

TITUS

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THE PATH TO GODLINESS



7 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



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The Path to Godliness

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» HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE STUDIES

1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

Interactive Bible Studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. They take you through a particular part of the Bible, helping you to know where to start, pointing out things along the way, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and making sure that you know how to get home. Like any good tour, the real purpose is to allow you to go exploring for yourself—to dive in, have a good look around, and discover for yourself the riches that God's word has in store.

In other words, these studies aim to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do plenty of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of 'interaction'—interaction with the Bible, with the things we've written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

2. The format

Each study contains five main components:

- short sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge
- a set of numbered study questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning
- sidebars that provide extra bits of background or optional extra study ideas, especially regarding other relevant parts of the Bible
- an ‘Implications’ section that helps you think about what this passage means for you and your life today
- suggestions for thanksgiving and prayer as you close.

3. How to use these studies on your own

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- In the first study, you will read right through Titus to get a feel for its overall content and background. This would be a worthwhile thing to do before each of the remaining studies as well. We won’t be studying Titus in verse-by-verse order, so reading it right through before each study will help to keep the flow of the letter in your mind (and it won’t take long to read with such a short book).
- Work through the study, reading the text, answering the questions about the Bible passage, and exploring the sidebars as you have time.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the ‘Implications’ and ‘Give thanks and pray’ sections at the end. It is important that we not only hear and understand God’s word, but respond to it. These closing sections help us do that.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you’ve learnt.

4. How to use these studies in a small group

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and triplets. Get together with a friend or friends and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don't need the formal structure of a 'group' to gain maximum benefit.
- For small groups, it is *very useful* if group members can work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how sidetracked you get!) if all the members have done some work in advance.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining the sections of text to emphasize and read out loud, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- If your group members usually don't work through the study in advance, it's extra important that the leader prepares which parts to concentrate on, and which parts to glide past more quickly. In particular, the leader will need to select which of the 'Implications' to focus on.
- We haven't included an 'answer guide' to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the Bible, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

5. Bible translation

Previous studies in our Interactive Bible Study series have assumed that most readers would be using the New International Version of the Bible. However, since the release of the English Standard Version in 2001, many have switched to the ESV for study purposes. For this reason, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.

» STUDY 1

A HELICOPTER JOY-RIDE

[OVERVIEW]

TUCKED DOWN AT THE BACK OF the New Testament, sandwiched between Paul's letters to Timothy and the book of Hebrews, is Paul's short letter to his friend Titus. For many of us it's a book we don't study often, and when we do, it's a bit difficult to know how to apply—there is a lot of very personal and specific guidance for Titus and his situation is very different to ours.

In another sense, however, Titus and his mates were not so different from us at all. They struggled with immorality and error among Christian leaders; they strived to live a consistently Christian life in a world hostile to the gospel; they needed encouraging about the basis and motivation of their lives as well as detailed teaching about behaviour. In other words, though their physical and cultural circumstances were quite

different, their spiritual lives were very similar to our own.

The book of Titus lays before us a *path to godliness*. Though addressed to special circumstances, it gives us some general principles about what godliness is and how we can attain it. We need this teaching now as much as they did then.

Before we look at Paul's letter in detail, we need to take a helicopter ride over it. In this first study, we'll look at some of the surrounding territory (the background information), read Titus right through, and get a feel for its contents and shape.

The story so far ...

One good thing about the background to Titus is that it's easy to become an expert. There's not a lot to know. Titus

(the man) is not mentioned in Acts, although his name pops up in Paul's other letters as a faithful and honest fellow-worker (e.g. 2 Cor 8:16-23, 12:18). We don't know very much about how Titus came to be in Crete, nor how the gospel first came to be preached there

(Paul passed by the island on his way to Rome).

All the solid information we have about the circumstances in Crete and Paul's reasons for writing are contained in the letter itself—so let's read Titus, shall we?

Read Titus 1-3.

Read the following questions and then read right through Titus, answering the questions as you go.

1. What do we learn about the character of the church in Crete:

- the make up of the congregation?
- the past history of the congregation?
- the natural character of the Cretan people?
- the way they became Christians?
- the things that were threatening them?

2. What do you learn about Titus and his role in the church?

3. What do you learn about Paul and his reason for writing?

Passing on the message

MANY FAMILIES HAVE FAMILY traditions or family heirlooms that are passed on from one generation to the next. Whether it is a secret family recipe or a precious piece of jewellery, every generation receives it both as a privilege but also as a duty—they know it will be their job to pass it on to their children one day.

Within the family of God, it is the truth of the gospel and the godly life that goes with it that is passed from one generation to the next. This is what lies behind Paul's letter to Titus (as well as his letters to Timothy). Paul is passionately concerned that the gospel be passed on to the next generation of Christians. People have been converted and churches have

been planted, but if the work is to continue and grow, then the next generation of leaders must be equipped to take over. The future of Christianity is at stake.

More than this, Paul sees that the true gospel—the gospel that has been entrusted to him by God (1:3)—is continually under threat, both from a hostile world and from false teachers. As we will discover in our next study, the appointment and behaviour of godly elders (or overseers) is a key element in countering this threat.

The same truth and gospel life that Paul wrote to Titus about are now being passed on to us. It involves a given body of 'sound doctrine', which is only properly understood if it is lived.

» Implications

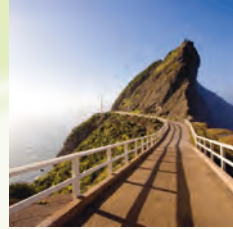
- What things bind us to the world of the first century? Based on your first reading of Titus, what things do we have in common with the Cretans?

- From your reading of Titus, have a stab at defining what Paul is passing on (in a couple of sentences).

» Give thanks and pray

- Give thanks that God has preserved the truth of the gospel in every generation, allowing it to reach us.
- Ask God to help you to understand the godly lifestyle that goes with the gospel and to live it faithfully so that you might hand on the truth to the next generation.

THE PATH TO GODLINESS



Down the centuries, Christians have suffered from the effects of two damaging (and opposite) problems.

On the one hand, there always seem to be people who impose rules and regulations for Christians to follow. On the other hand, there have always been 'Christians' who don't care about how they live, and who regard God's forgiveness as a blank cheque.

How can we avoid these problems and be motivated to live a life pleasing to God? If the idea of 'being godly' is attractive, how can we turn our vague yearning for it into reality?

In Paul's short letter to Titus, God reveals the path to true godliness. We are warned about false trails and given stirring encouragement about the source of true godliness, its motivation and the shape it will take. Titus is not a long letter, but it gives you a thorough working over.

Ideal for individuals and small study groups.

