

*LifeChange*

A NAVPRESS BIBLE STUDY SERIES

*A life-changing  
encounter with God's Word*

# TITUS

*Guidance for choosing Christian leaders  
and forming godly church members.*

OVER 2.5 MILLION SOLD

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NAVPRESS 

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with Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.



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# HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

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## Objectives

Most guides in the LIFECHANGE series of Bible studies cover one book of the Bible. Although the LIFECHANGE guides vary with the books they explore, they share some common goals:

1. To provide you with a firm foundation of understanding and a thirst to return to the book.
2. To teach you by example how to study a book of the Bible without structured guides.
3. To give you all the historical background, word definitions, and explanatory notes you need, so that your only other reference is the Bible.
4. To help you grasp the message of the book as a whole.
5. To teach you how to let God's Word transform you into Christ's image.

Each lesson in this study is designed to take sixty to ninety minutes to complete on your own. The guide is based on the assumption that you are completing one lesson per week, but if time is limited you can do half a lesson per week or whatever amount allows you to be thorough.

## Flexibility

LIFECHANGE guides are flexible, allowing you to adjust the quantity and depth of your study to meet your individual needs. The guide offers many optional questions in addition to the regular numbered questions. The optional questions, which appear in the margins of the study pages, include the following:

*Optional Application.* Nearly all application questions are optional; we hope you will do as many as you can without overcommitting yourself.

*For Thought and Discussion.* Beginning Bible students should be able to handle these, but even advanced students need to think about them. These questions frequently deal with ethical issues and other biblical principles. They often offer cross-references to spark thought, but the references do not give obvious answers. They are good for group discussions.

*For Further Study.* These include: (a) cross-references that shed light on a topic the book discusses, and (b) questions that delve deeper into the passage. You can omit them to shorten a lesson without missing a major point of the passage.

If you are meeting in a group, decide together which optional questions to prepare for each lesson, and how much of the lesson you will cover at the next meeting. Normally, the group leader should make this decision, but you might let each member choose his or her own application questions.

As you grow in your walk with God, you will find the LIFECHANGE guide growing with you—a helpful reference on a topic, a continuing challenge for application, a source of questions for many levels of growth.

## Overview and details

The study begins with an overview of Titus. The key to interpretation is context—what is the whole passage or book *about*?—and the key to context is purpose—what is the author’s *aim* for the whole work? In lesson 1 you will lay the foundation for your study of Titus by asking yourself, *Why did the author (and God) write the book? What did they want to accomplish? What is the book about?*

In lessons 2 through 7, you will analyze successive passages of Titus in detail. Thinking about how a paragraph fits into the overall goal of the book will help you to see its purpose. Its purpose will help you see its meaning. Frequently reviewing a chart or outline of the book will enable you to make these connections.

In lesson 8, you will review Titus, returning to the big picture to see whether your view of it has changed after closer study. Review will also strengthen your grasp of major issues and give you an idea of how you have grown from your study.

## Kinds of questions

Bible study on your own—without a structured guide—follows a progression. First you observe: What does the passage *say*? Then you interpret: What does the passage *mean*? Lastly you apply: How does this truth *affect* my life?

Some of the “how” and “why” questions will take some creative thinking, even prayer, to answer. Some are opinion questions without clear-cut right answers; these will lend themselves to discussions and side studies.

Don’t let your study become an exercise in knowledge alone. Treat the passage as God’s Word, and stay in dialogue with Him as you study. Pray,

“Lord, what do You want me to see here?” “Father, why is this true?” “Lord, how does this apply to my life?”

It is important that you write down your answers. The act of writing clarifies your thinking and helps you to remember.

## Study aids

A list of reference materials, including a few notes of explanation to help you make good use of them, begins on page 83. This guide is designed to include enough background to let you interpret with just your Bible and the guide. Still, if you want more information on a subject or want to study a book on your own, try the references listed.

## Scripture versions

Unless otherwise indicated, the Bible quotations in this guide are from the New International Version of the Bible. Other versions cited are the New American Standard Bible (NASB), and the King James Version (KJV).

Use any translation you like for study, preferably more than one. A paraphrase such as *The Living Bible* is not accurate enough for study, but it can be helpful for comparison or devotional reading.

## Memorizing and meditating

A psalmist wrote, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). If you write down a verse or passage that challenges or encourages you and reflect on it often for a week or more, you will find it beginning to affect your motives and actions. We forget quickly what we read once; we remember what we ponder.

When you find a significant verse or passage, you might copy it onto a card to keep with you. Set aside five minutes during each day just to think about what the passage might mean in your life. Recite it over to yourself, exploring its meaning. Then, return to your passage as often as you can during your day, for a brief review. You will soon find it coming to mind spontaneously.

## For group study

A group of four to ten people allows the richest discussions, but you can adapt this guide for other sized groups. It will suit a wide range of group types, such as home Bible studies, growth groups, youth groups, and businessmen’s studies. Both new and experienced Bible students, and new and mature Christians, will benefit from the guide. You can omit or leave for later years any questions you find too easy or too hard.

The guide is intended to lead a group through one lesson per week. However, feel free to split lessons if you want to discuss them more thoroughly. Or, omit some questions in a lesson if preparation or discussion time is limited. You can always return to this guide for personal study later. You will be able to discuss only a few questions at length, so choose some for discussion and others for background. Make time at each discussion for members to ask about anything they didn't understand.

Each lesson in the guide ends with a section called "For the group." These sections give advice on how to focus a discussion, how you might apply the lesson in your group, how you might shorten a lesson, and so on. The group leader should read each "For the group" at least a week ahead so that he or she can tell the group how to prepare for the next lesson.

Each member should prepare for a meeting by writing answers for all of the background and discussion questions to be covered. If the group decides not to take an hour per week for private preparation, then expect to take at least two meetings per lesson to work through the questions. Application will be very difficult, however, without private thought and prayer.

Two reasons for studying in a group are accountability and support. When each member commits in front of the rest to seek growth in an area of life, you can pray with one another, listen jointly for God's guidance, help one another to resist temptation, assure each other that the other's growth matters to you, use the group to practice spiritual principles, and so on. Pray about one another's commitments and needs at most meetings. Spend the first few minutes of each meeting sharing any results from applications prompted by previous lessons. Then discuss new applications toward the end of the meeting. Follow such sharing with prayer for these and other needs.

If you write down each other's applications and prayer requests, you are more likely to remember to pray for them during the week, ask about them at the next meeting, and notice answered prayers. You might want to get a notebook for prayer requests and discussion notes.

Notes taken during discussion will help you to remember, follow up on ideas, stay on the subject, and clarify a total view of an issue. But don't let note-taking keep you from participating. Some groups choose one member at each meeting to take notes. Then someone copies the notes and distributes them at the next meeting. Rotating these tasks can help include people. Some groups have someone take notes on a large pad of paper or erasable marker board so that everyone can see what has been recorded.

Pages 85–86 list some good sources of counsel for leading group studies.



# BACKGROUND

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## Paul and Titus

### Map of the Roman Empire



Paul wrote this letter to Titus at the end of nearly thirty years as a missionary of Christ. He was born in the first decade AD in Tarsus, a small but prosperous city on the trade route from Syria to Asia Minor. His family must have owned property and had some importance in the community, for Paul was born not only a citizen of Tarsus (see Acts 21:39) but even a citizen of Rome (see Acts 22:27-28).<sup>1</sup>

Tarsus was known for its schools of philosophy and liberal arts, and some scholars believe Paul must have had some contact with these. Like most cities in the Empire, Tarsus probably contained synagogues of Greek-speaking Jews who were often as devout as their Hebrew-speaking brethren.<sup>2</sup> However, based on Philippians 3:5, F. F. Bruce believes that Paul's parents

## Timeline of Paul's Ministry

(All dates are approximate, based on F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, page 475.)

Public ministry of Jesus	AD 28–30
Conversion of Paul (Acts 9:1-19)	33
Paul visits Jerusalem to see Peter (Galatians 1:18)	35
Paul in Cilicia and Syria (Galatians 1:21; Acts 9:30)	35–46
Paul visits Jerusalem to clarify the mission to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:1-10)	46
Paul and Barnabas in Cyprus and Galatia (Acts 13–14)	47–48
<i>Letter to the Galatians</i>	48?
Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15)	49
Paul and Silas travel from Antioch to Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia (Acts 16–17)	49–50
<i>Letters to the Thessalonians</i>	50
Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1-18)	50–52
Paul visits Jerusalem	52
Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19)	52–55
<i>Letters to the Corinthians</i>	55–56
Paul travels to Macedonia, Dalmatia, and Achaia (Acts 20)	55–57
<i>Letter to the Romans</i>	early 57
Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1–23:22)	May 57
Paul imprisoned in Caesarea (Acts 23:23–26:32)	57–59
Paul sent to house arrest in Rome (Acts 27:1–28:31)	59–62
<i>Letters to Philipppians, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon</i>	60?–62
<i>Letters to Timothy and Titus</i>	?
Paul executed in Rome	65?

spoke Hebrew and raised him in a strict Jewish home, isolated as much as possible from the pagan city around them.<sup>3</sup>

## Paul the Pharisee

Paul was sent to study Jewish law in Jerusalem under the foremost rabbi of his day, the Pharisee Gamaliel (see Acts 22:3; Galatians 1:14). The word *Pharisee* comes from a Hebrew word meaning “the separated ones,” for the Pharisees felt God had set them apart to live by the *Torah* (the Law, or Teaching, of Moses) and the oral interpretations of the *Torah* laid down by generations of teachers. Some Pharisees held that a man was righteous if he had done more good than bad, but Paul apparently followed the stricter group who insisted that every least implication of the Law must be kept.<sup>4</sup>

The Pharisees expected a *Messiah* (Hebrew for “Anointed One”; Greek: Christ), who would deliver them from foreign oppression and rule with justice. However, Jesus of Nazareth had scandalized many Pharisees by interpreting the Law with great freedom and claiming a special relationship with God. Thus, when some Jews began to proclaim Jesus as Messiah and Lord (a term usually reserved for God), strict Pharisees opposed them furiously.

Paul helped to lead the fight against the proclaimers of Christ in Jerusalem (see Acts 7:60–8:3; Galatians 1:13). But after a couple of years, Jesus confronted Paul in a blinding encounter (see Acts 9:1-19), revealing to Paul that he was persecuting the very God he professed to worship. Paul’s life now turned from a Pharisaic observance of God’s Law to a devoted obedience to Jesus Christ, the revealed Messiah. He joined the Jews who were urging other Jews to believe in Jesus, and after some years God called him to proclaim Jesus as Savior to Gentiles (non-Jews) also.

## Paul the church leader

Paul’s conversion may have marked his first move from cloistered Judaism into pagan culture. He spent ten years in Cilicia and Syria (Galatians 1:21), probably preaching Jesus along with Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jewish Christians who had fled Jerusalem. Then Barnabas called Paul from Tarsus to Antioch, where by this time the church was more Gentile than Jewish.<sup>5</sup>

Barnabas and Paul went to Jerusalem around AD 46 to settle any questions about what they were preaching (see Galatians 2:1-10). Paul submitted to the authority of the Jerusalem apostles, and they acknowledged his authority.

## Titus

Paul brought a companion on this Jerusalem trip: a young Gentile named Titus, whom Paul was training to carry on his ministry. When false teachers were later urging the Galatians to obey Jewish laws, Paul pointed out that the apostles had not even asked that Titus be circumcised (see Galatians 2:3-5).

## Paul the missionary

Soon after the Jerusalem trip, the church at Antioch commissioned Paul and Barnabas to evangelize Cyprus and Galatia. Then they attended a council at Jerusalem to settle the status of Gentiles in Christianity. Paul and Barnabas separated soon after, and Paul traveled from Antioch through Asia Minor to Macedonia and Achaia. Titus may have accompanied him on these journeys.

After this, Paul spent three years in Ephesus, and then began to travel again. In cities like Corinth and Ephesus, Paul's strategy for evangelism had been to arrive with a team of coworkers (such as Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and Titus). With them and any Christians in the city, Paul set up a headquarters for evangelism. He and his team made converts and trained local leaders. Eventually the team left town, entrusting a network of housechurches to the local leaders.

Paul's team established the Corinthian church about AD 50–52, but in AD 55 Paul received news of upheaval there. He wrote (1 Corinthians); he sent Timothy; he went himself; he was rejected. At last he sent Titus with a “stinging letter” (see 2 Corinthians 2:3–4).<sup>6</sup> This letter, which has not survived, evidently produced a change of heart, for Titus brought news of repentance (see 2 Corinthians 2:12–13; 7:5–7). Soon Titus bore a loving response from Paul to Corinth—the letter we call 2 Corinthians (see 2 Corinthians 8:17). It seems that by this time Titus was an emissary suitable for delicate matters.

Paul and Titus presumably worked together for some while longer. Paul made another missionary journey, but a trip to Jerusalem landed him in prison first in Caesarea and then in Rome (AD 57–62). Where was Titus? We do not know. Paul was released from house arrest in Rome in AD 62, probably either to freedom or exile.<sup>7</sup> His letter to Titus suggests that he was in Crete at some point. When Paul wrote 2 Timothy, either shortly before or after writing to Titus, Titus was in Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10). Soon after writing these letters, Paul was rearrested, returned to Rome, tried, and executed.

## Crete

We know nothing about the church in Crete other than what the letter to Titus tells us. In fact, any information about life in Crete at this time is scarce. But we presume that the Cretan church was founded among urban Gentiles, raised in the pagan culture of the Empire.

1. F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 32–40.
2. A. T. Robertson, “Paul, the Apostle,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), 2276.
3. Bruce, 41–43.
4. Bruce, 50–52.
5. Bruce, 127–133.
6. Bruce, 274.
7. Bruce, 444–446.

# OVERVIEW

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Left behind in Crete, Titus had a difficult task. Anyone who has been involved in reform or change knows what Titus was facing. Think what *your* response might be to a letter from a trusted friend or a pastor while in the midst of such a task.

## First impressions

Read the book of Titus through at one sitting, as a letter from a friend, before going any further. Potentially confusing verses will be clearer later if you can see how they fit into Paul's overall message. You might want to read the letter again, perhaps comparing different translations.

1. Describe the *mood* (tone, feeling) of the letter. (Is Paul formal, intimate, angry, joyful . . . ?) If you think the mood changes anywhere, note where it changes.

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2. What do you notice about the *style* of this letter? (Is Paul describing, giving instructions, trying to persuade . . . ? Is he writing a story, a personal message, a sermon . . . ?)

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3. *Repetition* is a clue to the ideas a writer considers most important to his message. What words or ideas occur over and over in this letter?

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### Broad outline

4. Reread the letter, preferably in a different translation. This time, think of a short phrase or sentence to describe what you think each main section is about. (Below are the divisions according to the NIV. Feel free to change them or add more.)

1:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

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1:5-16 \_\_\_\_\_

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2:1-15 \_\_\_\_\_

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3:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

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3:12-15 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Background

5. Read the background on Paul and Titus if you have not already done so.

### Study Skill—Cross-References

Other passages of Scripture can often shed light on what you are studying. These are called *cross-references*.

6. Read 2 Corinthians 2:13, 8:23, and Titus 1:4. Summarize what these verses tell you about Paul's relationship to Titus.

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7. What do you learn about Titus' character from the following passages in 2 Corinthians?

2 Corinthians 7:13-15 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 8:16-17 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 12:17-18 \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Purposes/themes**

8. From Titus 1:5–2:1, briefly describe the situation that evidently prompted Paul to write to Titus.

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9. What do you think are the main *themes* of this letter? (What was Paul trying to get across to Titus?) Your answer to questions 3 and 4 may point to some themes.

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10. Looking for an author's *purpose* in his writing can usually help us find his main message. How would you summarize your current impression of Paul's purpose in this letter?

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## Your response

11. In your initial reading of Paul's letter to Titus, you may have come across concepts you'd like clarified, or you may have thought of questions you'd like answered as you go more deeply into this study. While your thoughts are still fresh, you may want to jot down your questions here to serve as personal objectives for your study of the letter.

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**Optional Application:** One way to let a truth sink in is to tell someone else about it. To whom could you explain the most significant thing you noticed in your reading of Titus?

**Study Skill—Application**

The last step of Bible study is asking yourself, “What difference should this passage make in my life? How should it make me want to think or act?” Application will require time, thought, prayer, and perhaps even discussion with another person.

There are a variety of ways to approach application. At one time you might list as many implications of a Scripture as you can. You can look back at this list frequently for several days and think about ways to act on the implications. At another time, you might concentrate on one specific application, giving it careful thought and prayer and committing yourself to it. At another time you might just meditate on something the Scripture says about God, giving Him thanks and worship and asking Him to teach you to know Him better.

- 12. Did anything in your first reading of Titus especially encourage you to change or persevere in some area of your life? If so, write down this insight here, along with any implications you think it should have for your life. In prayer, consider whether there is anything you can do to act on these implications with God’s help.

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**For the group**

The beginning of a new study is a good time to lay a foundation for honest sharing of ideas, for getting comfortable with each other, and for encouraging

a sense of common purpose. One way to establish common ground is to talk about what each group member hopes to get out of your group—out of your study of Titus, and out of any prayer, singing, sharing, service, outreach, or anything else you might do together. You could take about fifteen minutes at the beginning of your meeting to give each person a chance to express his or her vision for the group. If you have someone write down each member's hopes and expectations, then you can look back at these goals later to see if they are being met.

After that, you might approach your overview in the following way:

First impressions of the book (questions 1–3)—10 minutes

Background on Paul and Titus (questions 5–7)—5 minutes

Outline (question 4)—5 minutes

Themes and goals (questions 8–10)—10 minutes

Group members' questions (question 11)—5 minutes

Examples of how you might apply something in Titus (for members who are less familiar with doing this)—10 minutes

Don't feel you must follow this structure or its time allotments rigidly; it is just a model for how to go about structuring a discussion. Also, be aware that some people are better than others at outlining, seeing themes, and so on. Some people are better at close analysis of a verse, or at seeing how a Scripture applies to their lives. Give thanks for each other's strengths, and don't be embarrassed to give and request help.

## Traveling Teachers

Travel was safe in the Roman Empire, and knowledge of the exotic, the mysterious, and the sophisticated was prized everywhere. Accordingly, a steady stream of wandering teachers and prophets circulated among the cities. They promised skills for success, the secret

*(continued on page 20)*

(continued from page 19)

of the good life, higher wisdom, or worship of the true god. Some arrived with shaven heads and colored robes, bearing an idol on a litter. Others came in the simple robe, full beard, and sandals of the traditional philosopher. Some prophesied ecstatically in the streets or shouted at passers-by. Some worked miracles and healings. Others gave stirring speeches, and still others taught quietly, but all worked in public places where they could find followers.

People loved to hear new things, but only because they wanted to be entertained or to escape their daily lives. They were used to experimenting with a new philosophy or cult whenever an old one lost its freshness or seemed not to be producing the desired results.<sup>1</sup>

1. Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 1–48. For a fascinating first-hand view of the religious and social world of the Roman Empire, see *The Golden Ass* by Lucius Apuleius, trans. Robert Graves (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1951); this is a wonderful novel, written in the second century AD, and the Graves edition is an inexpensive paperback.