

Expanded Report: Avoid Foolish Controversies (Titus 3:8-11)

Prologue: Focusing on What Matters in Ministry

As the family gathered for their evening study, Ryan opened the Bible to Titus 3:8-11. In this passage, Paul advises Titus to focus on teaching essential truths that promote good works and sound faith. He warns against getting involved in foolish arguments, genealogies, and contentious debates, particularly about the law. These disputes, Paul says, are unprofitable and divisive. Instead, Titus is encouraged to emphasize teachings that lead to godliness, peace, and good works. The central message is clear: fruitful ministry is about promoting the core truths of the gospel, rather than engaging in unproductive controversies.

“Tonight, we’re going to talk about how Paul warns Titus against getting caught up in pointless arguments and distractions,” Ryan said. “Paul encourages us to focus on what’s truly important in our faith and avoid being sidetracked by unproductive disputes.”

Ariel, eager to understand, asked, “So, Paul is saying we shouldn’t argue about things that don’t really matter?”

“Yes,” Ryan nodded. “He’s teaching us to focus on what brings life, peace, and unity, rather than getting stuck in arguments that don’t lead anywhere.”

Alice, holding Mr. Fluffernutter, asked, “Does that mean we shouldn’t argue about silly things, like who’s better at games?”

“That’s right, Alice,” Yaya smiled. “Sometimes we can get caught up in small, unimportant things. Paul is reminding us to focus on what truly matters—loving others and growing in our faith.”

Key Teachings: Emphasizing Essential Truths, Avoiding Divisive Arguments, and Fostering Fruitful Ministry

1. Affirming Faithful Teachings and Good Works

Titus 3:8

“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”

- **The Importance of Affirming Good Teachings:**

Ryan explained, “Paul emphasizes the importance of affirming sound teachings—those that encourage believers to live godly lives and to engage in good works. These teachings are ‘good and profitable’ because they help build up the church and bring glory to God.”

Ariel asked, “So, we should focus on teaching what helps people live good lives and love others?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “The goal of our teaching is to encourage people to live in a way that reflects Christ—doing good works, loving others, and walking in faith.”

- **The Role of Good Works in the Christian Life:**

Ryan continued, “Paul urges Titus to remind believers to be careful to ‘maintain good works.’ Good works don’t save us, but they are the fruit of a transformed life. When we focus on living out our faith through good works, it benefits everyone.”

Yaya added, “We don’t do good works to earn salvation, but because we’ve already been saved by grace. Good works are the evidence of our faith and obedience to God.”

2. Avoiding Foolish Questions and Divisive Disputes

Titus 3:9

“But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.”

- **The Danger of Unproductive Disputes:**

Ryan explained, “Paul warns Titus to avoid ‘foolish questions, genealogies, and contentions.’ These things can distract the church from its mission and cause division. Instead of debating things that don’t matter, we should focus on the gospel and the things that build up the body of Christ.”

Ariel asked, “What are ‘foolish questions’ and why should we avoid them?”

“Foolish questions are those that don’t lead to understanding or growth. For example, debating things that aren’t clearly explained in Scripture or arguing about things that don’t really affect our faith or salvation,” Ryan said.

- **Avoiding Divisions Over the Law:**

Ryan continued, “Paul specifically mentions avoiding ‘strivings about the law.’ In the early church, some people were arguing about how much of the Old Testament law should be followed. Paul says these debates only create division and confusion. The focus of the church should always be on Christ, not on irrelevant arguments.”

Yaya added, “When we get caught up in unnecessary disputes, we lose sight of the gospel. It’s important to keep the main thing the main thing—our salvation in Christ and our call to live godly lives.”

3. The Harmful Effects of Divisive Behavior

Titus 3:10-11

“A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.”

- **The Need to Reject Heresy:**

Ryan explained, “Paul warns that if someone in the church is teaching false doctrine or stirring

up division, after giving them two chances to repent, they should be rejected. False teaching is dangerous because it undermines the unity and health of the church.”

Ariel asked, “So, if someone keeps causing trouble by teaching things that aren’t true, we should stop listening to them?”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “While we should be patient and try to help them see the truth, Paul makes it clear that there comes a point where we must reject divisive behavior, because it harms the church.”

- **The Danger of Heresy and Division:**

Ryan continued, “False teaching leads to self-destruction. Paul says that the person who causes division is ‘subverted,’ meaning they’ve been led astray, and their own sin will ultimately condemn them. It’s important that we protect the church from such influences.”

Yaya added, “Heresy and division can have a ripple effect, hurting not just the person involved, but the whole community. That’s why Paul gives these instructions—to protect the church and keep it focused on the truth.”

4. The Key Teaching: Fruitful Ministry Focuses on Core Truths and Avoids Unprofitable Disputes

Key Teaching:

The key teaching of this passage is that fruitful ministry focuses on essential, profitable truths and avoids unproductive disputes. Paul encourages believers to affirm sound teaching that leads to good works, rather than getting caught up in divisive arguments. Christian leaders and members are called to prioritize the gospel, avoid distractions, and promote unity and godliness within the church. By keeping our focus on the core truths of our faith, we can avoid the dangers of unnecessary disputes and divisiveness that only hinder the church’s mission.

Ryan summarized, “Paul is teaching us that while there will always be distractions and controversies in the church, we must stay focused on what really matters—the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our ministry should be about building up the body, not getting stuck in divisive arguments.”

Practical Applications: Staying Focused on What Matters and Avoiding Unproductive Arguments

The family discussed how they could apply these teachings in their daily lives:

1. **Focus on What Builds Up:**

Ariel suggested, “We can focus on talking about things that are helpful to our faith, like reading the Bible together, praying, and encouraging each other. If we hear people arguing about things that don’t matter, we can kindly redirect the conversation.”

Alice added, “I can remind my friends that it’s more important to be kind than to argue about small stuff.”

2. **Avoiding Distractions:**

Ryan encouraged them, “When we’re tempted to argue or get involved in disputes that don’t matter, we can remind ourselves to keep the focus on Jesus and His Word. It’s not about winning debates—it’s about living in a way that honors God.”

3. **Protecting the Church from Division:**

Yaya added, “In the church, we can help keep the peace by speaking the truth in love and avoiding gossip or divisive talk. If we hear false teachings or get caught in arguments, we should stand firm in the truth and lovingly point others back to God’s Word.”

Takeaway: Staying Focused on the Gospel and Avoiding Distractions

As the family reflected, Yaya shared a story about a time when someone in the church wanted to argue about something trivial. “There was a time when a conversation in church was becoming divisive over an issue that wasn’t important. I had to remind everyone to focus on what truly mattered—the gospel. By doing so, we avoided unnecessary conflict and kept the unity of the church.”

Ariel smiled, “So, when we focus on what’s really important, like Jesus and His Word, it helps us stay united?”

“Yes,” Ryan said, “and that’s the key. Our mission as the church is to spread the gospel, not to get caught up in arguments. When we stay focused on that, we bring glory to God.”

Key Points Summary

1. **Focus on Sound Doctrine and Good Works:**

- Christian teaching should emphasize truth that leads to good works and godliness, rather than engaging in divisive disputes.

2. **Avoid Unprofitable Disputes:**

- Believers are urged to avoid getting involved in arguments or controversies that don’t contribute to spiritual growth or the advancement of the gospel.

3. **Protecting Unity in the Church:**

- To maintain the health of the church, divisive behavior and false teaching must be addressed, and the focus must remain on the gospel.
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Key Verse:

***“Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies,

and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.”*** (Titus 3:9)

This passage teaches us that as believers, we are to stay focused on the core truths of our faith and avoid distractions that could cause division. Our goal is to build up the body of Christ with the gospel, not to get caught in unproductive disputes.