

# Explore the Bible: An apologetic approach to ministry

February 28, 2022

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for March 13 focuses on 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12.*

I heeded God's call to ministry at age 19. I am the first pastor in the Brambila family. After 24 years of doing ministry, I learned this is God's ministry and not my ministry. My experience these years ministering in the Hispanic church are surreal when I reflect on what the Lord has done.

It's not that ministry is easy or simple. Ministry is challenging but rewarding, for you have the opportunity to experience firsthand miracles. These miracles are the most powerful ones—a transformed life or a restored marriage by the power of the Holy Spirit, not a golden tooth or making a person's heel grow (claimed charismatic miracles within the Hispanic culture). In spite of my doubts and weakness, the fulfillment of God promises is, in my experience, the most amazing feeling on earth.

## Serve to present the gospel of God (1 Thessalonians 2:1-3)

Paul expounded on the reasons to minister in Thessalonica. Paul expresses that was not "in vain" to minister to them while they suffered strong opposition. Paul and his companions had the responsibility to share the gospel of God. This term "the gospel of God" is a key element to approach ministry. It might sound redundant, but if we as ministers could learn early in our ministry that it is not our ministry, not our gospel, this will have a profound impact on the way we minister. It is God's gospel what we have to

share—his gospel alone.

Paul defends the motive behind the exhortation to the Thessalonians. The motive of his exhortation appears to be in question because of the resistance of the synagogue leaders in a cultural context. The temptation a minister can face is to taste the ministerial recognition of the gospel and be enamored with it. This means the minister thinks it is about the minister himself and not about the ministry to present the gospel of God.

## **Serve to care (1 Thessalonians 2:4-8)**

Paul continues to explain his defense on the motivation to care for the Thessalonian church. He explains God approved them to share God's gospel. Paul wants them to remember God is a witness of the way and manner of they were cared by him. He was not interested in pleasing men, but in God's gospel.

Ministers are called to please God and not men. This is a short sentence, but it represents a tension between how a minister can care for people. How can a minister exhort a person to please God? Does it mean a person cannot please God and men at the same time? That is the reality ministers will experience. This could be considered a contradiction, because human reason calls pleasing others as an act of care.

Paul introduces a maternal picture. He and his companions care about the Thessalonian Christians as a mother cares for her own children. It is interesting that Paul uses a maternal analogy, because it implies a familial relationship between the church and the apostles. In church life, we call the people we serve brother or sister, for we are God's family. We care for one another.

There is a word used by Hispanics to address a priest. The word in Latin is "*curatio*" and in Spanish is "*cura*" that means caregiver. Every believer is a

minister, a caregiver for the well-being of the church.

## **Serve to inspire (1 Thessalonians 2:9-12)**

Ministry is sacrificial. It takes grit, effort, focus, dedication and determination. Paul brings back to memory how he and his fellow laborers worked day and night. They avoided to be a burden; many scholars believe Paul was referring to bivocational ministry. Paul and company were inspiring in the way they worked and their objective to preach the gospel of God. They provided for themselves to gain trust and confidence.

When you choose to minister, remember that the attitude is of service and servanthood. Church leaders must inspire and must be role models of service. Paul reminds us God is a witness to our ministry's motivation. Paul exhorts us to remember—it is not our ministry and not our gospel. This teaching provides the minister the perspective of engaging in ministry that comes from God, to care for people, and not to please people but to please God for benefit of the people.

In conclusion, Paul wants believers to know obstacles and conflict are part of ministry. Any approval or authority given by God must be to bring glory to him. Ministers must resist the temptation to please people first by telling people only what they want to hear. Ministers should care so much for a person's spiritual life that must preach, act and behave in a way that pleases God. We must live lives that inspire others to preach the gospel, to serve and to care. May others see our labor and see that we represent our God well.

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