

“Are You a Help or a Hinderance to Your Congregation?”

Penetrating a Dark World

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1. Bruce Bickel and Titus 2:2: “Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.”

- **“Older men”** = *presbutes* = elder, ambassador
 - In Philemon 1:9, Paul calls himself a *presbutes*, and old man.
- **“Sober-minded”** = unaffected by their emotions.
- **“Dignified”** = serious and solemn minded, evoking the observation, *“That man is serious about his faith.”*
- **“Self-controlled”** = temperate, able to govern yourself. A person that is worthy of respect.
- **“Sound ...”** = healthy, in good working order, free from debilitation, uncorrupted.
 - In 1 & 2 Timothy & Titus, and adjective associated with Sound doctrine and teaching.
- **“... in faith”** = *piste* = **divine persuasion.**
- **“(Sound in ...) love”** = *agape* = divine love, displayed by Jesus on the cross.
- **“(Sound in ...) steadfastness”** = *hupomeno* = lit., waiting under; endurance; patient waiting.

2. Are you a help or hinderance to your congregation?

Titus 1’s focus: life, leadership and orderliness in the congregation.

a. Are you showing-up when your congregation meets for worship

- *“We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”* Romans 12:5.
- *“You are the Body of Christ and individually members of it.”* 1 Cor 12:27.
- *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one Body.”* Col. 3:15.

b. What is the outcome you expect from showing up?

- Bible knowledge, inspiration, batteries recharged, good feelings, warm relationships, etc .. for me.
- Brian H. *“I need to find a church where I am comfortable.”*

c. From the spiritual gifts God has given you, what are you contributing to congregational life?

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- *“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”* 1 Cor 12:7

d. How prepared are you for congregational gatherings & worship?

- How much preparation does Bruce do for Bravemen?
- *Devotional books, The Morning Office (BCP)*

e. Are you accountable to the congregation and do you put yourself under congregational authority?

- Are you part of a small group or guided by a spiritual mentor?
- *“When the Spirit is in your heart and the scripture is in your hand, you have all you need.”* Alexander MacClaren.

f. Are you making a “stretch” or “sacrificial” investment in the success of the congregation?

- Time, talent and treasure.
- Contributing treasure: *“You say, ‘How have we robbed you (Lord)?’ In your tithes and contributions ... Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.”* Malachi 3:8, 10

g. Are you prepared to spend time with parishioners and pastors who are irritating, petty, selfish, boring and not up to your standard of Christian maturity?

- *“The weak are indispensable ...”* 1 Cor 2:22.
- Why are the weak indispensable? Why are the irritating, off-putting indispensable.

h. Will you allow yourself to put up with a certain amount of doctrinal leeway for the sake of the brethren?

- What’s essential doctrine; what’s less than essential doctrine?
- Norman Geisler’s “Essential Doctrine Made Easy”. Christ’s Body. The Church is not included in 16 essentials!
- It’s much easier to be theologically correct rather than self-sacrificial (agape).

i. Are you willing to be patient as the Sovereign God works in you and your congregation?

- Do you believe that God is bigger than your boss? Do you think that God is bigger than your congregation?