

5 ESSENTIALS OF FAITHFUL GOSPEL MINISTRY



IN THE ARENA ... WE SEE LIFE FOR WHAT IT IS ... A LINE CLEARLY DRAWN BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL ... A FIELD OF BATTLE THAT PURIFIES AND TRANSFORMS OUR MINDS AND HEARTS ... AND WE LEARN WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT ... GLORY TO GOD. **NONE OF WHICH HAPPENS FOR THE PERSON WHO ONLY OBSERVES FROM THE SIDELINE.**

Essential ... constituting the basic nature of a thing; fundamental; of the utmost importance; indispensable, necessary; of or constituting the intrinsic, fundamental nature of something.

Faithful ... unflinchingly loyal to someone or something; unswerving adherence to a person or thing; firm in adherence to promises or in observance of duty; reliable, trustworthy; committed, dedicated, devoted.

1. Essential #1: Those who are **faithful** in gospel ministry declare the truth of the gospel with confidence and boldness in God in the midst of conflict, 2:1-2.

- (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 ESV) **For you yourselves know**, brothers, **that our coming to you was not in vain**. 2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, **as you know**, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God **in the midst of much conflict**.

- A. We remain faithful to the gospel when we have the utmost confidence in the plan and purpose of God—that our service to him is not in vain.
- B. God works out his purpose and plan in our lives in the greater, general context of much conflict.

Much ... πολὺς [polus] – great; **remarkable or out of the ordinary** in degree, magnitude, or effect.

Conflict ... ἀγών [agon] – an assembly; a place of assembly, especially an assembly met to see games; **the place of contest, the arena or stadium**; generally, any struggle or contest.

- C. We find boldness in our God in the contest, in the extraordinary (other worldly) arena, of the eternal, cosmic battle between good and bad, righteousness and evil, God and the devil.
- D. In the great arena the line between good and evil becomes more and more distinct and we grow in our conviction to fight the good fight.
 - (2 Timothy 4:7 ESV) I **have fought the good fight**, I **have finished the race**, I **have kept the faith**.
- E. In the great arena we grow in faithfulness and are willing to suffer unfair treatment for the privilege of holding fast to the gospel.

2. Essential #2: Those who are **faithful** in gospel ministry are passionate to please God alone and to declare the gospel that he has entrusted to us, 2:3-4.

- (1 Thessalonians 2:3-4 ESV) For our appeal **does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive**, 4 **but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the**

gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

- A. We stay on course and do not wander from the solid ground of sound doctrine.
- B. Our hearts are undergoing a continuous process of purification which is fueled by our desire to please God above all else in our thoughts and actions.
- C. Passion to please God is our strong defense against a common, powerful enemy of the soul—the human need to seek the approval of other humans over the approval of God.
- D. God is the only one who knows and tests the hearts.
 - (Jeremiah 17:10 ESV) **I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds**.
- E. Our desire to please God enables us to overcome the temptation to wander into error and appeal to people with the wrong motives.

This person avoids the error of believing what is untrue due to wandering or a straying about; being led astray from the right way; roaming hither and thither.

- (Hebrews 2:1 ESV) Therefore **we must pay much closer attention** to what we have heard, **lest we drift away from it**.

Drift away ... to glide by, be carried by, pass by; to disbelieve gradually or slowly, conceived of as being carried along due to a water current.

- F. Our desire to please God turns our minds away from immorality, filth; what is dirty and impure; especially sexual sins.
- G. Our desire to please God turns our minds from pettiness so that we are able to avoid all self-deceptive attempts to play games of craftiness or cleverness, or become skilled in deception.
- H. We act and speak in a way that is consistent with those who have been approved by God and entrusted to speak the truth of the gospel.
- I. We remain approved and trustworthy by maintaining the priority of our desire to please God over and above pleasing humans.

3. Essential 3: Those **faithful** in gospel ministry come into people's lives in the presence of God, 2:5.

- (1 Thessalonians 2:5 ESV) For we never came with words of **flattery**, as you know, nor with a **pretext for greed—God is witness**.
- A. Our abiding in deep reverence to God is a powerful twofold influence regarding our accountability and our trust in God.

- B. Paul never arrived on the scene, never came into their lives, using flattery or greed.
- C. Flattery and greed are blasphemous in that they devalue the awesomeness and majesty of God and the saving message of his gospel.

Pretext ... an alleged reason or pretended cause; a fictitious or mundane reason that is concocted in order to conceal a real or different reason.

Greed ... desire to have more, covetousness; the excessive and immoderate desire of acquiring more and more.

Blasphemy is anything that you say or do that is a substitute for the mighty works of God; in a very real sense every human act or word that serves to replace or revise God's words or works is a great offense to God.

EXAMPLE: When an evangelist offers someone physical healing as an enhancement to the saving grace of the gospel, then this is blasphemy. It is as if forgiveness of sins and life forever with God in glory is not enough, so let's enhance the offer with physical healing or material wealth. How offensive is that? We need to add perks to what God offers through the death of Christ. Wow!

- D. We violate what has been entrusted to us when we come into people's lives with flattery (distorting who they are) and greed (promising them more of what they do not need).
- E. In regard to the gospel people who offer more in reality offer less—it is another gospel, a false gospel.
- F. Paul's opponents in Galatia added circumcision.
- (Galatians 1:6–7 ESV) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.
- G. This manipulation whether with sincere or evil motives reveals an irreverent and prideful heart.
- H. All such methods of manipulation are an offense to God and the holy, majestic work to which he commissions us.
- I. Why? Because manipulation is a human substitute for the reality of the power of God and his life-changing work in the lives of humans.

4. Essential #4: Those who are faithful in gospel ministry share the gospel and their lives selflessly with the gentleness and godly, loving intentions of a nursing mother, 2:6-8.

- (1 Thessalonians 2:6–8 ESV) Nor did we seek

glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

- A. This person is not demanding but ready to share not only the gospel but also his very own life with the parental care of a nursing mother with her children.
- B. Those who seek glory are self-willed people who are driven by self-importance.
- C. Those involved in faithful gospel ministry are to serve in a parental role—like a nursing mother—in the lives of the people under their care.
- D. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy ("we") were neither mothers nor women.
- E. We find our insight from the simile—gentle among you like a nursing mother.
- F. The general parental principle was that they were gentle and affectionate in training the Thessalonians to live in a way that life would go well for them.
- (Ephesians 6:1–3 ESV) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."
- G. The word gentle—translated "kind"—in 2 Timothy speaks of gentleness and patience in the parental sense of correcting the course of those who have been snared by the devil.
- (2 Timothy 2:24–26 ESV) And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

5. Essential #5: Those who are faithful in gospel ministry work hard like a loving father exhorting his children to live in view of God's kingdom and the glory to come, 2:9-12.

- (1 Thessalonians 2:9–12 ESV) For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to

you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. 11 For you know how, like a father with his children, 12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

- A. We must be willing to work hard to not be a burden and to share our lives with the parental care of a father with his children.
- B. It was necessary for them to discipline themselves to remember Paul's labor and toil on their behalf.
- C. They needed to understand that he did this to avoid being a burden so that the gospel of God would not be hindered.
- D. It was necessary for them to discipline themselves to give an account as proper witnesses to the conduct of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy.
- E. Fathers are to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
 - (Ephesians 6:4 ESV) Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- F. We have the example of the loving discipline of our heavenly Father .
 - (Hebrews 12:5–8 ESV) And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” 7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.
- G. They knew that Paul—like a father with his children—exhorted, encouraged and charged them to walk in a manner worthy of God.
- H. This is how those who are called into God's own kingdom and glory live.

CONCLUSION: Are we living in view of the kingdom?

Are we exhorting, encouraging and charging our brothers and sisters in Christ to live in view of the kingdom of God?

Do we realize our opportunity ... our privilege ... to walk in the truth and live a life that pleases our holy God?

- (2 John 4 ESV) I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.
- (3 John 3–4 ESV) For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.