

# First Thessalonians

MARK IT UP

## HomeGroup **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week 3: Apr 24th-30th

PICK 2-4 QUESTIONS FROM BELOW THAT YOU THINK WILL BE MOST HELPFUL FOR YOUR DISCUSSION.

**ALSO, THIS IS A REMINDER THAT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WILL NOT BE PRODUCED OVER THE SUMMER. THE FINAL WEEK OF QUESTIONS WILL BE THE WEEK OF MAY 30TH WHEN THIS SERIES IS OVER. WE ENCOURAGE HOMEGROUPS TO PAUSE FROM MEETING REGULARLY OVER THE SUMMER SO OUR LEADERS (YOU!) CAN HAVE A BREAK.**

Have you ever wondered how faithful ministry can take place in the face of great opposition? Let's face it...there are countless ways ministry can go off the rails. Compromise is easy. Giving in to pressure takes no effort. This week we see a first-century example of what areas to pay attention to as we seek to follow Jesus in our own day, both as individuals and as a community at Calvary.

Main Texts: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

### Connect

1. Take a minute to compare notes. What did you mark up from the passage this week?
2. What did you find significant about the sermon or passage? What questions or thoughts did it raise for you?

### Learn

3. Read verses 1-6. What pitfalls or potential compromise with the message of the gospel does Paul claim to have avoided in Thessalonica? Why do you think these could have been areas of compromise?

There are a lot, beginning in v. 3: error, impurity, attempts to deceive, speaking to please people, speaking flattery, being greedy, and seeking glory from people.

These are common pits that people can fall into, including Paul. He surely wanted to be liked. We can assume he didn't enjoy being "beaten with rods and imprisoned" like he was in Philippi (even if he was joy-filled by the Spirit). It would have been tempting to

preach a more socially acceptable gospel message. Every sinner feels the lure of greed and seeking glory from people.

4. What happens when a minister, like Paul, is motivated by pleasing people rather than God?

There are a lot of ways this could be answered. One that may not be as obvious is that the gospel message is in danger of being compromised, meaning that people don't hear the true, saving "good news."

5. Look at verses 7-12. What are the key qualities of Paul's ministry that he mentions here?

Pastor Tom mentions several: gentleness toward others, affectionately desirous (loving) toward others, and firm but faithful over time. You could also include the self-sacrificing, hardworking nature of Paul from v. 9.

### Apply

6. What pressures or influences do you think cause Christians today (either as individuals or as churches) to compromise the message or the method of how they minister?

7. Think about the option to please people or to please God from verse 4. Why can't we do both? (*Extra credit: How do you think Paul's claim here relates to what he says in 1 Corinthians 9:22? "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some."*)

For the "extra credit," the context of 1 Cor 9 shows that Paul was willing to do whatever he could to appeal to the people he was ministering to, but would not compromise on the gospel message. He did adapt the message to relate the gospel to his setting (see, for example, the way he presents the gospel to the Areopagus in Athens in Acts 17), but he refused to compromise the "offensive nature" of the gospel. Paul's emphasis was that he "might save some." A compromised gospel that tells people only what they want to hear doesn't save anyone.

8. What qualities of Paul's method of ministry—everything from being "like a nursing mother taking care of her own children" in verse 7, to being "like a father with his children" in verse 11—do you find especially helpful or necessary for us today as a church? Why?

9. Think about the three areas of *the message*, *the motivation*, and *the method*. Which of these do you see as most difficult to live out on a daily basis? Why?