

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of February 16th - 22nd

Getting Started

1. If you were a church attender before becoming a follower of Christ, do you have an experience of what it was like to move from the mindset of 'going to church' to 'being the church'? If so, please share with the group.

Digging Deeper

2. In Article 7 of our Evangelical Free Church of America Statement of Faith, we affirm that: "The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers." 1 Let's think about that all-important word "should". How do you interpret its meaning? What's implied here? What's the benefit of getting this goal right? On the other hand, what's the corresponding loss when we get it wrong?

Open Your Bible to Titus 1:4...

3. Sir William Ramsay calls Titus "the most enigmatic figure in early Christian history." 2 Including the Letter from Paul to Titus, this man's name is mentioned a dozen times across the pages of the New Testament. Take a moment to survey the biblical portrait of Titus (2 Corinthians 2:12; 7:6-7, 13-14; 8:6; 8:16, 23; 12:18; Galatians 2:1, 3 and 2 Timothy 4:10). What clues do we draw about who Titus is and why he is so important in the early church?

4. In 1:4, Paul refers to Titus as "my true child". It's a striking image for a man who had no legal children of his own. Why does he refer to Titus this way? Fascinatingly, we find this sort of language is pervasive in Paul's epistles (see Galatians 4:10; Philemon 10; 1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 5:1; 2 Timothy 1:2; 2:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8; 11-12). Has the Lord given you the opportunity to be a spiritual father or mother to another believer? Is there anyone that you regard as your spiritual parent? Explain.

5. How does thinking of those on your 'List of 5' as future members of the family motivate you as it relates to evangelism? The lost people around us aren't simply 'non-Christians', many of them are God's elect (Titus 1:2) and predestined for adoption through Jesus (Ephesians 1:5). What sort of practical encouragement is this meant to be for us as we pursue our 2025 Vision?

6. Moreover, we read in 1:4 that Paul calls Titus "my true child in a common faith". In other words, Paul's language of spiritual parenting is tempered with the declaration that both he and Titus find themselves on level ground at the cross of Christ. Recalling that Paul is a circumcised Jew and Titus an uncircumcised Greek (Galatians 2:1-4; 3:7-9, 14, 26-29), not to mention that there were false teachers on the island of Crete who would have dismissed Titus's authority out of hand for this very reason (Titus 1:10-11; 3:9-10), why do you suspect these words from Paul would have been such medicine for his soul in the midst of the mission?

1 <https://www.efca.org/resources/document/efca-statement-faith> . Accessed 2/14/20 @ 11am.

2 Quoted in John R.W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*. InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL. 1996. p.170.

7. There is much discussion these days in the broader culture (and increasingly in the church) about the importance of one's identity (particularly of those who are perceived as oppressed – whether women, ethnic minorities, or LGBTQ+ persons). How does the New Testament treat the issue of gender, ethnic, or sexual identity in the new community of the church? Though we will seek to address the issues of critical theory and social justice at great depth later this year, what sort of help do we begin to glean from passages like Titus 1:4, Galatians 3:28 or Ephesians 2:11-22?

8. John Piper has helpfully pointed out that each of the letters of the Apostle Paul (without exception) begin with the phrase “grace to you” and they end with the phrase “grace with you”.³ This holds true in Titus, and we see the pattern 26 times in all 13 of his letters. Why? What's the explanation for Paul's carefully-chosen prepositions in each case? Discuss your answers as a group. Then, using the link below, take a look at Piper's explanation of his discovery and be encouraged!

Sermon Notes for 2/16/20
Titus 1:4
“Partners & Fellow Workers in the Mission”

Our mission is massive and our vision is vast...we cannot accomplish it alone - therefore God drives us together

Welcoming 75 newly baptized covenant members by January 2025 is **absolutely impossible, unless we...*

1. View God's elect as our _____ (vv.4a, 1b; John 6:37; Acts 13:48; 18:9-20; Eph. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:10)

2. Believe that in Christ we stand on _____ (v.4b; Galatians 2:1-4; 3:7-9, 14, 26-29; Ephesians 2:11-22)

3. Call upon the Lord for his _____ (v.4c)

Next Week: Titus 1:5-6 - “Elders on Mission, Part 1”