

God's Stamp of Approval

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Getting Started

Share with the group your answer to one of the following:

1. The most unusual epitaph you've heard about
2. The funniest epitaph you've heard about
3. The epitaph you'd most like on your gravestone

It's the real thing

Studies in what
"church"
was meant to be as
revealed by Paul in
his first letter to
the Thessalonians

In the Word (The texts for this week's discussion are 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8; 1 Corinthians 4:1-4)

Groups are not expected to discuss all questions!

(1 Cor. 4:1-4) In defending of his ministry, Paul makes a number of crucial points. Let's begin by examining what he says about his ministry.

1. What is Paul saying about the nature of a faithful servant of God? What does this say about how he views the opinions of others? How about his own opinion of himself?
2. How does this translate to others who are servants of God? How does this shape our interaction with one another? How does one guard against becoming self-righteous?

(1 Thessalonians 2:1-8) Paul begins this section with a reminder of the opposition and difficulty he had faced in Thessalonica and Philippi. He assures them about his motives in light of his relationship with God and his love for them.

1. (2:1-2; look back at Acts 16 to learn more about Paul's experiences in Philippi) What is Paul trying to communicate in mentioning Philippi and the opposition faced in Thessalonica?
2. (2:3-6a) Why would Paul make references to "motives," "tricks," "masks," and "greed"? What does that say about their world? Can you list some similarities to our world?
3. (2:3-6a) Paul says he is trying to please God rather than the Thessalonians or anyone else. Why is that such a difficult course of action? How can you discern whether your actions are motivated by a desire to please God, yourself or others?
4. (2:6b-8) In addition to his love for God, what drove Paul to share the Gospel with the Thessalonians? What do you see as the significance of his choice of words?

Application

1. A close examination of your life will probably lead to the detection of some areas where you are tempted to be a "people pleaser" rather than a "God pleaser." Choose at least one area to work on this week where you'll purposefully seek to please God rather than man. If you're able, ask one of your group members to pray for you this week.
2. Paul realized that to share the gospel with the Thessalonians he would also have to share his life. Choose one to three people with whom you want to share the gospel in the next two months. How are you going to do this?