Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – January 6, 2019

**Nurturing God’s Family**

**Planting, Establishing, and Leading**

**Local Churches**

Practical Principles from The Pastoral Letters

 First and Second Timothy and Titus are addressed to individuals, but clearly are meant to be “overheard” by the church at large, especially its leadership. The three short volumes create a template of sorts on planting (Titus), growing (maturing, maintaining, 1 Timothy), and leading (2 Timothy) churches, with a view to passing the baton to the next generation of the faithful.

***What’s behind it?*** Titus was an associate of Paul’s left behind on the island of Crete after it had been evangelized. We begin here, not because it was the first of the three letters, but because it’s about transitioning a group of disciples into a fully functioning local church.

***What’s it all about?*** We’ll see that all three letters share some common themes: exalting Jesus, guarding the deposit (God’s Word), warning against false teachers, leading with character, and living as disciples. Paul is passionate that churches and leaders understand who they are, why they are here, how to mature as churches, and how to birth new churches in all cultures (which will look different from theirs). In Titus the context is new churches, and Paul is helping to answer the question,

**“Just how is a church planted?”**

**What are Paul’s key points?**  Titus 1:1-16

✓ Authority: Ministry is rooted in God’s revelation (word). vv. 1-4

✓ Leadership: Church elders/teachers must be carefully appointed based upon simple, but crucial

 character qualities. vv. 5-9

✓ Battleground: Leaders face false teachers, errant culture. vv. 10-16

***What is the Big Idea?***

 *A church is planted by following God’s command to appoint godly elders/pastors who will confront false teachers and counter the ungodliness of the culture by instructing others in His Word.*

***How do we apply these principles?***

**1. Are you certain?** Paul references God’s revelation as the authority for ministry (“faith, truth, promise, word”). Why is this important for Titus? Do we truly believe that it is God’s command-ment to share our faith and make disciples? How will believing that our message is truly from God change our attitude and behavior? How confident will we be in ministry if we believe that Jesus is only one of many paths to God? 1 Timothy 6:13-16; Acts 4:1-12

***2. Who’s responsible?*** The Bible is clear that only qualified men who can instruct should be appointed as elders (“pastors,” “bishops” all name the same office). What are the consequences of appointing the wrong people? Who does the appointing? Who would best know the character of the men? We know that no one is perfect, so what does “beyond reproach” mean? Where is a leader’s giftedness for shepherding first seen, tested, and confirmed? 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Acts 20:28-33

***3. How do we confront culture and correct error?*** Paul (politically incorrectly!) calls out the Cretans for being “lazy gluttons.” Why does he quote from their own poets? Is he just being unkind, or are there lessons here? Are there weaknesses and besetting sins in every culture? If so, what are ours and how should we confront them? What are the standards by which a culture is judged? Who are the false teachers then and now? Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 4:1-6; 1 Timothy 1:3-11