

What Kind of Leaders Do You Want?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday, June 13, 2010
1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

“Just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12—NASB-U).

“As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory”
(1 Thessalonians 2:11-12—NRSV).

“As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory”
(1 Thessalonians 2:11-12—KJV).

The Apostle Paul set an example for all Christian leaders by the way he treated those in the churches for whom he accepted responsibility. As a compassionate and competent nurse would care for her own children, he watched over them (1 Thessalonians 2:7). As a caring and conscientious father would strive to guide his own children by word and example, he admonished them to conduct their lives in a manner worthy of God.

Paul cared for every church as a whole, and individually for each member in a congregation. He took the time to learn the specific concerns or difficulties of each person, so he could provide the best possible advice and guidance to each one. Following the examples of nurses and fathers, Paul taught believers to care for the physical, moral, and spiritual needs of one another.

Paul wanted to provide this type of leadership because new believers experience a new birth and adoption by their heavenly Father that needs nurturing by the church (see Romans 8:12-25 and Galatians 4:4-7). They begin their new life in Christ by drinking spiritual milk, and they should eventually be able to eat spiritual meat (see 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 and Hebrews 5:12-14). As they mature, they should learn how to govern themselves according to the Bible. To grow into spiritual adulthood, believers must heed Paul’s admonition and lead a life worthy of God. Spiritual maturity comes through obedience, which prepares believers to enter God’s kingdom with “joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17). — Copyright 2010 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Questions for Further Thought or Discussion

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1. Today, how difficult is it to discern the true motives of someone who preaches or teaches Christianity, either inside the church or outside the church? What are some tests that might reveal someone’s true intentions? Why is Paul concerned to reveal his true motives to the Christians in Thessalonica?
2. Why did Paul not want to burden new Christians with the need of meeting his material needs? In what ways can concern for money be a stumbling block for some inside the church and outside the church?
3. In what ways is “position” in the church important to people today? In what ways can people in high positions in the church abuse their status?
4. How do we measure “success” in the church today? How would you discuss the true measure of success with someone who argued that suffering or mistreatment as a result of preaching is a sign that God is not blessing someone’s ministry?
5. What is the practical and spiritual difference between serving God to please God and serving God to please people? Do you think anyone actually serves God today with the intention of pleasing people? How might this happen to someone almost without their knowing that they are really only seeking to please people instead of God?