

The Path to Godliness

Titus



**6 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
SMALL GROUPS & INDIVIDUALS**

The Path to Godliness

Titus

by Phillip D. Jensen
&
Tony Payne

The Path to Godliness

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How to make the most of these studies

1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

These ‘interactive’ Bible studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. The studies will take you through Paul’s letter to Titus, pointing out things along the way, filling in background details, and suggesting avenues for further exploration. But there is also time for you to do some sight-seeing of your own—to wander off, have a good look for yourself, and form your own conclusions.

In other words, we have designed these studies to fall half-way between a sermon and a set of unadorned Bible study questions. We want to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do a lot 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 sections of text to introduce, summarize, suggest and provoke. We’ve left plenty of room in the margins for you to jot comments and questions as you read.

Interspersed throughout the text are two styles of ‘interaction’, each with its own symbol:



Investigate

Questions to help you investigate key parts of the Bible.



Think it through

Questions to help you think through the implications of your discoveries and write down your own thoughts and reactions.

When you come to one of these symbols, you'll know that it's time to do some work of your own.

3. Suggestions for individual study

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in Titus and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it. You may be spurred to pray again at the end of the study.
- 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, following the directions as you go. Write in the spaces provided.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the *Think it through* sections. It is important to think about the sections of text (rather than just accepting them as true) and to ponder the implications for your life. Writing these things down is a very valuable way to get your thoughts working.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you've learnt.

4. Suggestions for group study

- 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 threesomes. Get together with a friend/s and work through them at your own pace. You don't need the formal structure of a 'group' to gain maximum benefit.
- It is vital that group members work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how side-tracked you get!), but only if all the members have done the work and are familiar with the material. You might also like to take up the suggestion (above) of reading right through Titus at the beginning of each study, depending on how much time you have.
- Spend most of the group time discussing the 'interactive' sections—*Investigate* and *Think it through*. Reading all the text together will take too long and should be unnecessary if the group members have done their preparation. You may wish to underline and read aloud particular paragraphs or sections of text that you think are important.
- 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 important sections of text to emphasize, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- 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 Titus, 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.

1

A helicopter joy-ride

Tucked down at the back of the New Testament, sandwiched between the well-known letters of Paul to Timothy and the equally well-known letter to the Hebrews, is Paul's short letter to his friend Titus. It is an obscure book to many Christians today, partly because we don't tend to study it very often, but also because we may be unsure how to apply such a personal and specific letter to our lives. Titus' circumstances were rather different from ours; the problems he faced and about which Paul wrote may seem foreign to us.

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 came to Crete in the first place (Paul passed by the island on his way to Rome).

All the solid information we have about the circumstances on Crete and Paul's reasons for writing are contained in the letter itself, and that is where we now turn.



Investigate

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 the ball

In the great rugby game of life, the Saints are playing the Demons. One of the Saints' star players (Paul) is being tackled and like any good footballer, he stands in the tackle and looks to offload the ball. He knows that if the Saints are going to continue to go forward, he can't afford to go down with the ball. He has to pass it.

The urgent need for the ball to be passed 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 which 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.

To return to our rugby metaphor, we are at the end of a long back-line, and to reach us the ball has passed through quite a few pairs of hands (about 20 lifetimes separate us from Paul and Titus). However, it is the *same ball* and in Paul's letter to Titus we see it being passed for the first time. We see the gospel as it has been entrusted to Paul by God and the godly lifestyle that must accompany it. We see a fixed, given body of 'sound doctrine' which is only properly understood if it is lived.



Think it through

1. 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?

2. From Titus, have a stab at defining what 'the ball' is that Paul is passing on (in a couple of sentences).