

FIRST AND SECOND

THESSALONIANS

Living in Light of Christ's Return

L E A D E R G U I D E

GROWING UP

BIG IDEA: As our faith matures, we are called to patiently nurture new believers.

DATE: Sunday, October 11 and Wednesday, October 14, 2026

SCRIPTURE: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

OPENING QUESTION

Have you ever had your motives questioned? How did it feel? Why do people suspect our motives as Christians sometimes?

This is what Paul was dealing with in today's passage.

SETTING THE STAGE

Chapter 1 of 1 Thessalonians introduced us to Paul the evangelist. This chapter introduces us to Paul, the pastor, for it explains how the great apostle cared for the new believers in the churches he founded. Paul considered the care of all the churches a greater burden than all the sufferings and difficulties he experienced in his ministry. Just as God uses people to bring the gospel to the lost, so He uses people to nurture the babes in Christ and lead them to maturity. The church at Thessalonica was born through the faithful preaching of the apostle and his helpers, and the church was nurtured through the faithful pastoring that Paul and his friends gave to the infant church. This helped them stand strong in the midst of persecution.

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (CSB)

For you yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our visit with you was not without result. ²On the contrary, after we had previously suffered and were treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, we were emboldened by our God to speak the gospel of God to you in spite of great opposition. ³For our exhortation didn't come from error or impurity or an intent to deceive. ⁴Instead, just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please people, but rather God, who examines our hearts. ⁵For we never used flattering speech, as you know, or had greedy motives—God is our witness— ⁶and we didn't seek glory from people, either from you or from others. ⁷Although we could have been a burden as Christ's apostles, instead we were gentle among you, as a nurse nurtures her own

children. ⁸ We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. ⁹ For you remember our labor and hardship, brothers and sisters. Working night and day so that we would not burden any of you, we preached God's gospel to you. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, of how devoutly, righteously, and blamelessly we conducted ourselves with you believers. ¹¹ As you know, like a father with his own children, ¹² we encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

DISCUSSION

READ: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6

Where have you seen people try to do God's work for the wrong reasons or motives?

Why is it important for Paul to remind the church of how he's ministering to the young churches? What does this suggest about the church in Thessalonica?

What is a "young" church today? How are a young church's needs different from the needs of a more established church?

From the Commentary:

Paul did not use guile or trickery to win converts. It carries the idea of "baiting a hook." In other words, Paul did not trap people into being saved the way a clever salesman traps people into buying his product. Spiritual witnessing and "Christian salesmanship" are different. Salvation does not lie at the end of a clever argument or subtle presentation. It is the result of God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Often we hear, "I don't care what your method is, just so long as your message is right." But some methods are unworthy of the gospel. They are cheap, whereas the gospel is a costly message that required death of God's only Son. They are worldly and man centered, whereas the gospel is a divine message centered in God's glory.

Paul's enemies in Thessalonica accused him of being a cheap peddler of this new message. They said that his only motive was to make money. In describing himself as a faithful steward, Paul answered these critics, and Paul's readers knew that he told the truth. Paul appealed to the witness of God and to his own witness.

In verse 5 we see that Paul was against flattering speech. What's wrong with flattery? In what ways is a flatterer someone who manipulates rather than communicates?

READ: 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

Why is patience such an important character trait for Christians, especially leaders? What happens when we're impatient with other believers? What are the long-term benefits of being patient? (See, for example, 1 Cor. 13:4).

From the Commentary:

First Thessalonians 2:7 can read "even as a nursing mother cherishes her own children." What is the lesson here? A nursing mother imparts her own life to the child. This is exactly what Paul wrote

in 1 Thessalonians 2:8. You cannot be a nursing mother and turn your baby over to someone else. That baby must be in your arms, next to your heart.

The nursing mother eats the food and transforms it into milk for the baby. The mature Christian feeds on the Word of God and then shares its nourishment with the younger believers so they can grow. A nursing child can become ill through reaction to something the mother has eaten.

What does a nourishing faith look like in practical terms? What was the “mother’s milk” that Paul fed to others? What are the kinds of “food” that can taint someone’s spiritual nourishment of another?

From the Commentary:

Paul considered himself a “spiritual father” to the believers at Thessalonica, just as he did toward the saints at Corinth. *“For you may have countless instructors in Christ, but you don’t have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”* (1 Cor. 4:15 CSB). The Spirit of God used the Word of God in Paul’s ministry, and many people in Thessalonica were born again into the family of God.

But the father not only begets the children, he also cares for them. As he defended his own work against false accusations, Paul pointed out three of his duties as the spiritual father to the Thessalonians.

READ: 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12

Paul talked about three duties: his work (v. 9); his walk (v. 10); his words (vv. 11-12). Describe what each duty was and what its purpose was. Why is work important? Why is walk important? Why are words important? How do they together make up our witness?

From the Commentary:

The verb in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 is the present tense: “who is continually calling you.” God called us to salvation, and He is constantly calling us to a life of holiness and obedience.

This passage gives us a beautiful example of a New Testament follow-up. Paul has shown us how to raise the babies. We must be faithful stewards, loving mothers, and concerned fathers. If we are not faithful to God, we may find ourselves becoming *doting* mothers and *pampering* fathers. Children need discipline as well as love. In fact, discipline is one evidence of love.

2:7 Paul fed these baby believers with the gospel and the truth. He taught them how to survive just as a mother imparts food and wisdom to her children. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to realize his love and sacrificial contribution so that his influence on them could be even greater. Paul chose the words “cares for” carefully because they demonstrate an attitude as well as an activity.

2:11-12 Paul presented a plan for discipling new believers. He compared this behavior to a father’s treatment of his children. **First**, a believer must be given advice and counsel combined with encouragement. These two principles work together to bring a believer to maturity. **Second**, a believer needs to be comforted during those difficult trials and temptations of life. **Third**, a believer must be urged or challenged to follow the Lord’s teachings.

They appreciated the Word. They did not receive it as the word of men; they received it as the Word of God. We must never treat the Bible as any other book, for the Bible is different in origin, character, content, and cost. The Bible is the Word of God. It was inspired by the Spirit of God and

written by men of God who were used by the Spirit. God's Word is holy, pure, and perfect. The Bible was written at great cost, not only to the writers, but to Jesus Christ, who became Man that the Word of God might be given to us.

The way a Christian treats his Bible shows how he regards Jesus Christ. He is the living Word, and the Bible is the written Word, but in essence they are the same. Both are bread, light, and truth. The Holy Spirit have birth to Jesus Christ through a holy woman, and He gave birth to the Bible through holy men of God. Jesus is the eternal Son of God forever, and the Word of God will live forever.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TIME (15 MINUTES): Have your group discuss these questions around their table or have them group up with 4-5 people:

- Do you fall prey to flattering speech? Do you ever find yourself serving God or the church for the wrong reasons? Are you seeking to build up your name or His Name?
- What are some ways you have practiced patience when discipling another believer? What frustrations did you experience? What joys?
- Describe one of the ways other believers have nourished your faith. What can you take from this experience to better prepare you to nourish others' faith?
- Who in your life needs discipling? Encouragement? Comfort? Who needs to be urged to follow God and obey Him? How can you come alongside them to help them mature in their faith?

GOING FORWARD

Think about your work, your walk and your words. All those together create your witness. Would others call you a mature, patient, nourishing Christian? Why or why not? In which area do you need to grow up?

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