

Woodlands Community Church

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Book: *Let the Men Be Men* by Chris Mueller

Chapter #3: Let the Men be Grounded (The Foundation of Biblical Truth)

Scripture: "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." (Titus 2:1).

Summary of Chapter Two

1. **In our last session, we considered the second chapter entitled 'Let the men be Leaders' specifically, what it looks like for men to be leaders in their marriages as loving headship under Christ.** We saw, first of all, that in God's original blueprint, men and women co-existed in perfect complementary fashion prior to the fall and the entrance of sin into the world. The source of marital strife in today's world stems from Genesis chapter 3, which describes man's fall from God and subsequent 'fall from each other'. We looked at many negative ways that the effects of sin may impact a man leading his wife in marriage, such as becoming dictators, trying to be revered, making solo decisions, thinking of themselves as an infallible authority, or even thinking of themselves as a superior species.
2. **We learned that in Christ, headship can be redeemed and restored.** The first prerequisite is that a man is born again, saved by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone. Then, looking at Ephesians 5:22–33, we explored this idea of loving headship under Christ. We saw that the love a man must have for his wife is a sacrificial love, a responsible love, a purifying love, a sensitive and caring love, an unbreakable eternal love, and a joyous and intimate love.

Chapter Three 'Let the Men be Grounded'

Introduction

1. **We are on a journey in this book, as Christian men, to recover a biblical view of masculinity in the threefold spheres of family, society, and church.** Now Chris shifts his focus to the importance of grounding the man himself. In this chapter, we are preparing the man who is in the home, the society the church and calls him to be faithful to God's blueprint for spiritual growth and ultimately likeness to Christ. This is grounding comes only, and ultimately, through God's inspired Word, the Bible.
2. **And one of the many reasons this is so important is because if you're not a man grounded in the Word of God then for sure there are competing influences grounding you in places you don't really want to be.** In a way, we are all constantly being moulded by whatever inputs we have in our lives. For example, if in the absence of routinely gathering with the Lord's people and hearing God's word preached, other 'messages', some worldly will shape you during the week. The same could be true within the family unit. If you don't train your

children, you can be rest assured that the world will do so in your absence. We could apply this to many areas of our lives.

- 3. And so we must be men who are grounded, not only for ourselves but for the sake of those who we are responsible for and who depend on us.** This will be great motivation, I think, in your life, if you are struggling at times, to make the effort to read and study the scripture, then you can frame it in this way. I must read and ingest this word for the sake of my wife, for the sake of my children, and for the sake of my church. Load yourself with that responsibility, and let that drive you and motivate you to study and become a man of God. Honestly, the reality is, 'read the bible or die'. What else has man been given of such value, than the creator's own words and ways?

TODAYS CRACKED FOUNDATION

The Shifting Culture

- 1. The significance of being a man grounded in God's word is first apparent by the immense shifting of our cultural standards as to masculinity, which makes this even more important as many men have become confused.** Chris says, *"For centuries, the secular standards were the same. To be admired, a man needed to be physically strong or skilled. He needed to be productive, courageous, wise, and a soldier who battled over his possessions and rights. He needed to be a protector of his spouse, children, and anyone else who was weaker. He also needed to be the decision-maker for his home, the centre of his family, and the captain of his own soul."*
- 2. This is hardly the perception of masculinity espoused in mainstream media, and other influences in the world today.** Chris says, *"The list of desirable traits for a man is now topped by characteristics like social consciousness, flexibility, tolerance, likability, and some have even suggested, femininity."*

The Wrong Response

- 1. Chris outlines a number of less-than-best solutions to the shifting sands of masculinity and culture that emerge more prominently than ever before, and so these are the wrong responses that we want to avoid.** We might all identify with some of these different points and are, in some ways, always fighting them.
 - 1. The first is the irresponsible man.** Chris says, *"This kind of man keeps his own agenda. He does not want to be tied down to too many commitments. Responsibilities like finances, disciplining children, involvement in church, house repairs, or keeping promises to friends are seen as an irritation and a hindrance to his own personal happiness."* I would define this temptation as avoiding, at all costs, having other people rely on us and shy away from responsibility.
 - 2. The second is the negative man.** Chris says, *"This man is strongly opinionated and dogmatic. He frowns more than he smiles, and his speech is full of warnings, rules, routines, and rigid orderliness."* These men are filled with pent-up bitterness and

discontentment, and while it may seem like a less-than-optimal solution, it is not a biblically grounded pattern.

3. **The third is the distant main.** Chris says, *"This type of man may be very often in the presence of his family, but his thoughts are consistently somewhere else. He may be bright and in great demand, but an invisible and often impregnable wall separates such a preoccupied man from his family, who wishes they could break through it."* I think the concept of disillusionment frames this issue. When a man isn't grounded, he has a tendency to become disillusioned with all the different things going on around him. There's no framework to categorise and interpret elements of his life. As a result, he experiences a form of withdrawal.
4. **The fourth is the complacent man.** Chris states, *"he ends up being absent, passive, or indifferent in his role as a husband and a father."* This is a man who's not really serious about much at all. Some personality types are more laid-back, but complacency is bad. Complacency, by definition, means *"satisfied with the current situation and unconcerned with changing it, often to the point of smugness."* The reason this is dangerous, I think, is because we are called to be a 'becoming' or 'changing' people at all times time! We want to grow into the image of Christ as lifelong learners. We don't want to be easy-ozy people, and we want people to be able to rely on us.
5. **The fifth is the 'Peter Pan man'.** *"This is the adult man who lives with his parents, spends most of his time playing video games, and waits to be offered a bank presidency job—a position for which he is not qualified. He is looking for a company to pay him handsomely simply for showing up, rather than seeking to work hard to advance his career."* Unfortunately, there's a lot of these men in the church today. They are not willing to take on leadership roles in any capacity. They don't grow older maturity speaking, in-line with their age.

Q: Looking at this list of five 'wrong responses' which ones stand out to you and in what ways might they become detrimental to your Christian life over time if not carefully fought against?

SOLID FOUNDATIONS IN TITUS 1

1. **There are a number of places in scripture where we find direct instruction for men (and women) which give us the building blocks of God's design for our lives spiritually and practically, Chris will make special note of the Apostle Paul's letter to Titus 1 & 2.** Chris says, *"The beginning of Titus is a great place to start building an understanding of God's design for both young men and young women (See also Ephesians 5:22–33, Colossians 3:18–19, 1 Peter 3:1–7, and 1 Corinthians 7:25–40).*

"Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Saviour; To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— 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.” (Titus 1:1–9, ESV)

The Importance of Spiritual Health

1. **From this point forward, Chris is ultimately concerned with our spiritual health as men.** The way that our bodies are designed means that usually, when we have physical health problems, symptoms will always show, though there are exceptions. When we're fighting a cold, for example, our nose gets blocked up, and we get a headache. If it's the flu, we get body aches. You know what I mean. It's important that we take care of ourselves, especially when we notice symptoms of failing health. But as Chris says, *"living a physically healthy life is important, but it's not nearly as important as living a spiritually healthy life."*
2. **And we don't want to get confused about how to live a spiritually healthy life.** There's a bit of a rule when it comes to diet, "all things in moderation", and generally, you'll ensure you're not overeating and gaining too much weight. This principle does not apply to our spiritual lives! We do not want all things in moderation. Consider what Paul says to the young prodigy in the ministry, Timothy, who is himself a young man. Paul says, *"Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."* (1 Timothy 4:7–8).
3. **Just as an athlete has to discipline themselves in their diet to remain in peak condition, so we all, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, as men of God, must have this same mindset in regards to our spiritual health.** Only intentional, disciplined spiritual training will do. Chris says, *"There was a time earlier in my life when I was very sick physically. Unfortunately, I did not receive a proper diagnosis of my illness for almost eight weeks. I later learned that I had bronchitis, but by the time I had been accurately diagnosed, my body had become severely weakened, and I found myself susceptible to any disease or virus that was going around at the time. That experience helped me to understand the importance of obtaining a proper diagnosis of my physical condition. It is even more important for Christian young men to have an accurate assessment of their spiritual health, and that is what the book of Titus will provide for us."*

Foundations for Spiritual Health

1. **The first foundation for spiritual health that Chris points out from Titus 1 is that a man must be genuinely saved before he can grow to be God's man.** Chris points to the opening of Paul's letter to Titus, where he says he is writing *"for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth"*. The first foundation, then, is that you must be saved. You

must know the forgiveness of sins that is found only in the cross of Christ. You must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, conformed to the image of Christ, and justified through faith. This is the language of salvation, which those who know the Lord sing with joy over. James says, *“Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”* (James 1:18, ESV) Chris goes on to say, *The words “God’s elect” remind us of the truth that the entire human race is so utterly sinful that we are hopeless and helpless to do anything to save ourselves. Therefore, we are totally dependent on the mercy of God for our salvation and must trust completely in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit... God must save you—you can’t save yourself. Jesus Christ accomplished your salvation through His perfect sinless life, His substitutionary death on the cross for your sin, and His resurrection from the dead. Your sin has fallen on Christ and, for you to be justified, His righteousness must cover you. Christ took your place so you could exchange all that you are for all that He is. If this is not true of you, then the rest of what Paul has to say is of secondary importance. Salvation is the starting place—the launchpad for biblical manhood.”*

- 2. The second foundation for spiritual health, Chris points out from Titus 1, is that you must be interconnected to a local church before you can grow to be God's man.** As we read from Titus, above, the first ingredient required to plant churches is to appoint elders or appoint biblically qualified authority. Elders in local churches are ministers on Christ's behalf to his people. The New Testament does not envisage Christians disconnected from local churches. The New Testament does not envisage churches without biblically qualified and appointed elders. They are there for your good from God and their ministry should not be disregarded. Chris says, *“Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to gather the new converts into local churches, assemblies of believers who would function dependently upon the Lord and one another. And for any young man today to grow into his God-designed role, he too needs to be immersed in the ministry and community of a healthy local church made up of born again believers under a plurality of biblical elders.”*

Q: Its common today for people to hold a loose connection to a local church(s) and keep people at a distance and 'not too close' how does Chris speak against this with his second foundation of spiritual health point here? What are people (believers) missing, in God's design of the church, by keep at a distance?

SOLID FOUNDATIONS IN TITUS 2

- 1. In the second chapter of Titus Paul discusses the character and function of older men and older women, and young men, and young women.** But we can rightly say the letter to Titus is of special interest to younger men because the recipient of Paul's letter Titus was a young man who needed to be grounded in sound doctrine to build his life in ministry upon.

“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. 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 behaviour, 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.”
(Titus 2:1–8, ESV)

The Contrast with False Believers

- 1. What doesn't show in the above passage from Titus 2 is that this "but as for you" that Paul says to Titus is a contrasting "but" with the end of Titus 1, where Paul talks about false teachers.** Titus's life, doctrine, and teaching stand in stark contrast to the false teachers of his day. This is the first principle Chris extracts for us all. To be a man of God who is grounded, there need to be sharp contrasts between us and the way of the world. Scripture must measure and govern what we think about, what we speak, what we watch, what we hear, our relationships, our marriages, and our families. The grounded man of God's life is lived differently.
- 2. But why do so many professing Christian men young or old not live in contrast to the world and false believers?** Why is it that many who profess Christ as their Lord and Saviour, deny Him in their lives and action?
 - 1. The first possible reason Chris points out is that they are not actually true converts to begin with.** This underscores the significance of the first foundation we discussed earlier: a man's genuine salvation. Jesus himself warned us there would be many false converts within the visible church. And just so we're clear, a faithful life, a faithful Christian life, is not the basis of saving faith. The foundation of saving faith is the work of Christ and Christ alone applied through justification. He saved us not because of the works we have done, the things we have said, or the prayers we have prayed, but because of His grace. Thus, Christian works and obedience are the results of what has happened to us. Nothing more. Evidence flows organically from the new life we have in Christ. When these fruits do not exist, it is genuine cause to doubt whether a person knows the Lord Jesus personally as their saviour. If the fruit on the tree is rotten, it's likely that the tree's root is as well. Chris says, *"Simply put, if you are not living differently, you may be deceived and not be a Christian at all. You may not be a real believer but a "make-believer."*
 - 2. Another reason a man may not live differently to the world as a Christian is that he has been negatively influenced by bad company.** We all know the scripture in 1 Corinthians 15, "Bad company corrupts good morals." Your friends really do matter. Really. If you live your life constantly surrounded by phoney Christians, you're in danger. Their influence on your life will be devastating. In fact, Paul in 1 Corinthians 5 gives instruction that we are not at all to associate with phoney Christians. If they claim to follow Christ but are living sexually immoral lives filled with greed, idolatry, revilers, drunkards, and swindlers, Paul says to not even eat a meal with such a person. And why? The goal is to bring the sinning brother or sister to genuine repentance by

removing them from church fellowship. The discipline aspect is a rarity in today's churches to our demise.

- 3. A third reason a Christian may not live in contrast to the world is that he does not have godly role models.** The church's best men should lead so they can be godly models and mentors for younger believers. This is why elders are so critical in the church's life. Chris says, *"The accurate interpretation and sound doctrine taught by godly elders will protect the flock by exposing and rebuking false beliefs and ungodly practices. If a young man is not in a healthy church that is "accurately handling the word of truth," he might not be moved by the Spirit of Truth to live according to truth."* It goes without saying that if you're in a church that, week in and week out, has nothing but fluff without substance and you're not really having the Word of God clearly communicated, impressed, and applied to you, you need to have some hard conversations with your church leaders and perhaps look at finding a church that will faithfully teach and model the word.

Q: Can you think of any other reasons why professing Christians do not have lives of contrast as we have described, are they accurate?

Encouraging Others With the Truth

- 1. A second indicator that Chris points out is that a man of God is committed to encouraging others in the truth.** Chris points out that the Greek verb "speak" in Paul's command to "speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine" does not refer to preaching in the church, but rather to ordinary conversation. As you go, speak sound doctrine. Chris says, *"So if you are a young man, you should often be speaking with others about sound doctrine. Paul wanted Titus to continually take the initiative to talk to people in the church at Crete about lifestyle choices that would honour the Word of God, make them more like Christ, and distinguish them from the world."*
- 2. And so here's another litmus test for a spiritually grounded man.** This is ordinary speech laced with spiritual thought. Here's a challenge for us to put this into practice. After the service at church, do you immediately start talking with your neighbour about the weather or how things are going on your farm or at work? Discussing those things in small talk may have some importance, but are really going to grow you and change you? The most vibrant Christians I know frequently want to engage with the message immediately after. This is consistent with what Paul is communicating to Titus.
- 3. But speaking sound doctrine as you go should extend beyond your Sunday service experience.** Sunday worship, hearing preaching, etc. only make up a part of your engagement with the church. Engage in various ministries within your church and participate in the activities of other Christians. Attend them with the expectation that they will greatly impact your spiritual growth and that of your fellow believers. Chris says, *"There are many Christians who want to be taught the great doctrines of the faith from the pulpit, but they cringe at the idea of having their rotten attitude confronted over coffee by a fellow brother or sister in Christ. To be a young man who is committed to becoming God's man, a truly*

masculine man, it will require more than having Christian friends your own age to “hang out with.” You will need to develop friendships with older and younger believers in the context of a church family, all of whom are committed to growing in Christlikeness and eager to talk about it.”

A Becoming Life

1. **The third indicator, of a spiritually healthy life, is a man who speaks the things which are 'proper' for sound doctrine.** This word for "proper" means seemly, suitable or appropriate. Chris points out in the King James Version it is rendered as "becoming". Chris says, *"Considering some negative examples can help us better understand the positive truth Paul is communicating in this verse by using the word “proper.” It is not “proper” Christlike character, for instance, when a Christian teenager rebels against his or her parents. It is not “proper” for a Christian employee to be lazy at work. It is not “proper” for a Christian husband to fail to live with his wife in an understanding way (1 Peter 3:7) or to fail to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). It is not “proper” for a Christian wife who knows the truth of the gospel to refuse to submit herself to her husband as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22). Spiritually healthy Christians are trained in how to live so that the gospel of Jesus Christ is properly adorned by their godly behavior, rather than distorted in an unbecoming fashion."* Our speech has the end goal of building people up into the image of Christ, those things which are proper.
2. **We are wise to remember here that this is not a legalistic adherence to a human standard of morality or placing ourselves under the law of God to earn righteousness.** All true Christians all have a new nature given by Christ already. Sanctification is the process of conforming ourselves, Spirit of God enabled, to that nature, which is the nature of Christ. Paul says, *“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.”* (Romans 6:17–18, ESV)

THE FOUNDATION OF SOUND DOCTRINE

1. **We've heard the term sound doctrine a few times now and Chris argues this is the climax of Paul's instruction in Titus 2:1 when he says speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.** So, what exactly is sound doctrine? The Greek term for sound here is ὑγιαίνω 'Hygiaino' (we can hear hygiene), it means being healthy, living well. The word doctrine means teaching or instruction. Chris says, *"So, when we put the words “sound” and “doctrine” together, what is being described is the accurate biblical teaching that leads to godly, Christlike living. Sound doctrine leads to spiritually healthy living."*

The Importance of Sound Doctrine

1. **Is sound doctrine really important?** Well, it's sound doctrine that promotes increasingly Christ-like behaviour, so it's critically important. If God invests Himself in His Word, and the

only special revelation we have to go on is His written Word, then the degree to which we accurately understand it, is the foundation for any and all obedience to it. Chris says, *"If you are sitting under ear-tickling teaching, rather than sound doctrinal teaching, you are being served diseased meat, which ultimately is going to make you sick rather than sound—you will be unhealthy spiritually and not vibrant for Christ."*

2. **Listen to what Paul says elsewhere to Timothy**, *"If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain."* (1 Timothy 6:3–5, ESV)

Q: What do you think happens when sound doctrine and teaching is lost in the ministry of the local church? Do you agree its critical to the churches life? What are some ways subtle drift from sound doctrine can occur? How can we promote the importance of sound doctrine more?

Sound Doctrine and Young Men

1. **Some application here for young men, and all men really, is that we need to be accurate and humble in our conclusions about scripture.** Just as the scripture calls for elders to be accurate in their teaching, so we all should aspire to the same, to have an accurate knowledge of the word of God. Paul said, *"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."* (Titus 1:9, ESV)
2. **Chris rightly points out one of the temptations that all young men face.** And all of us, really. At times, we may feel tempted to remain open-minded and remain undecided in our religious beliefs. Now we have to make a distinction between being open-minded and simply open-ended. To be open-minded means you're willing and able to hear counterpoints of view or different perspectives or methods of interpretation that perhaps you had overlooked and could change your mind or improve your accuracy doctrinally. However, being open-ended involves refraining from drawing any concrete conclusions and consistently maintaining a neutral stance. We want to be open-minded, but not open-ended.
3. **We want to have some serious theological convictions that we have come to ourselves but not shut off from other voices.** Particularly in the realm of what we would call Christian Orthodoxy, what genuine born-again believers have differentiated on, on non-essential matters over the centuries. Chris says, *"Young men have a propensity to keep their options open theologically, which is often a cover for laziness and an unwillingness to study the Bible. They will read a blog article instead of spending time in the pages of the Word itself. They will unthinkingly follow a favourite teacher or podcaster instead of striving to understand the author's intent in the text. They will default to an "open position" instead of wrestling with the Scriptures to find the answers. But Paul says we should be "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching" (Titus 1:9)."*

4. **Think of our Lord Jesus Christ who said,** *“It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* (Matthew 4:4, ESV) We should all strive to be men who live near to the Lord and His Word. To go His way and not our own way. Guided by His truth and not formulate 'truth' for ourselves.
5. **We're not trying to do this just to puff up our head knowledge, so that we can sound scholarly, appear smart to our peers.** We're trying to know the truth so we can live the truth. We want to be doers of the word. *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”* (James 1:22–24, ESV)

Q: What are we really getting at under the surface when we say things like we need to have 'sound doctrine' as believing men?

Sound Doctrine And Grace

1. **Everything we've just said will give you the perspective of a need to be a warrior for the truth. While this is commendable, we must exercise caution to avoid a zeal that disregards love and grace.** Chris says, *“Young men are often warriors for truth. That is good, but those who are zealous over sound doctrine can often lack love and grace. Our Lord Jesus was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Because Christ is our ultimate example, you and I should speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and demonstrate grace in our speech (Ephesians 4:29). The grace of God should guide us to live worthy of our salvation in speech and all aspects of life. This is a primary point Paul makes in his letter to Titus. Young men should always pursue living the truth in light of the “grace of God” (Titus 2:11), which has been shown to us through Christ and is “instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:12).”*
2. **The pursuit of truth as a Christian is a pursuit that comes in response to what God has done for us.** Therefore, it is important to remember that when we discuss sound doctrine, we should avoid becoming overly passionate to the point of breaking fellowship or acting in an arrogant or unbecoming manner. We should be well seasoned with grace and love towards our brothers and sisters in Christ, even with whom we have disagreement. This is another way for us to be grounded as men of God.

Q: Are there any further questions or points from this session you wish to discuss further?