



## Biblical Foundations Encouraging Hope

by Chuck Gianotti

*Studies in Titus —Part 2 (1:1b-4 NASB)*

The apostle Paul writes Titus with a clear focus. He serves God, but he serves “for” God’s people. The word translated “for” in our text, is rendered in other versions as “according to.” This is a part of speech called a “preposition”—these are the most difficult kind of words to translate because they can carry a wide range of meanings. However, what Paul means is that the whole reason or goal for being an apostle, his controlling impulse, is to nurture faith in God’s people.

The apostle fleshes this out by adding “and the knowledge of the truth.” He proclaims, teaches, endorses, and nurtures truth, knowing the truth and then acting out that truth—this is the core of godliness. And as he begins to instruct Timothy about leadership issues in the church, particularly about elders, Paul lays out this focus as his own understanding of the ministry. The work of an elder is essentially to nurture faith through the growing knowledge of the truth with a goal toward godly living.

### *Atmosphere of Hope*

So many other things cloud that vision, but we must keep our focus—at all costs. Paul goes on to say that our hope is the context in which all this ministry takes place. Without hope, believers cannot remain focused on faith, truth or godliness (vs. 2). These pursuits must and can only take place in the context of hope that connects us with that which is far above our time and struggles here on earth.

In Dante’s classic composition, “Inferno,” the sign on the entrance to hell reads, “Abandon all hope, ye who enter.” Loss of hope undermines everything; it neutralizes all teaching. Why would anyone want to pursue the Christian life if this is all there is? It is like running a race with no finish line. Like piecing together a jigsaw puzzle with no picture to guide you. If a person has no hope, then he will never respond to the clearest instructions in Scripture, because what’s the use? Even common sense is rendered lifeless. A Christian without hope is a spiritually depressed in-

dividual. (D. Martyn Loyd Jones’ book, “Spiritual Depression” is a great read on this subject).

So Paul speaks of hope often in his writings, and no less here in his instructions to the young leader, Titus. We, as elders, must always be giving people hope, pointing them to the hope that has long been promised by God (vs. 2b). The hope “which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,” is found in Christ, the promised One. He is not just an instructor about life, a teacher of the truth, or purveyor of a new way. He IS the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). He is the Christian’s hope.

Therefore, we must always keep Christ

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front and center. We need to be talking about Jesus—a lot! Keep the attention on Him. Not just at the Lord’s Supper, or at Easter, or throwing in an

occasional, “Praise the Lord.” Notice in this letter, in the span of four verses, Paul mentions the Lord by name two times. If we follow Paul’s example (as he instructs his readers to do on a number of occasions, see 1 Cor 4:16, 11:1, Phil 3:17, 4:9), then the question is poignant: “How often do I mention the name of Jesus in my conversations and emails with people?” Does the name of Jesus Christ find itself into our normal course of conversation? Let the walls of compartmentalization fall down!

### *Foundation of Truth*

Notice the words in this section related to truth: knowledge, promise, word, proclamation and commandment. Of course, Paul does not promote sterile formalism, or elevate dry doctrine divorced from everyday life. But truth must be maintained, or the foundations for any kind of sensible faith will crumble. Without objective truth based in the unchangeable Word of God (“who cannot lie”), then Christians (and anyone else) are left to feelings, intuitions or philosophical fancies—none of which is solid enough on which to build a life for eternity. Only the unmovable “commandment of God our Savior” will stand the test of time.

So it is on this basis that Paul can write to Titus, “my true child in a common faith:

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Elder work is all about leading. People are like sheep and sheep tend to go astray. That's one reason the church is sometimes referred to as "the flock." Sheep find security in those who love them and yet have authority to correct them when necessary. In his winsome description of the Lord as his Shepherd in Psalm 23, the first verbs David uses are, "He makes me... He leads me..." That is, He protects me from the wrong way, and directs me in the right way. Thank God for elders who do that same work of leading people "in the paths of righteousness" today.

Unfortunately, in some places that are fully committed to Biblical eldership, there is a suspicion of the word "leader." One time while speaking to a men's conference discussion group, an older man interrupted me: "Please use the term

"elders" and not "leaders." I pointed him to Hebrews 13:7, 17 and 24 where the writer repeatedly uses the Greek word "leaders" as seen in the NASB and Darby's translation. The man crossed his arms and sat down with a scowl muttering, "I still don't like it."

"Leader" is a good word. It can be useful when referring to those who are supplying direction in a young assembly that has not yet publically recognized elders. Or according to the definition of the word, "a person of influence," both elders and deacons in established churches, are men of influence, or leaders in the assembly.

As all elders know, leading people can at times be a difficult and thankless job. True, the church belongs to the Lord, and He is the builder. But a growing church imposes a demanding schedule on those who lead, not only in teaching, visitation, and various ministries, but also in making decisions that can affect the direction of the work. Skill, experience, and the power of the Holy Spirit are needed.

Given the importance of the subject, have you ever wondered what spiritual gifts God has provided to help those who lead to do so effectively? We might quickly think of evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph. 4:12), as notable, public (i.e., 'high visibility') gifts. But while these are valuable and necessary gifts found in many elders, they pertain primarily to the finding, feeding and care of the flock. But what gifts address matters of vision and direction of the assembly? In the various lists of spiritual gifts, there are two that provide special help for this need.

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### Two Gifts for Leaders

In Romans 12:8, we find a gift called "ruling" (KJV) or "he who leads" (NKJV). In I Corinthians 12:28,

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we read of "governments" (KJV) or "administrations" (NKJV). What are these about? For many years, when I taught on spiritual gifts, I treated them as synonyms, but they are not! Let's look briefly at each.

The Greek word in Romans 12:8 is "*prohistemi*" which is a combination of "*pro*" (forward), and "*histemi*" (to stand); literally "to stand forward." One of the more common words for leading, it offers a beautiful word picture of one who moves to the front to help show the way. It is used for example in I Thessalonians 5:12, "And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord..." Paul uses it three times in I Timothy 3 in reference to both elders and deacons, and again in I Tim. 5:17, when he instructs Timothy concerning the honor due to "the elders who rule well..."

The less common word, found in I Cor. 12:28 is "*kubernesis*," which is defined in the lexicon as, "to steer as a ship; pilot; helmsman." Both Acts 27:11 (the account of Paul's voyage to Rome by ship) and Rev 18:17 ("every shipmaster") involve use of this word, by way of example.

Now here is a fascinating thing!

Of the approximately 20 spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament, the two pertaining directly to leadership, which might at first glance seem mere variations of a common idea, i.e., leading or steering, describe men who function from opposite ends of the church; one in the front and the other from the rear. This is one of the many exquisite accuracies of Scripture that reward attention to detail in noting what preachers of a bygone era called "things that differ."

The first word (*prohistemi*), by its very makeup suggests someone at the head of the group, out in front, leading the way and therefore giving the impression of someone with authority and a sense of direction. As to the second word (*kubernesis*), anyone familiar with boats and ships will know that the forward direction of the entire craft is determined by the rudder

which is located in, and controlled from the back (stern) part of the ship. In fact, in smaller boats the "helmsman" or "pilot" sits at the very back with his hand on the tiller, and thus by a small movement of hand, can change the direction of the boat. The apostle James makes the point that a ship's rudder is, in fact, a very small part of the whole boat, yet has a profound effect on it (see James 3:4).

### Applications for Elders

Like all the spiritual gifts, these two are not meant to compete, but to compliment one another. Whether we think of the general on land leading his troops from the front, or the pilot at sea guiding his ship from the stern, we can see the connection with spiritual work in the church. Some men are outgoing, "up front" leaders who can gather the people, forge unity, and inspire effort to pursue a vision for learning, serving, or outreach. Other men, being no less leaders, prefer a position out of the limelight, in the back of the boat, so to speak. But far from being ineffective, the time spent in solitude laboring "in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17) can make a substantial contribution to

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## Wives' Corner

# Nurturing Women

by Ruth Spender

Those of us who have enjoyed the heritage of being raised in a godly home have much to thank the Lord for. To whom much is given, of him shall much be required.

I was not only blessed with a godly mother, but one who went out of her way as a handicapped individual to nurture our family and anyone else with whom she came in contact. I have been reminded often throughout my years in ministry of the large capacity God has given women to nurture other women.

We have the ability and the privilege to nurture others in the physical and spiritual realm. Whenever a new baby is welcomed into a family we see this precept in action. Much preparation is made to accommodate the needs of the youngest among us. Even those who have not given birth have nurturing instincts that are God given. When a woman is saved and she becomes a new creation in Christ, her potential for

nurturing is enhanced and her capacity to serve others is greater. She becomes more "other centered" rather than "me centered." As such, she is a valuable asset to those she ministers to in the assembly.

Long before the Titus 2 mandate was given where God's Word speaks to the need of the older woman teaching the younger woman, we read the story of Ruth and Naomi. In this Old Testament story we see a lovely example of mutual nurturing even in the midst of sorrow and pain. We learn by observing and we see the value of modeling spiritual truth to others around us. It is still one of the most effective ways to train young women today.

Another beautiful example of nurturing is found in the story of Mary and Elizabeth. These women spent several months together encouraging one another before the birth of their

children. Had the Lord provided Elizabeth to meet a need in her cousin's life in the absence of her own mother? We know that together they rejoiced at what God was doing in their lives. They would know Jehovah-Jireh as the one who provided their every need.

We see the same caring quality in our Lord as He looked out over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37. "...how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you would not." Here we see His care for a people who had rejected Him.

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## Spiritual Gifts (continued)

the health of the church, by steering it away from false doctrine and in line with "the paths of righteousness." Of course this is not to say that the "up front" man does not so labor, but only that God surrounds the church with leaders whose gifts and personalities differ but together supply the need.

No battle is won on a single front; elders must be team players. Those with outgoing personalities must purpose not to dominate the elders' meeting. Those with a quiet demeanor and who can easily go unheard must realize that their perspective may be the one needed, but it will be no help unless expressed. For the health of the church, it is important that each elder on the team live by the principle, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4).

The old adage, "As leadership goes, so goes the church," is generally true, but suggests another important question: is the ship moving? Is it going somewhere? Turning the rudder on a motionless ship will never change its direction! But that's a subject for another day!

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## From the Q-File

"And the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Son of man, behold, I am about to take from you the desire of your eyes with a blow; but you shall not mourn and you shall not weep, and your tears shall not come. "Groan silently; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban and put your shoes on your feet, and do not cover your mustache and do not eat the bread of men." So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. And in the morning I did as I was commanded" (Ezekiel 24:15-18).

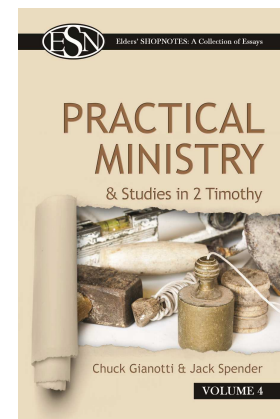
Sometimes as leaders we need to suppress our emotions because of something more significant going on. This presumes that our feelings, no matter how deep or painful, do not trump our obedience to the Lord. For Ezekiel that meant even when his wife dies he must still give the message of judgment to God's people. He does not get a bye because of his own personal grief.

To be sure emotions can still be there, just that they need to be curtailed publicly for a time. This might just be one of the most difficult parts

of being a leader of God's people. Obeying the Lord overrides absolutely everything.

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## Encouraging Hope (cont. from page 1)

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior” (vs. 4). With the truth comes the knowledge of grace and the consequence of peace. In fact, in every one of Paul’s canonical letters he pens this salutation to his readers (in various forms): Grace and peace to you from God. This is not just a mere idle wish or desire. It is the whole reason, stated concisely, for his writing. This brief statement captures what he really wants for people: 1) to know God’s transforming grace in all of life, both entering new life and continuing on in the way we received Christ – living a life of grace and 2) to experience the peace that completely eclipses fear, anxiety, disharmony, conflict, tensions, bitterness, resentment, hatred, stress or worry.

### Prayer based on hope

Have you ever noticed that the average Christian’s theology and spiritual life don’t always line up? How often do Christians pray that the Lord would take away their problems, as though the goal for this life is to remove all difficulties? But the redemption we have in Christ, the hope we have, is not in God making this fallen world better! Our theology tells us the world is irredeemably fallen (“cursed”) and we experience that fallenness all around us. What God has promised us is found in the words of Jesus Christ, His son:

*“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give*

*to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” (Jn 14:27)*

*“In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).*

Our Lord specifically prayed, not that the Father would take His disciples out of the world (John 17:15), but that they would be “kept from the evil one.” So we continue to live in the fallen world with all its difficulties. Our souls long, to be sure, for relief from the physical, emotional and psychological difficulties. But, we understand that the perfection of our redemption is yet future with the new heavens and new earth. But in the meanwhile, in this fallen world, we can have the peace of Christ which overcomes this world.

So we should spend less time asking God to change our circumstances, and more time believing the grace of God is sufficient and empowers us (2 Cor 12:9) in our circumstances. If we focus on the lot in life fallen to us, we will never rise up in the life God intends for us in the midst of our difficulties. It is said that great leaders of countries are simply regular leaders who were born in fortunate times for demonstrating their leadership. Presidents and prime ministers who ruled in times of peace did not have the stage for showing their greatness. So also in the Christian life and ministry, difficult times are the staging platform

for spiritual greatness. Not just for leaders but for all Christians.

Indeed we are all born in the same fallen world, none of us is unique. One movie actress recently was reported to have said, “Let me tell you something--being thought of as a beautiful woman has spared me nothing in life, no heartache, no trouble.” So too, the thought that our lives would be so much better if our circumstances were improved is foolish. This false thinking plagues us all.

### Leading toward hope

As elders, we need to lead people in discovering the hope that we have in Christ, regardless of our circumstances—an eternal hope that invades our temporal world and makes a difference in our lives now. This comes through in our teachings, our casual words, our lives. Our job is not to show people how they can make their lives easier or more comfortable. Our ministry is to help people find the grace and peace that comes only in the true knowledge, faith and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.



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Publisher/Editor: Chuck Gianotti  
Editorial assistance: Ruth Rodger  
Layout, Technical Asst: Sherri Jason

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