



ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH THE

# CHURCH



**ENGAGE  
IN THE  
ENCOU  
NTER**

# an introduction

FROM DOUG CLARK .....

I hope that the Encountering God series has given you a new understanding of who God is and who you are before Him. Once again, we will have time to study the Word on our own, read what others are saying about it, and be together for corporate teaching. I urge you to engage in the Encounter.

In the next few weeks, we will have the chance to encounter God through three little-known and less popular epistles: Titus, Philemon, and Jude. Epistles are letters to the Church designed to be read, first, to those addressed, and then to others for teaching, training, and encouragement in the Christian life.

What we see in these epistles is that as the Church is growing and facing challenges within their cultural contexts, these authors give hope, direction, and admonition to believers. The letters focus on many ideas: reconciling with others (mirroring how Christ reconciled us), being on guard against false teaching, and living as a follower of Christ in a chaotic and ever-changing world. Our hope is that by studying these letters, we will encounter God through the Church, finding common ground in the pursuit of godly living in an ungodly world. We pray that God's Word through the letters will serve as a guide in our approach to following Christ daily, to fostering God-honoring relationships, and to developing complete confidence in what we as Christians know to be true.

# A 5-DAY BIBLE STUDY

DAY 1

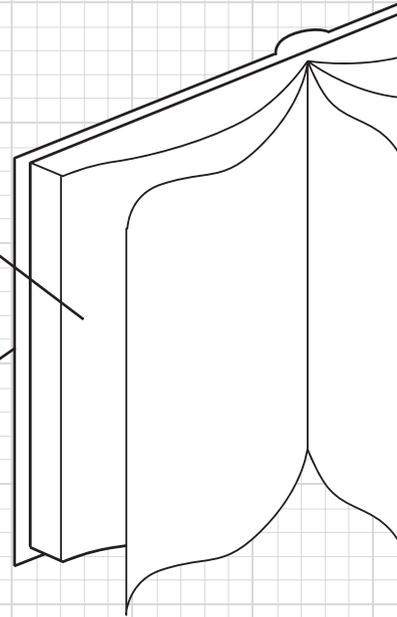
## **PASSAGE SUMMARY**

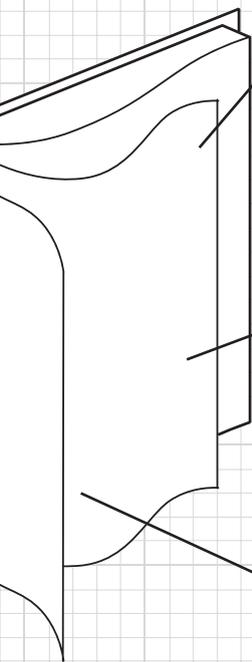
Read and re-read the chapter several times. After you have read the passage multiple times, write a summary: paraphrase it, outline it, or rewrite it in your own words.

DAY 2

## **OBSERVATIONS + QUESTIONS**

Look at the details in every sentence and word. Write down everything you see – names, words that stand out, objects, etc...  
What is the author saying? What is he trying to convey? What does it say about God? Humanity?





DAY 3

### **CROSS REFERENCE**

---

Are there other scriptures in the Bible that might address this topic or issue as well? What other wisdom do they offer?

DAY 4

### **REVIEW + CONCLUSION**

---

Review the passage again as well as the first three days' questions and answers. Write down any concluding thoughts you may have about the passage.

DAY 5

### **APPLICATION**

---

How might this passage apply to life?  
Select one application you came up with and think of ways you can actively apply it to your life this week.

# titus one

FROM CHRIS WITT

Titus is a young man with a big job. It was his task to put in order the churches springing up on the island of Crete, one of the many places the gospel spread after Pentecost. In terms of the religious expression he found there, I imagine it was a crazy, Wild West kind of time. Much like today, everybody had an opinion and a plan. However, Titus knew that Jesus made things pretty clear. Christ is a one way street to God.

Therefore, Paul counsels Titus as he is about to engage a “rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception” (v. 10). Even their own leaders called them “liars, brutes, and gluttons” (v. 12). However, keep in mind this

isn't just a gang of theological pirates he's talking about. Pirates are easy. They declare their malicious intent, and you decide to fight or run away. The more common and much more challenging enemy to truth is found in the corruption that lies hidden in the human heart buried under an appealing layer of human-shaped ideas.

Thus, Paul advises Titus that wisdom birthed from an impure place will ultimately find betrayal at the hands of the actions surrounding it. In other words, the veracity of our claims about God and His word will be rightly evaluated by the world through the lens of the life they experience in a personal encounter with us.

Paul starts with the leadership Titus will need to establish the Body of Christ in Crete. Twice, he describes leaders who are *anegkeltos* (blameless), meaning they live a life that stands up to scrutiny when examined. Paul is not describing perfect people in this list as much as hearts, words, and deeds that work in unison to produce healthy environments and good works in the lives of others. However, this is not just criteria for leadership; this is the product of a maturing faith.

Ask yourself these questions: Does the activity of my life betray my truth? I speak of peace, but do I seem perpetually involved in some sort of strife? Am I a patron of grace but wield

bitterness like a hammer? Do I market self-sacrifice and service from the comfort of my carefully crafted cocoon? In a world filled with the chaos of competing truth, the life of the Church must match the promise of the Word more often than not. This call applies to more than leadership; it is a call to every believer to seek a life that holds up to the scrutiny of a world looking for real truth in a sea of cheap words.

- D1: Passage Summary
- D2: Observations & Questions
- D3: Cross Reference
- D4: Review & Conclusion
- D5: Application

# titus two

FROM JEFF JOHNSON

Oh my goodness, have you read this chapter before? It really is great!

Titus 2 has such rich doctrine and instruction for the believer that it could take several weeks to study it fully. Paul instructs Titus to “teach what accords with sound [or healthy] doctrine” (v. 1) and then provides direction for all believers (vv. 2 – 8). He reminds us of what “grace” is, as well as what our hope in Christ Jesus is. Further, Paul instructs Titus to declare this teaching strongly and directly, encouraging each believer – including us two centuries later.

Moreover, Paul taught Titus ideas in this chapter that are important for us to follow closely. In this, we should be models of good works, and we should be able to instruct others in our faith with integrity, dignity, soundness, and self-efficacy. Our lives should be lived in such a way that others will see our good works and glorify our Father, having nothing bad to say about us. Does that sound like your life? I think that is what we should be hearing from Paul: how we should be living as Christians today.

Why? Because the grace of God that saved us also moves us beyond salvation to fully instruct us (vv. 11-12) – to teach us to renounce ungodliness and passions of this world and to teach us to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly. Does that sound like the grace that impacted your life? Saving you completely and now training you to live fully in Him and for Him? God-owned, fervent, and passionate to do good for Him each day?

Our God is great! Our hope is great, too! And in this hope we wait for our final blessing: “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus

Christ” (v. 13). Hope eternal, hope everlasting, hope for full and complete redemption. Now that is the grace of our Lord Jesus – Christ at work in our lives. Praise Him! And live like we have been instructed to live – completely and wholly for Him.

- D1: Passage Summary
- D2: Observations & Questions
- D3: Cross Reference
- D4: Review & Conclusion
- D5: Application

# titus three

FROM LOUELLEN LOWE

We are not short of controversy these days, whether legitimate or contrived. Perpetuating this controversy is the explosion of opinion at our fingertips via the internet. I know you've seen it (contributed to it?) – the ever-meaningful and always-helpful Facebook rant followed by battling comments. Sometimes, the controversy seems remarkably trivial. Other times, the issue at hand deserves attention, though perhaps over coffee rather than social media. I often find myself praying this question, “Lord, how do I engage?”

Lying, violent, gluttonous, and greedy – Cretans were famous for their immorality at the time Paul wrote this letter to Titus. As Titus worked to strengthen and expand the church

on the island, pervasive immorality was only half the battle. Adding to the acrimony, a group within the church was demanding strict adherence to Jewish law and causing a ruckus. We get the picture of moral chaos happening at all levels of society. Somewhere in the middle were those wanting, begging, to know, “How do we engage?”

Paul instructs Titus how believers ought to live in the chaos: be ready for every good work! Submit to authorities, be obedient, speak kindly to and about others, don't be easily baited by cheap arguments, be gentle, be courteous (even to the brute next door). How? Paul says to remember that we all were once non-believers, Cretans, even – lying, violent, gluttonous, greedy and

more. But for the saving grace of Christ Jesus, we would still be completely lost and without hope.

Don't be mistaken, though. Our human effort to be and do good is not our salvation. Paul makes it clear that it is God who, in His infinite goodness and mercy, saves us and changes us through the work of the Holy Spirit so that the natural outpouring of our lives are good works. Only through a real encounter with Jesus can we truly be changed.

Paul applies similar instruction to those bickering inside the church: Quit it! Major on what matters (i.e. the Gospel), and refrain from navel-gazing arguments about the law. In fact, if someone is determined to stir up

dissension and strife, try first to warn him, but then have nothing to do with him. Don't be "that person," he says.

Can you see how maybe the letter to Titus, particularly what we read in chapter 3, has such richness for Christians today? Are we not often caught up in the dissension rather than living in the tension of the Gospel? How might we live differently so that the glory of God might be reflected in our lives?

- D1: Passage Summary
- D2: Observations & Questions
- D3: Cross Reference
- D4: Review & Conclusion
- D5: Application

# philemon

FROM EDGAR GALDÁMEZ

We live in a broken world. Since sin entered our world, brokenness has been part of it. The effects of broken relationships with God and others are apparent. You probably know some of them. Perhaps, the effects are you. But we are not hopeless. The Gospel of Christ offers hope, restoration, and reconciliation with God and others. In some cases, it requires an intervention.

Philemon is a very short book (only 335 words) found in the New Testament. It is a personal letter written by the apostle Paul to a believer called Philemon. It deals with a runaway slave named Onesimus (meaning “useful”).

In the providence of God, Onesimus met Paul while he was incarcerated for the Gospel. Paul shared the Gospel with him, and Onesimus became a believer in Christ. Onesimus was restored and reconciled with God. Onesimus became “useful” to Paul, but Paul knew that Onesimus had a broken relationship with Philemon that needed to be restored. Paul wrote the letter, which Onesimus took with him back to the man he had wronged. In it, he asks, not with apostolic authority, but as a brother bound in chains for Christ’s sake, to take Onesimus back, not as a slave, but as a brother in Christ. Paul tells Philemon, “Welcome him

as you would welcome me. If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me.” Paul calls for reconciliation between Onesimus and Philemon. No doubt, Philemon did as Paul asked.

The Gospel of Christ restores and reconciles our relationship with God and with others. This often requires us to seek the forgiveness of others as well. In some cases, our offers of reconciliation will be denied, but our duty remains the same.

Think about your life and those around you this week. How is your relationship

with Christ? Are you being useful to Him? Are there relationships that need to be reconciled and restored? Seek those opportunities to share the Gospel of peace to those with broken relationships.

- D1: Passage Summary
- D2: Observations & Questions
- D3: Cross Reference
- D4: Review & Conclusion
- D5: Application

# jude

FROM CHRIS CULLINS

*“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”*

Jude is a small book often overlooked in the Bible, but it is packed with passion. Jude is a call to action; better yet, it is a call to arms. A half-brother of Jesus, Jude begins his letter talking about salvation but quickly changes the tone and direction to one much more challenging to believers.

In verse 3, the word “appealing,” or in some translations “exhorting,” in Greek is a word that generals would use to give orders to soldiers. Jude warns us urgently to be on our guard for false teachers among us who claim to know Christ. He tells us to “build yourself up in the most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”

When training to spot counterfeit money, one of the first things a Secret Service agent is taught is to know every single detail of the real thing – how it is made, what it is made of, what it is supposed to look like,

etc. Additionally, they have tools and resources at their disposal to test the fabric and composition of the dollar bills to determine whether it is true or counterfeit. The same principle applies to us!

The only way we will spot the counterfeit among us is to know the truth, and we have the resources at our disposal to help when we aren't quite sure. By spending time in the Word, praying, and conditioning ourselves to listen for God's voice, we will learn what is true and be able to identify, with clarity, what is not. Incredibly, God has given us powerful resources – His Word and His Spirit, that work in tandem with one another to steer us clearly.

Could you spot a counterfeit? Do you know the truth? Would you recognize God's voice if He spoke? Are you tapping into the resources He has provided?

- D1: Passage Summary
- D2: Observations & Questions
- D3: Cross Reference
- D4: Review & Conclusion
- D5: Application

A BIBLE STUDY *by* GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH