

Titus 2:1–2

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[0 : 0 0] Titus 2 verses 1 to 2. But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning and welcome as you're finding your seat. So good to have you here. I've decided to call this sermon, The Good That Can Come From Going Gray.

The Good That Can Come From Going Gray. Although looking at one of my elders, he might have wanted me to title it, The Beauty of Being in a Church Gone Bald.

I mean, just to take your pick. What do I want to argue from this text, brief as it is? It says simply this, A church worth joining has older men who are worthy of following.

A church worth joining has older men that are worthy of following. It was a year ago today that Lisa and I visited Florence, Italy for the first time.

[1 : 1 7] We saw the massive doors of entry to the Duomo, those gates just rising. And if you turn directly and then look beyond directly at the opposite side of the plaza, you see the gates of the Great Baptistery, which were designed, I'm told, by Ghiberto in about 1425.

These doors have 12 gold-plated panels of Old Testament scenes. The doors are all of bronze. They rise to 17 feet.

They're massive. And as we stood there looking at one and then turning and gazing at the other, I just began to think of the strength of the hinge that must support the weight of those doors.

Some of them were actually over 3,000 pounds each. The hinge that not only supported the weight of the door, but allowed it to swing effortlessly open where you and I can enter into rooms unseen.

I'm simply trying to say that there are times when the strength of a hinge can support the weight of work and allow entry into rooms unknown.

[2 : 4 4] This little letter has such a hinge, such a support verse, such a verse that holds all the weight of what has been said, and yet when you've opened it, brings you into the fullness of the letter.

And it's right there in chapter 2, verse 1. But as for you, preach or teach what accords with sound doctrine. This singular verse is strong enough and meant to point us as present-day readers back upon the weight that has been put forward.

That contrastive word, but, means that that verse is more likely connected to that which came before, even as it opens up to what is going to come.

But, as for you, Titus, teach what accords with sound doctrine. And so, with this morning's text, brief as it is, we find ourselves not in Florence, Italy, although you might want to be there on an October day, but we're on the threshold in the letter of opening up to the churches on the island of Crete, and we peer inside to see rooms yet unknown.

And what do we see? We see in the verses which come this week and next and the week after, older men milling about.

- [4 : 24] We're going to see next week both younger and older women training as they are a church worth joining.
- And then, so that they're not left out, the younger men get a week all to themselves there in the context of the church at Crete.
- My prayer is that over the next three Sundays, through these three imprinted visions of the churches in Crete, that Christ Church Chicago would become a church worth joining.
- That the older men would emulate what they see here. That our older and younger women would train for what we read here. That our younger men would be supported in what we read here.
- So that our church would be beautifully hung, swinging open to the world of that which is attractive in Christ. So, a church worth joining evidently has men, older men, who are worthy of following.
- [5 : 27] Who are these older men and what about them do we find admirable? Who are they?
- I looked this week into the government data of the United States to see who we consider to be older men.
- You're an older adult in the United States if you're age 65 or over. And then there's another report that actually divides the older men into further categories.
- You are young old if you're 65 to 74. You are middle old if you're 74 to 84.
- You are old old if you're tipping the scales at 85 plus. I suppose I should just state then that this sermon is a bit personal for me.
- [6 : 34] No, I'm not older yet. But according to the census, I'm on the cusp. When we started this church, I was 36. Just invert the numbers to find what I am today.
- Two years shy, according to the government, of being an older man. For years now, I've already been receiving the AARP cards in the mail.
- I've thrown them all away. I don't care about your discount because I don't want to be counted among you. So much for the U.S. government.
- You could also think in terms of who are the older men, who's considered an older man in our midst. From what I've been told, you start to really fall in your physical frame at age 50.
- The decline begins to move quickly. Perhaps there's many here then. This actually would go along with the idea later that we'll find next week.
- [7 : 41] Older women seem to have been further along, those that are married anyway, to having children that are kind of up and out for the most part because they're doubling down on younger women.
- Older men, by nature then, if they're married, would be of an age where their kids are high school and moving up and out.
- All of a sudden, all of a sudden, the strength of the number of men grows. But think of it this way, life expectancy. Recently, life expectancy in the United States has fallen for men in particular.
- Our life expectancy is now 73.6 years. It's not very long. Which would mean that you're middle age at age 36.
- So if you want to have a midlife crisis, don't call it that when you're 50. Mid-30s. You are already now moving. Or you could just say, like my title says, you've got some gray hair.
- [8 : 50] You've been around long enough to gain a distinctive look given the years you've lived. Or you've lived long enough to lose some things that you once had.

Isn't that right, Doug? You know, I get my hair cut on 57th Street. And for the last few years, I've said to my stylist, Esther, I'd sit down.

She'd say, what do you want to do? And I said, you know what I want to do, Esther, get rid of all the gray. And so for a couple years, she's been getting rid of all the gray. So a couple months ago, I'm in there. I sit down.

She says, what do you want? I said, you know, get rid of all the gray. She says, Dave, that's becoming impossible. Can any good come from going gray?

Older men. If you're 35, you're not young anymore. You're 50, you're well underway.

[9 : 57] You're over 65, everybody already calls you old. That's just the way it is. What is it about older men that we should treasure if we are going to be a church worth emulating?

If Christ Church Chicago, with the doors open and the older men milling about, exemplify certain characteristics, why would anyone want to say, that's where I need to be?

Here they are. Let me signpost it for you. There are three traits in these verses which stand on their own. They're right there in the first half of verse two.

Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, and self-controlled. Three standalone characteristics, followed by a triad of interconnected terms.

They are sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Love, faith, and this persevering manifestation of hope or steadfastness.

[11 : 11] Faith, hope, and love. These are men who are bound together around those characteristics. It's what holds them. Externally, they look a particular way.

Internally, they have the internal characteristics of men of faith, men of hope, men of love. So what does it mean?

To be an older man in a church worth joining, we need you to be sober-minded. It can be defined exactly as it reads.

Sober. Not drunk. Not buzzed. Not buzzed. In your right mind. Older men are to be sober-minded.

Data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health in our country indicate that approximately 20% of adults age 60 to 64 and over 12% over age 65 report current binge drinking.

[12 : 21] That's a pretty high number. One in every five of my own age category still currently binge drinking.

No longer 18, but 60s. And let's talk about the untold pain that comes from a disordered life as it relates to alcohol.

You don't got to be old to know this. Some of you have been raised in families that could speak of the untold pain that came from the older men in your family who succumbed to alcohol and therefore brought your own life and upbringing up through financial ruin on one end, family breakdown, and isolation on another end.

They are leading causes. Alcohol is a leading cause of the breakdown in a family, of growing up with alcoholic fathers. So many, even in our midst, walked in the doors and had to already gauge, what am I dealing with today so that I can navigate in a way where I don't have to mess with their mess?

Think about that then. Churches worth joining have older men worthy of following. And to be one who is worthy of following, you have to be sober-minded.

[13 : 53] Once we begin to take in too much alcohol into our bloodstream, our behavior changes, our body functions change. We might at first feel happy.

You might feel that the problems of the day are deadened and gone away. But soon you're slurring your words. Anger emerges. Abuse occurs.

Violence happens. Families are disordered. Cancer comes. Liver is damaged. Forgetfulness is there. Confusion is there.

Who among us has not seen the painful effects of older men who have had too much to drink? It's not a pretty sight. Fortunately, there are some positive signs among the younger in our midst.

Interestingly, from what I can read and tell, many in the younger generation, is it Gen Z? Is that what we are now? I don't know what you are when you're under 27.

[14 : 53] We'll get another number or letter. I guess they're letters, aren't they? Yeah, we'll get another letter soon. 41% of Americans are already trying to drink less on the backside of the isolation of COVID.

That's a good sign. If you want an investment strategy, I hear the mocktail business is going great because younger people are going non-alcoholic. These are all encouraging things.

But many of you that are younger, even in the coming week or two, are going to emerge in context where the alcohol is flowing, where a resident head has to be called because a friend has actually been hauled off to Bernard Mitchell.

They fell and cut themselves or they just were completely out of it. And all of a sudden, the whole context of a room, a dorm, a frat, a sorority is already dealing at the tender age of people with alcohol problems.

If you want to be a church we're joining, Paul says to Titus, as the doors open to the churches in Crete and as our doors are opened, if you're an older man in our midst, we need you to be sober in your right mind.

[16 : 09] Now, let's just qualify that because we know that the church should be filled with people who are recovering alcoholics. But you've got to get a hold of it.

This is very important to the Christian community because our family structures need to be healthy. They can't be healthy if we're not healthy. How do we do that?

Well, we're going to need help. If you need help in this area, then come and talk to us because we're here to help.

There's too much at stake. Not only that, not only is a church worth joining, one that has older men who are sober-minded, which I charge us to be, but they are also dignified.

Do you see that there? Standalone term, dignified. Now, we talk a lot today in this country about human dignity, and this is true. By nature, if you are a human, you have dignity.

[17 : 20] You have dignity because you were made in the image of God. The term here is not talking about that kind of dignity which you are endowed with just by nature of who you are.

It's talking about acting in such a way as others will deem you to be respectable. To be dignified is something you acquire. You acquire dignity by living a life that others would say is worthy.

Just as we gather today under Bing's call to worship to praise God because he's worthy. We need all the older men in our midst to be worthy of following, and that means you conduct yourselves with a constitutional makeup that is upright, balanced, dignified.

I think it's a wonderful word. It's to be in possession of a certain gravitas. It's to wear the mantle of being seen.

You know, there are a lot of men out there, but that's a man among men. That kind of dignity. A dignified man, and I'm sure I'm going to short the list, but a dignified man acts his age.

[18 : 43] A dignified man dresses appropriately. A dignified man carries himself honorably.

I mean, how do you take the measure of a dignified man? A dignified man, his speech is healthy and restrained. I mean, come on.

You ever been around family? I'm getting to the age where I'm scaring myself. Because I've been in a lot of rooms where older men say stuff, and you're like, what just came out of his mouth?

I mean, what is it about older men that they think they can say whatever comes into their brain? They've just offended an entire room, and it's almost as though they act like they didn't know they were doing it, but inside you get the sense that they knew exactly what they were doing.

Older men control their tongue. Older men don't say everything that comes into their mind. Older men are dignified.

[19 : 49] Older men carry themselves honorably. How do you take the measure of a man? Leonardo da Vinci, he did just that.

Great master of the Renaissance. An artist who, and more than an artist, but if you don't know who he was, he did the Mona Lisa.

He did the Last Supper. Enough said. But he was really interested in the late 1400s with human anatomy.

And in particular, he took the measure of a man. He began to think about the proportion of the person that he could then convey that on canvas.

This is one of the things he writes. He did 40 drawings on the human body. He devoted 6,000 words to what he was learning about taking the measure of a man.

[20 : 53] Listen to this description. Fascinating. Quoted now from Walter Isaacson's biography of him. Quote, The space between the mouth and the base of the nose is one-seventh of the face, he wrote.

The space from the mouth to the bottom of the chin is one-fourth of the face, and equal to the width of the mouth. The space from the chin to the base of the nose is one-third of the face, and equal to the length of the nose and to the forehead.

End quote. Who observes these things? But the great master who could portray humans on canvas as though they were glorified with all the dignity that God had endowed them with.

He took the measure of a man with the smallest of observations. Older men, do that with your own life. Measure the sobriety of your habits.

Measure the dignity of your patterns. And then third, be self-controlled. There it is. Self-controlled.

[22 : 07] What does this mean? It means to be in one's right mind. It means in one sense, older men have good judgment. Every older man in our midst needs to be a man who has good judgment.

If they say it, you should be able to trust it. Not only because of their life experience, but because of the rational, reasonable support that they can bring to it.

You need advice in life, you should be able to ask any older man in our midst. See, this is why the Bible talks about wisdom comes with gray hair.

It doesn't mean that everyone with gray hair is wise. But to the ones who are worthy of following, they're drawing on decades of experiential knowledge, both good and bad.

Isn't that what we learn even from the writer to the Proverbs? I chased a lot of things when I was your age, he says. But now I'm old, and let me lay down for you what you need, the fear of the Lord being the first thing among them.

- [23 : 16] This is what you have to do. You've got to be self-controlled. You've got to be clear-headed. It's the opposite of being a madman. Paul one day was talking to political leaders, and one of them, as he was explaining the gospel to the leader, the leader says, hey, man, you're out of your mind.

Paul said, I'm not out of my mind. I'm self-controlled. I'm in my right mind. In fact, he goes on to say, the words I'm giving to you are both true and rational.

That's what we need older men in our midst to do, to speak words that are true and reasonable, that make sense. There's nothing more pathetic than seeing an older man who lacks self-control, my opinion.

It's a pathetic sight to see an older man who ought to know better, nevertheless grasping for the fading flower of all the things in life that he knows he once enjoyed but didn't benefit him at all.

We need men, then, who are at Christ Church Chicago that are sober-minded, dignified, and self-controlled.

- [24 : 34] Take the measure of the man. Now, look at the text. Those three freestanding traits are bound together by three interdependent characteristics.

And we know that these three move together because the word in comes with all of them in the original text, as it does in our translation. They are sound in faith, in love, in steadfastness.

They are sound in this interrelationship between faith, love, and steadfastness really means perseverance, and perseverance really is the external manifestation of someone who has hope.

These are what bind the man. Faith, hope, and love. But notice it says he's sound.

This is an interesting word. We've already seen it in the text earlier this series. It's a word that generally is used to describe one's physical health. You go to the doctor, you're sound.

- [25 : 49] Sound is in the physical realm tied to one's material condition. But here, this word which normally talks about physical health is a metaphor for your internal spiritual health.

He's sound, he's well, he's healthy in faith, in love, in perseverance. The idea is, for older men, and I count myself among them, I told you it's personal, is that while on the physical plane of life, we begin to show signs of depletion, the internal constitutional makeup of our soul can be and should be as sound and healthy and well as when we were young.

It's beautiful, isn't it? I don't know if you've heard of the three D's of aging. Fortunately, we have such a young congregation, you won't come on to this for a few years, but just hit play on this sermon 30 years from now.

The three D's of aging, skin deterioration, facial deflation, and then facial descent. I mean, what a way to put it. Skin deterioration, age spots, facial deflation.

That's just deflating thinking about it. Do you know, and this isn't just a matter of being hydrated. If I pinch my flesh there, I'll tell you when it finally comes back to normal.

- [27 : 36] But on the inside, come on. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being relaxed.

Revived, renewed, day by day. That ought to be the calling card of the older men in our midst. So that, so that as the gate begins to change, as the face begins to fall, as the irretrievable middle seems to settle, I'm telling you all, because this happens, I was an athlete once.

I was an athlete once. On the inside, I ought to be as alive and healthier than ever.

And I ought to be alive in faith. We need older men who have strong faith in this city. I'm talking about men who know the faith, who could explain the faith, who could defend the faith, who could refute.

That is not the faith. We need men who are learning always, growing. If you are in our midst and not a Christian and you're in your 40s today and you come to Christ today, when you're 60, you ought to be sound in faith.

[29 : 02] We ought to be a healthy family because of your pursuit of faith. You ought to be more trusting than you were earlier. We ought to be more faithful in our behavior than we were earlier.

Our fidelity to the gospel and obedience should be rising as the faith that we understand is actually made known to us. That's what we want.

I want the internal soul, the constitutional makeup of the older men in this congregation to be sound, healthy, well. You know, the body is an interesting thing.

Externally, you can almost, I mean, we're almost impervious to real injury. I mean, you get cut, it'll heal itself. You break a bone, it's amazing how it can recover.

But the real problem with the health is when the internal organs are internally a mess. And therefore, it's the hidden things that we actually can determine whether we're good or not good.

[30 : 04] You need to keep your insides good men, that's what I'm saying. You need to eat spiritual food. You need to desist from things that undermine your faith.

You need to be sound, not only in faith, but you need to be sound in love. I mean, you just think of that great chapter, love is patient, kind. It's not easily offended.

We shouldn't have any older man in our midst who's easily offended. We ought to have older men who believe the best, hope the best. Do you know, the people that believe in you are the people that influence you the most.

And every older man in our midst, if you're younger in our midst, you ought to say, I'm in a church where they believe in me. They believe in me. It's a sign of his love.

This we ought to be. We ought to have men that are still exhibiting a genuine love for others, still helping, still serving, still giving, still extending.

[31 : 10] You know, there was an older man in the church I used to serve at. He was in his like 70s at the time. He volunteered in the nursery. I always found that stunning. This man ran a multi-million dollar corporation.

And on Sunday morning, you'd find him holding an infant, singing to them, Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so. Sound in love.

Not on the sidelines. Engaged. Sound in love. Beautiful pictures. My dad is now 91.

I'll never forget what he said to me on his birthday when he turned 80. I said, Dad, you're 80. What do you have to say for yourself? David, I want my 80s to be more productive for the gospel than my previous seven decades combined.

You know. Okay, Dad. He's 91. Still sound.

[32 : 26] In love. And, miraculously, he's still got his car keys. At any rate, let's keep going. Sound in faith, sound in love, sound in steadfastness.

The idea of steadfastness here is perseverance. The idea is really, what's implied here is, in the face of adversity, they're still there. How are you handling adversity?

adversity as an older man. I mean, this is really an interesting thing. Older men who are worthy of following are men who keep going joyfully into the headwinds of life's adversity.

They're still there. They never checked out. Still doing it. I just got back from London visiting a friend and celebrated his 99th birthday.

I think I've said this to you. You know you're getting old when your friends are 99. By the way, he's in the category of old, old. And let me remind you, I'm not yet in the category of young, old.

[33 : 46] Still there. Still engaged. Still asking me how's the gospel going. Tell me a great story about what Jesus is doing.

Persevering all through adversity. This is the good that can come from going gray. These are the kind of men we need in our midst.

Men worth following. Make the church worth joining. I am calling today on older men. And let me reach down as far as I can to the present life expectancy of 35 or older to already be walking toward the exemplary manifestation of these three singular traits bound in the triad of the interwoven thoughts of faith, hope, and love.

I'm calling on you to make us great. And if you fail, it affects the faith and the family as a whole.

So take the measure of the man. it's old, so old that none of you would know it so I can't really sing it.

[35 : 16] Not even sure Joe Pace is old enough to play it. But there's an old one. Rise up, O men of God, have done with lesser things one heart and mind and soul and strength to serve the King of Kings.

Rise up, O men of God, the church for you doth wait. Her strength unequal to her task. Rise up and make her great.

Well, if you sat here this morning and thought, well, that didn't have anything to say to me, well, see you next week. We can talk to the women, both younger and older. And come the next week and bring your friends.

Because we talk to the younger men. then. You know, when I got back from Italy and with this I'm done, I was often asked, what was your favorite thing?

And for me it was just this. Sitting around and watching older men in conversation. I loved it. I'm beginning to see that and love that here.

[36 : 29] I'll come in the foyer on a Sunday morning. It's like the older men have taken over the south side. Have you seen that up there? It's like a diner. I hope we get so many older men in here that enjoy milling about and being in conversation that the face of the congregation begins to say, what have you been through?

Tell me about Jesus. How do I follow the path? Where did you go off the rails? How did you get back on? love you.

Because this family needs to be seasoned and upright and strong. Our Heavenly Father, we now are going to go to the Lord's table because in Christ we have power to do the things you command.

hand. And so I pray that as we confess our sins and as we prepare to take this supper, your spirit would empower not just the older men but us all to love you well.

In Christ's name, Amen. Amen.