

FIVE-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Who Can Be Trusted with Christ's Church?

Titus 1:5–9

*Christ cares for His church through trustworthy shepherds
whose lives and doctrine remain under His gracious rule.*

Day 1 — The Church Belongs to Christ

Read: Titus 1:1–5, Matthew 16:13–18, Acts 20:28

We often speak about “my church” or “our church.” That language can express affection and belonging, but it can also quietly confuse ownership. The church does not finally belong to its members, its leaders, or the generation that sacrificed to build its ministry. The church belongs to Christ.

Paul left Titus in Crete to “put what remained into order” and appoint elders in every town. The churches already existed, but important work remained unfinished. Paul did not tell Titus to invent a leadership model that fit Cretan culture. Christ's people were to be ordered according to Christ's design.

That matters because the church is precious. Jesus did not purchase His people with money, influence, or clever strategy. He purchased them with His own blood. He promised to build His church, and He continues to care for it through His Word, His Spirit, and the shepherds He provides.

An elder is therefore a steward, not an owner. A steward manages what belongs to someone else and continually asks, “What does the owner desire?” Faithful church leadership begins with the same confession every member must make: this is Christ's church. His Word sets the agenda. His glory matters more than our preferences. His design is wiser than the methods that happen to impress our culture.

This truth brings both correction and comfort. It corrects us when we treat the church as a product meant to satisfy us, or as a platform built around a personality. It comforts us when leaders change, disappoint, or fail. Christ has never resigned as the Chief Shepherd. He does not abandon the people He purchased.

You are not responsible to carry Christ's church on your shoulders. You are called to love it, serve it, pray for it, and submit to Christ within it. The Owner remains faithful, and the future of His church rests securely in His hands.

Reflection Questions

1. Where are you most tempted to treat the church as though it belongs to its leaders, members, or preferences?
2. How does Christ's ownership correct your expectations of church life?
3. How does it comfort you when human shepherds are weak or imperfect?

Practical Application

Pray by name for your church and its elders today, thanking Christ for owning His church and asking Him to guide every decision by His Word.

Prayer

Father, forgive me for treating Christ's church as though it existed for my preferences. Thank You that Jesus purchased His people and never abandons them. Teach me to love what belongs to Him, trust His design, and serve with humility. Give our shepherds wisdom to follow Your Word and make Christ visible. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 2 — Faithful Where God Has Already Placed You

Read: Titus 1:6–7, 1 Timothy 3:4–5, Luke 16:10

Public ability is easy to notice. Private faithfulness is harder to see, but it tells us far more about a person's readiness to carry responsibility. That is why Paul begins an elder's examination at home.

“Above reproach” does not mean sinless perfection. No one would qualify. It describes a life that is not defined by a credible accusation of hypocrisy or unfaithfulness. If the man is married, he must be known for covenant fidelity. His household should show the pattern of faithful care and responsible authority already entrusted to him. Paul is not teaching that a father can guarantee a child's conversion. He is showing that the home is the first proving ground of shepherding.

This principle reaches beyond elders. We often imagine that faithfulness will begin when God gives us a larger opportunity: a visible ministry, a better job, a wider influence, or a responsibility that finally feels important. Scripture directs our attention to what God has already placed in front of us. How do we keep promises? How do we speak when no audience is present? How do we care for the people who know us best?

Grace does not first prepare us for public ministry by building a platform. Grace transforms ordinary life. Christ forgives the unfaithful and begins making them faithful. He teaches husbands and wives to keep covenant, parents to shepherd patiently, children to obey, friends to tell the truth, and church members to serve without applause.

This is not a call to construct a flawless home so others will admire it. It is a call to repent of the division between our public image and private life. Jesus already knows what happens behind closed doors, and He does not meet repentant sinners with contempt. The faithful Shepherd restores us and trains us to walk in the light.

The responsibility you have today may feel small, hidden, or repetitive. It is still a trust from God. Faithfulness begins there.

Reflection Questions

1. What responsibility has God already entrusted to you that you are tempted to treat as insignificant?
2. Where is there a gap between your public image and your private faithfulness?
3. How does Christ's grace free you to confess failure instead of protecting appearances?

Practical Application

Choose one neglected responsibility at home, work, or church and complete it today without announcing it or seeking recognition.

Prayer

Father, I confess that I often want visible influence more than quiet faithfulness. Thank You that Christ sees me fully, forgives my sin, and patiently changes me. Help me honor the responsibilities You have already given me. Make my private life honest, dependable, and increasingly ruled by Your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 3 — Who Rules You?

Read: Titus 1:7–8, Galatians 5:16–24, Titus 2:11–12

Paul's list of vices may look like five separate problems: arrogance, anger, drunkenness, violence, and greed. Beneath them runs one common rebellion—a life ruled by self.

The arrogant man treats his judgment as final. The quick-tempered man lets an outburst take command. The drunkard surrenders to appetite. The violent man uses power to serve himself. The greedy man bends possessions toward his own advantage. A man ruled by himself cannot faithfully steward what belongs to God.

The virtues in verse 8 show a different government. The hospitable man opens his life to others. The lover of good has affections shaped by what pleases God. The self-controlled man brings desires and emotions under Christ's rule. The upright and holy man seeks integrity before people and devotion before God. The disciplined man perseveres in obedience rather than drifting with every impulse.

These qualities do not earn grace. They reveal what grace produces. Later in Titus, Paul says that the grace of God trains believers to renounce ungodliness and live self-controlled lives. Jesus not only forgives the guilt of our self-rule; He breaks its dominion. The Spirit grows new fruit where anger, appetite, pride, and greed once governed.

That work is gradual, but it is real. Mature believers are not people who never feel anger, desire comfort, or struggle with selfishness. They are people who increasingly bring those impulses under Christ's authority. They repent more quickly, receive correction more humbly, and rely less confidently on themselves.

Elders must model this maturity, but the standard describes the direction of every Christian life. The question is not simply whether you can control your behavior long enough to look respectable. The question is: who rules you when no one is watching?

Christ is not a harsh ruler who takes life from His people. He is the gracious King who rescues us from the tyranny of self and teaches us the freedom of obedience.

Reflection Questions

1. Which desire or emotion most often acts as though it has the right to rule you?
2. What would repentance look like in one specific situation where self demands its own way?
3. Where can you already see evidence that grace is changing your responses?

Practical Application

Before your strongest recurring impulse directs you today, pause and pray: “Christ, You are Lord here. Help me respond under Your rule.”

Prayer

Father, I confess that I often trust my desires and judgments more than Your rule. Thank You that Christ has freed me from the dominion of sin and given me His Spirit. Train me by grace to be self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. Rule my heart for my good and Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 4 — Hold Firm to the Trustworthy Word

Read: Titus 1:9–16, 2 Timothy 1:13–14, 2 Timothy 4:1–5

Paul's qualifications reach their climax in verse 9. An elder must “hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught.” His authority does not come from originality, confidence, or a compelling personality. He is a steward of truth he received.

Holding firm means refusing to loosen our grip when Scripture becomes unpopular, inconvenient, or personally costly. But this grip is not stubborn loyalty to our own opinions. The elder holds “the trustworthy word”—the apostolic message that rests on the character of the God who cannot lie.

Paul gives this faithfulness a purpose. The elder must be able to instruct believers in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict it. He cannot nourish the church with a Word he does not hold. He cannot answer error with a truth he does not know. Sound doctrine both feeds and protects Christ's people.

That responsibility belongs especially to shepherds, but discernment is not theirs alone. A church that does not know Scripture will evaluate teachers by confidence, popularity, or usefulness. Christian content can sound comforting, clever, and sincere while slowly moving our trust away from Christ. We need more than familiar religious language. We need the trustworthy Word.

This does not mean reading the Bible with suspicion toward everyone. It means receiving God's Word with humility and testing every teaching by it. Ask: Is this what the passage actually says? Is Christ proclaimed as Scripture reveals Him? Does this teaching agree with the gospel?

Jesus perfectly held and obeyed His Father's truth. He resisted the tempter with Scripture, spoke only what the Father gave Him, and fulfilled every promise through His death and resurrection. Because our confidence rests in Him, we do not cling to truth in fear. We hold firm because the One who speaks is trustworthy.

Do not merely consume Christian ideas. Learn the Bible patiently, within the church, until its truth shapes your worship, exposes error, and anchors your hope.

Reflection Questions

1. Who or what most strongly shapes your understanding of God?
2. Are you learning Scripture deeply enough to test teaching rather than merely react to it?
3. Where are you tempted to loosen your grip on biblical truth because faithfulness feels costly?

Practical Application

Read Titus 1:9–16 twice today. Write one sentence explaining what elders must do with the Word and one reason the church needs that ministry.

Prayer

Father, forgive me for judging truth by personality, popularity, or convenience. Thank You for giving a trustworthy Word and for revealing Christ through it. Give me humility to receive Scripture, patience to learn it, and courage to hold it firmly. Protect our church through shepherds who instruct soundly and answer error faithfully. In Jesus' name, Amen

Day 5 — Hope in the Chief Shepherd

Read: Titus 1:5–9, John 10:11–18, 1 Peter 5:1–4

Titus 1 gives the church a demanding portrait of faithful shepherds. They must be above reproach, faithful at home, free from self-serving vices, marked by mature godliness, and devoted to the trustworthy Word. No honest elder reads that list with casual confidence.

The qualifications matter. Churches should not ignore character because a man is gifted, excuse self-rule because he gets results, or treat doctrinal clarity as optional. Christ loves His people too deeply to make faithfulness unimportant.

Yet our hope cannot rest in finding flawless leaders. Every elder remains a sinner being sanctified by grace. Every pastor will have weaknesses, make mistakes, and eventually leave his post. Some shepherds fail grievously and wound the people they were called to protect. If the church's future finally depended on undershepherds, despair would be reasonable.

The hero of this passage is the Chief Shepherd. Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father's will. He never used authority to serve Himself. He never distorted the truth, neglected a sheep, or abandoned His flock when care became costly. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for sinners and took it up again. He purchased the church with His blood and continues to guard it by His power.

That does not make human leadership unnecessary. The risen Christ cares for His church by giving qualified shepherds who live under His authority and His Word. It does mean that faithful elders point beyond themselves. They feed people Christ's truth, lead according to Christ's design, and remember that the sheep belong to Christ.

This gives the church a better response than cynicism or celebrity. Pray for your shepherds. Encourage quiet faithfulness. Evaluate leaders by Scripture. Refuse to build your confidence around a personality. When leaders disappoint you, do not pretend the wound is small—but do look beyond every failing servant to the faithful Shepherd who never forsakes His people.

Christ still protects, sanctifies, and sustains His church. He will continue until He returns and every weary undershepherd receives the unfading crown of glory.

Reflection Questions

1. Are you more tempted toward unrealistic trust in leaders or cynical distrust of all leadership?
2. How does Christ's perfect shepherding address that temptation?
3. What would it look like to support faithful shepherding in your church this week?

Practical Application

Send a specific note of encouragement to a faithful church leader, then pray that he will remain humble, holy, and anchored to Scripture.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Jesus, the faithful Chief Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep. Forgive me for placing too much hope in human leaders or withdrawing into cynicism. Protect Your church, strengthen its shepherds, heal those wounded by failure, and keep my confidence fixed on Christ until He returns. In Jesus' name, Amen