

The Rules of Life

Devotional Reading: Psalm 37:27–40

Background Scripture: Titus 1:1–3; 2:11–15

Titus 1:1–3

¹ Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³ and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,

Titus 2:11–15

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

¹⁵ These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.



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Key Text

*The grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,—**Titus 2:11–13***

Hope in the Lord

Unit III: Eternal Hope

Lessons 10–13

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Recall the “blessed hope.”
2. Contrast godly and ungodly lives of Paul’s day.

3. Make a plan to eliminate one ungodly element in his or her life.

Lesson Outline

Introduction

- A. Struggle for Godliness
- B. Lesson Context
- I. **The Messenger (Titus 1:1–3)**
 - A. Servant and Apostle (v. 1)
 - B. Commanded by God (vv. 2–3)
- II. **The Message (Titus 2:11–15)**
 - A. Grace Appeared (vv. 11–12)
Ever Learning
 - B. Hope Promised (vv. 13–14)
Waiting for Hope
 - C. Leader Encouraged (v. 15)

Conclusion

- A. The Gift of Grace
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

How to Say It

- Cretans *Cree-tunz.*
- Crete *Creet.*
- Epimenides *Ep-ih-men-ih-deez.*
- Pharisee *Fair-ih-see.*
- Septuagint *Sep-too-ih-jent.*
- Titus *Ty-tus.*

Introduction

A. Struggle for Godliness

A glance through the news would make it seem like the church is consistently plagued by ungodly behavior from both without and within. Recent scandals of greed, abuse, and misuse of power remind us that the church is not immune from ungodly behavior.

But the people of God have always struggled against ungodliness. The church has sought ways to live godly lives, even in an ungodly culture. This issue is as much an issue in the twenty-first century as it was in the first century.

B. Lesson Context

Paul's letter to Titus comes from a part of the New Testament called the Pastoral Epistles. Whereas Paul wrote other letters to specific groups of believers in particular locations (examples: [Galatians 1:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:1](#)), the Pastoral Epistles were written to particular individuals: Timothy ([1 Timothy 1:2](#); [2 Timothy 1:2](#)) and Titus. The latter was a church leader Paul designated "my true son in our common faith" ([Titus 1:4](#)).

The letter to Titus involved events that occurred after the conclusion of the book of Acts, but we have no exact knowledge of the sequence. By the time Paul wrote to Titus, the apostle had been released from his imprisonment in Rome and had found an occasion to visit the island of Crete. While visiting, Paul evangelized and started some churches. It is likely, however, that the gospel had already reached Crete many years earlier through unnamed believers (see [Acts 2:11](#)).

Crete was famous in antiquity as a source of culture and religion. The Cretan people, however, were not highly esteemed in the Roman world. In [Titus 1:12](#), Paul quotes a native Cretan "prophet" who describes his own people as "always liars, evil brutes, [and] lazy gluttons." While Paul does not name this source, one possibility is the sixth-century BC writer Epimenides. This statement has been called the Cretan Paradox because if all Cretans are liars, and Epimenides was a Cretan, then was he lying when he made the statement?

Paul was accompanied on Crete by one of his most trusted associates, a Gentile believer named Titus ([Galatians 2:3](#)). The book of Acts does not mention Titus by name. Still, he figures prominently in the letters of Paul. In 2 Corinthians, Titus is named (in Greek) nine times (example: [2 Corinthians 8:23](#)). Paul wrote his letter to Titus in about AD 65 after departing from the island. Paul had left Titus behind to correct a chaotic situation in the Cretan churches. Most importantly, Titus needed to place an eldership in each congregation ([Titus 1:5](#)).

The church in Crete was troubled by people who professed to know God but lived demonstrably different lives (see [Titus 1:16](#)). Such people had deceived others, disrupted the community ([1:10–11](#)), and brought needless controversy to the church ([3:9–10](#)).

Today's lesson reveals Paul's solution to this challenging situation. What the church in Crete needed was "sound doctrine" ([Titus 1:9](#); [2:1](#)) and training in godliness (see [1:1](#); [2:12](#)). This is the nitty-gritty of helping believers mature into godly men and women. Paul wanted Titus to grow the church by grounding them in the truth of the gospel and encouraging lives of holiness.

I. The Messenger ([Titus 1:1–3](#))

A. Servant and Apostle (v. 1)

1a. Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ

An ancient letter typically began by naming its author and its intended recipients. Paul's other New Testament epistles reflect this tendency (examples: [1 Corinthians 1:1–2](#); [1 Timothy 1:1–2](#)). In the first verses of this particular letter, *Paul* identified himself as its author and named his intended audi-

ence: Titus ([Titus 1:4](#), not in our printed text).

In [Romans 1:1](#) and [Philippians 1:1](#), Paul identifies himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. But nowhere else in the New Testament does he identify himself as *a servant of God* (compare [James 1:1](#)). His self-description reflects his humility—a required attitude for a leader of Christ’s church (see [Matthew 20:26–28](#)). Humility did not preclude him from leading the church. Instead, it was a prerequisite to being *an apostle of Jesus Christ*. Paul—a former Pharisee and persecutor of Christians—had been chosen to be Christ’s messenger (see [Acts 9:15](#)). Through the letter’s introduction, Paul demonstrated humility, affirmed his allegiance to God, and reminded Titus of his apostolic mission.

1b. to further the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—

Paul’s purpose in writing was to strengthen *God’s elect* people. This designation is rooted in God’s gracious and generous choice of a people to be his own (see [Romans 8:29–33](#); [Ephesians 1:4–14](#); [1 Peter 2:9–10](#)). Paul’s mission as an apostle was to strengthen the elect’s *faith* so that they may better understand their salvation (see [2 Timothy 2:10](#)).

Paul also wrote to mature their knowledge of *the truth* of their salvation through Christ Jesus. Doing so was part of his task as an apostle (compare [1 Timothy 2:3–7](#)). When people understand and accept the truth of salvation, they will repent and live new lives rightly ordered by God’s truth (see [2 Timothy 2:25](#)).

Together, faith and knowledge produce *godliness*: behavior that follows God’s standards revealed by Christ Jesus (see [1 Timothy 4:7–8](#); [6:3–4](#)). Ten of the fifteen uses in the New Testament of the underlying Greek word translated *godliness* are found in the Pastoral Epistles. Its usage reveals that Paul considered it crucial for leaders of the church to develop godliness.

Some Cretans were known for their ungodly behavior (see [Titus 1:10–13](#)). Therefore, it was appropriate for Paul to address such behavior from the start of his letter. Paul expected that Titus would take on the mission of leading the church in Crete to maturity through the gospel message.

B. Commanded by God (vv. 2–3)

2. in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,

The word *hope* often implies wishful thinking, like, “I hope it doesn’t rain tomorrow.” That is not how Paul uses the word in this verse. For Paul, *hope* is an assurance because the subject of this hope was Jesus Christ. Jesus is life, and he has life in himself ([John 11:25](#); [1 John 5:20](#)). God has promised that people can experience *eternal life* when they enter into a saving relationship with him ([John 17:3](#)).

This promise is sure because it comes from the all-perfect, all-powerful God. He is trustworthy and faithful and *does not lie* (see [1 Samuel 15:29](#); [Hebrews 6:18](#)). Further, it is rooted in God’s eternal nature. He gives life and desires to be in a relationship with his creation. Even when sin and death entered the world, God had prepared a way of salvation through Christ Jesus *before the beginning of time* (see [2 Timothy 1:9](#)).

3. and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching

entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,

Though God's promise existed since before creation, only *at his appointed season* did he reveal Christ as the fulfillment of that promise (see [Galatians 4:4–5](#)). God's timing in this regard was perfect; Christ came to earth at just the right time and in just the right context (see [Romans 5:6](#); [1 Timothy 2:6](#)). Thus, Paul emphasizes that God is at work in human history to accomplish his plan and purpose.

The underlying Greek word translated *preaching* conveys the idea of both the act of proclaiming the good news and the content of that proclamation. Part of Paul's task as an apostle was to commit himself to *the command of God our Savior* to proclaim that salvation had come in and through Christ Jesus. *Through Paul's preaching*, he served as a herald, announcing the good news of salvation (compare [Romans 16:25](#); [1 Corinthians 2:4](#); [2 Timothy 4:17](#)).

In this verse, Paul unpacks the basis for his ministry as an apostle. He could claim apostleship because he had experienced a particular calling to proclaim holiness and grace. Elsewhere, the apostle further unpacks this authority in his letter his protégé, Timothy ([2 Timothy 1:9–11](#)).

What Do You Think?

In what ways has the preaching of the gospel in your local church deepened your love for God?

Digging Deeper

How will you increase your exposure to God's Word and its teaching in your daily life?

II. The Message **([Titus 2:11–15](#))**

The first half of Paul's letter addressed several needs that faced the church at Crete: godly leadership in the church ([Titus 1:5–9](#)), a rebuke of ungodly behavior ([1:10–16](#)), and sound doctrine that leads to godly behavior ([2:1–10](#)).

A. Grace Appeared (vv. [11–12](#))

11. For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.

Having described how believers should live, Paul then explains the reason *for* that way of living: *the grace of God*. Such grace is a gift given to us by God for our justification and *salvation* (see [2 Timothy 1:9](#); [Titus 3:7](#)). Grace is necessary for salvation because, without it, we are incapable of attaining salvation by our own merit. Grace is not deserved or earned. Instead, it is based exclusively on the love of God (see [Ephesians 2:4–10](#)).

The underlying Greek word for *appeared* shows up only four times in the New Testament, two of which are in the letter to Titus (here and in [Titus 3:4](#); see [lesson 13](#)). The word carries the connotation of light appearing and shining in darkness (compare its usage in [Luke 1:79](#) and [Acts 27:20](#)). The grace of God, revealed in Christ Jesus, has *appeared* to bring salvation to a sin-darkened world (see [John 1:9](#); [Colossians 1:13](#)). The gift of grace is available to all people (see [1 Timothy 2:3–4](#)), but not everyone will

accept it. For those who do receive this gift, their lives will bear the fruit of godliness (see [Ephesians 5:8–20](#)).

What Do You Think?

How will you share the message of God's grace and salvation with someone this upcoming week?

Digging Deeper

How will you tailor your communication of that message to have maximum appeal and persuasiveness?

12a. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions,

God's grace has a formative effect on his people. Not only has this grace appeared for our salvation, but it has become our instructor as it *teaches us* the habits of righteousness and godly living.

The Cretans were not the only ungodly people. Outside of Christ, everyone stands condemned for their sins ([Romans 3:23](#)). When we accept the gift of grace, God gives us his Spirit to teach us. The Spirit bears the fruits of righteousness through us (see [John 14:26](#); [15:5](#); [Galatians 5:22–24](#)).

God's grace forms us to want to renounce personal and systemic sin. *Ungodliness* is a generic word for any evil behavior blatantly against God's righteous nature (see [Romans 1:18–23](#)). *Worldly passions* are the selfish desires of the flesh (compare [Galatians 5:16](#)). Because God calls believers to a life of righteousness, we should deny any such behavior that opposes God or is inconsistent with his character.

12b. and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

God's grace instructs believers to replace ungodly behavior with righteous behavior. *Self-controlled* living suggests prudence regarding our passions and desires. Paul lists it as a standard for the believers in Crete ([Titus 1:8](#); [2:2](#), [5–6](#)), and it should be our standard as well. To live *upright and godly* summarizes the required attitudes and behaviors that conform to God's standard. It is the opposite of “ungodliness” ([2:12a](#), above). Righteousness is God's standard, and he desires the same from his people (see [2 Timothy 2:22](#); compare [Ephesians 6:14](#)).

Paul frequently includes “virtue lists” in his writings (examples: [Galatians 5:22–23](#); [Ephesians 4:32](#); [Philippians 4:8](#)). This verse is the only such list that mentions all three of these attributes together. These three are not simply things to attain in future eternal life. Instead, we should seek to develop them *in this present age*—an age of darkness that opposes God and God's people (see [2 Corinthians 4:4](#); [Ephesians 6:10–12](#)).

What Do You Think?

In what ways are you attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit to lead you into godliness?

Digging Deeper

Who will you ask to be a role model for you in this regard?

Ever Learning

What do a cook, a pruner, a construction worker, a customer service representative, and a student have in common? This question seems like the start of a bad joke, but it's not. It's a list of some jobs I held after high school.

These diverse jobs had a common denominator. They each required some level of specialized training. For example, the restaurant required detailed training for its kitchen staff, and the construction company mandated that I know building codes. Because of these experiences, I've learned that life is a continuous process of learning and growing.

The Christian life is also one of learning and growing. God's grace teaches us to avoid ungodliness and to pursue righteous living. Are you willing to learn more about what God requires for the Christian life, or have you decided that you've learned all you can? What would your closest friends say about you?

—J. M.

B. Hope Promised (vv. 13–14)

13. while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Many unbelievers dread what the future may bring (see [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#)). Believers, however, have a *blessed hope* of Christ's return and eternal life in the presence of God (see [2:19](#); [Titus 1:2](#), above; [2 Timothy 1:10](#)). Even though we may experience trials and suffering on earth, we can take hope that God will be faithful to his promises and bring redemption and renewal to us and our world (see [Romans 8:18–21](#); [Philippians 3:20–21](#)). This hope will be fulfilled at *the appearing of the glory* of Christ (see [Matthew 16:27](#)). At his return, we will experience glorious renewal and resurrection life.

God revealed his grace through the incarnation of Jesus (see [2 Corinthians 8:9](#); [1 Timothy 3:16](#); [Hebrews 2:9](#)). This very same grace will again be on display at the return of our *great God and Savior, Jesus Christ*. As a result, we are to have lives of holiness and godliness in eager anticipation (see [Colossians 3:4–5](#); [1 John 2:28](#)).

What Do You Think?

How would you respond to someone who says that the return of Jesus Christ is inconsequential for a believer?

Digging Deeper

How do [Matthew 24:14](#); [25:31–46](#); [1 Corinthians 1:4–9](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:3](#); [4:15–18](#); and [Hebrews 10:24–25](#) inform your response?

Waiting for Hope

“We can walk or ride a bike wherever we need to go” was my proposal to my wife when we first arrived in rural Alaska. At that time, there were only five miles of paved highway in our area, and a

gallon of gas cost over seven dollars, so owning a car seemed unreasonable to me. Fortunately, my wife accepted my proposition. Walking and cycling became our primary forms of transportation.

After several years, however, we learned that five miles is a long distance to bike or walk during subzero temperatures. We settled on buying a used vehicle and hired a shipping company to deliver it to our remote location via a barge. As the barge slowly made its way to rural Alaska, we kept a close eye on its location with the help of the Internet. Over several months, the barge made numerous stops before arriving with our vehicle. The time we spent waiting for the arrival of the barge felt longer than the years spent without a car.

Jesus will return to earth, but we don't know its timing. Therefore, we wait for that "blessed hope" ([Titus 2:13](#)) and live in an "in-between" period between Christ's first and second coming. But this "in-between" time is not a time for us to wait aimlessly. Instead, during this time, we worship God and develop lives of godliness. How will you grow in godliness as you wait for Christ?

—J. M.

14. who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Believers eagerly await Christ's glorious return, and our hope is based on what he accomplished for us in his first coming to earth. God's grace was displayed when Jesus *gave himself for us* on the cross. In Jesus' giving of himself, he voluntarily did something that no one else could: rescue us from the grasp of sin and death and give us life (see [Galatians 1:4; 2:20](#)).

The purpose of Christ's self-giving was twofold. First, he came *to redeem us*. He did this by being the ransom that sin requires ([Mark 10:45](#)). The underlying Greek word for *redeem* is also used in the Septuagint to describe how God ransomed his people from their bondage (examples: [Exodus 6:6; 15:13; 2 Samuel 7:23; Psalm 130:8](#)). Christ's death on the cross paid the ransom for our sin and freed us from the bondage of our *wickedness* and ungodliness ([Romans 6:22; 1 Timothy 2:6](#)).

Second, the shedding of Christ's blood cleanses us from the impurity of our sins (see [Hebrews 9:12–14; 1 John 1:7, 9](#)). Our purification from sin leads to our sanctification into holiness and godly behavior (see [2 Corinthians 7:1](#)).

The result of our redemption and purification is that we become identified as the people of God: *a people that are his very own* (compare [1 Peter 2:9](#)). Christ's work has created an "elect" people ([Titus 1:1](#), above)—redeemed and purified—as God's own.

As God's redeemed people, we wait for Christ's return and the resurrection of the body. In this season of waiting, we should become *eager* to do *good* works that result from God's grace (see [Ephesians 2:8–10](#)). These good works flow from our love (see [Romans 12:9–21; 1 Corinthians 13](#)) that results from a life filled with God's Spirit (see [Galatians 5:13–26; Colossians 3:12–15](#)).

What Do You Think?

How will you live differently in light of the knowledge of your redemption and purification?

Digging Deeper

How will you make time to do the good works that result from this status?

C. Leader Encouraged (v. 15)

15. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

Paul concludes this section of his letter by imploring Titus to action to encourage people to lead holy lives. First and foremost, Titus needed to address the problems at Crete. God had set Paul apart to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ ([Acts 9:15](#); [26:15–18](#); [Galatians 1:11–16](#)). From this position of authority, Paul encouraged Titus to strengthen the faith of the believers.

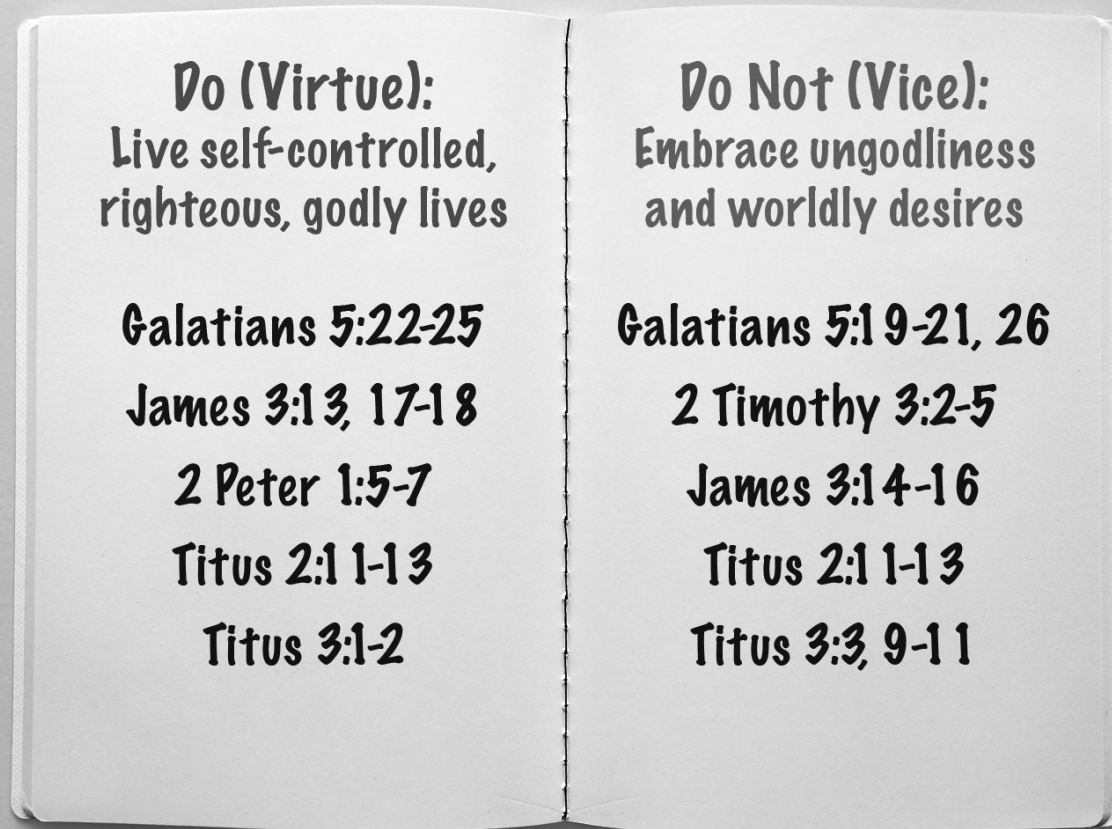
Titus would *encourage* other believers to do good works indicative of their life in Christ. Encouragement and admonishment were aspects of Paul’s mission (see [Colossians 1:28](#)), and so would be the mission of Titus.

This verse is the third time in this letter that Paul uses the underlying Greek word translated here as *rebuke* (see also [Titus 1:9, 13](#)). Ungodly behavior had abounded in Crete (see [1:12](#)). Therefore, Titus would have to call it out and offer a correction for godliness (compare [Galatians 6:1](#); [Ephesians 5:11](#)).

Titus could exhort and rebuke because of the *authority* that Paul had given him. There was a specific “chain of command” in this letter. Titus received authority from Paul, who had received his power as “a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ” ([Titus 1:1](#), above). As Titus boldly and confidently proclaimed the gospel, he followed in the footsteps of Paul.

The command *do not let anyone despise you* is very similar to Paul’s command to Timothy in [1 Timothy 4:12](#). Although there is no mention of Titus’s age, he was likely younger than Paul. Titus could have confidence that his words to the believers in Crete were authoritative and valuable for their growth in godliness.

How are you living?



Sheet 2—Summer 2024, Adult Resources, Standard Lesson Quarterly® Curriculum

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Lesson 12

Visual for [Lesson 12](#). Show this visual as you ask volunteers to read the Scripture texts to discover how believers should and should not live.

Conclusion

A. The Gift of Grace

When we feel burdened by our failures and struggles, we can take hope because of the good news that the grace of God has arrived. It has come in Christ Jesus. Christ's giving of himself has redeemed and purified us. Therefore, we have hope of eternal life—a hope anchored in God's saving gift. God's grace is a gift to humanity.

God's gift teaches us to live godly lives and to seek Christlike behavior. We live in this manner as we wait for the blessed hope of the coming of Christ Jesus.

B. Prayer

God, our Savior, we thank you for the gift of grace that has appeared in your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you for your gift of salvation and the hope that we have because of it. By the power of your

Spirit, help us to live godly and pure lives. In the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

We have a “blessed hope”!

Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with [NIV Bible Student](#) (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the [NIV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition](#)).

Into the Lesson

Write the following headers on the board: *Daily / Weekly / Quarterly / Yearly*. Ask learners to give examples of how they must wait during the time frame of each of the columns. (Possible examples: daily waiting at a traffic light, waiting for a weekly report, waiting at a doctor’s office for a quarterly appointment, waiting for a yearly birthday party.) For whole-class discussion, ask learners how they feel as they wait during each of these periods of time.

Option. Distribute copies of the “Waiting Game” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have learners work in pairs to complete as indicated.

Lead into Bible study by saying, “Our lives are filled with seasons of waiting. Part of the Christian life is one of waiting—eagerly anticipating the glorious return of our Savior, Jesus Christ. In today’s study, consider how we can be good stewards of the time in which we wait.”

Into the Word

Ask a volunteer to read [Titus 1:1–3](#) aloud. Divide learners into six groups: **Proverbs 8:12–26 Group**, **John 17:3–24 Group**, **1 Corinthians 2:6–7 Group**, **Ephesians 1:4–6 Group**, **2 Timothy 1:9–10 Group**, and **1 Peter 1:18–20 Group**. Have each group read their assigned text and answer the following questions: 1—What does your group’s given text reveal about God’s eternal nature? 2—How should the promise and hope of these eternal things impact how we live today? 3—What hope do you find in the passage from Titus and the assigned verses?

Divide the class into two groups: **Our Work Group** and **God’s Work Group**. Have each group read [Titus 2:11–15](#) and answer the following questions.

Our Work Group: 1—What should believers do while waiting for the “blessed hope” ([Titus 2:13](#)) of Christ’s return? 2—What is the connection between our salvation and our good works? 3—How can we avoid ungodliness and worldly passions? 4—How can we have lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly?

God’s Work Group: 1—What things in this passage describe what God has done or what he is

doing for us? 2—What is the connection between the grace of God and the presence of God’s Spirit? 3—How is God’s work in Christ Jesus one of redemption and purification? 4—What is the significance that God’s work culminates in his creation of a people for himself?

After five minutes, ask a volunteer from each group to share their answers before the whole class. After each group has shared, ask the following question for whole-class discussion: “How does the work that God has done and is doing impact our work of becoming godly people?”

Option. Distribute copies of the “Personal Timeline” activity from the activity page. Have learners complete it individually in a minute or less before discussing conclusions with a partner.

Into Life

Distribute an index card to each learner. Ask them to reread [Titus 2:12](#) and write down ways to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in light of the grace of God. Then, have each learner write a step-by-step plan for how he or she will eliminate one area of ungodliness and pursue one area of godliness instead.

Place learners into pairs and have each of them pray that their partner will be attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit as they pursue lives of godliness.

Note: Some learners may be apprehensive about sharing their plans with a partner. Encourage pairs not to spend time on the content of the plans but, instead, to focus on prayer for awareness of the Holy Spirit’s work.