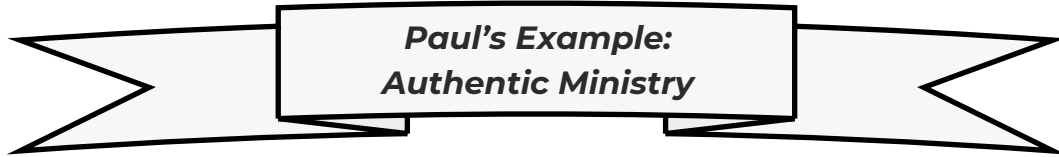


AUTHENTIC:

REAL FAITH
IN REAL LIFE

1 Thessalonians – Lesson 2



Although the fledgling church at Thessalonica had been nurtured by Paul for only a few weeks before he had been forced to leave; nevertheless, Timothy's later visit found that the church was doing well, even in the face of strong cultural opposition. Their faith was evident in their lives—in their actions, their attitudes, and their relationships. Paul learned from Timothy's report that the Thessalonian believers were investing in their Christian growth through works of service to God, labor on behalf the gospel, and endurance in spite of persecution. For these new believers, life was hard, but their faith was strong.

Examine the text:

Paul describes his ministry in Thessalonica

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12
 - a. Paul asserts that his visit to Thessalonica had not been in vain; his short stay with them and his work among them had not been a failure. What is the evidence for his statement? (Look back at the first chapter of the book, 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8)
 - b. What was the effect of Paul's preaching on his hearers? (Look back at 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)
 - c. What was Paul's primary motive for bringing the message of the gospel to the people of Thessalonica? (2:3-4)

- d. The opponents of the gospel wanted to discredit Paul. How did Paul defend his methods and his motives in this ministry to the Thessalonians? (2:5-6)
- e. How is Paul's affection for the Thessalonians reminiscent of a mother's love? (2:7-8)
- f. How is Paul's interaction with the Thessalonians an illustration of a father's love? (2:9-12)
- g. What was Paul's desire for these Thessalonian believers? (2:12)
- h. What eternal perspective should motivate the Thessalonian believers (and us as well!) to live in a way that pleases God? (2:12)

Explore the concepts:

- 2. Consider the description in this passage of Paul's attitude, his demeanor, and his transparency. How did Paul's authenticity inspire the Thessalonians to trust in his teaching?
- 3. What is impressive to you about this description of Paul's integrity and humility as he lived and worked among the Thessalonians? How does Paul's example serve as a model for you of how to invest in relationships with those you hope to influence for Christ? (2:10-12)

4. *For personal reflection:* Jot down names of people at your workplace, in your neighborhood, or in your family with whom you would like to have spiritual conversations. Are there steps you can take this week to build those relationships by offering genuine patience and affection and following Paul's example?

5. *For personal reflection:* When life seems comfortable and trouble-free, it is then that we tend to neglect our connection with God. During times of success and comfort, it's easy to lose sight of our desperate need for God. What can you do in your own routine of life to help you keep your relationship with God as the foremost priority in your life?

6. Paul urges these believers to "walk in a manner worthy of God." (2:12) This is a staggering concept; we want to understand it. What insight do you find in these passages?
 - a. Ephesians 4:1-3

 - b. Philippians 1:27

 - c. Colossians 1:9-10

Applying these insights, how would you concisely summarize what it means to "walk in a manner worthy of God"?

Exalt the Savior

It is striking that the Thessalonians joyfully embraced the Christian faith with such courage even in the face of hostility and rejection. Their lives demonstrated a dramatic change of heart. This heart change was prophesied in the Old Testament in Ezekiel 36:26. God proclaimed to His people that in a future day, *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."* This new heart is born in us when we embrace the call of the gospel of Christ.

There have probably been times in your life when your heart was suddenly and dramatically changed. A marriage commitment binds your heart to the man you marry. When a new son or daughter comes into your life, this event causes your heart to be forever captured by your love for this child. Has your heart been captured by the love of Christ?

Read each of these short passages as you consider these truths about Jesus:

- Jesus is God the Son, who took human nature upon Himself and lived a life of perfect obedience, even unto death. (read Philippians 2:6-8)
- Jesus' death purchased our salvation. Jesus died on our behalf, in order to bring us to God. (read 1 Peter 3:18)
- Jesus was raised from death to life and exalted to heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father. (read Acts 2:32-33)
- Jesus will return to establish His Kingdom. (read Acts 1:11)

The gospel—the good news that Paul proclaimed—includes all of these facts about Jesus—but there is more. Those who accept the gospel have the assurance of eternal life. Those who commit themselves to the gospel receive the Holy Spirit—the life of God indwelling His people of faith. Those who trust in Jesus enjoy the privilege of being adopted into God's own family of faith.

Have you embraced this good news? Have you responded to God's call on your life? Take a moment to pray, asking God to draw you to Himself. Ask Him to change your heart and to make you into a woman of authentic faith.

The Gospel brings the power of God for authentic life change