

“GOOD TEACHING = GOOD LIVING!”
by Rom A. Pegram (7/24/16)

For Father’s Day & for my birthday, one year, my son Josh bought me a print of one of my heroes—one of those who has been a role-model to me, even posthumously... His name is VINCE LOMBARDI. I love football. I don’t mind saying that I’ve been a Green Bay Packer fan ever since the 60s when I’d go down to the Ford dealership in South Wayne and pick up a copy of the Packer Yearbook. But, folks, Vince Lombardi is one of my role-models in life, because ... *he lived what he said he believed*. He never asked his players to do anything ... or live in any way ... other than the way he was willing to live himself! “Lights out at 10 PM!” Well, that went for the coaches, too...

And, I’ve always thought of pastors as ‘coaches’—life coaches or spiritual coaches, if you will. But, you’ll be happy to know, Vince Lombardi hasn’t been my only role-model in that area...

There’s another role-model of mine that we’re going to hear from today ... and he’s known as ... the Apostle Paul. Listen now to how Paul ‘coaches’ that young pastor, Titus, who is busy laying a Christian foundation on Crete. He talks to him about the importance of *good teaching* ... or being a ‘role model.’ Listen (Titus 2:1-15, NLT):

As for you, Titus, promote the kind of living that reflects wholesome teaching.

² Teach the older men to exercise self-control, to be worthy of respect, and to live wisely. They must have sound faith and be filled with love and patience. ³ Similarly, teach the older women to live in a way that honors God. They must not slander others or be heavy drinkers. Instead, they should teach others what is good.

⁴ These older women must train the younger women to love their husbands and their children, ⁵ to live wisely and be pure, to work in their homes, to do good, and to be submissive to their husbands. Then they will not bring shame on the word of God.

⁶ In the same way, encourage the young men to live wisely. ⁷ And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching. ⁸ Teach the truth so that your teaching can’t be criticized. Then those who oppose us will be ashamed and have nothing bad to say about us.

⁹ Slaves must always obey their masters and do their best to please them. They must not talk back ¹⁰ or steal, but must show themselves to be entirely trustworthy and good. Then they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive in every way.

¹¹ For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. ¹² And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, ¹³ while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

will be revealed. ¹⁴ He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.

¹⁵ You must teach these things and encourage the believers to do them. You have the authority to correct them when necessary, so don't let anyone disregard what you say.

Folks, the bottom line? If you're going to build a strong foundation for a community in Christ, you've got to have good role models! You've got to have good teaching (good=Godly; goodbye=God be with you)! So, we've got to have 'good' or 'Godly' teaching! *Why?* Because good teaching = good living—being that community of believers that Christ has called us to be. *Living out God's very best for our lives ...* only comes by way of being taught how to do so... There's the *why*; now, *how* do we go about this?

Well, Paul begins by speaking to Titus about those who make up *family circles* (small groups)—older men and women, young men, young women, and servants. These were the folks who came together as community. But, *how* in the world was Titus, living in the midst of 'false teachers' and 'wild west' kind of folks, to build a foundation for community here on Crete? After all, *the Christian family was something new in this pagan world!* For one thing, *it was going to take some really good teaching*—some retraining of folks to begin to think with the 'mind of Christ' (instead of the mindset of their culture). And, *where* was Titus to begin? With the most basic of 'groups' in that culture—the family... And, that's probably a good place for us to start today, too ... with 'good' or 'Godly' teaching, in the family! ... *Good (Godly) living, folks, involves good (Godly) teaching in these areas...* We must seek to find:

GOODNESS IN MATURING... Verse 2, again, says, "Teach the older men to exercise self-control, to be worthy of respect, and to live wisely. They must have sound faith and be filled with love and patience." Goodness, as we go through a maturing process (getting older) in life, needs to be taught...

Hersey Davis Pegram was my paternal grandfather. (His mother died when he was 10 weeks old; his name probably would have been something else ... if she'd been alive!) My grandfather was loved and respected everywhere he went. For years, he worked for Cone Mills (textile) there in Greensboro, NC. My father remembers when he was working there—working his way through school—that the owners of Cone Mills would sometimes wander through the plants. More than once, they came through greeting people and when they got to my father, they would always say something like, "Are you Hersey Pegram's boy?" When my dad would respond in the affirmative, they'd comment, "He's a fine, fine man." Why? Because *Granddaddy always lived what he said he believed...*

In other words, someone's good teaching turned into good living in my grandfather's life! Someone taught him the way to live a good (Godly) life, like:

- *Self-control* – One of his favorite sayings was always, "Brother, if you can't say something good about someone, don't say anything at all!" He lived that...

- *Worthy of respect, living wisely* - My grandfather was a very quiet man ... and when he had something to say, it was usually worth listening to ... and people loved him and respected him!
- *Sound faith, filled with love & patience* – You’ve got to find a role-model (or be a role-model) like this, if we want to lay the foundation for Christian community that God wants us to here... That was my grandfather!

Verse 3 then goes on to tell us, “Similarly, teach the older women to live in a way that honors God. They must not slander others or be heavy drinkers. Instead, they should teach others what is good.” Men & women are wired differently; that’s how my dad always described our differences... Today, however, I’d like to share with you one of the strengths that women have (over men). The gift God has given women is how easy relational things come to them ... but when that gift is abused, we end up with what Paul is talking about here: We end up ‘bad-mouthing’ (slandering) those we are in relationship to, instead of treating them (and whatever situation we’re in with them) ... *with love & patience*. And, what happens if there’s *too much wine* involved? The ‘bad-mouthing’ (slander) usually gets worse. Paul was no dummy; he’d experienced this *in churches* before...

So, we need to find GOODNESS IN OUR MATURING PROCESS. Next, we need to find: **GOODNESS IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY...** Verses 4-5 explain: “These older women must train the younger women to love their husbands and their children, ⁵ to live wisely and be pure, to work in (*‘care for’ may be a better translation here*) their homes, to do good, and to be submissive to their husbands. Then they will not bring shame on the word of God.” The ‘submissive’ part, of course, Paul means as he taught in Ephesians 5:21, a ‘mutual submission’... Where do young women/mothers learn how to be Godly women/mothers? They learn it from those who have had *experience* in raising children with a Christian foundation. If we pay close attention, we begin to realize when we read Paul’s letter to Titus that:

- Every generation has an important role to play in the Community of Christ!
- Every gender has an important role to play in the Community of Christ!
- Every person on every step of the social ladder has an important role to play in the Community of Christ!

Most of these things were pretty radical for Paul’s day! Moving on, as we are about good teaching, we also need to find:

GOODNESS IN CHRISTIAN LEADERS... Verses 6-8 speak to this in saying, “In the same way, encourage the young men to live wisely. ⁷ And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching. ⁸ Teach the truth so that your teaching can’t be criticized. Then those who oppose us will be ashamed and have nothing bad to say about us.” Paul is talking to Titus (and other young leaders) here. Do you want to be a good role-model before your peers, Titus? Teach what is ‘above reproach’ (sound doctrine); then live a life that is ‘above reproach’ (sound or good or Godly living); that’s the way to do it!

And, finally, Paul encourages Titus to also teach ... **GOODNESS IN CHRISTIAN SLAVES.** Verses 9-10 round out the 'family circle': "Slaves must always obey their masters and do their best to please them. They must not talk back ¹⁰ or steal, but must show themselves to be entirely trustworthy and good. Then they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive in every way." Again, what Paul is doing here is referring to the 'family circle' of his day; that included 'servants' or 'slaves' (though it's not exactly what we picture from our history in this country). In short, if anyone in the 'family circle' was a follower of Christ, their life needed to witness to that fact; behavior does matter, if you want to lay a Christian foundation for community *anywhere*...

The theme of goodness in our lives—or good works—now becomes Paul's focus for the rest of the letter to Titus... Vv. 11-14 is Paul's doctrinal basis for goodness: In other words, *we should desire to live goodly (or Godly) lives, in gratitude for all that God has done for us*—namely giving his Son's life that we might have life with God ... forever!

As we lay a foundation for Christian community right here in Eastern Wisconsin, what is our behavior going to be like? Are we going to take our God-given responsibilities as role-models seriously? Are we going to live lives that no one can criticize, because we're living according to the standards of Christ? If we're going to lay a Christian foundation where we live, this is what needs to take place... Folks, this will be a community...

- Where people will live what they say they believe...
- Where every generation will have an important role to play in role-modeling and good (Godly) teaching to generations that follow...
- Where every person, regardless of gender or social status, will have an important role to play in laying this Christian foundation ... equally!

That's Jesus' kind of community! That's the kind of community that God wants to see right here where we live! Good (Godly) Teaching = Good (Godly) Living! God wants his very best for us ... and for our kids ... and for our grandkids. Let's be that kind of a church right here...