

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

How to Recognize a Gospel Teacher

I Thessalonians 2:1-16

1 How do you recognize a gospel teacher?

How about someone who comes to your door, gives you free literature and volunteers to have Bible studies in your home?

How about going to other churches who don't teach the way you were taught about certain doctrines?

How about the preacher on the street or on television?

How do you know who's right? 2

First Thessalonians, chapter 2, verses 1 through 16, recommends that you look at their character. 3

You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition. For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved

by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.¹ 4

You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.² 5

Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging,

¹ | Thessalonians 2:1-4.

² | Thessalonians 2:5-8.

comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.^{3 6}

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.^{4 7}

For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.^{5 8}

First . . .

³ | Thessalonians 2:9-12.

⁴ | Thessalonians 2: 13.

⁵ | Thessalonians 2:14-16.

I. Character a Gospel Teacher

Would Not Have - v3

Character a gospel teacher would not have. Verse 3, **For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you.** ⁹

His appeal would not be from **error**. ¹⁰ The word “error” ⁶ literally means to wander around. It has the idea of deception, delusion or perversion. The King James Version translates it deceit. It like getting lost from the truth. ¹¹ True gospel teachers in our society have been accused of being mentally deranged because their teachings are contrary to the generally accepted flow of our culture. ¹²

The Apostle Paul was accused of this. **At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.”** ⁷ ¹³

⁶ πλάνη.

⁷ Acts 26:24.

Even the Lord's own family accused Him of this. **Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."** ⁸

We Christians, because we are different from the flow of society, appear to them to be a little weird! ¹⁴ Therefore, many false teachers deceive themselves into thinking what they proclaim is gospel truth! ¹⁵

His appeal would not be from **impure motives**. ¹⁶ The phrase "impure motives" ⁹, translated from the King James Version, means uncleanness. Its immorality, filth. It has the idea of sexual impurity. ¹⁷

This idea about Christians came from gossip that was not unfounded. Christians were accused of uncleanness because they were known to have "love feasts" (potluck suppers and communion services)

⁸ Mark 3:20-21.

⁹ ἀκαθαρσία.

and greeted one another with “a holy kiss”. ¹⁰ Nasty minds interpret rumors in a nasty way! Actually, it was the false teachers whose lives were inconsistent with their teachings. ¹⁸ The Lord called them hypocrites for that reason. ¹¹ ¹⁹

His appeal would not **trick** others. ²⁰ The word “trick” ¹² means to bait, deceive, or set a trap for. ²¹ Verse 5 says a true gospel teacher wouldn’t use flattering words. ¹³ ²²

Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda of Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945, had a favorite statement, “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it!”

¹⁰ I Thessalonians 5:25-26 - Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

¹¹ Matthew 6:2, 5 & 16 - “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men . . . And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men . . . When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting.

¹² δόλος.

¹³ I Thessalonians 2:5 - You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness.

That is the character a gospel teacher would not have.

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So, what would be the . . .

II. Character a Gospel Teacher

Would Have - v7-12

Character a gospel teacher would have. 24

Verse 2 says that he **teaches with boldness**; **We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.** 25

The Apostle Paul had been imprisoned in Philippi because of his preaching. 26 In Acts, chapter 16, Paul exorcized an evil spirit from a slave girl who made her masters money from fortune telling. They arrested him and put him in prison for it. The charge was that he had **thrown the city into an uproar** boldly preaching

things that went against their **customs**.¹⁴ Even when persecuted, Paul preached with boldness.

Boldness is not arrogance. It's courageous! When you have a passion for what you say, it shows!²⁷

Verses 7 and 8 says he **teaches with gentleness**. . . .
But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.²⁸

The analogy here in verse 7 describes gentleness like a mother nursing her baby.²⁹

Verse 8 continues this thought as gospel teachers nourish their students with the gospel message,³⁰ the milk of the word.¹⁵³¹

Verses 10 and 11 states that he **teaches with a consistent life** to back up his message. **You are**

¹⁴ Acts 16:16-34.

¹⁵ I Peter 2:2-3 - Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children. 32

The analogy here in verse 11 is the example of a loving father to his children.

The “Our Daily Bread” devotional guide a few years ago had this story about S. H. Hadley preaching at McAuley’s Bowery Mission. When he offered the gospel invitation one of the men off the streets came forward praying this prayer, “Dear Lord. Make me like Joe!”

Joe’s funeral had been that afternoon. He had come to know the Lord and had such a dramatic conversion that everyone in the room that night knew what this prayer meant. Joe had changed so completely that everyone could see Lord Jesus living in him. This man desperately wanted Joe’s life for himself! ¹⁶

¹⁶ “Make Me Like Joe!”, Our Daily Bread, August 12.

An unknown author wrote, “If a boy lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If a boy lives with hostility, he learns to fight. If a boy lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive. If a boy lives with pity, he learns to feel sorry for himself. If a boy lives with jealousy, he learns to feel guilty.”

“If a boy lives with encouragement, he learns to be self-confident. If a boy lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient. If a boy lives with praise, he learns to be appreciative. If a boy lives with acceptance, he learns to love. If a boy lives with approval, he learns to like himself. If a boy lives with recognition, he learns to have a goal. If a boy lives with fairness, he learns what justice is. If a boy lives with honesty, he learns what truth is. If a boy lives with sincerity, he learns to have faith in himself and those around him. If a boy lives with love, he learns that the world is a wonderful place to live in.” ³³ Is anyone learning any of these things from you? As we live, others learn! ³⁴

Verse 12 says the gospel teacher **teaches by encouraging, comforting and urging. . . . encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.** ³⁵

The word “encourage” ¹⁷ means to call to, exhort or invite. ³⁶

The word “urge” ¹⁸ means to witness, bear personal testimony. We get our English word martyr from this word.

So this scripture has taught us about the character a gospel teacher would not have and the type he would have. ³⁷

The rest of this scripture describes . . .

¹⁷ παρακαλέω.

¹⁸ μαρτύρομαι.

III. The Result of the Gospel Teacher's Teaching - v13-16

The result of the gospel teacher's teaching. ³⁸

Verse 13 tells us his teaching **will be received as God's teachings**. **And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.** ³⁹

In the story the Lord told about the Sower and the Seed ¹⁹ ⁴⁰ the condition of the heart, the soil, determines how the seed would produce. ⁴¹

These Thessalonians were the good soil and received the teachings as the word of God. Chapter 1, verse 7 relates, **And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.** The Thessalonians had probably only been Christians for less than a year, but the fruit of the gospel produced a

¹⁹ Matthew 13:1-23.

faith among them that was a model for other churches! ⁴²

Finally, in verses 14 through 16, the gospel teacher's teachings **will produce fruit in committed lives!** **For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out.** ⁴³

The church can grow even when persecuted! In 1937 missionaries were forced out of Wallamo, Ethiopia. They left only eighteen new Ethiopian Christians and a few scriptures. The new Christians were persecuted and some were martyred. Five years later, when the missionaries were allowed to return, they found that the church of eighteen had multiplied to over ten thousand! ⁴⁴

In verse 16, **salvation is the result of teaching the gospel message!** . . . in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved.

So, how do you recognize a gospel teacher?

Look at his character!

<http://biblelifemessages.org/>