Living to Do
Believers should look for opportunities to do good works as acts of worship.

TITUS 3:1-11
MEMORY VERSE: TITUS 3:14

READ Titus 3:1-15, First Thoughts (p. 134), and Understand the Context (p. 134). As you read, make notes on how you would describe the difference between salvation through faith and the role of good works.

STUDY Titus 3:1-11, using Explore the Text on pages 135–139. Record potential questions your group might ask. Note the Key Doctrine (Justification) and how Paul described it in his letters.

PLAN the group time using Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 140–141), More Ideas (p. 142), ideas included in QuickSource, and ideas online at Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploreTheBible/Adults/LeaderExtras. Customize a plan to meet the needs of your group. Spend time in prayer for your group, as this can be an opportunity to share how salvation is not based on works.

GROW from the weekly podcast on Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

GATHER the following items: □ Personal Study Guides. Prepare to display the following Pack Item: □ PACK ITEM 2 (Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus). Make copies for the group of: □ PACK ITEM 9 (Handout: Models of Church Structure); and □ PACK ITEM 11 (Handout: Titus: A Snapshot).
**FIRST THOUGHTS**

People who have been imprisoned for their faith remain faithful despite great costs. Christians with few economic resources give sacrificially to relieve believers fleeing their homes during religious persecution. Faithful laymen use their business opportunities to share Jesus with others. Believers around the world demonstrate their faith in difficult situations. As believers, we are responsible for walking like our Savior and doing good deeds for others.

(In PSG, p. 118)

_How might a believer’s good works point others to Jesus?_  
_How can a believer communicate his or her motive for doing good works in a way that honors God?_

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**UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT**

**TITUS 3:1-15**

Understanding Paul’s letter to Titus requires reading it as a letter to a colleague, not just a theological treatise. The original form lacked the chapter and verse divisions that were added later for ease of reference. Sometimes these markers break up the natural thought patterns of a letter. Understanding Paul’s intent requires Bible students to look at the way sentences and paragraphs should naturally follow each other.

Consequently, the opening verses of chapter 3 refer back to the people addressed in chapter 2. Paul had given specific instructions about how Titus should teach various groups regarding personal character and relational conduct. As he moved toward the letter’s conclusion, Paul summarized his comments and expanded them to describe how believers should live out their faith in a wide range of situations. From dealing with authorities to interactions with other people, they were to honor Christ.

Lest the Cretan Christians get the idea that Paul and Titus were speaking down to them, Paul interjected a personal confession. He shared how radically different his own life and Titus’s life was before salvation. He emphasized how God had shown grace in spite of terrible sins. Indeed, the Lord could work in and through the Cretan believers to demonstrate His transforming power.

Despite their best efforts, Paul and Titus still encountered opponents outside and within the churches. Paul urged his son in the ministry to avoid useless debates and remain true to the message. The work Titus was called to do was urgent; he had limited time to set the foundation on which other colleagues would build. When another pastor arrived from Paul, Titus would leave Crete to join Paul in Nicopolis where they would spend the winter. In the meantime, Titus’s pastoral ministry required strengthening the disciples in their faith and in their walks with Christ.

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**KEY DOCTRINE**

**Justification**

Justification is God’s gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ (Rom. 3:23-25).

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**BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR**

**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

**GOOD DEEDS (TITUS 3:1-2)**

**VERSES 1-2**

Titus was not a novice in his ministry on the island of Crete. He helped establish churches and develop young believers. He ministered alongside Paul before Paul moved northward and left Titus to continue the work. Paul urged Titus to **remind** the Cretans of certain qualities of Christ followers. While not an exhaustive list, he mentioned six attitudes and actions.

As mentioned in the context study, chapter and verse divisions can cause readers to miss connections between various sections of text. When Paul mentioned **them** in this verse, he was referring back to persons cited in the previous chapter. He addressed various generational groups as well as slaves, but all were believers. God had made these people into “his own possession” who would be “eager to do good works” (Titus 2:14).

Paul repeated the need for believers to **be ready for every good work**. He was urging people who were saved by God’s grace to be prepared to act when they encountered opportunities for good work. First, he urged the believers to **submit to rulers and authorities**. Crete was under Roman control and ruled by various civil authorities. The indigenous population was primarily Greek with a minority group of Jewish residents. The rulers likely were the Roman governors or proconsuls. **Authorities** administered Roman laws while being mindful of Greek cultures.

Paul’s admonition contrasts respectful believers with people he had described as “rebellious” (1:10). He specifically mentioned the “circumcision party,” suggesting that the Judaizers were responsible for an unruly spirit among the population (1:11). The conduct of Cretan Christians would demonstrate how their faith led them to be more model citizens than their opponents.

These believers also were responsible to **obey**. Some commentators suggest the difference between being submissive and being willing to obey involved first the mindset and second the deed. In neither case did Paul advocate believers going along with orders that contradicted their loyalty to Christ. Paul’s consistent example showed his respect for authorities. Yet he remained faithful to Christ, although it meant being beaten, arrested, and imprisoned.

Next, Paul urged the Cretans to demonstrate Christlikeness in their interpersonal relationships. They should **slander no one**. Believers should not verbally attack people with evil intent. Consequently, Christians should **avoid fighting**, whether physically or with abusive speech. While believers ought to avoid quarreling with one another, this caution relates to their interactions with unbelievers as well.

In all ways, believers should be **kind**, reflecting the compassion and character of Christ. More than merely avoiding contention, the Cretan Christians were to demonstrate benevolence in attitude, **always showing gentleness** in their actions. We may find it easy to behave this way with people who are nice to us, but Paul urged kindness to **all people**.

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**VERSES 1-2**

1. Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,
2. to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, always showing gentleness to all people.

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**BIBLE SKILL**

Compare usage of the same word in different passages.

Paul used the term or idea of heirs in several of his letters. In one column, write these references: Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 1:11,18; 3:6; Galatians 3:29; 4:7; and Titus 3:7. In the second column, summarize how each passage describes believers as heirs of God. Also, consider the concept of inheritance in Galatians 3:18; Ephesians 1:11-14; and Colossians 1:12. What insights do you gain from each passage about being an heir? How would you summarize Paul’s understanding of being an heir of God based on these passages?
(In PSG, p. 120) Why was it important for believers to submit to the authority of government? How does being a responsible citizen impact how others view Christians?

BASED ON HIS MERCY (TITUS 3:3-7)

VERSE 3

In a confessional spirit, Paul identified with the need for spiritual guidance. His use of the word *we* included not only himself and Titus, but all believers. Paul described qualities of people before and after conversion.

The word *foolish* was not meant to disparage someone as unintelligent. Instead, it describes one’s refusing to employ God-given mental abilities for wise decisions. While being foolish relates to imprudent decisions, being *disobedient* reflects unwillingness to follow God’s direction. This word paints the picture of a general attitude of disobedience and rebellion. Earlier in this letter, Paul used the term to describe the lost (1:16).

The second pair of characteristics also reflects qualities similar to one another. To be *deceived* can lead to being *enslaved*. People may be misled about beliefs as well as what constitutes proper behavior. If they continue under false influences, they can become shackled by *various passions and pleasures*. These terms can include lusts of the flesh but could also involve other immoral behavior. Lacking the truth of God’s Word, they become bound by covetous desires.

The third set of qualities lists three aspects of sinful attitudes. They were **living in malice and envy.** *Malice* involves a depraved intention to harm others. By coupling this idea with *envy*, the source of malice lies in jealousy of others and ends in people loathing one another. The words *hateful* and *detesting one another* appear to follow a pattern of Hebrew parallelism in which successive terms modify and expand the first. Sin toward God inevitably leads to animosity toward people.

VERSES 4-5

But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 
he saved us— not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy —through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 
5 he saved us— not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy —through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

4 With a single word, *but*, Paul contrasted the sinfulness of an unregenerate life with the effect of God’s grace. Paul emphasized the Father’s initiative in extending His *kindness* and grace. Through His giving of His Son, God provided the means and motivation for lost sinners to become His children. He offers pardon to people who do not deserve forgiveness and reconciliation to those who were His enemies.

God’s love existed in eternity past, before He created the first human being. However, that love *appeared*, or was made manifest, in Jesus’ incarnation, sinless life, atoning death, and glorious resurrection. With the coming of Christ, hope invaded human history, not through the merit of the loved but by the kindness of the One who loves.
Paul’s simple statement, he saved us, contains the essence of salvation theology. First, it means we need saving. Without Christ, human beings are lost, separated from God because of sin (Isa. 59:2). Second, it declares we cannot save ourselves. We can do no works of righteousness to earn salvation. Our best efforts to achieve righteousness amount to filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).

Not by human efforts but according to his mercy God saves us. Through Christ, God made possible the washing of regeneration. Some commentators suggest the term washing references baptism, although most would not describe baptism as a means to salvation. Such a connection would contradict other New Testament teachings. (See Eph. 2:8-9.) Rather, Paul used the word washing as a metaphor to describe the cleansing power of regeneration.

The phrase renewal by the Holy Spirit involves a simultaneous, not a subsequent, aspect of salvation. We are not regenerated and then renewed. Both happen at the moment we are saved. The Holy Spirit renews our spirit as regeneration makes us alive in Christ (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13; 1 Pet. 3:18). As we continue in the Christian life, the Spirit renews our inner being even when our lives experience hardship (2 Cor. 4:16). He also renews our minds, transforming our lives (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23).

VERSES 6-7
Paul continued interchanging the phrases God our Savior and Christ our Savior as he had in earlier passages (Titus 1:3-4; 2:10,13). This demonstrates the dual truths that Christ the Son is truly God and that God the Father and God the Son are both instrumental in our salvation. Verse 6 continues the description of salvation begun in verse 5. In saving us, God poured out his Spirit on us. This statement contains great theological truths. First, it means that God takes the initiative in blessing believers with His Spirit. Second, we receive the Holy Spirit at salvation. Paul taught that anyone who did not have the Holy Spirit was not saved (Rom. 8:9). A third truth involves the way God gives His Spirit abundantly. He did not hold back on His gifting, but poured out His Spirit. Finally, the giving of the Spirit is made possible through Jesus Christ. We cannot earn the right to the Spirit or manufacture His gifts.

The phrase so that links verses 5-6 with the results in verse 7. Paul joined terms like regeneration and renewal with the word justified to describe what happens at salvation. By using the tense having been justified, Paul referred to something that had already happened in believers’ lives. We could not justify ourselves, but God justified us by his grace through Christ. Grace is unmerited favor, the extension of mercy to the sinner who has no hope apart from Jesus.

Without Christ we are without hope.

Salvation results in believers becoming heirs of God with the hope of eternal life. Without Christ we are without hope (Eph. 2:12). We can only receive hope and everlasting life by being born again into God’s family through faith in Christ.
In PSG, p. 123) **How would you describe the difference between doing good works to gain salvation and doing good works because one has been granted salvation?**

**DONE ON PURPOSE (Titus 3:8-11)**

**VERSE 8**

8 This saying is trustworthy. I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works. These are good and profitable for everyone.

**VERSE 9**

9 But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless.
The word *quarrels* could infer a general spirit of contention that produced conflict between the Cretan Christians and the people living around them. It also might be part of the *disputes about the law*. In either case, all of these diversions were *unprofitable and worthless*. The first of these twin terms emphasized the lack of positive benefit, while the second addressed their futility. Titus and his churches had more important matters that required their full attention.

**VERSES 10-11**

Paul believed a focused ministry was so important that Titus should not waste time on people who continued to sow discord. He instructed Titus to give a strict warning to any *divisive person*. However, if such an individual continued to be the source of conflict after one or two cautions, Titus was to reject that person.

Paul was not saying Titus should not seek repentance or salvation for these kinds of people. Instead, he wanted Titus not to allow them to disrupt his work or disturb the church. This caution was consistent with Jesus’ instructions for His disciples to move on from any place that did not receive them (Luke 9:5). Paul followed that example when he shook the dust from his shoes in witness against Jewish opponents who interfered with the Gentiles’ receiving the gospel (Acts 13:48-51).

Titus should know the nature of divisive persons. Paul used three phrases to describe them. Such an individual had *gone astray*. This phrase can also mean “perverted” or “corrupt.” Not only were they *sinning*, but they determined to continue in their sinning. Titus did not need to denounce these people, for they were *self-condemned* by their own deeds.

**Christians are to avoid being drawn into side issues that can harm the gospel message.**

Believers should not waste time with such people or be distracted by their divisive debates. Christians are to avoid being drawn into side issues that can harm the gospel message. Instead, they are to concentrate on honoring God through good works. Consequently, they can be deliberate in fulfilling God’s purpose through their lives.

**How does God’s purpose guide your priorities and determine your activities?**
LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

SHARE: As the group arrives, invite them to share something they did to help someone in the past week. Ask: How did what you did impact the other person?

ASK: How might a believer's good works point others to Jesus? How can a believer communicate his or her motive for doing good works in a way that honors God? (PSG, p. 118)

CONTEXTUALIZE: Review the key points of Understand the Context (p. 134; PSG, p. 119). Key points could include: Paul’s letter focused on encouraging Titus to remain diligent to the ministry as a preacher and to lead the people to godliness. In chapter 2, the call to diligence required him to rebuke false teachers and encourage holiness in the church. Now in chapter 3, Paul discussed the church’s behavior toward those outside the church.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Titus 3:1-2, as the group listens for actions Paul called on Titus to encourage.

STATE: Paul directed Titus to remind the Cretan believers to be ready to do good works, placing others above themselves. Use Pack Item 11 (Handout: Titus: A Snapshot) to emphasize how Titus had proven himself worthy of the leadership entrusted to him.

ASK: How is a believer’s good behavior connected to the gospel message? (PSG, p. 119)

EXPLAIN: Paul advocated believers demonstrate submission in relationship to those in authority as well as to those in relationship to them (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). As believers showed the evidence of their transformation through Christ, they could build bridges to others, conveying His amazing grace toward all people.

ASK: Why was it important for believers to submit to the authority of government? How does being a responsible citizen impact how others view Christians? (PSG, p. 120) How can the church build bridges for the gospel and remain distinct?

TRANSITION: Since we’re called to love others, we must remember what we were saved from so we can empathize with others.

READ: Direct someone to read Titus 3:3-7, prompting the group to add to Paul’s list of encouragements to Titus.

STATE: Paul contrasted the believer before and after conversion. He emphasized that salvation is not based on works but on God’s mercy received through faith in Jesus. Call on a volunteer to write on a board as you reread the passage. Direct that person to record (1) the characteristics of someone before coming to Christ and (2) the characteristics of a person after becoming a Christian.
CONTRAST: Reread verse 3 to the group and stop at the conjunction of “But.” Explain how this is a description of the state of everyone “before Christ.” Then read the remainder of the passage (vv. 4-7) to emphasize the difference that comes from the mercy of God being applied to the believer because of Christ.

HIGHLIGHT: Verse 5 is a key verse that explicitly states how salvation is not about works but the mercy of God.

ASK: How would you describe the difference between doing good works to gain salvation and doing good works because one has been granted salvation? (PSG, p. 123)

EMPHASIZE: We are not called to do good things to be saved; rather, we do good things because we are saved and seek for others to know Jesus.

TRANSITION: For us as believers, there’s a purpose in good works that can help to further the gospel.

READ: Instruct a volunteer to read Titus 3:8-11, and add the remainder of Paul’s encouraging actions from these verses to the board.

STATE: Paul explained that good works, not debates and arguments, should characterize the believer’s behavior. The person who focuses on doing good works for God’s honor will not have time to get involved in wasteful debates and arguments.

CONTRAST: Review verses 8 and 9, highlighting what things Paul said are profitable and what things are unprofitable.

ASK: How might engaging with quarrels and controversies over trivialities get in the way of living out the gospel and honoring God through our works? (PSG, p. 125) From what Paul stated, when is the proper time to show grace to someone who is indifferent? When is the time to show godly discipline to that fellow believer?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

SHARE: Lead the group to share with a neighbor something from today’s study that gives them encouragement to demonstrate their faith through godly actions.

RESPOND: Present the Key Doctrine found on page 124 of the PSG (Justification): Justification is God’s gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ (Rom. 3:23-25). Allow time for silent reflection. Encourage the group to prayerfully consider where God is calling them to provide for someone in need.

CHALLENGE: Direct the group to the second question set under In My Context in the PSG (p. 126): Reflect on Titus 3:14 and the difference Christ has made in your life. How does your faith in Christ help you live a productive life? Memorize the verse.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God that through His Son we can demonstrate our faith through godly actions and bring honor to Him.
PRACTICE

- During the week, challenge the group to do a good work for someone and encourage them to couple it with the gospel. Ask for reflection of the difference it made in seeking and sharing the gospel versus just simply doing something good for someone.
- Spend time praying specifically for the needs of your group.

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

To supplement Focus Attention, encourage participants to provide comparisons of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus as far as content and emphases. Use Pack Item 2 (Outlines of 1,2 Timothy; Titus) as a guide.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

- To supplement the teaching of Titus 3:5, direct the group to review the information on the inside front cover of the PSG. Emphasize that salvation comes through belief in Jesus alone and can't be earned through works.
- To supplement the teaching of Titus 3:10, lead the group to compare Paul’s encouragement to Titus with the discipline measures provided by Jesus in Matthew 18.
- For further application of Titus 3:8-11, review Pack Item 9 (Handout: Models of Church Structure). Discuss ways your group can further support the leaders in your church in maintaining unity. Decide what specific actions need to be taken and commit to following through on them.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

Direct the group to the third question set under In My Context in the PSG (p. 126): Discuss as a group ways of honoring God through addressing a need in your community. Identify steps the group can take to begin to address that need.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA

Read the lyrics to the song, “In Christ Alone (My Hope Is Found),” by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, to emphasize how salvation is available to us through the work of Christ.