

Relational Wisdom

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0 : 00] We're reading from Titus chapter 2. The passage Pastor Jason is preaching from Titus 2.

! And I'll read verses 11 to the end and then one verse in chapter 3. Titus 2 and verse 11.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

These then are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you. And then chapter 3 and verse 14.

Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.

[1 : 27] This is the word that revives the soul. May it have that effect in all of our hearts tonight.

Pastor Jason. When you wake up in the morning and you swing your feet out onto the floor right away or maybe you do what I do and you just lie there and you think about things for a little bit, what are you thinking about?

When you're getting dressed and you're putting the coffee on, what kind of thoughts are going through your head? What are you thinking about? Or you're driving to work.

You're getting things around. Who, what is on your mind? Hopefully you're going in three directions. Hopefully not all at once. But at least those three directions are interwoven. So first, I hope you're thinking something about yourself. What you need to get yourself to do.

How you're feeling. How you're going to manage yourself. Maybe doing some self-examination. Where's my heart at? What am I worried about? What am I excited about today? What has me concerned?

[2 : 41] Hopefully you're thinking about others. Those other people in your family. Those other people in your life. Other people at church. Other people in your neighborhood. We all live with people.

The fact that you're right here, right now, says you're a part of a group of people. And you live with them. And hopefully through all of this, last but not least, I hope you're thinking about God.

Am I close to him? Am I far away from him? Am I humbly walking with him? Humbly obeying him? Humbly believing him? Or am I carelessly ignoring him? We can be in all sorts of frames of mind as we go through our days.

Where we're actively trusting. Actively obeying. Actively pursuing the Lord with zealousness. Or maybe we're just disobeying him.

[3 : 41] You see what I'm saying. Your whole life. My whole life. We live. We need to live.

Self-aware.

Others-aware. And God-aware. And not only aware that we are in this pattern of relationships. But we're actually engaged in those directions.

Engaged toward myself. Engaged towards others biblically. Engaged towards God. Our whole life fits into this paradigm.

Where we're other self-aware. Other-aware. God-aware. Self-engaged. Others-engaged. And God-engaged. Our whole life fits into that paradigm.

Now you know who. Most of you know who Ken Sandy is. He's the founder of Peacemaker Ministries. And he.

[4 : 43] And this is what I've just been telling you about being others engaged and God-engaged and others-aware, etc. That's what he calls relational wisdom.

Relational wisdom is really being aware of others biblically. Aware of God biblically. Aware of myself biblically. And engaged in each of those directions biblically.

And then giving them each person their due. And so really, it's about loving God. This relational wisdom that Ken Sandy talks about.

Loving God. And loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. Now, when I first heard that Ken Sandy left Peacemaker Ministries, I was thinking.

I was like, oh, the irony of this. But he did leave the ministry. But it was to start a new ministry.

There was nothing wrong at all with Peacemakers.

[5 : 37] He just wanted to focus in a different area. He was tired of coming into conflicts. Sort of behind the ball. Coming in when things were already bad.

And he wanted to get sort of upstream of these conflicts and these difficulties. And he wanted to start working in the area of teaching people how to live with each other.

How to prevent conflicts. How to live graciously and wisely with each other. And that's how he started this ministry called Relational Wisdom.

The thinking was that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. So let's get on preventing this. But this idea is not just about preventing conflict.

Although it is that. This is the whole Christian life. This is how we live the Christian life. In these three directions. Aware and engaged in these three directions.

[6 : 41] And this is what grace calls us to do. This is what grace teaches us to do. Teaches, disciplines, trains us to do.

You see that right in Titus chapter 2 verse 12. So what I've just been talking about is not just about what Ken Sandy thinks. This is what the grace of God does.

The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions. And positively to say yes to living, self-controlled, upright, and godly lives.

So grace teaches us to say no. There is a strong N-O. No.

Grace is very intolerant. Grace is intolerant of worldly passions. Grace is intolerant of ungodliness. It can't live with them as roommates.

[7 : 46] Have you ever had a roommate? Hopefully you haven't. But maybe you have a roommate that you could not get along. And it had to be you or them. That's the way grace and worldly passions and ungodliness are.

They can't live with each other. Grace won't let them get back in the door once grace is there. Or kids, you can think about it like this.

Would you live, or any of us, not necessarily just kids, but would you live with mice and snakes and big spiders in your house? You'd say no. The minute I see them, I'm getting them out.

I'm intolerant of that kind of thing living in my house. Well, grace is intolerant too. There's this big N-O, no, in the Christian life.

So, there is no. No. Godliness is more than just saying no, though.

[8 : 49] Godliness is more than just saying no to things. The sum of godliness can't be, you know, you don't drink, you don't dance, you don't chew, and you don't go with girls to do.

It has to be more than just saying no to things. Now, you know that at a basic level. But we can become so focused on not doing the things that we're not supposed to do, that we forget that the Christian life has a whole lot of things that we need to be saying yes to, positively.

That we need to be moving to doing a lot of good things. So, holiness, godliness, living a life that accords with the gospel is a lot more than not bearing bad fruit.

It's about bearing, or not bearing, yeah, not bearing bad fruit. It's about bearing good fruit. It's about bearing good fruit. So, not just no to ungodliness and worldly passions, but saying yes to what Paul is putting down here.

Yes to self-control. Yes to living upright with others. And yes to living godly toward God. Now, if we spent more time doing yes things, it would probably mean that we would have less time to do those things that we weren't supposed to do.

[10 : 12] It is a well-known homespun statement. Idle hands are the devil's workshop. Because it's true. People with too much time on their hands find it easy to do the things that they're not supposed to do.

But if we were to positively engage in the things that we were supposed to be doing, we'd find it easier to resist the things that we're not supposed to do. So, here's an illustration for you. And it seems apropos considering this season. You know, there are some kind of oak trees that they don't lose their leaves until the spring.

So, their leaves turn brown. They're dead on the branches. But they're still on the tree, hanging around, not going away. And they will stick there through the whole winter.

And only when, when those new buds from springtime come out, and they push those dead leaves out, do the leaves fall off the tree, and the green new leaves grow in their place.

[11:27] The old falls away when the new is growing. That is a picture of what the Christian life is. We can have a lot of dead things hanging around, and it's only when we positively engage in the positive that the old dead things fall off.

So, not just striving for the no, but striving for the yes. Now, striving in what? And this is where we're going to look at this verse here. It says, first of all, self-control.

Self-control. So, this has to do with me. How I'm managing myself. How I'm conducting my own behavior. The direction is us-ward, or towards myself.

It's positively, proactively, living sober, serious, thoughtful lives. It's not just about saying no to things.

It's about actively, seriously managing my life, directing my life, steering my life in a positive, God-honoring direction.

[12:34] So, what would you think of a company that only said no to bad ideas, but never said yes to good ideas? Well, it wouldn't be much of a company for very long, would it?

It wouldn't positively make any money. Well, imagine if you're the CEO of You Incorporated. How are you managing yourself?

Is it just about saying no to the bad ideas? Or are you saying yes to the good ideas? Are you steering yourself into the right things?

So, this is about your time. It's about your money. The positive use of your time. The positive use of your money. The positive use of your body for the right things.

It's about directing your mind into the Word of God. So, I am thinking God's thoughts after Him. Now, how did I get here?

[13:31] Because I proactively controlled myself, controlled my mind, and put my mind under God's mind, under God's Word. It's about directing your emotions to glorify God.

Everywhere in the Bible, it assumes that you have at least some control over your emotions. It says, rejoice in the Lord.

It's telling you to command your emotions to rejoice in the Lord. So, do you have control of your emotions? Or, are they sort of like the boat and the sails up and wherever the wind takes you is where you go?

That's not self-control. So, yes. Keep yourself.

Control yourself. In regard to things that you shouldn't be doing is definitely a part of self-control.

Saying no to things is definitely and certainly a part of self-control. James says, keep a tight rein on your tongue.

[14:41] There should be this, I'm controlling, I'm keeping back my tongue from saying the words that I initially want to say. I'm keeping a tight rein on it. But James says, if you can control your tongue, you can control everything about yourself.

The tongue is so powerful and so steering of a life that if you can control this tongue, then you can manage your whole life. So, yes, you want to keep your horse from falling in the ditch.

You want to keep a tight rein on your tongue. You want to keep the horse from falling into the ditch. But at the same time, you want to steer your horse, your words, your life, down the road in a positive direction.

That's what this self-control is about. Steering the horse down the path of righteousness. So, what falls into the world, the orbit of this self-control that we are to proactively and positively control our lives in that direction?

Well, everything that has gone before in Titus 2, I didn't read it tonight, but we have read the first 10 verses of Titus 2 multiple times.

[15:52] You know it. It speaks to each group. So, older women, take a hold of your life and steer it into this righteousness, into this life that accords to the gospel.

Well, like what? So, for older women, living reverently in the fear of the Lord, ladies, you don't just wait for that to happen.

Older ladies, you don't just wait for that to happen. You move yourself into the fear of the Lord. You control yourself.

You pray for that. You point yourself. You steer yourself in that direction. He says, no, not slandering. That's again, tight rein on your tongue. He says, he's talking about not drinking to excess.

And then he says, positively teach the younger women. Again, you shouldn't, older ladies, you can't be waiting for that to just drop in your lap. But this is what you are called to do positively.

[17:02] So you don't wait around for something magically to fall into your lap. You control yourself in that direction. You say, yes, I am going to teach the younger ladies. Now, that doesn't mean that you bowl straightforward without any sort of graciousness or wisdom, but it is saying you get ready for it.

You search for opportunities. You prepare yourself and then you engage in that. You commit to doing that good. And not just once, but more and more again and again.

And we could go through each group. We could talk to older men. We could talk to younger women. We could talk to younger men. But you know who you are. And you know what Titus 2 says to you in particular.

It's right there on the page. And so, here's your assignment. Here's the positive thing that God wants you to be doing. This is what he wants you to control and manage your life in this path of righteousness.

So, that's positive holiness where we are actively, positively directing ourselves into this. Again, I had Pastor John read Titus 3.14 because it says our people must learn to devote themselves to do what is good.

[18:24] The Christian life is not just about saying no to things. It is about actively saying being eager. 2.14 says Jesus redeemed us to be his own eager to do what is good.

So, we should be zealous, positively controlling ourselves, eager to do what is good. And so, again, this means being aware of ourselves.

So, knowing what's going on in here, knowing where we're strong, where we're weak, where God has called us, what God has called us to here and now, and engaging ourselves for God's glory, engaging ourselves in a biblical direction, that's self-control.

That's the first thing that we need to be saying yes to. Each and every one of us in our own particular way, we need to be saying yes to self-control. Now, secondly, we need to say yes to living upright lives.

and this word has reference to how we treat and how we behave toward others, towards those people around us. This is others facing, others aware, others engaged, doing what is right toward other people, other men, other women, other people in our lives, giving others their due, their rights.

[19:47] treating them and behaving in such a way towards them that God says this is the way, this is the standard for how you should treat this person.

Now, this again, resists the urge for us to get consumed with ourselves. Sometimes, I think we can get so intent on working on ourselves, consumed with ourselves, or working on our relationship toward God that we forget that the second greatest commandment is that we love others as we love ourselves.

So, as concerned as I am about myself, that's how seriously I am to take you. As concerned as I am about getting my rights and getting what is my due, I should be concerned with giving others their due.

So, husbands, do right by your wives. God has a standard of righteousness. The Lord, the Lord Jesus, your Lord, has told you this is how you are to treat your wife.

You are to love them, to not be harsh with them, to live with them in an understanding way. That's right. Living uprightly is then doing that. Not just knowing it, doing it.

[21:23] Treating her the way that you should treat her. That's what you owe her. You owe her honor and gentleness and respect. And grace teaches you to love your wives.

Wives, in the same way you need to do right by your husband. Again, wives, the Lord has a standard that says this then is how you should, this is the right way to treat your husband, your attitude toward him.

And so husbands, Jesus expects certain things from you and wives, Jesus expects other things from you. And when you engage in those activities, when you behave in such a way, you are living uprightly.

We could talk about parents to children or children to parents. We could talk about a lot of different relationships. But let's talk about what is upright living towards people here, towards our brothers and sisters here at Grace Fellowship Church.

Let's not talk about Christians in general, although that is true, but let's talk about us here. So what does living upright with each other look like?

[22 : 37] Again, this should be a positive, actively growing, where we're eager to do what is good direction in our life. And what does the Lord our God require of us?

Well, it's all those one another passages. All those one another passages that we find in the Bible. That's uprightness in the family of God.

So like what? Love one another. love one another. Be devoted to one another. Are you devoted to the people here?

Be devoted to one another. Honor one another above yourselves. Living uprightly with each other means that we honor each other. We lift each other up and we hold each other in high esteem.

Live in harmony with one another. Build up one another. Accept one another. Admonish one another. Greet one another. Care for one another. Serve for one another. Serve one another.

[23 : 40] Bear one another's burdens. Forgive one another. And I could go on. I could probably give you 20 more. But that's what we owe to each other.

That's living uprightly. And that's what grace teaches us to do. And those are the kind of things that we need to have a big yes to here. Where I'm not just worried about not doing the wrong things.

I am concerned with doing the right things. So eager to do what is good towards my brothers and sisters here. How about toward our government?

the Bible says that we owe them obedience and honor and taxes. That's not extracurricular.

That's standard righteousness. And we should be the best citizens, the best community members.

How about towards the poor, the disenfranchised, the victims of racist or illegal oppression toward those who don't have as much social capital as we do.

[25 : 07] What is upright living then? Well, come with me down to the Jordan River and we're going to meet a prophet. And so we're on a visit with John the Baptist.

And so I say, John, I want to repent. I want to be a part of the kingdom of God. What should I do?

And John answers, the man with two tunics should share with him who has none.

And the one who has food should do the same. That's Christianity 101. That's not master level Christianity.

what John is saying is grace the very minute it pierces our dead hearts should have an immediate impact on how I treat those who are less fortunate, less blessed, those who are poorer than I am, on those without.

Again, this isn't extra credit. This just shows that your heart has been changed, that now you're aware of others.

[26 : 18] You're sensitive to them. You're not a dead selfish sinner anymore. When Job sought to defend himself and his own uprightness, he said, I rescued the poor and the fatherless who had none to assist him.

I made the widow's heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing. What is his righteousness?

It's his concern for the poor, for the widow. I was a father to the needy.

I took up the case of the stranger. That means I took up the legal defense of the immigrant. If our only heart toward the immigrant is harsh condemnation of why are they here, and they broke the law getting here, if that's all we have in our heart, that doesn't measure up to God's heart.

God's love. And so yes, the Lord does talk about obeying the laws, but again and again he says, take care of those who are aliens and strangers because you were aliens and strangers in Egypt. and we are aliens and strangers here. Wasn't Boaz praised? And don't we praise him for the way he treated that Moabite immigrant, how he treated the poor.

[27 : 44] He let her glean in his field. He was extra generous with her. Why? Well, I think the bottom reason is because the Lord said in Deuteronomy, the gleanings belong to the poor.

And that's theirs. And the implication is is if you don't let them have it, if you aren't giving it to them, you are stealing from the poor.

Now, doesn't everything in our own hearts say that the rich man should have shared with Lazarus who laid daily at his gates. It wasn't right for him to live in luxury and for Lazarus to just lie broken and sick at his gate.

Again, there's something, we know that that's just incredible callousness of heart. We're talking about what it means to live uprightly.

So, in regard to the poor, on those less fortunate than us, John Chrysostom, one of the greatest preachers and theologians of the early church, said that if you cannot remember everything, I think he was wrapping up a sermon, if you cannot remember everything, instead of everything, I beg you remember this without fail, that not to share our own wealth with the poor is theft from the poor and deprivation of their means of life, we do not possess our own wealth but theirs.

[29 : 23] Now, that pinches and it's something to consider if we don't entirely agree with. Greed is a sin against God and it's a sin against the poor.

So, ladies, in a couple of weeks you're going to have an opportunity to share with the needy and the downtrodden in inner city Atlanta. And I just want you to go as you go. I'm not laying any sort of guilt trip on you or anything.

But just remember the grace of God towards you. Remember the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who was rich and yet for your sake he became poor. And just about what is right and I hope you come eager to do what is good.

And last of all, Paul says godly. being godly. And we're running out of time so I'm not going to spend much time here. Just listen to Matthew Henry, what he says.

And godly towards God in the duties of his worship and service. And I want you to underline this sentence in your mind.

[30 : 35] Regards to him, regards to God, indeed, should run through all, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.

Personal and relative duties must be done in obedience to his commands with due aim at pleasing and honoring him from principles of holy love and fear of him.

Now what is he saying? That we are to live a totally God oriented life. love where I love him and I fear him.

And because I love and I fear him, I want to please him. And I want to obey him. And I want to do whatever I do, whether I eat or drink or whatever that is, to his glory.

So what is a godly life? It's this God oriented life. It's a God fearing life. It's a life that is open to God where the roof so to speak between heaven and earth has been blown off in our own hearts in our own minds where we don't live with that roof over our head where we don't see him we don't acknowledge him we don't appreciate him but we're living aware and open to him remember him thinking about him loving him doing all that we do for!

[31 : 56] him And so! my ways I'm appreciating I'm aware of who he is so I go to school with him on my mind I go to work with him on my mind I'm living with my family and with my children and with my brothers and sisters with him on my mind I put him at my right hand my best thought by day or by night thy presence my light godliness is living in moment by moment trust moment by moment obedience where I'm respecting him loving him relying on Jesus Christ and so when I'm dealing with myself when I'm doing that self control and I'm directing myself I'm doing it with Christ's will as my will where I've said like Isaiah here am I send me I'm ready to do whatever you want me to do and when

I'm loving and serving others I'm doing it for the glory of God depending on God we say sometimes it's so hard to love this person it's so hard to serve this person but again there is grace in our Lord Jesus to love that person there's help from our father there's help in the Holy Spirit and so we're open we're aware we're actively trusting that's what we need to say yes to now that's going to mean saying no to a lot of other things that distract us from God but we need to be saying yes to that now as we close let me ask you just there's a lot here to do what stood out to you most what area is the Holy Spirit pulling you in maybe what area do you need to stretch out and reach further in maybe it's self control maybe it's living uprightly towards others or living more open to

God just I trust that God is here and he's having dealings with your heart and so I am asking you what area do you need to stretch out in what area is the Spirit saying stretch grow in this area identify it then work on it cooperate with God the Spirit maybe tell someone about it say I I'm going to work on loving this person this other person or I'm going to work on controlling this part of my life and managing it to the glory of God or you know what I'm going to live more open to God and tell

someone about it ask them to hold you accountable ask them to pray with you and and start and and start saying yes start saying yes in that area eager to do what is good and then you lean hard into everything Jesus is for you we don't grow without connecting this to Jesus connecting ourselves to Jesus and so connect him to that area of your life that you are working on you lean in on him and in faith you say yes so lean in say yes and let's grow together let's pray Lord my own heart is convicted of many areas and so I pray that your word would be doing the same and my brothers and sisters that we would be more aware of others more aware of you even more aware of our own weaknesses and failings and strengths and just give us would you give us more wisdom in all of these areas and your agenda and your syllabus is different for each of your children and so

I know the things that I need to work on maybe someone else doesn't and so I pray that whatever and in whatever area we each need to grow Holy Spirit be our tutor be our teacher have personal dealings with us draw us to Jesus Christ in these areas that need to grow draw us to Jesus Christ to find strength to be zealously and eagerly saying yes more in whatever area that might be we want to be a growing people we want to be a holy and devoted people we want to be self controlled and upright and godly make us that for your honor and for your praise we ask that in Jesus name amen amen