



Week 2

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

The Big Idea: If we don't share the gospel we are cutting people off from their only hope of salvation.

Pre-Group

1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

2 For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. 2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. 3 For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. 11 For you know how, like a father with his children, 12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

STUDY: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Before interacting with this guide, all leaders and group members should study the referenced text using the HEAR Method.

H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

- **Why was this written?**



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- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.

Questions for Study and Reflection:

- 1.) In this passage, Paul shares what an authentic Christian life looks like. How does living this kind of life push back against the narrative that Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites?
- 2.) Based on this passage, what does an authentic Christian life look like? Are you modeling that?

Major Themes:

- 1.) Evangelism is not only sharing a message. It's sharing your life.
- 2.) God knows our hearts, whether they are authentic or not.
- 3.) Compassion and love should be the major motivation for evangelism.

Summary:

Paul came to Thessalonica after his stay in Philippi turned south. The people that he found there were receptive to the word and a small church was born. Nevertheless, his time there was short because of members of the Jewish community rioting at this new



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message. So, 1st Thessalonians is written to instruct the church that he had to leave in such a hurry.

As Chapter two opens, Paul begins to recap his time with them and his desire to visit them again. What we find is possibly Paul at his most vulnerable as he expresses his love for the people at Thessalonica. In short, we get to read about how Paul loved the Thessalonians and not only shared the message of the gospel with them, but also his life.

Verses seven and eight make this explicit as Paul says that he was willing to give his very life to the church because of how dear he held them. This matters for us because it lays out a pattern for gospel influence in our lives. We don't just do evangelism drivebys and hope for the best. Instead, we give our lives to the relationships that God puts before us and then we make sure those relationships are full of Jesus. We preach a message and we share our lives.

Group Time

Introduction

Evangelism has gotten a bad rap in the past because it's often been presented as just the rehearsal of facts about Jesus. "He lived. He died. He rose again. Do you believe it?"

The problem is that evangelism is much more than the recitation of facts. It's showing people who Jesus is based on the words you speak, the way you care for them, and the way you live your life.

Here's the point: you are more likely to see someone come to know Jesus if you have a relationship with them as you share the gospel.



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Have you ever shared the gospel with a stranger? Have you ever shared the gospel with someone you knew?

Which was easier? Which one do you think had the greater impact?

Understanding and Applying

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

While it may often be easier to share the gospel with a stranger, most of the time our gospel message has a greater impact on those we have a relationship with.

So, Paul tells us that we should share the gospel, but we should also share our lives.

In your opinion, what does it look like to share your life with someone?

As you share your life with people, there are a couple of important things to consider as far as sharing the gospel is concerned.



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First, we need to remember that we do have to use words to share the gospel. We have to actually talk about Jesus at some point.

Francis of Assisi once said, "Preach the gospel. Use words if necessary."

While that sounds good, it's nonsensical. You can only preach the gospel if you use words.

That's why Paul is clear in v.2, even as he shared his life, he declared a message, the message of Jesus.

Why do you think it's so hard to speak of Jesus sometimes?

Second, we have to remember not to put anything in the way of the gospel.

There are times when we spread the message without mouths but we hinder it without lifestyle. In other words, we live like hypocrites and then our message looks like a lie.

Read verses 9-12.

Paul is clear that our conduct has to match our message.

How do you seek to make sure the way you live matches up to the message you preach?



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Finally, we have to make sure that we care about the people who we share our lives and message with.

The old adage is true: people don't care what you know until they know that you care.

If we want people to take our message seriously then we have to take other people seriously. This is why relational evangelism is so important. It gives us an opportunity to meet people's spiritual needs and we minister to their physical needs.

How can you care about people more intentionally so that you will have an opportunity to share the gospel more easily?

Closing:

Who has God put in your life that you have relationships with that he means for you to share the gospel with?



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Resources

Teacher's Bible Commentary

Paul's Work in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:1–16)

There was opposition to Paul's preaching while he was in Thessalonica. After he was forced to leave, these detractors tried hard to discredit him. Itinerant pedlars of philosophy and religion were fairly common in the cities of the Roman world at that time. Some of them were greedy charlatans preying on the ignorance and credulity of the people. Paul's enemies had tried to identify him with such disreputable teachers. In this letter to the new church he left behind, he defends his conduct and that of his fellow missionaries. The brethren are asked to review the facts of his short stay.

In the first place, he points out (2:1) his ministry there added up to success for the gospel, not failure. In spite of mistreatment and insults at Philippi and opposition at Thessalonica he and his fellow missionaries spoke with the courage that comes from God (v. 2). They did not use clever tricks to win converts and they showed no impure motives (v. 3). They did not resort to flattery and sought no praise (vv. 5–6). On the contrary, they were willing even to give their lives (vv. 7–8). They had even worked—tentmaking being Paul's trade—to pay their own expenses (v. 9).

Paul reminds them that the facts are clear, that their attitudes, motives, and conduct were pure, right, and without fault (v. 10). He asks them to recall the acceptance they gave so freely then (vv. 11–12). They even suffered from their fellow citizens because of this support (v. 13), even as the believers in Judea had suffered from their own people, the Jews (v. 14). This thought evokes from Paul a bitter statement (vv. 15–16). This constant rejection of God's spokesmen by the Jews has brought (and still is bringing) God's wrath down upon them. In effect, Paul's defense says, "I stand on my record!"

Fields, W. C. (1972). [1 Thessalonians](#). In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The teacher's Bible commentary* (p. 758). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Holman Christian Concise Bible Commentary

God-Approved Ministry (2:1–9)

Chapter 2 is new material, but it is closely related to chapter 1. Chapter 2 is a defense against insinuations about his alleged ulterior motives. The apostle was subjected to a constant barrage of accusations. The Thessalonians



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themselves may have begun to question Paul's sincerity. No evidence of organized opposition on a wide scale exists. Estrangement could have developed unless treated immediately. So Paul addressed his readers most affectionately.

Paul claimed their ministry (Paul as well as Timothy and Silas) was above suspicion. It was bold and powerful because God had approved their ministry to preach the gospel. The success of their mission, in spite of sustained opposition, was due largely to their courage inspired by God. The approval of God was more significant for Paul and his team than the success of the mission. Yet the success of the work offered important validation of his motives and message. Verses 7–8 picture Paul as one who had found sufficient reason to endure suffering and the questions surrounding his character. He denied that flattery was the means of his ministry. Also greed and human praise were not the motivations for his ministry.

Worthy of God (2:10–16)

Paul appealed to the sensitive nature of their ministry in order to silence those who attacked him. To the hesitant he offered exhortation; to the weary he offered encouragement; to the weak he offered strength and direction. His motivation was to help each convert see what it meant “to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory”.

Christian ministers are expected to offer practical guidance to fellow Christians, but not as dictators. Christian leaders cannot rule by decree. If they are to be true to the Spirit of Christ, they must lead by example. The example must be modeled after the Lord Jesus Christ (see 2 Cor. 1:12; Phil. 2:7).

Paul returned to the theme of thanksgiving in verse 13. His thanksgiving for them was an aspect of his vindication and served as a demonstration of his guileless interest in them. They had listened to him and welcomed his message as “the word of God, which is at work in [those] who believe.” The manner of speech was Paul's. At the same time God was uttering His own powerful, creative word through him. The word had evidenced its power in their daily experience.

The words of verses 15–16 have been the source of careful scrutiny. Some think Paul spoke mistakenly about the Jews. Others reject Pauline authorship of these verses. These options are hardly worthy of Holy Scripture. Certainly the words here reveal Paul's heartfelt concern and exasperation with his countrymen. Yet to read this as personal vindication is to misunderstand Paul's point. It is the rejection of the gospel that moved Paul to bitter denunciation reminiscent of the prophets of God.

Dockery, D. S. (1998). [The Pauline Letters](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (pp. 595–596). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

The Bible Panorama

CHAPTER TWO

V 1–3: PROBLEMS Paul reminds them of the problems he suffered at Philippi, which involved cruel and spiteful treatment by others. That, however, has not stopped his boldness in the gospel. **V 4–5: PLEASING**



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Paul reiterates that his aim is not to please men but rather, by taking seriously the gospel entrusted to him, to please God who tests the heart. At no time does he flatter men or misuse his position as a preacher of the gospel. V 6–9: **PREACHING** Paul's preaching is characterised by seeking glory for God, gentleness with his hearers, concern for those who hear in the church, labour and toil, and being on duty twenty-four hours a day for the gospel. He earns his own living so as not to be financially burdensome to them. V 10–12: **PARENTAL** His attitude is parental to the children of God in Thessalonica. He longs to see his children walking with God and can point to his devout, just, and blameless witness to encourage them in this. V 13–14a: **POWERFUL** It is the gospel of God working in their hearts that causes the Thessalonians to imitate the churches of God that follow Christ. There is power in the truth of God. V 14b–16: **PERSECUTED** They, too, have suffered persecution by those who want to forbid them to share the gospel with Gentiles, in case they should be saved. God's wrath is upon such people, who not only sin, but try to prevent the spread of the gospel. V 17–20: **PASSIONATE** Paul has a passion to see them again, but has been hindered by Satan. They are his 'glory and joy' through the gospel and he looks forward to the day when he will be with them in the presence of Christ.

Chrispin, G. (2005). [*The Bible Panorama: Enjoying the Whole Bible with a Chapter-by-Chapter Guide*](#) (pp. 518–519). Leominster, UK: Day One Publications.