

GENESIS ROAD PRESENTS...



a look at the picture of God
in every chapter of
the 56th book of the Bible

Chapter 1

GOD CARES ABOUT CHARACTER.

As I have grown up in the Christian church, I have heard a lot about spiritual gifts. Understandably, we take these into serious consideration when evaluating if a person is qualified to lead a congregation or ministry. Some people have the gift of music. Some people have the gift of administration. Others have the gift of communication or hospitality or vision.

But when Paul charged Titus with the task of selecting leaders for the church in Crete, he asked him to consider not what people could *do*, but who they *were*: “Appoint leaders in every town according to my instructions. As you select them, ask, ‘Is this man well-thought-of? Is he *committed* to his wife? Are his children believers? Do they respect him and stay out of trouble?’ It’s important that a church leader, responsible for the affairs in God’s house, be looked up to—*not pushy, not short-tempered, not a drunk, not a bully, not money-hungry*. He must *welcome people, be helpful, wise, fair, reverent*, have a good grip on himself, and have a good grip on the Message, knowing how to use the truth to either spur people on in knowledge or stop them in their tracks if they oppose it.” (vs 5-9)

To Paul, I suppose it didn’t much matter if someone was a talented musician . . . if they couldn’t control their temper. And it didn’t much matter if someone was a genius at raising funds . . . if they weren’t reverent. It seems that Paul was telling Titus that it was better to have an “unqualified” person of good character than a leadership guru who couldn’t be trusted.

God cares about character. The kind of person we have chosen to be is much more important to Him than the list of things we can accomplish.

And why? Because God can fix whatever is lacking in the “talent” department, but He doesn’t have much say over a person’s character. Because of the dictates of free will, *we* get to choose the people we become, and if we choose to be difficult, temperamental, untrustworthy people, there isn’t a lot God can do about it.

Thus, in God’s kingdom (and, consequently, in His church), character *always* trumps ability.

With Him, the way to *do* is to *be*.

Chapter 2

GOD IS GREEDY.

Is that a dangerous blog title? Too provocative? Is it sacrilegious to describe God as greedy? Perhaps, but isn't "greedy" how we describe a person who is not satisfied with just a little, but someone who wants more and more and more—maybe even wants it all?

If that's what you think of when you think of *greed*, then when it comes to us, God is certainly greedy. Because in this chapter of Titus, Paul explains that God doesn't just want a small portion of our lives. He wants it all: "That is the way we should live, because God's grace that can save everyone has come. It teaches us not to live against God nor to do the evil things the world wants to do. Instead, that grace teaches us *to live in the present age in a wise and right way* and in a way that shows we serve God." (vs 11-12)

I chose to only quote this summary statement, but it comes at the end of a long list of things Paul instructs Titus to encourage in his fellow believers. And, given that list, it's more than clear that, to God, worship isn't something that just takes place at a church one hour each weekend. No, with God, worship is supposed to be *a way of life*.

Here are just some of the things Paul said believers should strive for:

- To be careful about how they act.
- To be boss over their desires.
- To be persistent.
- To speak kindly and honestly.

- To love family.
- To be wise.
- To not be chained by addiction.
- To be pure.

God doesn't just want you for one hour a week. He doesn't want partial custody. He wants *full* custody! He wants your worship to be a way of life, an every day surrender to His will and plan for your future.

He doesn't just want some small, isolated part of you. He wants it *all*. And He will continue His relentless pursuit of *all* of you until one of two things happens—either you totally surrender to Him or you kick Him to the curb.

We usually think of greed as being bad, and that's true (not to mention Biblical). In the context of a sinful heart, there is nothing good about greed. It works *in spite of* others for the exaltation of self. But in the context of a loving heart, greed works for the exaltation of others *in spite of* self. And when it comes to us, God is just plain greedy.

He knows no other way to be.

Chapter 3

GOD CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING.

I have recently been going through what I call a “Romans 7 season” in my life. You know, that famous passage where Paul laments that he does the very things he *doesn’t* want to do and *doesn’t* do the things he *wants* to do? He goes so far as to say that, at times, he feels like something else has taken control of him. I know all too well what that feels like.

I bet you do, too.

And that’s why it is so awesome to read verses like this one: “There was a time when we, too, were foolish, rebellious, and deceived—we were slaves to sensual cravings and pleasures; and we spent our lives being spiteful, envious, hated by many, and hating one another.” (vs 3)

That’s a pretty awful description of life. Anyone who is living like that has to be miserable. But that’s why it’s so wonderful to realize that this description is written in the *past* tense. Paul is saying, “That’s what we *were*. That’s what we *used* to be. Not anymore!”

In other words, *there is hope*. There is always hope. You may feel like you are currently a slave to lust, envy, hatred, or evil, but if you’re willing to stick it out with God, He can make that description of you a thing of the past. He can free you from anything—yes, *anything*—that has you enslaved.

So, when I am weathering a “Romans 7 season” in my life, it is so comforting to know that there is a Romans 8 (which, just like this verse, is good

news!) as well as a host of other verses that remind us of God’s amazing power to heal and save. For while it may be a hopeless feeling to think that everything needs to be changed, we serve a God who can change everything!

If we’re willing to hang in there with Him, in His time, He will make all things beautiful.