



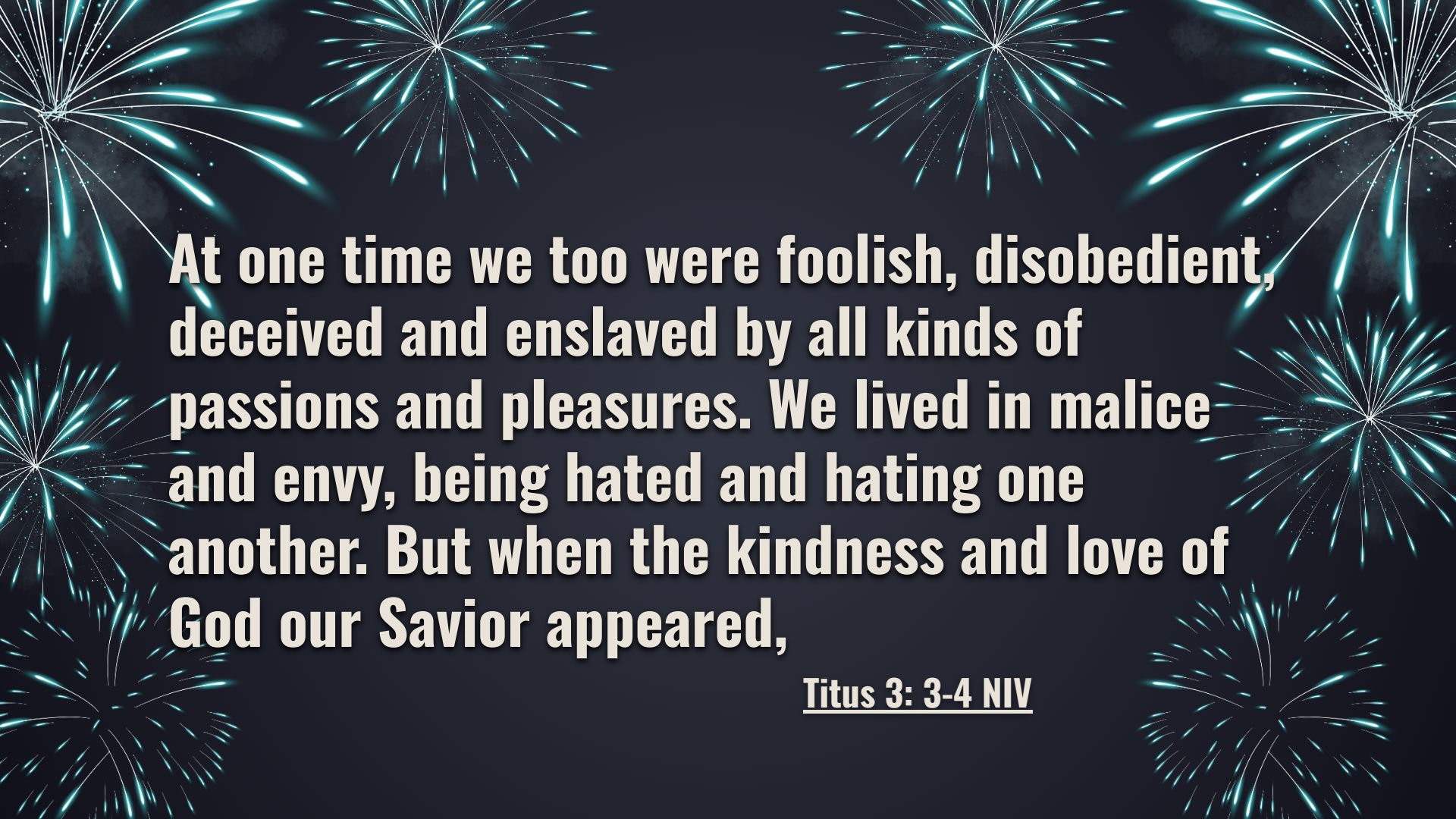
2024

*the year of...*



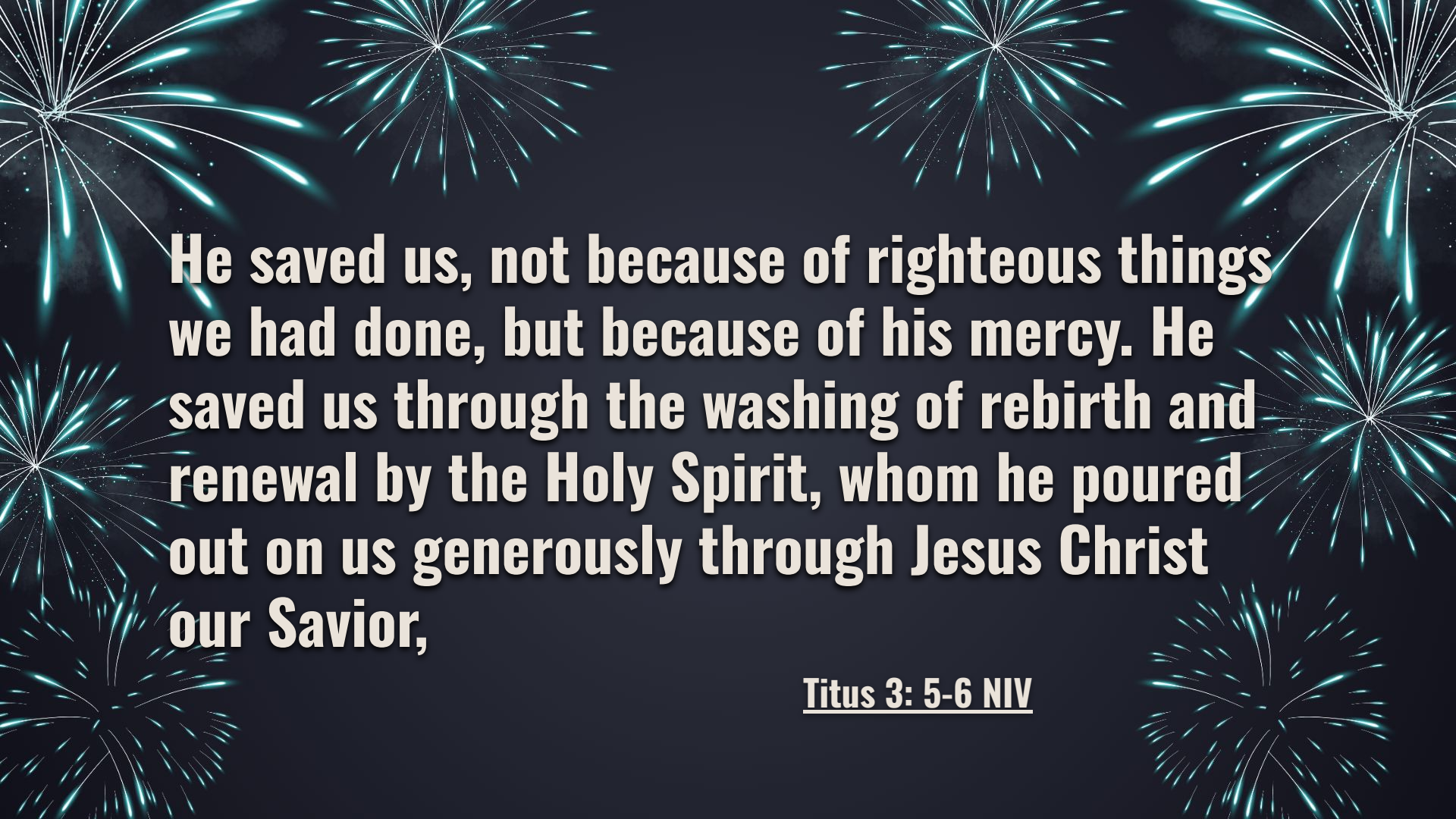
# Punchline

**Growth looks different for  
everyone, but makes a  
difference IN everyone**



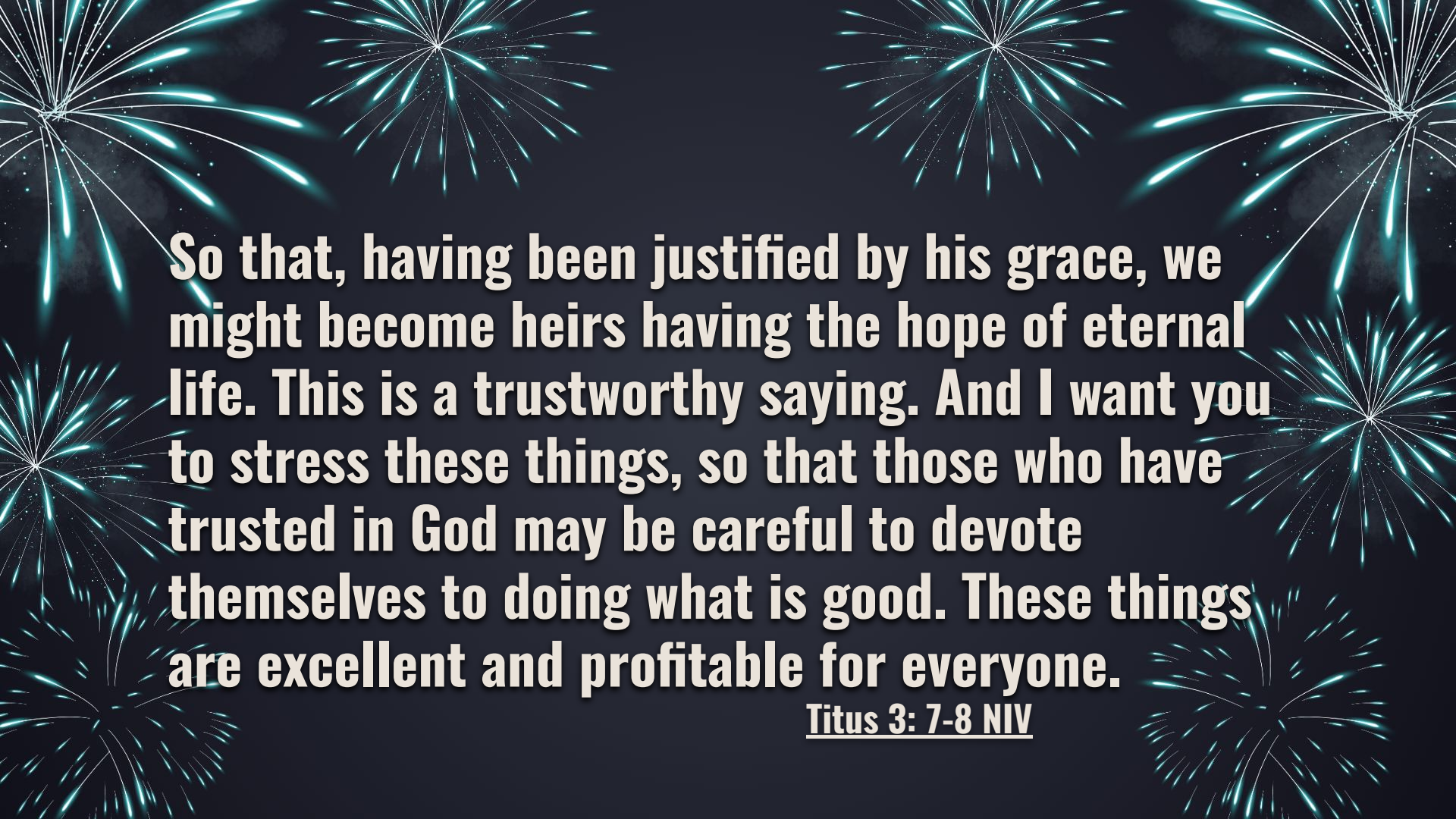
**At one time we too were foolish, disobedient,  
deceived and enslaved by all kinds of  
passions and pleasures. We lived in malice  
and envy, being hated and hating one  
another. But when the kindness and love of  
God our Savior appeared,**

**Titus 3: 3-4 NIV**



**He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,**

**Titus 3: 5-6 NIV**



**So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.**

**Titus 3: 7-8 NIV**



# Remember The Past

- Foolish - no spiritual understanding
- Followed anything and anyone
- The kindness of God appeared
- Given a “washing” - being made clean
- We need to put off behaviors that don't honor God to grow and do good for Him



2024



2024





# Put Off Behavior

- **Might be from your past or present**
- **Passion and pleasure WITHOUT Godly influence**
- **Passions and pleasures that lead us away from God show our immaturity**





# Put Off Behavior

- **Envy**
  - **Getting things to show off**
  - **Wanting what someone else has**
- **Immaturity is focusing and relying on material things and wealth before God**



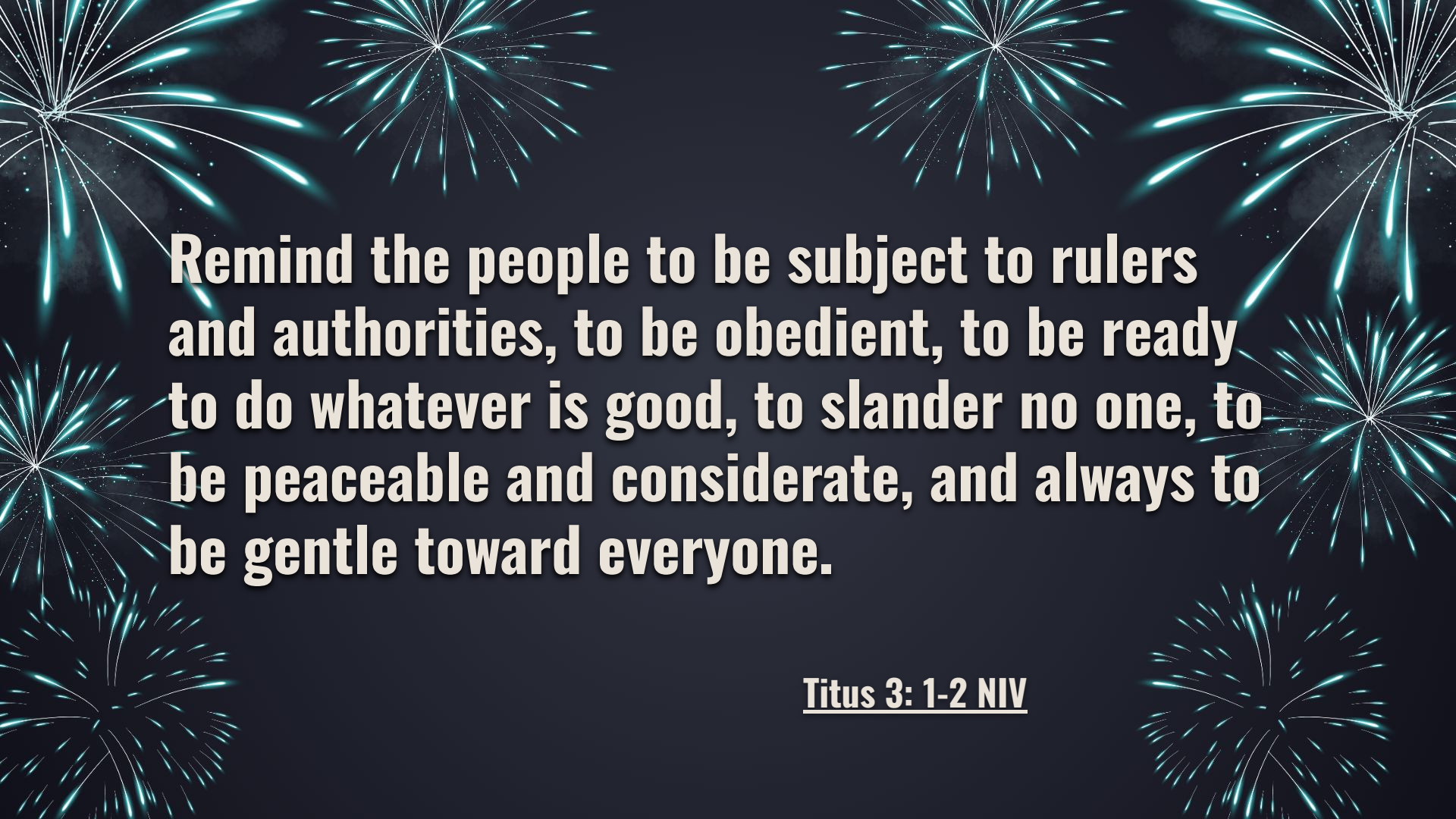
# Put Off Behavior

- **Envy**
  - **Getting things to show off**
  - **Wanting what someone else has**
- **Immaturity is focusing and relying on material things and wealth before God**



# Put Off Behavior

- **Growth is realizing we've been disobedient and need to change**
- **Growth is realizing our spiritual immaturity in that we haven't been putting God first**



**Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.**

**Titus 3: 1-2 NIV**



# Submit To Authority

- **Subject to rulers and authority**
  - **Voluntary acceptance of what is in place**
- **No slandering anyone**
- **Comes down to respect**



2024



2024





# Respect Authority

- **Respect the rules in place**
  - **Not willfully, going out of our way, to break a rule**



# Respect Authority

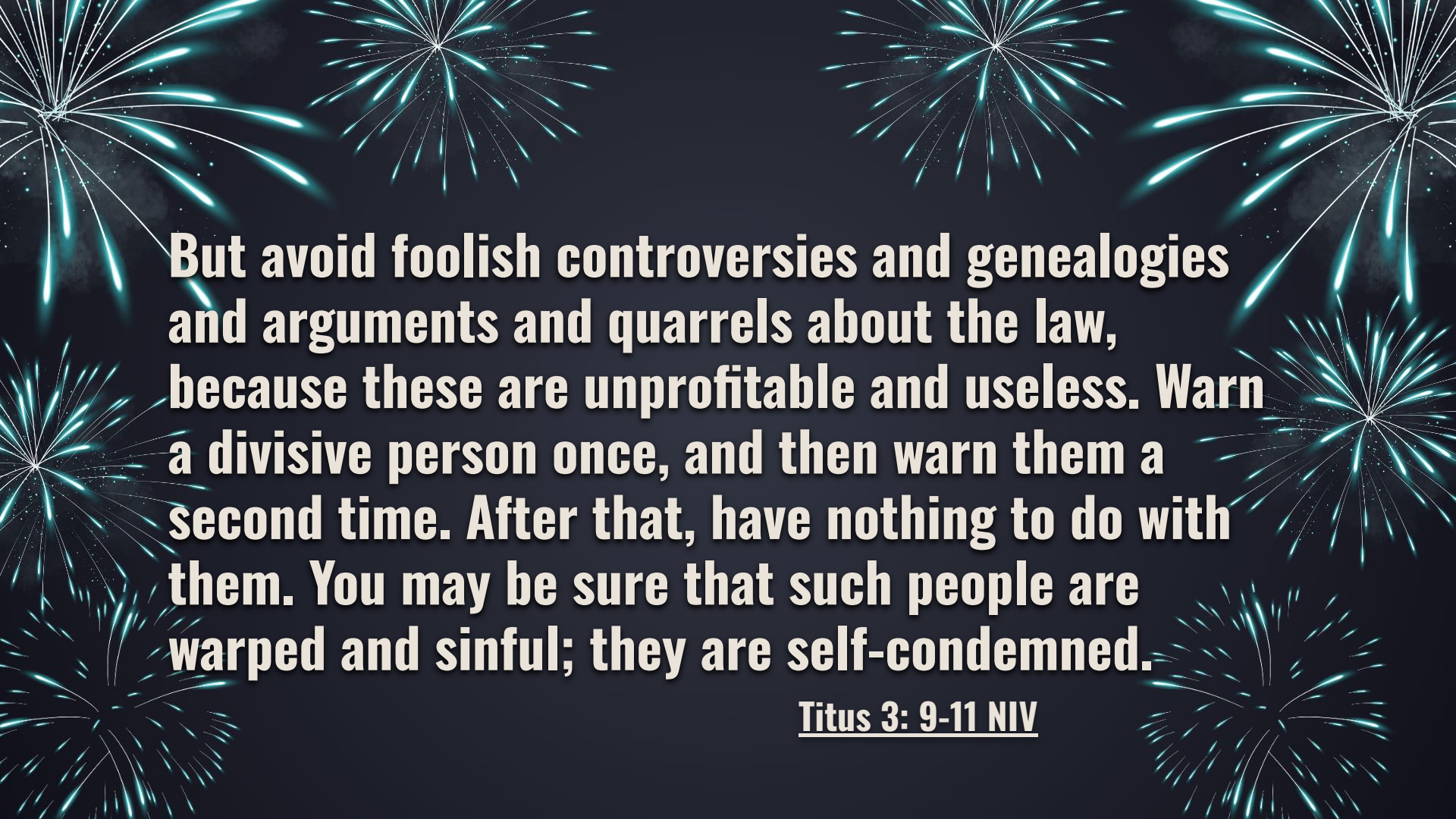
- **Not slandering someone**
  - **If you don't like them you don't have to say anything**
  - **If you say something, say it as a follower of Jesus first**





# Respect Authority

- **When we slam someone we're not advancing the Gospel we're actually holding it back**
- **Growth is disagreeing or not liking someone in authority and still being respectful**



**But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.**

**Titus 3: 9-11 NIV**



# Avoid Foolish Arguments

- **Arguing over what the Bible says**
  - **The problem is when it causes division**
- **Be aware of people starting these arguments**
- **Warn them**
- **God will handle them**



2024



2024





# Avoid Foolish Arguments

- **Christian “stuff”**
  - **Theology, music style, church size, etc...**
  - **Disagree but disagree in love**



# Avoid Foolish Arguments

- **Other “stuff”**
  - **Music, sports, food, entertainment**
  - **Be careful where it goes**
- **Growth is engaging in debate the right way and knowing when to let it be**



# Avoid Foolish Arguments

- **Have confidence to call someone out who is shaking things up in the wrong way**
  - **Do it in love**
  - **If they won't hear it God will handle them**



# Avoid Foolish Arguments

- Growth is realizing we can disagree on a lot of things but what really matters is being unified around what Jesus did for all of us





## Wrap Up

- **We all have different areas to grow in**
- **Put off behaviors that don't honor God**
- **Respect those in authority**
- **How you handle arguments**
- **Growth looks different for all of us but it makes a difference IN all of us**

## Audio file

[Growth Audio.mp3](#)

## Transcript

Alright, so with the new Year kind of starting we we kind of analyze the hour things starting many of you we talked about a few weeks ago if you made resolutions or goals or plans or any of that many people hope to make improvements starting the new year and a lot of them have to do with with growth in some way shape or form are going to grow as people grow in life. Grow somehow and growth is what we're going to focus on today. This is week three of four in the series 2024, the Year of dot dot dot. We've been just looking at kind of a different theme or word every week to kind of see if we can make that part of our lives in 24. So we've done repentance. We did forgiveness. Today we're going to do growth next week. Just a little preview will be prayer. That will be our 4th ones. We'll talk about prayer next week. But today is growth. It's going to be about growth in our relationship with God, but more so growth in our lives. When we see that we need to rely on God first or putting God first and how that can help us grow. In different situations, how we put God first before our own passions and? Fires put him first in how we handle people and our behavior towards people that are in authority. Also putting him first when we have disagreements or arguments over different things with people, so that's all going to be growth. That's not an exhaustive, exhaustive list of how to grow, but those are three we're going to address today. Now, we may all need to grow. In all three of these areas, maybe one, maybe two, maybe it's different. That's totally OK. Wherever you are is OK, what you need to grow in might be different from the people sitting at your table. And what I want us to remember about that is. This growth looks different for everyone, but it makes a difference in everyone. So growth looks different, probably for everybody in this room, right? But it will make a difference in all of our lives. So that's how we're going to look at growth today. To do that, we're going to look at chapter three of the Book of Titus. We're actually going to take this chapter a little bit out of order, but I just kind of like the way it. Sets up to do. It out of order. The first area will look at has to do with our own behavior the other two. About our behavior with others. Quick poll who here has read the book of Titus before? Yeah, few good. OK. It's not a super popular one. We bookmark it there in your tables. And I said it to Stacy this morning. She's like Titus, huh? It's like, yeah, right. We don't do it enough. So here we are. We're going to be in Titus Chapter 3. We're going to start with verses 3 through

8. We will come back to verses one and two in just a little bit. So Titus 3 verses 3 through 8. It'll be up here behind me. It is bookmarked in those Bibles. You want to follow along on tablets, phones, computers. I'll be in the NIV translation. All great. Here we go. Titus 3 three through 8 says at one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. So that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs, having the hope of eternal. Life this is a trustworthy saying and I want. I want you to stress these things so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone will stop there. It's a real quick. This is a letter to Titus. Paul writes this Titus is one of his workers in Crete, and he's overseeing the Christians in Crete and the church there. So that's kind of the the setup of the letter here. So he's Paul's giving some instructions to Titus and what he's saying is, remember the past as motivation. It says we were this, and that includes Paul and Titus. Basically saying we had we were foolish. We had no spiritual understanding. What that led? To was no discernment, no hearing from God and then outward disobedience, basically by following anything or anyone, all kind of Willy nilly, just just flying passions. Pleasures will follow all that. Then they would also hold grudges against other people and be envious towards them and make other people envious towards them. And this all kind of is happening within. This is like a heart inner behavior inner condition. But what Paul says then the kindness of God appeared and he's saying it actually appeared in Jesus. He's going back to the fact that Jesus actually. Really came to Earth, which led to Jesus blessings, his mercy, his salvation. And he did all of this in spite of the behavior and disobedience of the people because he gave mercy and kindness, not because they cleaned up their acts but out of love. And he says he gave this washing this cleaning. So washing being like actually. Act of being made clean, clean of past sin. Again, spiritual and inner act right. We follow the passions and pleasures that were warmed up inside us that we wanted to follow up, that we've been washed clean by Jesus. Paul will say this justified the people to God basically being made right with God. Paul loves the word justified. It's used a lot in his writing. It's a legal term basically just saying we were made right with God. So we hear a lot with Paul, we're going to do some more of Paul's letters coming up here. The rest of kind of the winter and spring. So we'll probably hear that term again. But what comes with that? With being justified being made right with God is that we're made heirs to the Kingdom of God and given hope. And the important thing to stress is that hope is right now we have hope right now, even in light of our past. In essence, immaturity of following our own behaviors and not following God. And even in light of our

present immaturity, we have hope. So when we kind of shut off that behavior, we remind ourselves of the kindness and mercy of God. It leads, as Paul says, to good works, good outcomes of our actions. So Paul kind of outlines how we go from behaviors we shouldn't have to God's mercy and forgiveness and justification to good works for God. So we kind of gives this kind of flow of how it can go. But what it really starts with and where we're going to kind of focus on is putting off behaviors that don't honor God in order to grow and do good things. Putting off some type of behavior we talked just before. How's your 2024 going? For many, sometimes starting the New year is putting things off. We shouldn't do. And for many, it's food choices. I know that's one of mine eating healthier, right? We're all gonna eat healthier to start the year. I thought back to to college me, which was all probably similar to that one. There was a lot of pizza, chips and beer and soda. I think I looked back at where I lived in college. I actually lived by a pizza place every. Year I lived above toppers one year across from a rocky rococo's one year and down the street from a little Caesar's another. I didn't realize until I thought back I was like ohh, that makes sense why I had so much pizza. We live by him, right? Well, now it's a little better. It's more like this one. Right now there's salads and chicken breasts and water. The idea is putting off this for something better. Right. So putting off our own bad behavior and following our own pleasures and desires and doing things that don't honor God is like putting down the chips. And now we're going to grab the salad. OK, that's kind of what we're going for. It doesn't mean we'll never struggle with the chips or we'll never eat chips again. But we're putting something off or something. So putting off behavior that doesn't honor God, you might see this in your past might be in your present, and I think what it kind of boils down to is immaturity, and I know it's not a fun word to to always hear. But I think. It's accurate. Not putting God first and giving way to things. Don't honor him shows a little bit of spiritual immaturity in our parts, and it's something I'm guilty of. It happens. We get enslaved by passion and pleasure, so passion and pleasure, though without Godly influence, there's nothing wrong on our own, with passions and pleasures. But if God's not behind them, they can't be our main influence. So look at your passions and pleasures, right? The passions you have. God might be using them or be a part of them. And if that's the case, that's great. Allow God to use the passions that he gave you. Let him be a part of your pleasure or the things that make you happy. However, if they're leading you away from God, that's when they become a problem. So what are you doing with your passions? Think about it. Where? Where do they take you? What are you doing with them? What brings you happiness and pleasure are those things that honor God ours got. Involved with those. Passions and pleasures are fine, but when that's what we chase or they lead us away from God, that's showing some spiritual maturity. And that's one thing we want to grow. Right and maturity also has to do with envy, both being envied and envying others. And envy is super hard. Envy comes from inside, right. It's kind of wanting what other people have or making them

want. What you have, right? So others envying you, getting things to show off, you know, one upping someone around you and your neighbor gets a brand new car. You buy the same one, but the higher model to be like Oh yeah, yours is great. You see mine. Mine's got the this, that kind of thing. It's the opposite of humility, which is what we're called to be by God, is to be humble. It's also envying other people, and this is a hard one. I think. I would say one that I struggle with more envying others versus being envy, wanting what someone else has. I cannot see if somebody's got like a super dope patio where there's like a grill built into the wall of the patio and my wife is laughing at me. Right now, because she knows. That's what I want, right? So you got the cool wall and the grills right there and be out. And I'm grilling all summer long like you could all come if I get that, by the way, you're all invited. But that's hard. That makes me like I want that and this creeps in really easily for all of us when we don't even realize that envy gets in. And it can make us think or feel maybe that God hasn't provided enough or hasn't given us enough. And usually it comes in the way of money or material things. And the immaturity is in that we focus on material things and wealth, and our reliance on those things and not our reliance on God. But thankfully we have that flow that Paul outlined, which is our way out our way to grow the kindness of God sending Jesus and giving us a rebirth and a renewal through Christ and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We can mature and grow in Christ, understanding that he is better than the passions or pleasures that take us away and inviting him. To our passion and pleasure, so working to shed disobedience to God and being captivated by our pleasures and passions. Growth is realizing we've been disobedient. We do need to change. This happens. Growth is realizing our spiritual immaturity and that we haven't been putting God first and honestly, relying on him when relying on ourselves. And this may be where you're at right now if you are, that's great. Right. Work through that and honestly, this is stuff we'll always be kind of working through. We're always gonna have to work through fully relying on God. But work on it and grow in that area. That will lead to being able to do more for God, right? So putting off our past behaviors that had to do with our own behavior, now we're going to look at growing in our behavior these next two towards other people. So we're gonna go back to the beginning of Titus. Let's look at 3 versus one and two. It says this. Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever. What is good to do, whatever is good to slander, no one to be peaceable and consider it, and always to be gentle toward everyone. We'll stop there. He says remind basically this is stuff people should know. We should know, but you need a little nudge. A little reminder of these things. So remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities in their area. A voluntary acceptance of what is in place, the rulers and the rules that are there. The caveat here is always that what is in place? You follow that as long as it doesn't completely contradict or go against what? Just calling them too. So obedience to that, that's the first part. So obedience to the rules that are there. And then there's also

kind of a respect level. By not slandering anyone, those in authority and others, this is giving them some inner grace, being peaceful and gentle to those people around, even if you don't like them. Even if you find a perverse, you don't agree with them. And I kind of lumped this all in with the word rest. And learning to disagree without disparaging someone, disagreeing without going on the attack, you can have one without the other, right? Having one thing it's it seems like maybe they gotta go together, but they don't. Just thinking about there's a place Stacy and I've gone a number of times. The piano bar downtown, the Ivory room and kind of the whole idea is you're there. You got doing. Channels two people playing and they're playing like a lot of songs people know, so everybody starts singing well. They've had a shirt there. I don't. It's still there. That said, it won't be long before you sing along. The idea being you can't be here and. Thing right? But you can. It's hard. You can actually be there and sing. It's hard, especially when piano man comes on or sweet Caroline. Write all these songs that you know but you can't actually be there and not sing even if everybody else is, even if it's hard. You can't have one without the other. You can indeed not like an authority figure or or their rules and policies. And not make disparaging remarks about them or attack them, even if everybody around you is doing it. And this can be hard. So we're gonna look at that a little bit. We all have authority figures in life that put rules and policies in places, government leaders, bosses, supervisors, whatever. And there's a phrase that's fairly common that will go like I have issues with authority or like, I don't do authority well. And it's seen as this positive, right. I don't take anybody or anything from anybody type of thing. I get where it comes from, but here's the issue is is as Christians, we're literally already followers of somebody. We're followers of Jesus. We submit to his authority and to God's authorities. We're already following. And we're taught through Paul here to respect the rules that other people put in place, subject to be obedient and respect the rules these leaders put in place. Now it doesn't say agree with everything, don't have to agree, and like everything that's out there, but we're following them as long as they don't contradict following God, basically not willfully going out of our way. To break a rule just because we don't like it or we feel like that one doesn't apply to me right, I'm above that one. We don't prove anything at all. When we do that. So Paul is writing to Titus Ears to respect the rules and policies that are in place. So that's kind of the rules and policies. The next layer is the person themselves. That actual ruler, when he says don't slander, this is about respecting a person. Or the leader themselves not slandering someone in authority or anyone else for that matter. And this will inevitably pop up. When it comes to rulers, cause we're in, we're in an election year. Can't ignore it. 2024 is an election. New leaders will be elected. It always gets heated. It charges people up and it tends to get a little nasty. Now as a church, if you were ever wondering, hometown does not will not endorse a candidate or a party or anything like that. How you choose to vote if you vote is completely up to you. We may all vote

differently and that's totally fine. Now I actually kind of like. What election season is supposed to be about the changeover of leaders? My my undergrads in political science. My senior research was on actually religious affiliation and voting habits, so I kind of like it. But I don't like where it's gone to, which is all the mud slinging and how nasty it has gotten. And this happens when people don't like a candidate they don't agree with somebody. So we're gonna talk about that a little bit. What to do if there's somebody in authority that you don't like, whether that's an elected official candidate, a boss, a supervisor, anything. So if you don't like a particular person. First off, you don't actually have to say anything. About that publicly. You can keep it to yourself, we really can. But if you need to say something, I would say let's think about saying it as a follower of Jesus first, right? Not liking a person and disagreeing with them, but not ripping them to shreds. Being respectful, I think that's how we can look at being followers of Jesus when we do disagree and I see this from. Non Christians and Christians alike, both sides of the aisle, from people that don't like bosses officials. And how they have every right to disagree. You have every right to not be a big fan of somebody that's in place but slandering and the shots at them and the language are making fun of them really needs to stop, especially as Christians. We're not proving anything by slamming someone on social media at the water cooler at work. We're not advancing the gospel or spreading the message of Jesus. I feel like we're just holding it back because that's not what Jesus would have done. You know, there's the love your enemy, love your neighbors, this whole thing. Disagree and not like someone without slandering or disparaging them, say in a respectful way. That's growth and maturity when we can do that to be able to do that. And I think that's what this section is getting at, to disagree, to not like someone in authority and still being respectful. So we're respectful to people in authority. We also need to be respectful when it comes to disagreements or arguments with others. Let's look at a little more here in Titus Chapter 3. This will be verses 9 through 11. It says this. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn A divisive person once, then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful. They are self condemned. We'll stop there. He says avoid arguments. About the law. So this would imply basically people they're arguing over different parts of their Old Testament law, Jewish customs and ceremonial issues today. This would look like Christians arguing with other Christians over what the Bible says. OK. And what Paul's getting at is in this day and this time when he's writing to Titus, this would usually come from people speculating about something, making an unfounded assumption or an unfounded claim. Then this leads to fighting and division, and that's where the problem comes in. The fighting and the division that these disagreements lead. To Paul is saying, these types of arguments that lead to division are useless and they do not spread the gospel. So he's saying we need to avoid those. He's

also saying, be aware of people that are starting these arguments, maybe on purpose, people that push ideas or opinions or views on others that cause problems. And he says, Paul says, warn them, warn those people about what they're doing. Stand up to them with confidence. Don't slander them. Do it in a loving way, but stand up to them. Then he says, if they refuse to listen. Let them go be done with them. It's not a good use of your time and resources. Paul saying they won't receive correction they won't receive instruction from anyone. They insist on going their own way. He says God will handle them. That's up to God then. So showing maturity and growth. Is being able to avoid foolish arguments that lead to division, especially amongst us Christians, and to be on guard for those trying to start them. We could run the gamut on things that would be foolish arguments. There's a fun one that have with my family. Thankfully, that doesn't lead to any division, but my sister and I have quite the back and forth that goes on about. There is a gash. In the wall in our basement, back at my parents house and I've told this story before. Basically what happened is I was it was year 2000. My sister and I were home. My brother was older and living somewhere else. My parents were going out of town for the weekend and instead of telling us, you cannot have any friends over there. We're just going to tell you it's OK. You're going to do it anyway, so we'll just give you the permission. Great. We both had sets of friends over. Different nights and they come home and there's a gash in the wall. Now it's that is actually a picture of the wall as of Wednesday. My dad sent this to me. It's hard to see it, but the gas is still there. My dad will not patch it or fix it because my sister and I to this day go back and forth. But whose friends that were that did it. I insist. It's her. She insists it's mine. And my brother Stokes the fire. And this just because it's funny now, this doesn't actually lead to any actual issues. My sister and I get along great. But if we actually got mad at each other and like, trying to put our families on different sides. Not about the gash. Who did it? That would be the. Problem, right? It's funny. Again. My dad refuses to patch it, and I think if they sold the house, he would leave it and not fix it. But if we did it and it like split us legitimately, that would be the definition of a foolish argument. So what Paul's teaching here is avoid foolish arguments, and I like this section. The first type we look at two types of arguments, first one being Christian stuff for lack of a better phrase. Theology the way churches operate types of services. There are a variety of views potentially in this room, definitely within the churches in Verona and the Greater Madison area, about baptism on creation, on types of worship music. The play style of preaching, church says all of it, and that's all important. That's all fine. And I won't say it's not, and it can be talked about and debated, but not in a way that divides us. And that's where the issue comes in. Disagree but disagree in love. Disagree, but stay unified around what Jesus did for all of us. And remember how much bigger that is than whatever we disagree on. Don't engage in any of these arguments or debates to to just be right or to be the better Christian. Here's an example of one that has come up. I've been in worship ministry for



close to 20 years and I've followed like some worship leader groups on social media and one of the hot topics that should not be one is the use of these right here music stands. It is. I know you're laughing, but it is. It is insanely debated about whether you should use these because they block you from the congregation. They're buried between you and God, whatever. And this, like I've seen it. And I was like, clearly I don't care because I use. And whatever people want to have this discussion, but I've seen people literally get mad on these threads and rip each other apart and it just drives me nuts. And I'm not going to keep going on it. I have it in my notes. Don't go on your soapbox because I could, if you got a couple hours after church, we can do it. But that's the definition of a foolish argument about whether we should use one of these, you know, service, right? This is the kind of thing have the discussion. Sure. But don't let it. Divide have the right heart about it. And also when we enter into these know where you're coming from because part of the issue is Paul talked about with Titus. Is there are assumptions or unfounded claims made and that can absolutely be a problem as well? So just be careful on the stuff, know when to enter in, no one to stay out. Or bow. Out such arguments over things within the church. Maybe then just arguments or debates about other stuff, and it can be fun to have back and forth debates about sports, about music, about food, entertainment. That's great. Do it all the time, but just be a little careful about where those go. Does it as it gets going and back and forth, does it turn personal when it shouldn't? Are you trying to just be right and puff up some arrogance or tell somebody they're wrong? Just things to be aware of? Because in any of those, we always want to. Represent God well. Want to represent God? Well, you don't have to engage in these debates if you don't want to. You can, but you can let them go. You do not have to respond to that tweet or that post. You don't have to. You know, when the conversation ends. If Kyle and I are having when we're walking away and turn around and another thing, Kyle, you don't have to do it. You really don't. But if you do, just remember the heart behind it, though, we're followers of Jesus first, so growth is engaging in a debate or disagreement. Excuse me the right way and knowing when to just let it be. Finally, it's also about having the confidence to call someone out when they're shaking things up in the wrong way. So Paul ends this part. Again, we gotta do this in love without slandering them, but let somebody know. Hey, you're causing division. This is not OK. That it's not right. And if they won't hear it, which some will not. God will handle it. You can let them go. That isn't up to God. Growth is realizing we can disagree on a whole lot of things, but what really matters is being unified around what Jesus did for all of us, that's what matters. We all have different areas to grow in. And as we wrap up, think about. The three we. Talked about, you know, maybe it's one, maybe it's two, maybe it's all three, maybe something totally different. But recognize where you need to grow. It's OK wherever you are. You need to put off behaviors that don't honor God. Work through that with God. Focus on him first. Or maybe it's respecting those in authority and this can be hard when you

disagree with them or the policies that are in place. But do that again with being a follower of Jesus in mind. Or is it maybe growth in handling arguments? Do you need to get involved in less arguments or debates? Do you need to? Just let more go. Or do you need to keep the right heart when you do it? Or is there someone you see causing division that you're like God's nudging me? I do need to say something about this. So growth will look different for all of us, but when we grow, it will make a difference in all of us. Let's pray. Got to thank you for this. Morning. I thank you just for this part of the letter to Titus gather we can learn how to grow in you and gather so many ways. We can all be growing in our lives with you. But I pray we would think about these three about our own behaviors, God, and really our behavior towards others and that we would always feel the nudge from you to grow in these things that we would put you first and that would lead to our group. So God, we thank you that we do have you in our hearts. God, that we can discern your voice and I pray that we would. Have the strength God to listen and to follow what you're having us do in these situations. Gotta pray that we have to use to listen as well. So we thank you again for this morning your name. Amen.