

Evangelizing Crete

Can you imagine living in Crete during the first century? According to **Titus 1:12**, the reputation of Cretans was that of “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This was during the rule of the Roman Empire. Immorality and idolatry were rampant; in fact, they often went together. The inside joke was that there were no wild animals on Crete, but the people made up for it. More than living there, can you imagine trying to evangelize Crete? Yet, that is exactly what Titus was to do and was to prepare the brethren there to do as he set things in order.

Notice the evangelistic overtones of Paul’s letter to Titus. In **Titus 1:9**, shepherds have their particular qualifications so they can rebuke those who contradict. The empty talkers of **Titus 1:10-11** needed to be silenced because they were upsetting whole families and turning them from the faith. Family members were to be taught how to behave, not just because it was the right thing to do, but also in order to keep God’s Word from being reviled (**Titus 2:5**). Titus was to behave properly so the opponent may be put to shame (**Titus 2:8**). Even slaves were to behave in godly ways so that the doctrine of God would be adorned properly; that is, so that those seeing how they behaved would see how great the doctrine of God is (**Titus 2:10**).

In this letter we see three keys to evangelizing a place like Crete. If these were the keys for Crete, I think they may be the keys for Brownsburg, Indiana, as well (or any other place, for that matter).

Key #1: Good living

In **Titus 2:1-10**, Paul told Titus to teach the brethren how to live. He talked about older men, older women, younger men, younger women. He even taught how slaves were to live. This was all about godly living. He said things like being sound in faith and in love, being sober-minded, reverent, pure, self-controlled, kind. This kind of living shows that Jesus is impacting us. He is changing us.

Key #2: Good working

In **Titus 2:14**, Paul said God has set us apart as His special people to do good works. Then again in **Titus 3:1**, he said we need to be prepared for every good work. Paul ends the letter in **Titus 3:14** saying, “And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works” (ESV). Certainly, participating in good work is a natural part of good living. But we should see this as a step further. Good living is about our attitudes and how we conduct our business. Good works is about specifically looking for ways to interact with others, helping them in their needs. This might include getting involved in organizations and associations that do “good works.” But more importantly this is about keeping your eyes open with your neighbors, friends, and co-workers, being involved in their lives and helping them. Whether it is just having them into your home as friends for a meal, helping with house repairs and yard clean up, bringing food when they are sick, or sending notes of encouragement, good works in the lives of others open doors for the third key.

Key #3: Good teaching

In **Titus 1:10-14**, Paul explains that bad teaching doesn’t help. It causes people to turn from the truth. Rather, we need folks who will pass on the good teaching of Jesus’ gospel. We must use sound speech that cannot be condemned (**Titus 2:8**). Like Titus, we must teach what accords with sound doctrine (**Titus 2:1**). We need to avoid foolish controversies and quarrels (**Titus 3:9**), but instead teach God’s good news. You and I can do this. This isn’t about having a 10-part Bible study series to teach people everything they ever need to know or answer every Bible question they ever need to answer. It means being able to take people to God’s Word showing them how He has helped you through it.

This is the kind of evangelizing we can all do. Live right. Be involved in the lives of others with good works. Figure out what you will say to them about Jesus and His Word in your life and theirs. By the way, if you get to that point of teaching and feel uncomfortable, give me a call. I’ll be happy to meet with you and your friends any time to talk about Jesus and His will. Just let them know you have a friend that you study with from time to time and let’s get the time set up.

Let’s all make sure we are working in these three keys. If it could evangelize Crete, it can evangelize Brownsburg.

—Edwin L. Crozier