

WHAT ARE YOU HANGING ON TO?

Titus 1:9

People approach the Bible from different perspectives:

Just another book—even *fiction* book—little evidence to support it
Collection of stories—teach *spiritual* truth, but not always factual, historical, scientific truth—**may contain errors of fact**, but **spiritual truth** is valid guide to godly living anyway.

Either God-breathed, totally **trustworthy**, without error
—we can believe everything, or it can't be trusted at all.

EFCA: “Where stands it written?”

Fundamental issue: ***What does God say?***

Statement of Faith affirms the Bible is our ***final*** authority!

Is it really?

“I don't care what the Bible says, I know what I've experienced!!!”

“You can't live that way!”

Too often our experience, or what society says, holds more weight ***than what God has said!***

Problem at Crete: Pagan culture is invading the church.

Everyone claims to know God, but lives convey different message.

—want salvation, but not transformed character.

—want to continue in old lifestyle, with gospel privileges.

Numerous surveys: church follows pattern of secular society.

In the midst of that kind of society, Paul urges the church to ***appoint blameless leaders we can model our life after.***

3 areas mentioned; in each of these, **NO ONE** is free from exposure!

If you're struggling with temptation to view pornography...

If your children make bad choices...

If you struggle with pride or anger, or with a desire for things...

If you don't always see things from God's perspective...

... you have lots of company!

... that doesn't make you unfit for leadership!

Paul is dealing with our **reputation!**

When people in the community observe our lives, what do they see?

Elders ought to be:

* ***Blameless with respect to their home and family life*** 1:6

* ***Blameless with respect to their personal character*** 1:7-8

* ***Blameless with respect to their use of God's Word*** 1:9

What God *requires* for elders is God's *desire* for ALL His people!

**GODLY PEOPLE SHOULD BE BLAMELESS
IN THEIR USE OF GOD'S WORD 1:9**

"He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it."

PEOPLE WHO TAKE HOLD OF HIS WORD;

WON'T LET GO!

Not *just* in doctrine, but also in daily living— *in our lifestyle*

3 exhortations about how godly leaders ought to use God's Word:

1. KEEP A STRONG GRIP ON GOD'S WORD 1:9

Recognize that it's faithful; it's worthy of confidence.

We should be willing to stake our life on it! (*and our lifestyle!*)

If what we think doesn't agree with God's Word, ***scrap OUR view!***

Don't try to make God support OUR opinion!

“Faithful word” describes message of gospel they received.

There’s **sufficient evidence to consider message**
“trustworthy”

If *they* could trust message *they* had, how much more can we, now that God has *“breathed out”* His Word, recording it without error, so we can know what **GOD HAS SAID!**

HOLD FAST TO GOD’S WORD—

Keep a firm grip on it! “Cling to it!”

God’s Word should control our life.

Goes beyond *just* believing it’s true.

Bible must become the *center* of our life, and our ministry.

Dobson: “God has chosen to place this ministry in the path of a cultural revolution that has shaken the foundations of the family... Not only are we called to support the institution of marriage and parenthood, we’re also asked to confront the evils of our day: campaigns to abort millions of babies, promote teen sexual promiscuity, legalize homosexual “marriages,” interfere with parental rights, kill the sick and elderly, outlaw religious expression in public life, and others.” [15 years ago!]

If we’re going to speak to what GOD says about such issues, we WILL come into conflict with culture. So, what’s our final authority?

What controls what we’re going to say?

Modern society? Popular evangelical opinion?

Or, God’s Word?

When we trust God’s Word, we submit ourselves to it!

We don’t move away from it, no matter what winds blow!

God’s people put confidence in God’s Word and cling tightly to it!

**** We should take a firm hold on God's word;**

**** God's word should get a firm hold on us!**

2. USE GOD'S WORD TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS

“give instruction in sound doctrine” lit, “encourage with healthy teaching”

We come alongside others to give right kind of help at right time.

*defense attorney *teacher *encourage the discouraged

*comfort people suffering *coach—give swift kick when needed!

To do that effectively *WE* must take hold of God's Word firmly!

With God's Word, we encourage others, with *healthy teaching*

Heb. 10:24: *“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.”*

***Healthy teaching encourages us
to become all God wants us to be!***

3. USE GOD'S WORD TO REFUTE THOSE WHO DISAGREE

=> "Cause them to see the light clearly"

Help others see the light

We can't change minds; we can help people see what's at stake.

We present what God's Word says. Rest is up to *Him*.

Our job: present evidence clearly, **on basis of God's Word.**

We help people recognize nature of decision they're making.

Once we present truth, people make their own decision.

Only those who know God's Word, who cling to it themselves, can use it to correct those clinging to other teachings!

NOT *my* opinion—*God's Word* causes people to “*see the light.*”

**Healthy teaching helps those who oppose truth
to understand the issues!**

God's Word IS worthy of our trust!

But, what are we doing with it? Is it OUR final authority?

When we give advice, what's the basis of our counsel?

***Have WE put OUR opinions in 2nd place,
to take firm hold on God's Word?***

Basis of godly counsel isn't *my* opinion—it's *God's Word*.

He has spoken! We help people discover what *He* has said.
If people fight message, we must be sure it's God's Word they
fight!

3 BIBLICAL requirements for godly people:

Take a firm hold on God's Word, and let it hold us!

Encourage one another with healthy teaching.

Help each other understand the truth.

Are WE clinging to God's Word as our final authority?

Are we encouraging people to love & good deeds, based on Word?

Are we using the Word when we help people who disagree with us?

What's our FINAL authority?

Who has THE LAST WORD in our life?

Our culture? Our friends? Other Christians?

*Or, is our authority: **GOD HAS SPOKEN!** I'll do whatever HE
says!*

How well do we know God's Word?

How often do we read it?

How much time do we spend in God's Word each day?

Can you use it to show others why you believe what you believe
about God, eternal life, godly living?

GOD HAS SPOKEN!

His Word is truth! It's trustworthy! **It's our FINAL authority!**

Let's grab hold of His Word; cling to it; no matter what others think!

Don't put any *human* opinion on the same plane—even *mine!*

GOD HAS SPOKEN!

Let's cling to HIS WORD alone!