

1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

WHAT DOES HEALTHY MINISTRY LOOK LIKE?

Introduction: In this passage Paul is defending his ministry against accusations and insinuations that opponents were making about his motives and message. In his defense, he outlines what healthy ministry looks like.

Reading: Take the time to read through the passage together, at least once.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul begin by talking about his previous experience in Philippi?

It is likely that he is trying to prove he is not in ministry for the money or anything else. The fact that he got beaten up and mistreated but went right back to ministry proves that thesis.

2. What are tell-tale signs that a ministry is using deception or is in error?

Is knowingly contrary to the Scriptures, compromises on difficult cultural issues, hides hard doctrines.

3. What do you personally find most tempting as you do ministry: words of flattery, glory or greed?

You may need to flesh out what each of these mean, but aim for personal answers if you can. Also, have your own answer ready.

4. What does the word "but" at the beginning of vs. 7 signify?

That Paul is about to draw a contrast between the accusations and how he actually behaved.

5. Paul uses the metaphors of both a nursing mother and an "exhorting" (think of a somewhat serious/stern encouragement or kick in the butt) father. How do these images contrast? How do they complement each other? Which do you think you are more in need of in this season of life?

We need both at different times. Sometimes we need to be nurtured and tenderly helped along in our faith, but other times we need to get off our butts and get moving.

6. Do you struggle to feel "affectionately desirous" for others? Which is harder for you: to share the gospel of God or your very self?

7. Did anything else strike you from the text or the sermon that you would like to share?

Conclusion:

Though Paul's ministry was exemplary and worth emulating, ultimately we see Paul only as a faint echo of Jesus himself. What is amazing is that Jesus was so affectionately desirous of us that he did not deliver to us the message of salvation, but gave to us his very life. He could have made demands of us, could have imposed on us, could have demanded we live up to his standards. But he didn't. He came gently, he came as a perfect parent, brother and friend to do what we could not do for ourselves. And it is Jesus who invites us into ministry alongside him – learning his ways and becoming like him.