each he gives a different emphasis. In the letter to Titus we find important instructions about principles for Christian living, and in the letter to Philemon we find Paul applying Christian principles to a specific situation.

Studying Titus and Philemon in sequence proves interesting. In the letter to Titus we learn from Paul's direct manner as he faces a challenge head-on—dealing with false teachers and unchristian behavior on the island of Crete. And in the letter to Philemon we learn from Paul's diplomacy and tact as he handles a delicate situation with great care—urging a fellow Christian to receive back a runaway slave as a Christian brother. In both letters we see how important it is to share the good news of Jesus and to live faithfully for Christ as people of integrity.



# Glossary of Terms

**Apollos**—a pastor from Alexandria who had been taught by Paul’s friends Priscilla and Aquila and had become well known as an effective preacher of the gospel (Acts 18:26-28; 1 Cor. 3:4-6; Titus 3:13).

**Apphia**—one of the persons addressed in Paul’s letter to Philemon. She is probably Philemon’s wife.

**apostle**—a person sent by God to accomplish a special task.

**Aristarchus**—a fellow worker with Paul, this person is also described as Paul’s fellow prisoner in Paul’s letter to the Colossians. Aristarchus, Demas, Epaphras, Luke, and Mark are all mentioned in the closing comments of Paul’s letters to Philemon and to the Colossians; scholars agree that both of these letters were likely written and delivered at the same time (see Col. 4:7-17; Philem. 2, 10, 23-24).

**Archippus**—another of the persons addressed in Paul’s letter to Philemon (see also Col. 4:17). Archippus may have been Philemon’s son or another close relative. He was apparently a member of Philemon’s household and of the church that met in Philemon’s home.

**Artemas**—one of the persons mentioned near the end of Paul’s letter to Titus. Paul said he would send either Artemas or Tychicus to Titus, apparently to continue Titus’s work in Crete so that Titus could visit Paul for a while or work elsewhere.

**circumcision group**—This term refers to a group of people who taught that a person had to become Jewish or had to hold to certain Jewish practices to be a Christian.

**Crete, Cretans**—Crete is the fourth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. Its inhabitants were called Cretans.

**Dalmatia**—a region to the northwest of Greece in the days of the Roman Empire.

**Demas**—one of Paul’s fellow workers (see **Aristarchus**).

**elect**—People who are elect have been chosen by God to have eternal life through Jesus Christ. This salvation is for all who believe in Jesus as the only Savior from sin and death. Anyone who trusts in Jesus as Savior and Lord is elect.

**envy**—Envy is a deeply malicious form of greed. It involves not just wanting something that you can’t have but also wanting another person, viewed as a rival, not to have it either.

**Epaphras**—a fellow worker and prisoner with Paul (see **Aristarchus**).

**faith**—“being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1). True faith involves the knowledge and assurance that God’s Word in the Bible is trustworthy and true, giving us the confidence that all our sins are forgiven through the saving work of Christ.

**foolish**—In the Bible, being foolish means going against God, deciding not to follow God’s way (see Ps. 14:1-3).

**Gentiles**—all people who are not Jews.

**godliness**—A person shows godliness by striving to live God’s way, aiming to live a life pleasing to God.

**grace**—Often a greeting in Paul’s letters, *grace* refers to God’s unmerited favor, by which we can have eternal life through the saving work of Christ.

**holy**—pure, set apart in a special way to bring glory to God.

**hope**—In the Bible *hope* refers to a sure thing: the eternal life God promises for all who believe in Jesus for salvation (Rom. 1:16; Titus 1:2; Heb. 11:1). This is far different from a common meaning of *hope* that points toward wishing for something.

**Jews**—descendants of Abraham, God’s chosen Old Testament people (also called Israelites or Hebrews).

**justified**—A person who is justified is a person who has been made right with God (righteous).

**Luke**—a friend and fellow worker with Paul. Luke is described as a doctor in Colossians 4:14 and is probably the same person who wrote the New Testament gospel of Luke and the book of Acts (see also **Aristarchus**).

**Mark**—may have been John Mark, who traveled and worked with Paul at different times and was probably the author of the New Testament gospel of Mark (see also **Aristarchus**).

**Nicopolis**—Several cities in the Roman Empire had this name, meaning “victory city,” and the one mentioned in Titus was probably the metropolis on the northwestern shore of Greece.

**peace**—In the Bible peace is closely related to the Hebrew word *shalom*, which means well-being in line with God’s will in every aspect of life.

**righteous**—A person who is righteous is right with God, having no guilt or sin. God grants us the righteousness of Christ when we believe in him as Savior and Lord.

**saints**—All who believe in Christ as Savior are *saints*, meaning those who are “set apart.” Believers are set apart to live holy lives by faith in Christ—not in separation from the world but by being like Jesus, who associated with all kinds of people but did not join in their sin.

**slanderers**—people who practice malicious gossip, usually meant to damage the reputations of others for some sort of gain, such as power, prestige, status, or wealth.

**Timothy**—This fellow worker with the apostle Paul is mentioned at the beginning of several of Paul's letters in the New Testament. The Bible also includes two letters Paul wrote to this faithful Christian brother—now known as the books of 1 and 2 Timothy.

**Tychicus**—another of Paul's faithful, fellow workers in ministry (see also **Artemas**). Tychicus sometimes also carried news about Paul and letters from Paul to various churches (Col. 4:7-9).

**Zenas**—Zenas was a lawyer who apparently traveled with Apollos the preacher, as Paul mentions in his closing remarks to Titus. Zenas's Greek name suggests that he may have been a lawyer in the civil system.

# Lesson 1

## Titus 1

### A Job for Titus

#### Introductory Notes

In Titus 1 we find important instructions that point to the beginnings of church government. No deacons are mentioned (as in Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13), and it seems that elders were not yet firmly in place in the churches on the island of Crete. So in this letter, written around A.D. 64 in the early days of the church, Paul lays out some guidelines for Titus to use as he ministers to the churches of Crete.

#### Optional Share Question

*Note:* The optional share question in each lesson may serve well at the beginning of your session, or it may fit better at some other time during the session. Use or adapt each share question in a way that works best for your group.

**When you think about the church, what values do you place on trustworthy leadership and sound teachings? Why?**

#### 1. Titus 1:1-3

a. *What do we learn about Paul from these verses?*

Paul calls himself “a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (Titus 1:1).

- **What do you think Paul means when he calls himself “a servant of God”?**
- **What is the role of a servant?**
- **What do you think Paul means when he calls himself “an apostle of Jesus Christ”?**
- **How do you think Paul knew what God wanted him to do?**

Invite group members to look up the word *apostle* with you in the glossary near the front of the study guide (also near the front of this leader guide), and encourage everyone to use the glossary often as they read

through Paul's letter to Titus. Discuss together why Paul might call himself both a servant and an apostle.

In some ways the opening lines of Paul's letter to Titus may be difficult for group members to understand. If your group is made up of seasoned believers, it may be fairly easy for everyone to grasp what Paul is saying here. But if not, take care to guide people who may be unsure about the terms Paul uses, again inviting everyone to look to the glossary for definitions as needed.

It may also be helpful to point out that letters in Paul's day often included lengthy greetings like these (see Rom. 1:1-7; Gal. 1:1-5). Paul often used such greetings not only to identify himself and his readers but also to establish his authority as an apostle of Christ, called to serve the Lord by spreading the good news of Jesus and building his church. These greetings also usually included a word of blessing or benediction ("good word") like the "Grace and peace . . ." we find in Titus 1:4.

Because he already knew Paul, Titus probably would not have needed such a long introduction. But this long introduction was likely a great help as Titus took Paul's letter around Crete and read it to the various churches there, as was commonly done in those days. Paul's explanation of who he was and whom he served would have helped to give Titus the backing he needed to carry out the job Paul had appointed him to do.

Some group members may be baffled by the term "God's elect" (Titus 1:1). You might explain that when we elect someone to a public office, we *choose* that person to that position. Similarly in some ways, God elects people by choosing them for the special position of being God's children, being part of the family of God. It probably won't be necessary to discuss the doctrine of election in depth at this point, but if group members have questions about it, try to address them straightforwardly without getting off the track of this lesson. (Some passages on election are Rom. 8:28-30; 9:10-16; Eph. 1:3-11; 2:8-10; 1 Pet. 1:1-5; 2:4-10.)

In Titus 1:1 Paul also mentions "the truth that leads to godliness." When God's truth is believed, the one who believes will want to live a godly life.

- **What does Paul mean by the word "godliness"?**

As noted in the glossary, "godliness" describes a life lived in a way that pleases God. The evidence of a changed heart is a changed life.

- b. How are faith and knowledge described?*

Paul says that faith and knowledge rest "on the hope of eternal life" (1:2). You may want to point out, as noted in the glossary, that the biblical understanding of *hope* is far different from a common meaning of the word that points to wishing for something. Biblical hope looks ahead in faith to a sure thing: the "eternal life" that God has promised (1:2; see Heb. 11:1).

- **What is eternal life?**

Eternal life is life that lasts forever. Paul is talking about life in God’s presence that will continue in heaven and on the new earth after Christ comes again (John 14:1-2; Rev. 21- 22).

- **Why might Paul emphasize here that “God . . . does not lie”?**

No doubt people questioned the promises of God as much in Paul’s day as they do today. Here Paul is emphasizing the trustworthiness of God’s promise of eternal life. Another reason for this emphasis may be to point out a contrast with some of the Cretans with whom Titus was working. According to Titus 1:12, the people of Crete were known for their lying. What’s more, Satan is known as “the father of lies” (John 8:44), but God’s character is wholly truthful and trustworthy.

*c. How does God bring about faith and knowledge in people’s lives?*

- **When did God bring “his word to light”? How?**

“At the appointed season” (Titus 1:3)—that is, in God’s time, when people’s hearts are prepared and ready—the Lord brings about faith and knowledge through the preaching of his Word. Paul’s preaching, entrusted to him by God, brought the Word to Titus and to the believers in Crete. At the center of this preaching was the story of God’s love shown in the life and mission of Jesus Christ to save sinners.

- **How do you think Paul felt about his role of preaching?**

Paul clearly took his ministry very seriously, understanding that his role was that of a servant of the one true God, who sent him to preach the good news of salvation everywhere.

## 2. **Titus 1:4**

*a. How does Paul describe Titus?*

- **In what sense was Titus like a son to Paul?**

Paul calls Titus his “true son in our common faith.” This means Paul considers himself as Titus’s spiritual father or mentor, probably because Paul led Titus to Christ. (See also 2 Cor. 2:13 and 8:16-24, where Paul refers to Titus as a brother, partner, and fellow worker.) In addition, Titus now has the role of representing his spiritual father, Paul, as he ministers among the Cretan churches.

b. *What is the blessing Paul conveys on Titus?*

Paul prays for “grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus.” “Grace” was a common Greek greeting, but Paul was no doubt using this word also to convey God’s blessing of grace, God’s unmerited favor.

“Peace” conveys the Old Testament sense of *shalom*, or general well-being.

Some group members may notice that Paul refers to both God the Father and Jesus as “our Savior” (Titus 1:3-4). Both the Father and the Son (as well as the Holy Spirit) had a role in bringing the gift of salvation.

3. **Titus 1:5-9**

*Why had Paul left Titus in Crete?*

Paul says he left Titus in Crete to complete some unfinished work by appointing elders (church leaders) in every town. Again we can see the benefit of these words in that they give Titus the authority for his task. Titus surely knew why Paul had left him behind in Crete; the Cretans, though—especially those who’d been spreading false teachings (1:10-16)—needed to know that Paul, who’d first brought them the gospel (1:3), was leaving Titus in charge to finish the work of setting up the churches there.

Some group members might be curious about why Paul would leave unfinished work in Crete. Because he had started churches in many other places, Paul may have needed to visit them again to bring encouragement and renewed spiritual direction (see Gal. 1). Paul also needed to continue in his own special task assigned by the Lord Jesus, to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9: 5-16; 26:12-18). Paul was mainly what we might call a church planter, or a traveling missionary. Recognizing that God gives gifts to all believers (including gifts of preaching, teaching, leadership, and administration—see Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12), Paul could leave unfinished work behind, knowing that in God’s power others could complete what he had started. It can be encouraging to know that Paul, with his outstanding gifts, left work for others rather than trying to “do it all” himself.

- **What did it mean that elders were appointed?**

The Greek word for “appoint” here means “set in place” or “put in charge,” so this does not necessarily mean Titus was the one to choose them. Each church, knowing its own members best, probably chose those who would make good elders, and it was likely Titus’s role to commission and train them. Paul even emphasizes that he had previously “directed” Titus to do this, so Titus was prepared to do so. This statement also made clear to the Cretan believers that Titus was acting on the direction and authority of Paul.

#### 4. *Titus 1:6-9*

*What are the qualifications of an elder?*

- **What is the role of an elder?**

“Since an overseer [or elder] is entrusted with God’s work,” this person who serves as a leader in the church must be blameless, the husband of one wife, the father of believing, obedient children, hospitable, a lover of what is good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. Paul also cautions that an elder must not be overbearing, quick-tempered, a heavy drinker, violent, dishonest, or greedy.

Being blameless is not the same as being sinless. No one is sinless, but the elder must live a life that is above reproach and have an untarnished reputation.

- **Why might it be important that the elder be blameless in the community?**

The church’s (and thus the Lord’s) reputation would be at stake. Elders must live lives of integrity.

- **Why might Paul require that an elder be “the husband of but one wife”?**

This phrase has spurred some debate and confusion over the years. Some interpreters have thought it prohibited remarriage after a person became widowed or divorced. Others have thought that it meant an elder must be married, not single—but then the phrase would read “the husband of a wife,” not “the husband of but one wife.” Most likely the phrase means that a male elder, if married, should be a person who has maintained a faithful monogamous married life (see text note on 1:6 in the *NIV Study Bible*).

- **Does the word “husband” stipulate that only males may be elders?**

In Paul’s time a woman would never have been considered for the position of elder because of the culture. In those days, “elders, by definition, were chosen from among the older men of the congregation” (text note on 1:6, *NIV Study Bible*).

- **Were people excluded from serving as elders if they were divorced before they became believers? What about people who did not want a divorce but were forced into it by their spouse?**



When we raise important questions like these, we can see that the matter of appointing elders requires much prayer, discernment, and searching of Scripture. The list of requirements Paul gives here is not as clear-cut as we might like.

- **Why might Paul mention the children of an elder?**

Some skills that are necessary in raising believing children are necessary for leading and teaching in the church setting. If a person's children are unbelieving, wild, and disobedient, the elder's leadership gifts may be called into question. This qualification for leadership assumes that the elder is able to talk with children about the Christian faith and help them respond.

- **How does this requirement apply today? Are people with unbelieving children disqualified from the position of elder?**

It's important to remember that only the Holy Spirit can change hearts. Some churches may make the obedience of one's children a strict qualification, stated or otherwise. But some churches may look at the bigger picture, taking into account that a person is qualified in other respects.

Again, Paul's list of qualifications here is not necessarily as clear as we might want it to be. It was most likely clear enough to Titus as he went about his work of appointing elders in the churches of Crete. As we look at this list and try to apply it in our own settings today, we do well to bear in mind that Paul himself was not married or a father (see 1 Cor. 7:1-7), and neither, it appears, was Titus. Was this list intended to disqualify them from serving as elders or overseers? Probably not.

Group members may notice that in Titus 1:7 Paul uses the word "overseer," not "elder"—but from the context (and from other passages in the New Testament) it's clear that these terms are used interchangeably to describe the same group of church leaders. For Paul's readers in Crete, the term "overseer" would have reminded them of someone who manages an estate for a wealthy landowner. In some ways this term gives a helpful picture of the work of an elder, who is entrusted with the care and nurture of the Lord's church.

- **If the elder is to oversee the church, why might the qualities listed in verses 8-9 be necessary?**

A life of integrity would, of course, include kindness and hospitality, and these traits were essential as new believers in the young churches of Crete looked to their leaders for guidance in Christian living. It's important to remember also that Christians at that time were often persecuted for their

faith. A welcoming attitude toward newcomers, as well as an openness to hosting refugees and visitors, was important—as it still is today.

Elders also had to be able to grasp “the trustworthy message” of salvation, encourage others by sound teaching, and refute people who opposed it. Their self-controlled, upright, and disciplined actions showed persecutors and troublemakers that the community of believers in Christ was the best thing the world had ever seen—and that the church’s leaders could not be faulted for any misconduct.

## 5. *Titus 1:10-14*

*Note:* Some people in your group may be surprised that Paul uses some very strong language in his indictment of false teachers among the churches of Crete. As you lead the group’s discussion on the remainder of Titus 1, try to communicate how dangerous false teachings can be in any setting.

a. How does Paul describe the “rebellious people” in the churches of Crete?

- **Why might they be described as mere talkers and deceivers?**
- **What seems to motivate them?**

These “rebellious people” seem to have been smooth talkers who were trying to deceive others, probably to sway their beliefs and to con them somehow out of their money and other valuable property. Note that these people seem to be motivated by “dishonest gain” (1:11) in comparison to church leaders (elders) with integrity, who are characterized by “not pursuing dishonest gain” (1:7).

- **What were these people rebelling against?**

They were apparently rebelling against the truth or against the authority of the church.

- **Which group of people seems particularly guilty?**

Paul singles out “especially . . . the circumcision group”—that is, certain Jews who claimed that Gentiles had to become obedient to Jewish laws before they could become Christians. These false teachers were known as *Judaizers* (from the Greek verb *ioudiazo* in Gal. 2:14). Paul states that these people must be “silenced”—or as the Greek here may also be translated, “muzzled.”

- **Why was it so important that they be silenced?**

These rebellious people “were ruining whole households” with their false teaching. Somehow they also stood to gain from this malicious behavior. They were profiting from households of believers whom they had led astray. With these strong words (and more—see vv. 12-16) Paul was graphically pointing out the dangers of ministering in an environment that was hostile to “the trustworthy message” of God’s salvation.

*b. Note the way Paul says a Cretan had described his own people. Why do you think someone would say that?*

Paul was quoting a sixth-century B.C. poet, Epimenides, who wrote that “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” Apparently the Cretans had a longstanding reputation for selfish, dishonest, and even brutal behavior.

- **How do you think the Cretans would have felt when they heard this statement?**

It would be difficult to deny, since the quote came from one of their own people and they were proud of him. Other references in ancient literature confirm this scathing criticism of Cretan morality. The Greek phrase “to Cretanize,” in fact, meant “to lie.”

- **What does Paul say about that description of the Cretans?**

Paul agrees. You may want to point out, though, that Paul is talking in a general way; he is not saying that every Cretan is a liar. If that were true, how could Titus go about his task of appointing trustworthy elders?

Ultimately we know that the Holy Spirit could change anyone’s heart and shape that person into a faithful servant of God (John 16:13; 2 Cor. 3:17-18). That’s what happened to Paul himself (Acts 9) and to many others. So Paul also knew that if God wanted faithful followers on the island of Crete, God would see that his children there would become new creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

*c. Why is it important that these Cretans be rebuked?*

They have to be rebuked so that they will return to sound teaching in the faith and not be swayed by myths or the commands of false teachers. Some of the false teachers apparently were teaching Jewish myths and genealogies, claiming that these also were necessary for salvation. Paul is interested in correcting not only the Cretans in general but also the false teachers, so that they will not lead others astray and will also come to repentance and hold to sound doctrine.

## 6. *Titus 1:15-16*

- a. *What do you think Paul means when he says nothing is pure to those who are corrupted and do not believe?*

Scholars think that in Titus 1:15 Paul is emphasizing one area of life in which legalistic Jewish Christians (Judaizers) tried to influence people—that is, in their food laws, in which they labeled foods as either “clean” or “unclean.”

- **What might it mean that “to the pure, all things are pure”?**

Those who are pure of heart (living in step with the Holy Spirit of God—Gal. 5:16-26) need not worry about the kind of rules and regulations taught by some people. On the other hand, those whose hearts are corrupt will not become pure by observing rules and rituals. *Note:* It may be necessary to point out that something is not necessarily pure just because the viewer sees it as pure. There are moral rights and wrongs, as we learn from observing God’s law as our guide for thankful, Christian living.

- b. *How can we tell whether a person knows God?*

Give an example of how people might show by their actions that they do not know God. The actions of the rebellious Cretans are not indifferent; they show that these people actually deny God. Jesus taught that those who believe in him are recognized as believers because of their actions (Luke 6:43-44; John 13:34-35; 15:8).

- **How does Paul describe those who deny God by their actions?**

Paul says they are “detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.” With these harsh words Paul is emphasizing how bad and destructive false teaching really is for the church. (See also Gal. 2-3; 2 Pet. 2; 1 John 2; Jude 3-16).

### **Questions for Reflection**

*What have you learned about “the trustworthy message” of salvation? In what ways can you share it with others?*

*In what ways can Paul’s teachings about trustworthy church leaders help you serve God faithfully?*

*What can you tell others about the importance of sound teachings and the destructiveness of false teachings in the church?*

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by  
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Grand Rapids, Michigan

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ISBN 1-59255-180-7

10987654321

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# How to Study

The questions in this study booklet will help you discover for yourself what the Bible says. This is inductive Bible study—no one will tell you what the Bible says or what to believe. You will discover the message for yourself.

Questions are the key to inductive Bible study. Through questions you will search for the writers' thoughts and ideas. The prepared questions in this booklet are designed to help you in your quest for answers. You can and should ask your own questions too. The Bible comes alive with meaning for many people as they discover for themselves the exciting truths it contains. Our hope and prayer is that this booklet will help the Bible come alive for you.

The questions in this study are designed to be used with the New International Version of the Bible, but other translations can also be used.

**Step 1. Read each Bible passage several times.** Allow the thoughts and ideas to sink in. Think about its meaning. Ask questions of your own about the passage.

**Step 2. Answer the questions,** drawing your answers from the passage. Remember that the purpose of the study is to discover what the Bible says. Write your answers in your own words. If you use Bible study aids such as commentaries or Bible handbooks, do so only after completing your own personal study.

**Step 3. Apply the Bible's message** to your own life and world. Ask yourself these questions: What is this passage saying to me? How does it challenge me? Comfort me? Encourage me? Is there a promise I should claim? A warning I should heed? For what can I give thanks? If you sense God speaking to you in some way, respond to God in a personal prayer.

**Step 4. Share your thoughts with someone else** if possible. This will be easiest if you are part of a Bible study group that meets regularly to share discoveries and discuss questions. If you would like to learn of a study group in your area or if you would like more information on how to start a small group Bible study,

- write to Discover Your Bible at

2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

or

P.O. Box 5070  
STN LCD 1  
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8

- call toll-free 1-888-644-0814, e-mail [smallgroups@crcna.org](mailto:smallgroups@crcna.org), or visit [www.SmallGroupMinistries.org](http://www.SmallGroupMinistries.org) (for training advice and general information)
- call toll-free 1-800-333-8300 or visit [www.FaithAliveResources.org](http://www.FaithAliveResources.org) (to order materials)

# Introduction

The apostle Paul wrote many letters—to individuals as well as churches—and several of those letters are preserved in the Bible. In this study we'll be looking closely at two of them, now commonly known as the New Testament books of Titus and Philemon.

Titus, a young man whom Paul had met in the early years of his ministry, had become a fellow worker and faithful companion on Paul's missionary journeys, and Philemon, a well-to-do householder whom Paul had met later (probably near Colosse), had become a faithful, generous supporter of Paul's ministry and had opened his home so that other believers could worship there. Paul considered each of these men a close friend.

While the brief letters Paul wrote to Titus and Philemon are addressed to them individually, it's clear that these letters are also intended for the groups of believers (churches) who worshiped and associated with them. In both letters Paul speaks of godly living, but in each he gives a different emphasis. In the letter to Titus we find important instructions about principles for Christian living, and in the letter to Philemon we find Paul applying Christian principles to a specific situation.

Studying Titus and Philemon in sequence proves interesting. In the letter to Titus we learn from Paul's direct manner as he faces a challenge head-on—dealing with false teachers and unchristian behavior on the island of Crete. And in the letter to Philemon we learn from Paul's diplomacy and tact as he handles a delicate situation with great care—urging a fellow Christian to receive back a runaway slave as a Christian brother. In both letters we see how important it is to share the good news of Jesus and to live faithfully for Christ as people of integrity.

# Glossary of Terms

**Apollos**—a pastor from Alexandria who had been taught by Paul’s friends Priscilla and Aquila and had become well known as an effective preacher of the gospel (Acts 18:26-28; 1 Cor. 3:4-6; Titus 3:13).

**Apphia**—one of the persons addressed in Paul’s letter to Philemon. She is probably Philemon’s wife.

**apostle**—a person sent by God to accomplish a special task.

**Aristarchus**—a fellow worker with Paul, this person is also described as Paul’s fellow prisoner in Paul’s letter to the Colossians. Aristarchus, Demas, Epaphras, Luke, and Mark are all mentioned in the closing comments of Paul’s letters to Philemon and to the Colossians; scholars agree that both of these letters were likely written and delivered at the same time (see Col. 4:7-17; Philem. 2, 10, 23-24).

**Archippus**—another of the persons addressed in Paul’s letter to Philemon (see also Col. 4:17). Archippus may have been Philemon’s son or another close relative. He was apparently a member of Philemon’s household and of the church that met in Philemon’s home.

**Artemas**—one of the persons mentioned near the end of Paul’s letter to Titus. Paul said he would send either Artemas or Tychicus to Titus, apparently to continue Titus’s work in Crete so that Titus could visit Paul for a while or work elsewhere.

**circumcision group**—This term refers to a group of people who taught that a person had to become Jewish or had to hold to certain Jewish practices to be a Christian.

**Crete, Cretans**—Crete is the fourth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. Its inhabitants were called Cretans.

**Dalmatia**—a region to the northwest of Greece in the days of the Roman Empire.

**Demas**—one of Paul’s fellow workers (see **Aristarchus**).

**elect**—People who are elect have been chosen by God to have eternal life through Jesus Christ. This salvation is for all who believe in Jesus as the only Savior from sin and death. Anyone who trusts in Jesus as Savior and Lord is elect.

**envy**—Envy is a deeply malicious form of greed. It involves not just wanting something that you can’t have but also wanting another person, viewed as a rival, not to have it either.

**Epaphras**—a fellow worker and prisoner with Paul (see **Aristarchus**).

**faith**—“being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1). True faith involves the knowledge and assurance that God’s Word in the Bible is trustworthy and true, giving us the confidence that all our sins are forgiven through the saving work of Christ.

**foolish**—In the Bible, being foolish means going against God, deciding not to follow God’s way (see Ps. 14:1-3).

**Gentiles**—all people who are not Jews.

**godliness**—A person shows godliness by striving to live God’s way, aiming to live a life pleasing to God.

**grace**—Often a greeting in Paul’s letters, *grace* refers to God’s unmerited favor, by which we can have eternal life through the saving work of Christ.

**holy**—pure, set apart in a special way to bring glory to God.

**hope**—In the Bible *hope* refers to a sure thing: the eternal life God promises for all who believe in Jesus for salvation (Rom. 1:16; Titus 1:2; Heb. 11:1). This is far different from a common meaning of *hope* that points toward wishing for something.

**Jews**—descendants of Abraham, God’s chosen Old Testament people (also called Israelites or Hebrews).

**justified**—A person who is justified is a person who has been made right with God (righteous).

**Luke**—a friend and fellow worker with Paul. Luke is described as a doctor in Colossians 4:14 and is probably the same person who wrote the New Testament gospel of Luke and the book of Acts (see also **Aristarchus**).

**Mark**—may have been John Mark, who traveled and worked with Paul at different times and was probably the author of the New Testament gospel of Mark (see also **Aristarchus**).

**Nicopolis**—Several cities in the Roman Empire had this name, meaning “victory city,” and the one mentioned in Titus was probably the metropolis on the northwestern shore of Greece.

**peace**—In the Bible peace is closely related to the Hebrew word *shalom*, which means well-being in line with God’s will in every aspect of life.

**righteous**—A person who is righteous is right with God, having no guilt or sin. God grants us the righteousness of Christ when we believe in him as Savior and Lord.

**saints**—All who believe in Christ as Savior are *saints*, meaning those who are “set apart.” Believers are set apart to live holy lives by faith in Christ—not in separation from the world but by being like Jesus, who associated with all kinds of people but did not join in their sin.

**slanderers**—people who practice malicious gossip, usually meant to damage the reputations of others for some sort of gain, such as power, prestige, status, or wealth.

**Timothy**—This fellow worker with the apostle Paul is mentioned at the beginning of several of Paul's letters in the New Testament. The Bible also includes two letters Paul wrote to this faithful Christian brother—now known as the books of 1 and 2 Timothy.

**Tychicus**—another of Paul's faithful, fellow workers in ministry (see also **Artemas**). Tychicus sometimes also carried news about Paul and letters from Paul to various churches (Col. 4:7-9).

**Zenas**—Zenas was a lawyer who apparently traveled with Apollos the preacher, as Paul mentions in his closing remarks to Titus. Zenas's Greek name suggests that he may have been a lawyer in the civil system.



b. What is the blessing Paul conveys on Titus?

3. *Titus 1:5-9*

Why had Paul left Titus in Crete?

4. *Titus 1:6-9*

What are the qualifications of an elder?

5. *Titus 1:10-14*

a. How does Paul describe the “rebellious people” in the churches of Crete?

b. Note the way Paul says a Cretan had described his own people. Why do you think someone would say that?

c. Why is it important that these Cretans be rebuked?

6. *Titus 1:15-16*

- a. What do you think Paul means when he says nothing is pure to those who are corrupted and do not believe?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. How can we tell whether a person knows God?

*Questions for Reflection*

What have you learned about “the trustworthy message” of salvation?  
In what ways can you share it with others?

In what ways can Paul’s teachings about trustworthy church leaders help you serve God faithfully?

What can you tell others about the importance of sound teachings and the destructiveness of false teachings in the church?