



## ***You Had Become Very Dear to Us***

1 Thessalonians 1:1-12

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**Overview:** Paul's forced departure from Thessalonica enabled critics of his ministry to question his motives in the attempt to win new believers back to themselves. Paul challenges this narrative by expressing his love for the Thessalonians through the use of familial language—they are his brothers and sisters, and his actions toward them were like a gentle mother and an encouraging father. More directly, Paul defends the integrity of his ministry by appealing to their time together. Negatively stated, he reminded them how he proclaimed the gospel without regard to his own safety or comfort, without any ulterior motives, and without seeking personal or professional gain. Put positively, instead of making demands, he gave himself for them; instead of profiting from them, he provided for himself; and instead of telling them to do what he said, he invited them to do as he did. In short, Paul's driving force in ministry was to please God, and in so doing, he endeared himself to the people of God.

**01. The minister's integrity is inseparable from his ministry. Therefore, ministers must guard their hearts and remain accountable to the congregation.**

**02. The minister's primary responsibility is to please God. Therefore, ministers should neither fear man nor flatter the congregation.**

**03. The minister's position is a sacred trust from God for the congregation. Therefore, ministers should work hard, remain gentle, and exercise authority without becoming authoritative.**

# STANDING FAST IN THE LORD

1. How did Paul's forced departure lead to questions about his motives in ministry? Why was it important for Paul to remind the Thessalonians of what they had seen in his ministry? Do you believe it is wise to follow the ministry of a pastor who is not accessible or whose life is not transparent to those around him?

2. Note the use of familial language Paul uses to refer to the Thessalonians (verses 1, 9). Given the fact that he knew them for such a short time, how does this language point to the new relationship Christians have with one another? Do you view fellow church members as brothers and sisters in Christ? How does this relationship affect how you treat one another?

3. Paul states that he has been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel (verse 4). How important is it for pastors to honor this trust by not changing the gospel? What signs might point to a pastor changing or diluting the gospel in order to win favor with people? What "words of flattery" might a pastor use to grow a church in ways that are inconsistent with the gospel? How important is it for a congregation to know the gospel well enough to ensure that it is not being diluted or de-emphasized?

4. Why is a pastor's integrity inseparable from his ministry? What problems occur when a church ignores character and places more value on the office itself or the success of the pastor? How does lack of integrity lead to abuse of power in the church? See 1Timothy 3 for further insight.

5. Paul's use of mother and father imagery is instructive. What examples from his own ministry does he cite to show he acted like a mother and a father to them? Consider how these images help balance the minister from being too lenient or too harsh on others, as well as joyfully providing for others.

**For Further Reading:** Collin Hansen and Jeff Robinson, eds. *12 Faithful Men: Portraits of Courageous Endurance in Pastoral Ministry* (Crossway, 2018)

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