

# **“A Perfect Example”**

**1 Thessalonians 2:1-12**

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**All Scripture quoted from ESV unless otherwise noted**

Would you say that you follow the news? What does that even mean? How do you follow something? What does it mean to “follow an example?” How do you choose which examples you are going to follow and which ones you are not going to follow? Who might be following your example? Are you setting an example that they should be following? Are you sure? Maybe there is something to be learned about that from 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. Maybe we can see some critical aspects of setting an example worth following in these verses.

## **Set the example of courage (v.2)**

- Boldness is not the same as loudness
  - Saying – “The squeaky hinge gets the oil”
    - Sometimes the squeaky hinge gets replaced, you know.
  - Leadership by loudness is based on fear and intimidation
    - Sooner or later, that leadership is going to sink

Set the example of courage because ***there will always be opposition to the truth***

- John 3:19, Hebrews 11:35-37

Courage is not never being afraid or having all the answers

- Courage is marching forward despite the fear and uncertainty
- Nelson Mandela – “Courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it.”

## **Set the example of integrity (v.3)**

- Teachers are expected to say positive things on report cards
  - Integrity means remaining truthful despite the difficulty it presents

***There will always be opportunities to cheat yourself***

- The distance between winning and losing is often the same as the distance between what you should do and what you actually do
- Lack of integrity leads you to lie for personal gain, break commitments to others, and tell half-truths and exploit loopholes

## **Set the example of purpose (v.4)**

- The highest purpose you can know is loving, honoring, worshipping, and serving the true and living God
- Trying to please everyone is like the guy spinning plates at the circus

- You can get pretty good at it
- But you can't do it forever
  - Sooner or later, things are going to come crashing down

***Sometimes you have to adjust your headings*** in order to keep your focus and aim on your main goal

- Planes landing in the crosswind
  - Adjust their aim based on the end goal and current situation
  - Don't just "Set it and forget it."

### **Set the example of humility (v.5-6)**

- Paul, Silas, and Timothy didn't come looking to feed the egos of the early church, and they didn't seek out the hot air of others to stoke the coals of their own egos

We don't see many examples of humility in our world

- Humility is so rare that many may not even recognize it when we see it, or if we do, it comes across as such a surprise, we wonder what that person is up to, so we see humility as a cloak for pessimism or maybe as a front to disguise a person's ulterior motives

### ***The value of humility suffers from an image problem***

- Humility is often mistaken for a lack of self confidence
  - Remaining humble and maintaining a strong sense of self-confidence is like juggling 2 lit torches. You've got to give pretty regular attention to both, or eventually one of them will burn you

### **Set the example of compassion (v.7, 2 Tim 2:24)**

- Paul uses the analogy of a nursing mother to describe his relationship to the early church. What do you suppose Paul is trying to convey here?

A nursing mom nurtures and cares for her children

- Has to take care of her own health so she can take care of others
  - A nursing child receives the same sort of nutrition that the mother receives
- Plane - oxygen masks - put yours on first

### ***Share life with the people around you!***

- Philippians 2:3 - "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."
  - Compassion and corporate responsibility say, when one falls, we all stop to help
    - When we rise together, we stand together

- When we stand together, we stand strong together; united with one heart, one mind, one God – and we don't leave one another behind

### **Set the example of endurance (v.9)**

- Labor and toil are often used together in Scripture. Labor is the active exertion of energy, while toil is the passive weariness or fatigue as a result of this exertion.

Sometimes life gets tiring

- There are times for rest and recharging, but like a rechargeable battery, when that recharge cycle is done, you are able to jump back into service; back into action; back into life

Paul says, 'You know how hard we worked . . . that's the example for you.'

- *Don't let the weight and the blessing of worship and honor and service to the King of Kings fall into the hands of the few*
- It was never meant to be that way

You have a place in the work of the kingdom of heaven

- Whether you have a title or not
- Whether you have the skill set or gifts inventory that you wanted or not

To the church, Paul says, 'follow the example of your leaders.'

- To the leaders of the church, Paul says, 'set the example for those whom you lead.'

## **DIG IN!**

**Here are some farm-fresh questions that will help you to personalize and apply this morning's message.**

1. **What does it mean to be "entrusted with the gospel" (v.4)? Who does this apply to today? How do you know? If we are 'entrusted' with it, then to whom does it belong?**
2. **When Paul and Co. shared the gospel with the Thessalonians, it bore much fruit. How might that have discouraged them when they went on to the next town? How do you avoid being discouraged when it seems that your sharing the gospel message isn't making much of a difference?**
3. **How much snow did you get this week?**

4. **What does it mean to “follow an example?” How do you choose which examples you are going to follow and which ones you are not going to follow?**
5. **Who might be following your example? Are you setting an example that they should be following? How do you know?**
6. **Paul speaks of his coming to the Thessalonians as, “Not in vain.” What do you suppose he means by that? Is preaching ever in vain? What does Isaiah 55:11 have to say about this?**
7. **Does it seem at all like Paul is praising himself here? Why or why not? Why would he describe himself and his methods in these terms? How might this help the Thessalonian believers?**
8. **What have you learned through your personal time of Bible reading this week?**