

A Compelling Model for Spiritual Maturity

Word

Scripture Reference

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Discussion Questions

1. We all need spiritual models—people who live out the Christian life so others may visualize how it is to serve God and one another. Do you consider yourself as a model for serving the Lord that others may follow? Why?
2. 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 is where we learn the modelling of the servanthood of the apostle Paul. The first observation we get from this model is that Paul prioritized the proclamation of God's Word. As a servant of God, our primary tool for service is the Bible. Why is the Word of God the primary instrument for God's people? What are the uses of the Word of God? Paul's proclamation was marked by perseverance and precision. How are these evident in verses 1 to 4? What were Paul's motives and why are our motives in serving the Lord very important?
3. The second observation we get Paul's model is that he *possessed pure intentions* (v. 5-6). These speak about the inner attitudes and intentions of your heart which are very important for service because service is not only external compliance or simply doing things. A servant of God does not minister for the sake of enriching one's self. A servant of God seeks only the approval of his Master. We may start serving with the right intentions, but at some point develop wrong intentions. As a Christian serving the Lord, why is this a danger? How do you guard yourself from this danger? How would you evaluate your attitude and intentions for serving the Lord?
4. The third observation we get from the model of the apostle Paul is that he *pursued the spiritual progress of the church*. The aim of the servant of the Lord is to serve and spiritually build up others, not to lord it over those whom they are leading. In verses 7 and 8, how did Paul serve the people? Notice that Paul's service is marked also by giving. Ministry, in summary, is giving. Discuss why this is so. In verse 8, what did Paul give in order to serve the people? What does it mean to give our lives? In addition, Paul's service is marked by sacrifice. In what way did he sacrifice, according to verse 9? A servant of God is willing to give the Word and anything that would mature believers in the faith.
5. The fourth observation we get from Paul's model is that he *provided the people a pattern for Christian living*. He showed the people the kind of life the Church ought to live in order to glorify God. How is Paul's responsible living described in verses 10-11? Someone who commits to serve the Lord ought to be mindful of the

fact that his life is being watched by people. His life ought to serve as visual aid to people. He serves not only by teaching but also by example. How is irresponsible and careless living detrimental to our witness as servants of the Lord Jesus? How are you living your life in and out of the church? A servant of God seeks to live responsibly knowing well that his life will be emulated by others.

6. Finally, we observe from the model of the apostle Paul that he *provoked (spurred) others to achieve their full potential*. His ministry was marked by consideration of human failings. Why is it important to acknowledge that as humans, we still fail? As a servant of the Lord, how do you deal with people in the ministry who fail? How did Paul inspire people who may have failed in verses 11-12? The church is not composed of perfect people but imperfect people. A servant of God exercises gentleness and inspires others to live up to the standards God have set for them. How have you cheered up or encouraged someone in church recently?

Walk

Having seen the model of Paul's manner of ministry, you are not simply to applaud it or look at it. This model was written so that you have a standard by which to evaluate your ministry life at church. Christians are all called to serve. Paul's manner of ministry is worthy of our emulation. How about you? How does your daily life of service to the Lord measure up in light of Paul's model?

Worship & Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, we just want to praise you for the example of the Apostle Paul, certainly not a perfect example, he too had failures in life. Nonetheless, we see him committed to live according to the standard You have set for him. So certainly, he comes as a model worthy of emulation. May we take time to evaluate our own service to You. Are we serving? Speak closely to our hearts so we can sense Your inner prompting. If we are serving, does our service measure up to your standard? May we have the right motives and even the right manner in serving You. Raise us up as servants who are not mindful of the difficulties of serving but are giving all out service for Your glory and honor. In Jesus' Name, Amen.