

“On Being A Spiritual Parent”

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

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Teaching Aim: To realize born-again Christians have been entrusted with the gospel of Jesus Christ; we are now stewards of God. To understand the primary goal of every believer should be to please God, not man. To recognize every Christian can be a mentor to someone; we have been called by God to love young believers in a way similar to a nursing mother taking care of her infant child’s needs and a loving father guiding his family in its spiritual growth!

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)

Part I: The example Paul and Silas set for others through suffering (1 Thess. 2:1-3)

1. In **1 Thessalonians 2**, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of what his lifestyle was like during the time he lived with them. Four times in **chapter 2** Paul used the phrase, “*you know.*” Paul’s early exodus might have caused him to wonder if his time in Thessalonica had been in vain. What was Paul’s conclusion after hearing the testimony of Timothy and the others who had been in contact with the Thessalonian believers (**vs. 1**)? (See **1 Thess. 1:5-9**)

2. Every appearance is that the Jews from Thessalonica were attacking Paul’s character. James Denny says, “*In most other callings, a man may go on, no matter what his character is, provided his balance at the bank is on the right side; but a Christian who has lost his character has lost everything.*” Why do you think Satan is busy at work trying to destroy the character of Christians? Has anyone ever attacked your character? What kind of damage was done?

3. Satan’s goal is to knock you out of ministry, and if he can’t get at you personally, he will go after the weakest link in your life. What is the weakest link in your life? What can we learn from **1 Pet. 5:8**? According to **1 Pet. 5:9**, how should we respond when we are under attack from the devil? What can we expect to happen as a result? (See **1 Pet. 5:10**)

4. How were Paul and Silas treated at Philippi (**vs. 2**)? (See **Acts 16:22-24**) Have you ever had anyone attack you because of your faith in Christ? Did you back down or continue to press on for Christ? How did Paul and Silas respond to the Philippians brutal attack (**vs. 2**)? (See **Acts 16:25-26**)

5. Paul and Silas were men of integrity, but it didn't take long for the Jews who didn't believe the gospel message to attack the character of these men. (See **Acts 17:5-10**) Paul and Silas were forced to leave Thessalonica by night; yet even in this, God was in control. One of the telltale signs of a false prophet or false teacher is bad fruit. (See **Matt. 7:15-16a**) Contrary to the accusations of the Jews, what can we learn about Paul's motives from **verse 3**? What kind of spiritual fruit did Paul and Silas produce in Thessalonica?

Part II: A steward of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 2:4-6)

1. **Verse 4a** says, *"But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak..."* The word *"entrusted,"* as used here, means to be a steward. What is a *"steward?"* (See Dictionary) How does being a steward relate to your life as a Christian today? Who is a steward obligated to? Who is the Christian a steward of today?
2. In **verse 4b**, Paul wrote that we are to share the gospel message *"not as pleasing men, but God who tests the heart."* What did he mean? What can we learn from **Gal. 1:10**? According to **1 Cor. 4:1-2**, what is the most important attribute of a steward? On a scale of 1-10, how faithful have you been in your stewardship of the gospel of Jesus Christ? When is the last time you shared the gospel with someone?
3. In light of **verse 5**, what two charges had the jealous Jews of Thessalonica been making against Paul and Silas? What is the meaning of the word *"flattery?"* (See Dictionary) William MacDonald writes, *"A flatterer is a person who manipulates rather than communicates."* Without mentioning names, have you found this to be true in your own life?
4. What were the Jews accusing Paul of when they said, *"he was using a cloak for covetousness?"* What was a *"cloak?"* (See Dictionary) What was Paul supposedly coveting? Who did Paul call on to be his witness against these false charges (**vs. 5**)? Who is the only One who can truly judge the human heart?
5. What did Paul mean when he said, *"Nor did we seek the glory of man"* in **verse 6**? What can we learn about Paul if he meant he didn't seek celebrity status for being an Apostle of Jesus Christ? What can we learn about Paul if he was saying he didn't want the Thessalonians financial support? (See **Acts 18:1-3**)

Part III: A nursing mother and a caring father (1 Thess. 2:7-12)

1. How did Paul describe his ministry to the Thessalonians in **verse 7**? If the emphasis for a steward is faithfulness, what is the emphasis for the nursing mother? How is the illustration of a nursing mother a good example of those who tenderly care for new believers? What qualities are required of a mother taking care of her infant?
2. How affectionate were Paul and Silas towards the Thessalonians (**vs. 8**)? Paul was the spiritual father of all of the churches he planted; he was the first to share the gospel message to the people in Thessalonica. What else did Paul and Silas impart to the people? Why? Did Jesus act in a similar way as He was ministering? (See **Mark 10:45**)
3. What did Paul choose to do in Thessalonica so that he wouldn't be a burden to the Thessalonians (**vs. 9**)? The Greeks despised manual labor, but Paul wasn't above doing physical work. According to **2 Thessalonians 3:7-10**, what was Paul's view toward lazy people, but more specifically, toward lazy Christians? Should the same be true today?
4. In **verse 11** Paul shifts from the imagery of a nursing mother to that of an encouraging father. What three words did Paul use in **verse 11** to describe how he carried out his duties as the spiritual father of the church in Thessalonica? What is the meaning of each?
5. As a father is responsible to care for the needs of his earthly family – so Paul was responsible to care for the spiritual needs of the church in Thessalonica. This was not an easy chore then and it is still not an easy chore today. How much did the Apostle Paul have to suffer for the sake of sharing the gospel of Christ with others? (See **2 Cor. 11:24-27**)
6. What additional burden was weighing heavy on Paul? (See **2 Cor. 11:28**) Why should believers love and pray for their spiritual leaders instead of assuming the worst? Paul was in this race for keeps, what incredible truths can we learn from **1 Cor. 4:15-16**?

7. What was Paul's parental hope for his spiritual children (**vs. 12**)? Are you hoping the same for your biological children and grandchildren? What is your hope for your spiritual children? What sound advice did Paul give to the Philippians in **Phil. 1:27**? How should we live our daily lives so that our conduct is "*worthy of the gospel of Christ*?"

8. As Christians, we are called to be faithful stewards of the gospel of Christ and to love young believers with the tenderness of a nursing mother and the firmness of a caring father. Have you been blessed with someone you can call your spiritual father or mother? What kind of an impact have they made on your life?

9. What are some ways that you can help younger Christians grow spiritually? Have you ever been discipled or mentored by another believer? Have you ever discipled or mentored a younger believer? Why is discipleship so important to every believer? What can we learn about discipleship from the example Jesus set? How about the example Paul set? (See **1 Cor. 11:1**) Is there a young believer in your life that you can pour your life into and help them grow spiritually? Will you do it?

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- As Christians, we are stewards of the gospel of Jesus Christ!
- Christians are called by God to be bold and uncompromising in sharing the gospel message, but to do so with gentleness and respect! (See **Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Pet. 3:15**)
- Suffering is not always a bad thing; God can use how we handle our suffering to lead others to Christ!
- The primary goal of the believer is not to please men, but God who tests the heart!
- Spiritual parents are called to love their children in the faith in a way similar to a nursing mother taking care of her infant child's needs and a loving father guiding his family in its spiritual growth!
- Our goal is to see our spiritual children grow in their faith and live a life worthy of God!