
Title: Preparing for Ministry

Text: Titus 1:5-2:10

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Introduction How many of you know who Peter Lutz is? Peter Lutz isn't exactly a household name. But Peter Lutz is getting a lot of attention these days, attention that he would not have wanted and would have felt unwarranted. 5 years after his death, Peter Lutz has become a cause célèbre. Lutz spent 20 years chairing the marine biology department at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. Lutz was considered a distinguished sea turtle expert, and was one of only a handful of sea turtle scientists who had studied the effects of oil on sea turtles. And now you know where this is headed. Dr. Lutz was distinguished enough that BP listed him as a go-to expert in a worst-case scenario report that was released last year. In case of oil spill, call Dr. Lutz. Most problematic is that Dr. Lutz, world famous turtle-ogian, died four years before the report was published. His place in the lists of scientists to call has become a major embarrassment for BP, because his inclusion on such lists has been exhibit A in highlighting BP's lack of preparation for such a disaster.

It's a bit easy to pick on BP these days. But the reality is that the Gulf Oil Spill has this trait in common with the other great disasters of our generation (Hurricane Katrina, the Challenger Explosion, and 9-11): in the aftermath of each it became quite apparent that the lack of preparation aided and abetted the disaster. In each of these instances, including the Gulf Oil Spill, warnings about worst-case scenarios and potentials disasters were given and either ignored or insufficiently heeded. Lack of preparation can have catastrophic consequences.

As part of our ongoing Pleasing God series, in the past few weeks we have taken some time to highlight Christ's gifting his church for service in the body. We've noted the unity that results from Christ's people using their gifts; and we've noted the diversity of gifts given for the purposes of building the body up into maturity. This morning we are slightly adjust the lens as we consider Christ's gifting of his church. Having considered questions such as what are the gifts, how are we to use the gifts, and how do I know what my gift is, another natural question that arises is what do I need to do in order to cultivate the gift Christ has given me? What do I need to do to prepare to use my gift, if anything?

While there is no passage that directly speaks to the nuts and bolts of ministry preparation, there are a number of texts that implicitly speak to the issue. One of those texts is the book of Titus, and that's where we are going to be spending our time this morning.

The central, organizing thought of the Titus letter

Turn with me to the book of Titus. And the passage where we will begin is the passage that immediately follows the text I have identified this morning as our text. Turn to Titus chapter 2 verse 11. We are beginning here, because it is here that Paul locates the central organizing thought in his letter to Titus. No matter what issue or text one is considering in the book of Titus, one must keep this passage in the purview because it is here that Paul expresses the primary motivation, reason, and

purposes behind the letter and Titus's circumstances surrounding the letter. Wherever one goes in this short letter, one is interacting with the implications of this section. Let us read it together: this is what God's word proclaims to us:

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Here is the central organizing thought of Titus. All of what Paul says to Titus in regards to setting in order the churches rotates and revolves around the idea that the Incarnate Grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all kinds of men, including Cretans who were notoriously a difficult people. If we are to understand Paul's purposes in Titus, not to mention for our own purposes this morning in thinking about preparing for ministry, we must keep this central, organizing thought in front of us that the Saving Grace of God has appeared and Christ has redeemed and purified for himself a people.

A letter to Titus

What is it that gives rise to the occasion of Titus? Paul has dispatched Titus to the island of Crete for the purposes of 1) organizing and structuring churches, and 2) appointing elders in every church. And the reason given for the necessity of Titus to set in order the churches, and appoint elders in every church, is that insubordinate deceivers who are wrecking entire households need to be silenced. In fact, there is a close parallel here between churches that are not ordered and families that are upset or are in disarray. This word for "upsetting" in verse 11 has the sense of being overthrown or being disorganized. There is much in common with this word "upsetting" and "shipwreck" in 1 Timothy.

And what is it that is causing the homewrecking but the Judaizing influence that caused Paul and the apostles so much grief wherever they went. Very few churches Paul planted did not become occasions for Judaizers to come calling with their erroneous emphasis on the law as a basis for salvation and transformation. Titus, who had formerly worked in one of the most difficult situations of the early church, Corinth, is left in Crete as a dragon-slayer, commissioned to confront those who aren't simply content to teach error, but to destroy community life, even to the point of wrecking households.

Titus the dragon-slayer

The hedge against these household upsetters is two-fold, the two things we've already mentioned from verse 5: 1) putting what remained in order... apparently the churches were very disorganized in their gathering, their community life, and their governance. 2) And, appointing elders in every church. These are the weapons of Titus the dragon-slayer. And the two forms of this structure is unpacked in the rest of chapter 1 and the first section of chapter 2. The first weapon is the appointment of elders who will defend sound doctrine and rebuke those who are teaching falsehood (1:6-16).

Titus 1:6-9 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Here in Titus 1, in describing not only their stewardship, but their character qualifications, Paul paints a contrast between, Christ, himself, the apostleship, Titus, the elders AND these rebellious men. Paul describes his ministry, his calling, his relationship with Titus, as well as the qualifications of elders. In doing this Paul shows Titus, "Here is what we ARE". This sound doctrine, this gospel, which is to be defended and which counters the counterfeits, is that with which Paul has been entrusted from Christ himself. Titus, Paul's legitimate son (vs. illegitimate) is to appoint elders who also are identified with and entrusted with sound doctrine. In the apostolic chain of passing the torch, the elders on the island of Crete become stewards of God's household and His gospel. Titus and the elders are given the three-fold task of 1) rebuking the false teachers "sharply" (vs. 13), 2) teaching the kind of lifestyles that are in accord with or are compatible with or are the results of sound doctrine (2:1), AND 3) setting an example or being a model of good works. Right doctrine necessarily precedes right living and right living necessarily comports with right doctrine. The two are inseparable. Sound doctrine and the lifestyle that is in alignment with sound doctrine are brought to bear as witness against the home-wrecking false teachers. Paul, Titus, and the elders are the champions of the gospel rising up to challenge false teachers who are household wreckers, detestable, unfit for any good work (1:16).

But it's not simply the appointed eldership of the Cretian churches that function as weapons against the deceivers who must be silenced. The other form of Titus' weapon is found in chapter 2, verse 2:

Titus 2:2-10 Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

It's not simply the elders who are defending sound doctrine and refuting the error. The entire church and its community life are engaged in the stewardship of the gospel. Between elders and the entire church, the empty talking deceivers are to be

silenced. The house of God, the church family, is to be actively pursuing the well-being and the defense of families that have been broken because of false teaching.

The community life of the church

Notice in chapter two the qualities of the older men, older women, younger women, and younger men: self-controlled, sound in faith, steadfast, teaching what is good, dignity... these are qualities that mirror the qualifications of elder. And in fact, the activity of defending sound doctrine and being engaged in sound speech for the sake of the gospel links this section with the previous section. Together we are to see the elders and the community working in tandem on behalf of the gospel in the lives of the members of the community. For Paul and Titus, the Judaizing dragon of law and works for salvation and transformation will be slain in structured churches consisting of elders and Christ's body inseparably working together to defend the gospel.

Also note that it's no coincidence that the beginning section of chapter 2 follows a stiff rebuttal of those who are "disobedient". In effect, Paul is saying at the end of chapter 1, "Here is what their life "IS"... this is what IT looks like"... and the beginning of chapter 2, this is what the community life of the church is, and this is what the community life of the church is to look like. Just as the eldership provides contrast to those who are wrecking households, Paul rightly understands that the collective life of the body of Christ, rightly proclaimed in the gospel and rightly lived out in gospel saturated lives, becomes itself, a hedge against biblical error, a rebuttal of false teaching. This community life in chapter 2 manifests itself as a contrast to the "upsetting of whole families". Does the community life expressed in chapter 2 look like an upset family to you?

The proclamation pattern

And all of this revolves around the verses we first mentioned... the middle part of the book. The proclamation of the hope of eternal life, the proclamation of the Salvation and Grace which has appeared from heaven, has been entrusted to Paul. Paul commissions Titus with the proclamation, which Titus is then to delegate to the elders. In turn, the proclamation is proclaimed and taught by the elders to God's covenant people; and the results of this proclamation is a cohesive community life. This is how the covenant community is to function in light of the grace that appeared bringing salvation to all kinds of men.

The Saving Grace that has appeared to all kinds of men in verse 11 is the source of the community life of the preceding verses. How is it that liars, brutes, and beasts can adorn the doctrine of God? How is it that liars, brutes, and beasts can bring honor to the word of God? Because salvation has appeared. This appearance of Saving Grace changes everything. The disobedience and worthlessness of Titus' opponents, which was once characteristic of Cretan church members, is stood on its head. What was promised in the pages of Old Testament history, has finally and emphatically appeared... life is different.

Thus, Paul can expect the Cretan Christians to be involved in the very heart of defending and proclaiming the life-giving, life-sustaining gospel that gave them life to begin with. Why? Christ has appeared bringing salvation. Christ appeared and redeemed and purified for himself a people. Those who embrace the sound

doctrine, those who embrace the proclamation of the hope of eternal life are no longer characterized by lawless deeds, worldly desires, and ungodliness. Those who embrace the Christ who has been revealed and wait for him to be revealed again are characterized by self-controlled, righteous, and godly lives... lives that beat back the erroneous ways of thinking that wreck the lives of entire families.

How is it that those who were once Liars, Brutes, and Beasts can live sensibly, righteously, & godly? How is that a Cretan can live down their own notorious past? It's because Christ has appeared as grace to the sinners. And what is it about that appearing that secures salvation for the Cretan? In fact, what is it about Christ's appearance that changes lives... that teaches us to say no to ungodliness and live sensibly, righteously and godly? The actions of redemption and purification at the cross in verse 14.

In fact, Paul is drawing another parallel in the midsection of chapter 2... Grace Has Appeared (vs. 11), Christ Has Redeemed and Purified (vs. 14). Both thoughts can be considered one and the same throughout this text. And both thoughts have parallel actions. Grace Has Appeared and teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly desires. Christ has redeemed a people from all manner of wickedness or all lawless deeds. Grace Has Appeared and teaches us to live sensibly, righteously, and godly. Christ has purified for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good deeds... deeds which are witness against the wicked deeds of those who are wrecking entire families.

Implications from Titus for preparing for ministry

So what are the implications for preparing for ministry in the life of the community? Obviously, Titus and the elders don't simply jump right into ministry, although, one might make the argument that formal training is probably minimal here in the early church on Crete. The situation seems urgent enough, one wonders how long Titus will take in order to raise up and appoint elders. However, the implications about why we must prepare for ministry are everywhere in this text, even though not explicitly mentioned.

Before we get around to answering the question, "what can we be doing to prepare for ministry in the life of the body", there is one caveat we must mention, something that is resident here in this letter to Titus. Turn to chapter 3. Verse 1:

Titus 3:1-7 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, (and we can say at this point that this thought of good works is repeated throughout this letter to Titus because, again, it is these good works that are part and parcel to silencing those who are upsetting family units)... members of the Cretan churches are to be prepared to exhibit and evidence and adorn sound doctrine in their lives... verse 2:

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured

out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

It's no accident that Paul now speaks of Christ's appearance in ethical terms. Goodness and loving kindness are incarnated in the One who is the source of all goodness and kindness. The Good and Kind One, in his death and resurrection and regenerative work of the Spirit, has saved the Cretons and in so doing, turned Liars, Brutes, and Beasts into Kind and Good defenders of the gospel against those who are upsetting families. As we speak of being prepared for ministry there is a sense in which we are Born Ready... we are inherently prepared for ministry in the saving work of Christ on the cross and the regenerative work of the Spirit in our Spirit baptism. The implications that all who have been regenerated by the Spirit have been gifted by the Spirit include the idea that to be gifted is to be prepared. The defense of the gospel, the teaching and living of a lifestyle that aligns itself with sound doctrine begins at the moment of regeneration. This doesn't mean we don't actively prepare ourselves for ministry... I have more on that. But it does mean that no one can offer an excuse that they cannot be participants in the community's adorning the sound doctrine with lives that speak to the regenerative work of the Spirit. One cannot use lack of preparation as an ultimate excuse, because at a most basic level, all of us have been born prepared to adorn the gospel of God as a people zealous for good works.

In fact, one of the implications of chapter 2 following chapter 1 and the community following the lead of the elders is that *everyone* in the body is a participant. All are expected to be ready for every good work. No one is exempt. The older men and older women and the younger men and younger women... that's all encompassing. That's everybody. This is the work of the entire community. Everyone, regardless of gifting and regardless of the variety of roles in the body, is to be about the task of perpetuating sound doctrine, refuting error, and encouraging each other to adorning sound doctrine with lives that portray the fruit of the gospel.

How do we prepare ourselves for ministry?

Having said that, there are some things we can say from this text, and elsewhere, about being actively prepared for and being devoted to the good work of being involved in the community's perpetuation of sound doctrine. How is it that we prepare ourselves for the ministry?

1. One must be actively committed to the gospel. The book of Titus defines "sound doctrine" primarily as the gospel... what Christ has done for us in his first appearance, or what we call the First Advent. It has become apparent to me over time that much time is spent pursuing pet doctrines and petty theology, and not enough time is spent immersing ourselves in his life, the cross, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus on our behalf, AND the implications of what Christ has done for us in lives that are gospel saturated. If we are to prepare ourselves for ministry, we must be actively pursuing the gospel and its implications.

2. It naturally follows from this that one must be committed to participating in the immediate effects of the gospel. Notice there is a distinction between the gospel and its effects. There is a tendency these days to speak of the effects of the gospel as if they were the gospel itself. We mustn't make that mistake as we are preparing for ministry. There is nothing we do in the gospel. The gospel is simply what Jesus

did, not what we can do. What we do is the result of the gospel's work in our souls. We must maintain the distinction between gospel and its effects.

Being committed to the immediate effects of the gospel means first and foremost being committed to the source of the gospel, the Word. To be prepared for ministry is to actively submit oneself to the corporate preaching and teaching of the Word. Because ministry is by definition Word-oriented, preparation to use the gifts bestowed by Christ for use in the body means cultivation of habits that orient those gifts around the proclamation of the Word in the body. It is in the Word that gifts are energized by The WORD, Christ himself. Preparation for ministry means consistent feeding from Christ, the Manna from heaven, in sitting under the proclaimed Word in the corporate assembly.

This also means that preparation involves being students of the Word. And again, since all are participants in the ministry of the Word at some level, all are students of the Word at some level. This means making use of the learning opportunities afforded in the local assembly. For some, this means active participation in Adult Bible Education. How committed are we in the preparation for ministry of our gifts to Adult Bible Education. For others, preparation for ministry means the commitment and sacrifice of being a participant in the Biblical Theology Study Center on Saturdays (insert shameless plug here). This may mean for some, intentionally pursuing diaconal training provided by Pastor Mark. This may mean, for others, intentionally pursuing training to be teachers and helpers provided by Steve Black and Cheryl Watkins. It may mean pursuing training for evangelism provided by Pastor Dan. And yes, it may mean for some, pursuing leadership training in the Biblical Theology Study Center.

But all of us, regardless of our gifting, are to be students of the Word. Why? Because, if we have been listening to Dale and Mark over the past few weeks, our gifts for ministry are inseparably connected to the Word. Though not all gifts are Word-oriented or Word-focused gifts, all gifts are Word driven and Word energized. The Spirit utilizes our gifts for the building up of the body via the life sustenance found in feeding from our Manna from Heaven in the Word.

3. Preparing oneself for ministry in the use of gifts also means being committed to the Word in picture form. This means being committed to the proclamation of the gospel through baptism and the Lord's Table. It may seem basic to some of us here. But one, by definition, *not* prepared for ministry if one is not baptized for it is in baptism that we are publicly identified with Christ and His people. Further, being prepared for ministry means frequent participation in the proclamation of Christ's death until he comes in the Lord's Table. Neglect of the Table impedes proper use of the gifting Christ has given to his corporate body.

4. Another seemingly obvious step of preparation, one implicit in the letter to Titus, is being committed to the local assembly, the expression of which in our cultural context is membership. This step of preparation cannot be overemphasized in our evangelical context. Proper exercise of the gifts from the Spirit is impossible outside the local assembly. It is popular today to speak of the gifting in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians primarily in terms of the general, global, or invisible body of Christ. That, quite frankly, is a misreading and an unfortunate warping of those texts. Certainly, that would be a misreading of what is taking place in the letter to Titus. What is being described in the one anothering between the "olders"

and “youngers” in Titus 2 is precisely life in the local assembly. To quote Jonathan Leeman from his recent book on church membership, “the local church is where the church on earth is”. Unquote. As we transverse the pages of the New Testament we find that the church invisible presupposes a visible expression. In fact, most mentions of the word “ekklesia” or allusion to the house or assembly of the New Covenant, are speaking to the reality of the local church as Christ’s vehicle for expansion of his kingdom on earth. If we are to prepare ourselves for ministry, we must be committed to the local assembly.

5. And it follows from a commitment to the local church, that preparation for ministry will involve a commitment to the community life of believers. I find it ironic that as I listen to the discussion over preparation for the ministry and debate over the gifts of the Spirit, that sometimes the most vocal are those who are not actively participating either in a local church or the community life of the local church. Yet, this is presupposed everywhere in the letter to Titus. Titus 2:1-10 is describing life in the community. In fact, the relationships described here are paradigmatic in all sorts of ways for community life. One anothering is embedded in the warp and woof of corporate body life. The most basic of preparation for ministry occurs in the informal conversations, the chit chat, the constant encouragement in the ebb and flow of our communion with each other.

6. The one-anothering of Titus 2 also includes the implication of preparation for ministry through mentoring relationships. It is not my place here to unpack all the various angles and aspects to mentoring. However, we must note that Paul’s specific paradigm for defending the gospel, adorning sound doctrine, and being ready for every good work involves the “olders” teaching and training the “youngers”, especially as it relates to the development of the fruit of the Spirit. We must then ask ourselves, how are we preparing the use of our gifts for the benefit of the local assembly in the cultivation of mentoring relationships, either as mentors or mentorees? It’s interesting... Paul does not consider the intentional teaching and training of “youngers” by “olders” as optional here. These are included in his imperatives in this letter to Titus. There is an intentional and necessary built in accountability factor in heading off the rebellious false teachers preying on the flock.

I’m inclined to think that the families on Crete who were susceptible to the shipwreck that comes with the Judaizing errors of looking to the law for salvation and transformation were younger men and younger women, young families vulnerable to ideas that not only were less than gospel, but ideas that did not have their families best interests in mind. Paul intimates here in Titus that a strong corporate family is necessary to strengthen vulnerable nuclear families. If these churches are to be set in order, these churches will have “olders” not only teaching the gospel, but modeling the gospel for the “youngers”. Because it isn’t simply the proclamation of sound doctrine that impedes the influence of those who disobedient and divisive, it is the gospel modeled and displayed in the lives of the community that contrasts and exposes the rebellious even as the gospel is adorned. Preparation for ministry necessarily involves mentoring and being mentored by the “olders” and “youngers”. Who are we mentoring? Who is mentoring us? To whom am I accountable? With whom am I practicing the mutual submission, as Ephesians 5:21 describes it?

7. It also follows from commitment to the local church and body life that preparation for ministry necessarily means a cultivation of the spiritual gifts that have been given to the body. This point is easy to miss because it is right under our noses. The best preparation for ministry in the use of a gift *is* use of the gift. If one is making oneself ready for every good work, then at a most basic level, one should already find oneself participating in those good works. We get this thought here in Titus in the relationship between the elders' family life and service in the corporate family. Cultivating service and ministry at the personal level is itself preparation for service at the corporate level. Preparation begins in the personal life and moves into the corporate assembly, even as the gifts are given in the corporate assembly. I think this is why it is easy for evangelicals to begin to individualize the understanding of gifting. Much could be said at this point... but we'll leave it with this... though preparation of ministry begins at the personal level, its primary function is not personal, but corporate.

8. The last thing we need to see from Titus in regards to preparing for ministry is probably the most fundamental and yet, unfortunately, seemingly the most neglected means of preparation. Implicit in the qualifications given for the appointment of elders, qualifications which are mirrored in the life of the whole body in chapter 2, is a commitment to personal integrity and the pursuit of Christ-likeness. It's not very glamorous. It's certainly not easy. But the most fundamental of preparation for ministry is the cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit that has been imputed to each of us. How is it possible to set in order a disorganization of the local assembly if the personal life is fundamentally disorganized? How is it possible to stem the tide of shipwrecked families unduly influenced by false forms of legalistic Christianity, when the personal life is out of control and maybe even on the rocks? This isn't simply true for elders. The fact that Paul applies qualifications for the elders in chapter 1 to the rest of the body in chapter 2 tells us that these kinds of questions are important for the entire body. Would you like to know how to go about preparing yourself for ministry in the body? Be cultivating a life that is beyond reproach, i.e. a life that does not call into question the very Christ you confess. Be pursuing your wife as Christ loved the church. Practice a winsome subordination in the workplace. Nurture self-control. Cultivate a temper that is in check. Practice hospitality. Orient your affections around the gospel and its goodness. Long before we go running after the pursuit of education and training in a particular interest or for the ministry of a particular gift, we must be training ourselves to model Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

In fact, all of these things can be summed up in this. Preparing for ministry most fundamentally is immersing ourselves in the gospel and allowing it to shape us. Sitting in Adult Bible Education or even the Biblical Theology Study Center on one level is relatively easy. Preparing ourselves for ministry in the gospel by placing ourselves within reach of the gospel is hard. Back to where we started... Titus 2:11-14:

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for

our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Christ's appearance as the Grace of God for us in our salvation necessarily trains and prepares us to sing on the Praise team? Teach an Adult Bible Education class? Counsel on Mondays? Preach in the pulpit? Lead invigorating excursions to Joni and Friends? It does do all that. But here Paul is placing the implications of Christ's work for us in his life, the cross, and resurrection in terms of the personal... Christ's salvation actually trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions... resulting in lives that have the necessary characteristics for adorning the gospel.

Jesus Christ gave himself for us. Preparing for the ministry by aligning our lives around the gospel means giving ourselves for each other. The upshot of what we just read... the upshot of the Grace of God who has appeared for our salvation, this Grace who prepares us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, the upshot is this very simple premise for ministry preparation: if any would come after Jesus in the service of gifts, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Jesus. The most basic preparation for the kind of ministry that is a hedge against the catastrophic consequences of the shipwreck of faith and family, and preparation which orients itself around the gospel, is simply heeding the invitation of the One who gave his life for us: Give your life to me. Come and die.