

A Practical Study of 1 Thessalonians

Delighting The Heart of God “Learning to Bring Pleasure to God”

Question Number Two – Are You a Phony? – 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Charles Swindoll in his new book *Simple Faith* says:

(*Simple Faith* by Charles R. Swindoll)

Several years ago I came across one of the simplest and best pieces of advice I have ever heard: “Be who you is, because if you is who you ain’t, you ain’t who you is.”

p. 8

And we’re talking about people being phony—people being hypocritical.

John R. W. Stott, the great English theologian, said:

(*Simple Faith* by Charles R. Swindoll)

“Some people weave round themselves such a tissue of lies that they can no longer tell which part of them is real and which is make-believe.”

p. 34

John MacArthur's new book *Charismatic Chaos* says:

(*Charismatic Chaos* by John F. MacArthur, Jr.)

My father had a saying, "No one counterfeits what isn't valuable." One never hears about counterfeit brown paper. People do not counterfeit trash. But they do counterfeit money, diamonds, and jewelry.

p. 170

And of course the greatest counterfeit in the world is Satan himself.

Second Corinthians 11:13-15 says:

2 Corinthians 11:13-15

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.

Lewis B. Smedes has written a lot of books, probably he is most famous for the book *Forgive and Forgive* or *Healing for the Hurts We Don't Deserve*, which is an excellent work on the subject of forgiveness. But this new book that he's written is called *A Pretty Good Person: What It Takes to Live with Courage, Gratitude and Integrity* is the sub-title. He speaks on

this subject when he says:

(A Pretty Good Person: What It Takes to Live with Courage, Gratitude and Integrity by Lewis B. Smedes)

Hypocrisy, sham, cant, phoniness, fraud, humbug, dissimulation, disguise—they are bad because they prevent people from making their own, their free, their honest response to reality as it is.

One more reason honesty is important: Lying demeans people. It treats them as if they were not mature enough to be trusted with reality.

“Tell the truth to the British people,” Churchill begged the leaders of Britain during the decade of self-deception about Hitler. “They are a tough people, a robust people.” But the leaders of the 1930s did not trust people with truth.
p. 80

There’s a book that was written called *The Day America Told the Truth*. And it’s a new book that shows us, by an extensive opinion poll, what actually is the level of integrity in America. I just want to give you a few statements of the results of this:

Only 13 percent of Americans see all Ten Commandments as binding on us today. Ninety-one percent lie regularly—at home and at work. In answer to the question, “Whom have you regularly lied to?” the statistics included 86 percent to parents and 75 percent to friends. A third of AIDS carriers admitted to not having told their lovers.

Most workers admit to goofing off for an average of seven

hours—almost one whole day—a week, and half admit that they regularly call in sick when they are perfectly well.

The survey also posed the question, “What are you willing to do for \$10 million?” Twenty-five percent [said they] would abandon their families, 23 percent would become a prostitute for a week, and 7 percent would kill a stranger. Think of it! In a gathering of 100 Americans, there are seven who would consider killing you if the price was right. In 1,000 there are seventy!

(taken from *Disciplines of a Godly Man* by R. Kent Hughes, p. 119. Page and source information from original book not verified)

It was the chaplain of the Kansas State Senate who stood before the Senate and offered the following prayer:

Omniscient Father:

Help us to know who is telling the truth. One side tells us one thing, and the other just the opposite.

And if neither side is telling the truth, we would like to know that, too.

And if each side is telling half the truth, give us the wisdom to put the right halves together.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

(taken from *Disciplines of a Godly Man* by R. Kent Hughes, p. 120. Page and source information from original book not verified)

Now the book of 1 Thessalonians, the very second question that the apostle brings to us is:

Are you real?

Are you phony?

Are you hypocritical?

Are you honest and transparent in your life?

What we're going to see in the second chapter is that Paul declares unquestionable INTEGRITY.

Now the people in Thessalonica got the message from all of those who were opposed to his ministry that he left because he was trying to use them for selfish advantage. He came to town, danced his toon, and took off on the next train. And being there only three weeks, he doesn't have any time to defend himself. And so his honesty, his integrity's at stake.

“Did you just come as a fly-by-night or are you real?”

“Is the message you've given us genuine?”

And so there is no greater passage of scripture to find a model for ministry in chapter 2 verses 1-12. And this model for ministry, as you cast it against the twentieth century in which we've been plagiarized and shocked and everything else, really

helps us understand that it is possible to be a genuine, real person.

Question #1 was this:

Have you made the right start?

As you played your life against the Thessalonian Christians, how did it measure up? Has there been a time in your life when you have turned your idols to serve the living and true God to wait for Christ to come from heaven? Is that your experience? Has the power of the Spirit convicted you to the point that a work of faith took place and you're involved in a labor of love and you're waiting with perseverance and hope for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? That's the picture of a real Christian.

Now we look at the other side of the picture as the apostle describes here the fact: "Are you Phony?"

Now I realize when you start talking like this, everybody tries to find an excuse for not being the one that the Spirit of God is trying to speak to. Oftentimes people who are the most phony wish that so-and-so were here. You know, because they think that message belongs to them and they're not willing to be honest before the Lord.

We had a doctor here last week at the conference and his father had a serious bypass surgery just a couple of days before and they were afraid they're not going to be able to

come. But it worked out perfectly. But, he said to us, “You know, my father was so stubborn he had to have heart pains and nearly collapsed in death before he went to the hospital to have surgery.”

And you know, basically he’s saying my dad is a stubborn old coot! You know, he just wouldn’t believe that he’s sick and that he is needing for someone else to do something for him.

Now if we do that physically, I understand why people do it spiritually. It’s just like “You know, I’m going to take my chances.” It’s Michael Landon when he’s diagnosed with dying with cancer, “I think God will understand if I don’t accept Jesus as the Son of God.” You know, those kind of things shock us but that’s the mentality of 90% of Americans. Sitting around going to take their chances on the fact that God isn’t going to do anything and He’s going to understand that we tried to do the best we could and so we can go on continuing to be hypocritical and phony and we’re going to get away with it.

You know, I’m sorry. There’s a day coming when God’s going to pull on the chain and blow the whistle and you’re going to go to the house and you’re going to stand there on the basis of what you did with Jesus Christ. And it’s much better to be at TrailWest in 1992 and to get these things straightened out here than it is to wait until you get over there because it’s going to be way too late. Because the minute you leave here, it’s all over with.

Now scripturally when we talk about phonies and we look at

these verses, and we see the tremendous integrity of the apostle, there are two kinds.

There's PHONY #1 that you can run into. And this is the person who is never come into relationship with Christ. He's a person who's gone through all kinds of religious motions. Maybe he's been a good churchman. Maybe he's been a good member of the lodge. Maybe he's been a good businessman. And he equates being good in all of these areas as being a man who is a man who is going to be accepted by God because he's just been such a good, moral, honest, upright individual. And so when it comes to the area of relationship, he really doesn't know anything about that.

In the passage of scripture that reveals this the most clearly is Matthew 7 in the Sermon on the Mount, verses 20-23.

Matthew 7:20-23

So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work lawlessness."

So what the Lord is saying here, basically, is there are going to be people who are going to be surprised because they never

knew the Lord Jesus Christ.

PHONY #2:

Now the other phony is a Christian. This phony is a carnal Christian. He's living in the flesh rather than in the Spirit. He's allowed disobedience to come into his life. He's content with botched up priorities, living for the here and now—building only on wood, hay and straw rather than gold, silver and precious stones. He's an individual who is faking it, who's playing a game. You can get in close to this individual and he doesn't have time to have his personal walk with God continue to intensify. He doesn't memorize the scripture. He doesn't pray. Yay maybe he gives a little bit of money to impress others, but he really is not a person who is walking in an intimate relationship with the Lord.

So as we look at these twelve verses and the apostle Paul basically defends his ministry in Thessalonica because he had to leave—he didn't have a choice. It got so hot in persecution, they were going to take his life and so he had to literally flee for his life. Now he writes back to defend the integrity of his ministry. And what a beautiful passage of scripture to look at. And what a model for each of us who walk with God.

Alright, let's look at it—verse 1.

v. 1 For you yourselves are knowing, brethren, of our entrance among you, that it has not been without results,

“For you yourselves are knowing, brethren, of our entrance among you, that it has not been without results,”

See the word “you”? That’s in the **EMPHATIC POSITION** in the Greek text. It’s like when you read the Greek sentence, it’s the first word.

It’s always the thing that’s most emphasized. So he’s addressing them with this issue. He wants them to have it straightened out as to how the apostle was genuine and honest and pure in his motives in coming to them.

So he says first of all, “you yourselves are knowing.” That word occurs **FOUR TIMES** in the passage. So he’s reminding them of what they already know.

“you are knowing, brethren, of our entrance among you,”—**WHAT?**—“that it has not been without results,”

“You need to just look around my dear friends and realize that when I was there, the Spirit of God worked among you and did something in your life.”

What you’re going to see here is Paul’s going to say **THREE THINGS**:

1. his **MESSAGE** was genuine,
2. his **MOTIVES** were pure, and

3. his METHODS were without guile—he didn’t have any secret things that he was trying to accomplish by being in the city of Thessalonica.

So he’s saying here, “our entrance among you [was not] without results.”

Or you could say EMPTY OF CONTENT.

And I took Jesus’ words from John 6:63 and wrote it alongside there:

John 6:63

“It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life.”

Paul says “When we were there, there was an obvious indication of the fact that the Spirit of God was at work and it was not empty.”

Verse 2.

v. 2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, even as you are knowing, we had the courage in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

“but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, even as you are knowing, we had the courage in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.”

Paul said “Hey look, it was no piece of cake in Philippi. And we came from Philippi and the conflict there and we’d already suffered and we came to town and with courage in our God to continue on.”

Courage is displayed in the life of a person who has been hurt and driven to the canvas but gets up to fight another round and keeps going. And you’ve got to appreciate that in the fact that the apostle Paul had that experience. And he preached it “in much conflict.”

Now there’s a wonderful verse in 2 Corinthians 7:5 that helps us understand Paul was very human. Listen to this:

2 Corinthians 7:5

For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without and fears within.

We have a tendency to put a guy like Paul up on a pedestal like he wasn’t scared, like he didn’t face shaky knees when he was confronting these men of great culture and philosophical orientation.

He said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2:

1 Corinthians 2:2-3

I came to you in fear and much trembling, but I came determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and that One having been crucified.

“But it was in fear, fightings without and fears within.” (2 Cor 7:5)

And he describes it in:

2 Corinthians 4:8[and 9]

we were afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

He was a man who just kept on keeping on. And that demonstrates the authenticity and the genuineness of the message.

You see, the people who are quitting preaching today and the people who are quitting bearing fruit are only demonstrating the fact that there's no authenticity to their message because they aren't persevering. They aren't hanging in there. They aren't continuing to go.

I was talking to one dear friend of mine, a pastor in another city a number of years ago. And he said, “You know, they're

dropping like flies.”

And I just felt like right at that point, I needed to tell him “I’ll see you at the finish line.”

And so it’s become almost a trademark. One of the things you do when you run a marathon, the only reason you do it is to finish. I mean, you don’t do it to try to win. You simply do it to try to demonstrate that you can actually run 26 miles and finish. Once you’ve done that, you’ve pretty well done your thing. And that’s the way I believe it is in the Christian life. It’s like a marathon. You only run it to finish. You want to complete it. You want to accomplish it. And Paul, no matter how tough it gets, keeps going and he demonstrates by that fact the authenticity of his life and ministry.

“after we had already suffered and been mistreated...we had courage in our God.”

Where do you get your courage? You get your courage from God, don’t you? Does God strengthen in the midst of difficulty?

Philippians 4:13

Yes, I’m ready for anything through the strength of the one who indwells me.

Isaiah 40:31

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their

strength...

Does He sustain you?

Oh man, “His grace is sufficient for you. His strength is made perfect in your weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

He’s there! You know, there’s a wonderful passage in 1 Samuel 14:6. Jonathan’s with his young armor-bearer and he had it up to here with the Philistines. And his daddy’s sitting under a tamarisk tree and they aren’t doing anything. They’re scared of the Philistines. And this is what Jonathan said:

1 Samuel 14:6

Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, “Come, let’s go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few.”

Man, he grabs and goes and starts a big war. Of course there is a tremendous victory for the sons of Israel because he had courage in his God.

You see exactly the same quality in young David. That’s why Jonathan and David were blood-brothers.

In 1 Samuel 17 you’ve got David coming in on the scene, rolling in on his daddy’s chrome-wheeled chariot, bringing hot dogs and potato chips to the boys and they’ve been sitting

around there for 40 days with a great big ole guy who's been challenging them to send somebody out and fight him. And old high-pockets has been successful for 40 days until this young guy comes walking on the scene. And he says in 1 Samuel 17:37, when he's talking to Saul he says:

1 Samuel 17:37

The Lord's delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of a bear. He'll deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.

And then he goes right on down to the brook and picks up five little smooth stones and he says this to the old Goliath:

1 Samuel 17:47

All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he'll give all of you into our hands.

Buddy, we're going to eat your lunch today. You've had it.

And you know, it's incredible the courage that's demonstrated at a time a person is strengthened in the Lord our God.

Psalms 112, verses 7 and 8. I just love these. I'm trying to memorize them.

Psalm 112:7, 8

He'll have no fear of bad news;
his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.
His heart is secure, he will have no fear;
in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.

That's a great God! And it's a man in confidence, trusting this great God to keep him and protect him and sustain him, while he's continuing on in a service for the Lord.

You know, maybe God is just saying to you that you just need to have the courage and to keep on hanging in there because your victory is just around the corner.

It was Lange, that old commentator, who said:

The Lord's true messengers are for the most part prepared in the school of suffering.
(source unknown)

Paul certainly was not exempt of that.

Romans 8:37

All these things we are overwhelmingly conquering through Him that loved us.

1 Corinthians 15:15

Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther said in “A Mighty Fortress”:

Did we in our own strength confide?
Our striving would be losing
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God’s own choosing.

(source unknown)

Yay, we came to you, “we had courage in our God to speak to you the gospel in much conflict.”

It was tough when we came—verse 3.

v. 3 For our exhortation was not out of error, neither out of impure motive nor in deceit;

“For our exhortation was not out of error, neither out of impure motive nor out of deceit;”

You see, the most important thing to Paul in talking to them is his message. He’s going to talk about that first, and then he’s going to talk about the man he was and the ministry he performed. You’re going to see it just kind of fall into a slide here. But first of all, what can he say about the message he gave?

Three things there, did you see it?

His message was:

1. “not out of error,”
2. it wasn’t “out of impure motives,” and
3. it wasn’t “in deceit.”

Let’s talk about it for just a second.

His message was a message that “was not out of error.”

John 8:32

you’ll know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.

Do you speak the truth? Do you know the truth? Do you spend time in the truth?

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Can you tell the difference between truth and error? Are you able to discern when somebody’s teaching something that is contrary to biblical truth? Does it really bother you when that happens?

When it comes to the sovereignty of God, when we recognize He really is sovereign, then everything in our lives is controlled by Him and He has some reason or purpose. We might never know it until we get to glory, but at least we can trust Him in that.

So when you have a message that is coming “out of error,” can you discern it because you know about Biblical truth to sort the things out and to be able to understand?

The very first thing he says to them is “Look, our message was from truth.”

Secondly, our motivation was not from “impure motives.”

And I put 2 Peter 2:18 there:

2 Peter 2:18

For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

When you look at his MESSAGE, it wasn't “out of error.”

When you look at his MOTIVATION, he had pure motives, boy in his coming.

And thirdly, the METHOD that he operates on—his

methodology—is not “in deceit.”

What does he mean here? He means he’s not trying to deceive them by tricks. He’s not trying to manipulate to accomplish something for personal advantage.

The number one priority in his life was his message but his motivation and his method also backs up that message with great credibility.

Look at verse 4.

v. 4 but even as we have been found worthy by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we are speaking, not as pleasing men but God, who is examining our hearts.

“but even as we have been found worthy by God”—Oh I love that!—”to be entrusted with the gospel, so we are speaking, not as pleasing men but God, who is examining our hearts.”

Wow.

As God looks down right now, and He looked into your heart right at this minute, would He find you worthy to be trusted with His gospel? You know, God doesn’t allow the Bread of Life to be broken with dirty hands. He’s not going to bless that.

And God also passes up dirty instruments that are filled with

crud and dirt to pick up something clean to dispense the Water of Life.

And what Paul's saying is:

Look, I don't have anything to hide from y'all. I just want to tell you something, "we were found worthy by God to be entrusted with the gospel." He came looking for me on the Damascus Road. And I have been found worthy to do that.

And he's saying something else:

Because I have been, I'm speaking that way "not as pleasing men but God."

"I really don't care," Paul says, "how men are going to respond one way or the other because my primary motivation is to be a mouthpiece for pleasing God. And I want to please only Him who is examining our heart."

Ouch.

To be "found worthy" and to "examine" actually come from the same Greek root word. So by testing he's "been found worthy." And the process has been an "examining" process.

Now the doctor's examining, isn't it. We're having a spiritual check-up. And as we do this, Paul says "we have been tested."

Now does God test us? Oh that is such an important part of scripture teaching. God is in the process all the time testing us to measure progress and for us to see how we're going to respond. And when we've got egg all over our face, guess what we flunked?

The disciples are a great illustration of that. Here the Lord Jesus has been teaching on the whole subject of faith in Mark chapter 4 and you get to the end of Mark chapter 4, He puts them in a boat and they're going across the river, across the lake and there's a great big storm. And Jesus, in faith, is asleep in the back of the boat. But who wakes Him up? Probably Peter, who is a very experienced fisherman and these guys have been through a few storms, but they say "Don't you care that we're perishing and the ship's going down while you're laying there asleep?" (Mark 4:38)

They just flunked the test. The sovereign God of the universe just stands up and says "Peace, be still." (Mark 4:39) And they come off a ten-foot wave on a glassy sea.

And then they really flunk the test and got egg all over their face when they said "Who is this that even the winds and the waves obey His voice?" (Mark 4:41)

You see, He'd been running progressively through His little discipleship curriculum and they failed. And guess what? When you fail a test, you get to do it again. You get another opportunity for the course.

And one of the best things you can do as a Christian is when you hit a test is to pass it. Because if you don't, it's going to come back in another way and you're going to stay hung up there until you learn it. You just might as well.

And if you keep on saying you grow too soon old and too late smart, you're going to have a rough life. Because the Lord, when you name the name of Christ, He is in the business of testing progress all the time. And He loves to give pop quizzes—those that you just don't think you're ready for. But He just wants to reveal what you're like.

Now does He do that scripturally?

Oh man, Genesis 22:1. Abraham finally, after 25 years, got the son that God promised. Genesis 22:1 says:

Genesis 22:1

God did test Abram.

What was the test?

“Take what you've been waiting for for 25 years and I promise in the unconditional covenant, and take him up there and offer him on that mountain.”

So he rose early the next morning, got his donkey ready and got the wood ready and took his son and went.

You see, he was instantaneously obedient and he passed the test on the mountain. And guess what? He was blessed. And God wonderfully provided a ram for a sacrifice and a great service of worship.

There are two other verses I'm trying to memorize in:

Isaiah 48:10, 11

I have refined you, though not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.
For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this.
How can I let myself be defamed?
I will not yield my glory to another.

Yes, He does. He does that.

James 1:2, 3

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces [WHAT?] *hupomeno*.

Perseverance produces endurance.

Can I give you a few more?

1 Peter 1:6, 7

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little

while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though it's tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Then you turn over to chapter 4 of that same epistle, verses 12 and 13:

1 Peter 4:12, 13

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that you also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

You see that's what God does. And Paul says to these Thessalonian Christians "we've been tested and we have been found worthy because God is examining our hearts."

You see, I can only look on your outside and you can only look on my outside. You don't know what's inside me. But God does.

And I loved what Dr. Walvoord says in his commentary:

The final test of every life and of every message or sermon is, What does God think about it?

(source unknown)

You know, that's the bottom line, when you come right down to it. When all has been said and done, that's it.

“Worthy to be entrusted with the gospel.”

Now if God's in the business of testing us, have you been found worthy to present the gospel because He's tested you and you passed that test?

And ask yourself the question:

Is He examining your heart right now?

And guess what, your answer has to be “Yes” because He's doing it all the time. It's in the PRESENT TENSE there.

“God is continually examining our hearts,” is the way that really ought to be translated.

It's like “He keeps on examining our hearts.”

We're never exempt of examining from God as He begins to teach us how to walk with Him.

Hebrews 4:13

... all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

You know, and that's really what God's saying. You know that's 1 Corinthians chapter 11. If a man would examine himself, he would escape judgment. (1 Cor. 11:28-32) But if you're going to wait to let God do it, it's going to become very painful. And that was the reason a lot of the Corinthians were dead physically, simply because they dropped as...illustrations of God's judgment upon them, because they refused to examine their own hearts.

And then there's another verse, 2 Corinthians 13:5, that verifies that we better do it or God's going to do it in a severe fashion. Listen to this:

2 Corinthians 13:5

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?

Galatians 6:4

But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.

You see, there is a great process that's got to go on in our hearts as believers or the Judgment Seat of Christ and that future day is going to be a horrible, horrible moment of

revelation that's going to be very, very painful.

1 Samuel 16:7

the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things that man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart."

Now when it says "examining the heart" we think of this organ that pumps all the blood here and keeps us going. Is that what God's examining?

The word "cardia" in the Greek text refers to the personal life. It's the center of:

the intellectual,

the emotional, and

the moral character of the individual.

It all resides in the cardia—the heart. And so when it says He's "examining our hearts," Paul's saying, He's examining what I think about. He examines what moves me emotionally. And He examines me morally. What are the precepts that undergird the way I act and think.

He is the one that's probing around down there. And guess what? He knows all about us. He loves you unconditionally.

And there's no one in this room that is loved any more or anyone any less. That's how patient He is even though He's got it thrown up on His big video screen all of your heart. And He knows you intellectually, emotionally, and your will.

Now what does that tell us we ought to do?

Well that tells me something and I already did it. And that is, I better sit down and have a good heart-check before I start teaching family camp number 2. And I gave you those verses, hoping you'd do it.

Well I'm going to give them back to you again 'cause I know sometimes we don't hear it the first time. So when it comes the second time, you remember it.

Time for a HEART-CHECK. What are the verses?

Psalm 26:2, 3

Test me, O Lord, and try me,
examine my heart and my mind...

And then:

Psalm 139:23, 24

[Test me] Search me, O God, and know my heart;
try me and know my thoughts.
See if there's any anxious way in me,

[or offensive way in me]
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Verse 5.

v. 5 For neither were we found using flattering words, even as you are knowing, nor in pretense desiring advantage—God is witness—

“For neither were we found using flattering words, as even as you are knowing, nor in pretense desiring advantage—God is a witness—”

Now see that word:

1. “flattering words?”

That’s the only place that occurs in the New Testament. That’s like telling people a bunch of positive prattle so that their pride will be ministered unto.

It’s like the politicians telling you everything you ever wanted to hear. And basically, they’re trying to flatter you into going to the voting booth and doing for them what needs to be done.

And so he says “I want to tell you three more things. I want to tell you, we didn’t come into town using flattering words. We didn’t come into town telling you what you thought you’d really like to know. We came into town telling you what you needed to know so that you would respond.”

He didn't try to flatter them.

Secondly, he didn't come into town:

2. "in pretense desiring advantage."

In other words, he wasn't coming in thinking that he would use this to accomplish some other purpose. And so "God is witness."

Isn't that great? Can you call God witness to your heart? You see ultimately the bottom line is, Paul can say "I can tell you, we didn't come with flattering words, we didn't come in pretense." And then if you add verse 6 there it says he didn't come seeking the glory of men either.

We came in honesty and integrity to proclaim the message.

That's our **KEY VERSE** to the study.

Can we actually say that we don't use "flattering words," we don't come in "pretense" wanting an unfair advantage, we don't come "seeking from men"? We're honest.

Some writer said:

The devil rejoices more over one hypocrite than over 99 real sinners.

(source unknown)

You know, that's probably the truth.

His great masterpiece is somebody who's phony. And boy I want to tell you, Jesus rung the chains on hypocrites more than almost anybody else.

You want to get cured of hypocrisy, just read Matthew 23. Boy, he goes over to:

Matthew 23:13-15

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; you do not enter it yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites, you devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you shall receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice a son of hell as yourselves.

Woo! You think that raised a few hackles? Boy what a message.

And he speaks of them in Matthew chapter 6 in the Sermon on the Mount when he says:

Matthew 6:5

When you pray, you're like hypocrites; because you love to stand and pray in the synagogue and in the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say unto you, you have your reward in full.

You've been disappointed by people like that? Who really have shocked you by the fact that they've compromised and these are the things that characterize their lives. That's the twentieth century, isn't it? But that's not real.

And what the apostle is saying is that none of these things were true of his ministry in Thessalonica.

I was reading a book a number of years ago where Billy Graham, on one of his very first crusades in Georgia back in 1947 tells this experience of one Saturday night:

It was about 2:00 in the morning and in a big room next door to us in the hotel they were having the wildest party I think I'd ever heard or seen. They were tearing the roof down, singing lewd songs, and swearing, and drinking—all of which we could hear. It was completely impossible to sleep. Grady Wilson came to my room and he asked what should we do.

I put on my bathrobe, and I went next door and I knocked. A man answered and asked, "What do you want?"

I said, "I am a minister and tomorrow, or that is today, is Sunday. We are trying to get some sleep next door but we can't."

He turned to the crowd packed in there saying, "Say, wait

a minute, everybody, here's a preacher who wants to talk to us."

So I gave them the gospel and they all listened. I said, "I'm sure most of you are church members and some of you are Sunday School teachers even."

One lady, with tears streaming down her cheeks, said, "Mr. Graham, you're right. I'm a Sunday School teacher."

Imagine the conviction. How do you act when no other Christians are around? Do you live for Christ, witness for Christ? Do you let them know where you stand?

(source unknown)

You see probably the most classic illustration of the person we're talking about is Judas.

Here is a man who is WITH Christ, but he's not IN Christ. He went through all the motions, he served his function, but he gave his life and became a suicide. He never really became honest.

The difference between Peter and Judas is Peter came back. He was forgiven. He was restored. He was a powerful preacher at Pentecost.

But with Judas, his pride would never let him come back. It's a sad, sad story but a lot of people are like that.

Somebody has wisely said:

Christianity was never meant to develop your acting ability.

(source unknown)

And I, you know, I thought at this point, my students are going to need some help. And so I kicked my shoes off and I meditated in the office by myself for a while. And I asked myself this question:

Why do we find comfort in wearing masks rather than being real?

And I came up with four things that just are not anything very original, but it kind of distills my thinking:

1. We don't like ourselves the way we are and so we feel like we've got to be somebody else. We don't like ourselves the way we are.
2. We are afraid that others will not like us so we've got to be something we're not.

Number 3, and this is probably the biggest out:

3. We're trying to cover an empty religious experience. We don't really want people to know how shallow our spiritual commitment is and how shallow our relationship with the Lord is. So we try to cover that by being something we're not.

And then fourth, and this is probably one of the biggest:

4. It's a cover of my own selfishness. I just want to live life on my own terms. I want a certain level of comfort zone. I want to drive my car, live in my house, live in my city, and I don't want to be characterized as a religious fanatic and so I found a certain comfort zone, staying at a distance in the twilight. And so therefore I'd rather be that than to come into the light and be an all-out individual who can characterize themselves as what the apostle described himself here, as a man of integrity.

And as you make your spiritual check-up, you've got to do that yourself. You've got to do that in your heart. You've got to let the Spirit of God wipe the slate clean and become a person who's real and genuine and that you don't have any problem telling people where you stand and how you feel about your relationship with Christ.

Now let me hasten on and I'll wrap it up—verse 6.

v. 6 nor seeking glory from men, nor from you nor from others,

“nor seeking glory from men, nor from you nor from others,”

He's saying “Hey look, I didn't come into town seeking glory from men you Thessalonians, nor from others for that matter. I came only to glorify God.”

Now when you look at that, you can say:

1. Paul was not guilty of using personal positive prattle. He wasn't flattering people.
2. He wasn't guilty of pretending,
3. He wasn't guilty of pride. His message was genuine, his motives were pure, and his methods were sincere.

And I'm just saying to you folks, that's still possible in the twentieth century if we just get serious about our walk with God.

Maybe you've had it up to here with the shallow commitment. Maybe you've had it up to here with just scratching the surface. And may God stir up your cage and rattle your chain and make you get off your duff and do something about it! This is the time to do it, not to keep listening about it. Or trying to ride the fence and be something over here that you're not so you can be something over here that you think you maybe really are. And there's a constant tension going on.

You see, the apostle ends it with some beautiful statements here.

v. 7 though being able to be in a position of dignity as Christ's ambassadors. But we became gentle in your midst, even as a nursing mother is tenderly caring for her own children.

“though being able to be in a position of dignity as Christ’s ambassadors.”—verse 7—“We became gentle in your midst, even as a nursing mother is tenderly caring for her own children.”

What Paul says is all things are true. But I want to tell you a little bit about what we did with you. When we came in there, we could have come in there with the credentials of an apostle but we came in there acting two ways. We came in there—as he shifts from the preachers to the hearers—we came in there like “a nursing mother tenderly caring for her own children.”

Now how does a momma care for her children? Well some of you are mommas sitting here and you know how you care for children. You care for them, you feed them, you guard them, you protect, you provide, you nurture them. It is so.

A wonderful couple of verses of scripture in Matthew 23:37, 38 where Jesus says:

Matthew 23:37, 38

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

That verse will never be the same. As last year Pearl rode on tour with me every other week. We were coming across the

Trinity River from our ministry in Arlington to Dallas and Pearl said something that stuck with me ever since then. She said: “O Dallas, Dallas, how often I wanted to gather you as a mother chicken would gather her children under her wings and you would not.”

And you know, it made me think how many cities in the United States of America would Jesus be weeping over and be asking and saying the same thing?

“O Fort Worth, O Fort Worth...”

“O Chicago, Chicago, how often I have wanted to but you wouldn’t.”

You see, God is like that and Paul is like God. Wanting to nurture, wanting to sustain. And Moses was like that too in Numbers 11:12 in that great prayer. When he was so discouraged with them he said:

Numbers 11:12

Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on an oath to their forefathers?

And then in Galatians 4:19 Paul bears his heart when he says:

Galatians 4:19

My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed within you—

The DEEP LOVE of the apostle for the Thessalonian Christians and he had only seen them for 3 weeks! He's like a nursing mother to them.

See what he does in verse 8?

v. 8 So feeling kindly for you, we were delighting in imparting to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved ones to us.

“So feeling kindly for you, we were delighting in imparting to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved ones to us.”

We care so much for you. We only came in there and gave you the gospel, the message, but we gave you our hearts. We spent ourselves for you.

The word “So feeling kindly for you”—that’s only used here in the New Testament. And again is a word that is picked up by Paul to describe the intensity of his love. That’s the word for the nursery. Did you know that? That’s the word you would use in Greek to describe the nursery.

And I always love what I saw in a Baptist church at St. John’s

New Brunswick when I was doing a Bible conference up there a number of years ago. On their nursery they had a little sign that said: “They shall not all sleep but they shall all be changed.”

You know, Paul was like that. He knew that he’s going to have to change some dirty diapers but he says:

“we were delighting in imparting to you not only the gospel of God but our own souls, because you became beloved ones to us.”

You see, the way I have a real problem with health-wealth-prosperity is they’re coming to take and they’re not characterized as giving.

The difference between

TRUTH and ERROR is

GREED and GIVE.

And here the apostle says we not only loved you so much that we gave you the Gospel, we gave ourselves to you as well. We loved you that much! There were no conditions attached to our love.

I was reading a little book the other day called *Yes, Lord, I Have Sinned, But I Have Several Excellent Excuses*. This is by James Moore. He’s a Methodist minister and he says this:

(Yes, Lord, I Have Sinned, But I Have Several Excellent Excuses by James W. Moore)

One of my favorite stories was told by Bishop Gerald Kennedy some years ago. A young man was proposing marriage to his girlfriend: “I admit that I’m not wealthy like Jerome; I’m not as handsome as Jerome; I don’t have a country estate or a yacht or a private plane like Jerome’s. But my darling, I love you.”

The girl answered, “I love you too, but tell me more about Jerome!”

p. 107

You see the apostle Paul says **NOBODY** can take your place in my heart! And after these three weeks and what I have witnessed of the direction of your lives, I am committed to you.

Hannah Hurnard said:

Sacrifice is the ecstasy of giving the best we have to the one that we love the most.

(source unknown)

And he said, “We came to town, we gave you the Gospel, but boy I’ll tell you something else. We gave you our own souls.” And he reminds them of what that cost him. See verse 9?

v. 9 For you are remembering, brethren, our toil and hardship, night and day laboring that we might not

be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

“For you are remembering, brethren, our toil and hardship, night and day laboring that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.”

If he did in Thessalonica those three weeks what he did in Corinth, he probably started building tents and tried to make enough money to support himself so he wouldn't put any burden on any of those Thessalonian Christians financially because they were destitute too.

Verse 10.

v. 10 You are witnesses, and [so is] God, as to how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we proved ourselves among you who are believing;

“You are witnesses, and [so is] God,”—he says I'm going to get the horizontal and the vertical witness in here.

“You [both] are witnesses... as to how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we proved ourselves among you who are believing;”

Now what does it mean when he says we were DEVOUT, we were UPRIGHT, and we were BLAMELESS before you who believed?

Well when he says they're DEVOUT, it means they were pleasing God—they were holy.

When he says they were UPRIGHT, their lives were conforming to scripture.

When he says they were BLAMELESS, he simply means their lives can bear close inspection. It doesn't mean that he was perfect. It simply means that before God, you could look at their lives and see that they were walking in truth—not that they were sinless.

Verse 11—I know you've gotten through listening and I'm going to finish. I've got 5 minutes on the clock and I'll be done right on time.

v. 11 just as you are knowing how to each one of you as a father his own children:

“just as you are knowing how to each one of you as a father his own children:”

Now he changes his illustration. He's not only a nursing mother, but he's like a daddy. And he says THREE THINGS about a daddy. A father is:

1. one who EXHORTS,
2. he's the one who ENCOURAGES, and

3. he's the one who's an EXAMPLE.

He's just changed the subject. But would you look at a little phrase that maybe you passed over quickly?

“[But] to each one of you...”

Paul believed in personal discipleship. He spent time with these individuals one at a time.

You know, I've always been frustrated that Stephen Covey is a Mormon because he wrote a fabulous book called *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. I took all of his principles and put a marriage conference together this last spring that just really went great. And God used it mightily as we put scripture together with the principles.

But in the book he quotes Dag Hammarskjold, who was the past Secretary-General of the United Nations. Listen to what he says. It's very profound. You'd almost think it's Biblical truth.

(The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic by Stephen R. Covey)

“It is more noble to give yourself completely to one individual than to labor diligently for the salvation of the masses.”

p. 201

Because as you give yourself to one individual, that is going to

multiple to two and to four and to six and then to eight. And on and on it goes.

And Paul, in Thessalonica, gave himself unselfishly to each one of them just like a father would to his sons.

Now the problem is, we've got a bunch of missing fathers. And kids are growing up in trouble.

You know I told you there are books for men coming out your ears. Well there's a book called *Missing From Action* by Weldon Hardenbrook. This has been written for a number of years. Published by Nelson Publishing. Listen to this. This will shock you:

(Missing from Action by Weldon M. Hardenbrook)

The chilling reality is that children without dads have potential for great harm, not only to themselves, but to others in society as well. For starters, check this "hall of fame" chronicled by author Daniel Amneus:

Few readers will have heard of Richard Lawrence, Charles Guiteau, Leon Czolgosz, John Schrank, or Giuseppe Zangara. These gentlemen were the assassins or attempted assassins of Andrew Jackson, James Garfield, William McKinley, and Theodore Roosevelt, respectively. Some recall the name of Dean Corll, the Houston mass murderer, and everyone recalls that of John Wilkes Booth. Lee Harvey Oswald, James Earl Ray, Sirhan K. Sirhan,

Charles Manson, Andreas Baader, and Lynette Fromme are household words.

These people experienced the extreme but logical end of what can occur when dad disappears, for they all “share an interesting biographical oddity. They all grew up with no fathers in their daily lives.”

pp. 89-90

v. 12 exhorting you, and encouraging [you] and bearing witness to the end that you should be walking in a manner worthy of the God who is calling you into His own kingdom and glory.

And you see, Paul says “I’m not going to have that for you Thessalonian Christians. I’m going to be like a daddy to you. And I’m going to do three things for you. And I have been doing them.”

“[I’m] exhorting you, [I’m] encouraging [you] and [I’m] bearing witness to the end that you should be walking in a manner worthy of the God who is calling you into His own kingdom and glory.”

Now how do we exhort one another as fathers?

Dawson Trotman did it this way. He’d come to somebody and he says “What have you gotten out of the word today?” and “What verse are you memorizing?”

Now, I mean, that's exhortation. He can flat get at you that way. No wonder he founded the Navigators and was so greatly used of God. That's:

Hebrews 10:24

let's consider how we can stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

How do you encourage somebody? You come in alongside and you say something that's going to encourage them by your life and by your lip.

Barbara Johnson said:

(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life by Barbara Johnson)

Most of us miss out on life's big prizes.

The Pulitzer.

The Heisman.

Oscars.

But we're all eligible for life's small pleasures.

A pat on the back.

A kiss behind the ear.

A four-pound bass.

A full moon.

An empty parking space.

A crackling fire.

A great meal.

A glorious sunset.

[Source unknown]

p. 21

Those are the tiny delights of life that encourage us.

And finally he says:

“I’ve been bearing witness to you. I’ve been an example to you. You could follow in my footsteps. I am walking with the Lord.”

Now those are the verses. What are the lessons that we picked out of those? I must read these because we’re recording so be patient with me. There’s just 8 of them. And the lesson sheet’s right here. You can pick them up right after we get through.

LESSON #1: Fruit was born and lives were changed because the ministers’ lives had been changed.

LESSON #2: Paul persevered in preaching the gospel even though he knew he was going to suffer the consequences.

LESSON #3: Paul was sustained and strengthened in his suffering.

LESSON #4: His message was genuine, his motives were pure, and his methods sincere.

LESSON #5: Paul did not come to Thessalonica to GET but to GIVE the gospel and to give of himself.

LESSON #6: Paul's life could bear close inspection. Can yours?

LESSON #7: A father's function is 3-fold:

1. exhortation
2. encouragement
3. an example

LESSON #8: The goal of Paul's ministry is that they should be "walking in a manner worthy of a God who is calling them into His own kingdom and glory."

Does your life bear close scrutiny? And when you die are you going to leave an impact behind you because of an example of integrity and honesty and a walk with God? Or are you going to continue to be a phony?

Listen to Gordon Aeschliman and Guy Doud.

Gordon Aeschliman says:

(Cages of Pain by Gordon Aeschliman)

I began to understand. I picked up my journal and [I] penned the following prayer: "Lord you have prepared a way for me to go and I want to walk that path unflinchingly in

order that all the plans you have determined to accomplish through my little frame will see their fulfilled end. Please do with me as you desire and don't put a hold on your sovereign intentions because of my feeble heart."

p. 152

Do you want that?

And listen to Guy Doud in high school when his grandma died. He wrote "Grandma's Hands."

(Molder of Dreams by Guy Rice Doud)

Grandma's Hands

I remember her hands, my grandmother's hands
All crippled and twisted in pain.
The hands that held children, the hands that baked bread,
Would never be useful again.

I remember her hands, my Grandma's hands,
All gnarled and painfully bent.
But I saw in those hands a black precious book,
The key to the life that she spent.

I remember her touch, Grandma's touch,
As she grabbed my hand with hers.
With love and tenderness she drew me close,
And whispered these precious words:

“Jesus loves you, always remember,
Jesus loves you, Guy!
Jesus really loves you, son,
He does, and so do I!”

Yes, I remember that voice, Gram’s voice,
As one day she read from the book.
She read of His hands, of nails driven through,
Of the pain and suffering He took.

She said, “I look at my hands gnarled in pain,
And sometimes I’ve questioned why.
But Jesus always answers by taking my hands
And offers a tender reply:

“I suffered on Calvary, the spear pierced my side,
The nails were driven by bones.
I suffered and died on Calvary’s tree;
I suffered and died alone.

“I know your pain; I’ve felt it too.
Believe me, my child, I care.
Just give me your hands and I’ll hold yours,
And help you your burden to bear.’

“I reached for His hands,” she said, “as He reached for
mine.
And I felt the holes pierced through.
And my hands, though gnarled, crippled and bent,
Know no pain like the pain that He knew.”

I remember her hands, my Grandmother's hands,
Folded, as she lay at rest.
And as I touched those hands one last time,
I thanked God that her life was so blessed.

Those hands that held the Bible, those hands that held me,
Now hold the Master's hands.
No longer gnarled or twisted in pain,
They are strong and tender again.

At the bottom of the poem, I wrote, "In memory of a great woman in Christ, Mayme Tooley Rice, by her grandson, Guy Doud."

pp. 14-16

A Practical Study of 1 THESSALONIANS: Your Spiritual Checkup

“Victory in Areas of Vulnerability”

Key verse 3:10 — *“night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith”*

QUESTION NUMBER TWO – ARE YOU A PHONY? – **1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12**

KEY VERSE 2:5

v. 1 For you yourselves are knowing, brethren, of our entrance among you, that it has not been without results,

v. 2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, even as you are knowing, we had the courage in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

v. 3 For our exhortation was not out of error, neither out of impure motive nor in deceit;

v. 4 but even as we have been found worthy by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we are speaking, not as pleasing men but God, who is examining our hearts.

v. 5 For neither were we found using flattering words, even as you are knowing, nor in pretense desiring advantage—God is witness—

v. 6 nor seeking glory from men, nor from you nor from others,

v. 7 though being able to be in a position of dignity as Christ’s ambassadors. But we became gentle in your midst, even as a nursing mother is tenderly caring for her own children.

NOTES

NOTES

v. 8 So feeling kindly for you, we were delighting in imparting to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved ones to us.

v. 9 For you are remembering, brethren, our toil and hardship, night and day laboring that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

v. 10 You are witnesses, and [so is] God, as to how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we proved ourselves among you who are believing;

v. 11 just as you are knowing how to each one of you as a father his own children:

v. 12 exhorting you, and encouraging [you] and bearing witness to the end that you should be walking in a manner worthy of the God who is calling you into His own kingdom and glory.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. Who does Paul tell us he is trying to please in verse 4?

3. Who is his “witness” in verse 5?

4. How does Paul tell us he acted in verse 7?

5. What two things did Paul give them, according to verse 8?

6. Why did Paul work, according to verse 9?

7. How did Paul and his followers act, according to verse 10?
Define “devoutly,” “uprightly,” and “blamelessly.”

8. Why did Paul “encourage” and “witness” to them, according to verse 12?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Fruit was borne and lives were changed because the ministers' lives had been changed.

LESSON #2: Paul persevered in preaching the Gospel even though he knew he was going to suffer the consequences.

LESSON #3: Paul was sustained and strengthened in his suffering.

LESSON #4: His message was genuine, his motives were pure, and his methods sincere.

LESSON #5: Paul did not come to Thessalonica to get but to give the Gospel and to give of himself.

LESSON #6: Paul's life could bear close inspection.

LESSON #7: A father's function is three-fold: 1) exhortation; 2) encouragement; and 3) an example

LESSON #8: The goal of Paul's ministry is that they should be "walking in a manner worthy of a God who is calling them into His own kingdom and glory."