

Preparing My Heart for Effective Ministry: Following Paul's Example

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Summary: Effective and lasting ministry demands that our souls be as prepared as our minds and bodies. Reflecting on the Apostle Paul's own personal testimony regarding his challenging ministry in ancient Thessalonica, we will briefly consider 24 heart-felt "ministry covenants" that need to be made prior to embarking on our own disciple meetings, teaching opportunities and ministry adventures. This checklist is based on what the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-20 as he presented the defense of his brief ministry in Thessalonica (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1-2; Acts 17:1-9). May the example of his ministry success be our own.

Ministry Covenant #1. "I will not waste the gifts and resources God has entrusted to me."

1 Thess. 2:1 "For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain..."

Ministry Covenant #2. "I will boldly speak the truth, even in the midst of opposition."

1 Thess. 2:2 "...but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition."

Ministry Covenant #3. "I will strive to make sure that my ministry is accurate."

1 Thess. 2:3 "For our exhortation does not come from error..."

Ministry Covenant #4. "I will strive to make sure that my ministry is pure."

1 Thess. 2:3 "For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity..."

Ministry Covenant #5. "I will strive to make sure that my ministry has integrity."

1 Thess. 2:3 "For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit..."

Ministry Covenant #6. "I will minister from the depth of God's approval and calling in my life."

1 Thess. 2:4 "...but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak..."

Ministry Covenant #7. "I will strive to please God, even if it means not pleasing men."

1 Thess. 2:4 "...so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts."

Ministry Covenant #8. "I will not engage in flattery."

1 Thess. 2:5 "For we never came with flattering speech, as you know..."

Ministry Covenant #9. "I will not allow greed to motivate my ministry."

1 Thess. 2:5 "For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed -- God is witness..."

Ministry Covenant #10. "I will not seek the praise and glory of men."

1 Thess. 2:6 "...nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others..."

Ministry Covenant #11. "I will not assert or abuse my position."

1 Thess. 2:6 "...nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority."

Ministry Covenant #12. "I will be as gentle as a mother tenderly caring for her children."

1 Thess. 2:7 "But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children."

Ministry Covenant #13. "I will strive to have a fond affection for the people I am serving."

1 Thess. 2:8 "Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."

Ministry Covenant #14. "I will impart not only my message and ministry but also my life."

1 Thess. 2:8 "Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."

Ministry Covenant #15. "I will labor diligently so as not to pose a financial burden on God's people."

1 Thess. 2:9 "For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God."

Ministry Covenant #16. "I will behave in a godly manner."

1 Thess. 2:10 "You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers..."

Ministry Covenant #17. "I will be as forthright as a father lovingly correcting his children."

1 Thess. 2:11 "...just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children..."

Ministry Covenant #18. "I will equip people to walk in a manner that is worthy of the God who called them."

1 Thess. 2:12 "...so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."

Ministry Covenant #19. "I will strive to teach that which is truly based on the Word of God and not the word of men."

1 Thess. 2:13 "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God..."

Ministry Covenant #20. "I will confidently expect that God's Word will mightily work in the people I am serving."

1 Thess. 2:13 "And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."

Ministry Covenant #21. "I will encourage Bible-believing disciples to be prepared to endure persecution for the cause of Christ."

1 Thess. 2:14-16 "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost."

Ministry Covenant #22. "I will strive for such a relationship with the people I am serving that, once I leave, I will be eager to see them again."

1 Thess. 2:17 "But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while in person, not in spirit were all the more eager with great desire to see your face."

Ministry Covenant #23. "I will pray that God will remove the hindrances and clear the way for more effective ministry."

1 Thess. 2:18 "For we wanted to come to you I, Paul, more than once and yet Satan hindered us."

Ministry Covenant #24. "I will pray that the people I am serving will be a source of blessing when Jesus returns."

1 Thess. 2:19-20 "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy."