

Discussion Questions

Date: September 13, 2026

Preacher: Josh Ratliff

Sermon Outline

Genuine Ministry: A Pure Heart Before God | 1 Thess 2:1-12

Genuine Gospel Ministry Is Not Motivated by Self-Interest (2:1-6)

- Genuine ministry perseveres through suffering, mistreatment, and conflict for the glory of God. (vv. 1-2, 4)
- Genuine ministry is not demanding, deceiving, self-seeking, or people-pleasing. (vv. 3-6)
- **Question:** Does our service to others reflect perseverance and genuine motivations?

Genuine Gospel Ministry Embodies Christ Through Familial Affection (2:7-12)

- Christlike ministry embraces the tender care of a nursing mother. (v. 7-8)
- Christlike ministry reflects fatherly exhortations and guidance. (vv. 11-12)
- **Question:** Where have you seen the church serve one another as a family? How can we work toward the vision of embodying this kind of ministry together?

Bottom Line: Genuine Gospel ministry is characterized by mutual, self-giving love.

Talking Points

* When have you experienced opposition when it comes to serving others or in a ministry? Why do you think this opposition didn't stop Paul from continuing his mission?

* Have you ever noticed yourself pulling back from serving or speaking the truth into a situation in order to avoid conflict? How do we know when it is wise/Biblical to step into conflict rather than to avoid it?

* Why does selfishness and pride kill ministry work? What are some common signs or warnings of your ministry work being for your own gain or fulfillment?

* How can we remove entitlement from our lives? What are some steps we can take to humble ourselves in order to be best used in the Holy Spirit's work?

* Why do you think Paul chose the image of a nursing mother to describe gospel ministry? Where have you seen ministry like this in or around your life?

* Have past experiences within the church or with people close to you affected your ability to be tender towards others? Who can you let into your life to help process this grief and hurt so you can love others more tenderly again?

* How do you typically react when someone calls you to a higher standard of living for Christ? Are you currently allowing anyone to speak challenging, fatherly exhortation into your life?

* Who can you pour into and love this week for the sake of the ministry of Christ? What is it going to potentially cost you?

If you are currently struggling with sin or a situation, who in your life can you go to for tenderly love and care, and for wisdom and guidance?

Understanding Scripture

1. Read the passage aloud.

- Question: How would the original audience have understood this passage?
- Question: What was God's desire for them?

2. Reread key verse(s) aloud.

- Question: What does this teach us about the human soul, desires, or behavior?
- Question: What does this teach us about the nature, desires, or behavior of God?

3. Ask if anything is difficult to understand in the passage, or simply point it out yourself.

- Back up from the confusing verse and reread the whole section slowly—highlight the author's flow of thought.
- Ask everyone, "What are some possible interpretations?" Encourage curiosity!
- If needed, provide clarification, but admit if you don't have a satisfactory explanation, and volunteer to research answers. Share your findings over text or at the next meeting.

4. Summarize the passage in 1-3 sentences to refocus the group ("Okay, so far we've seen in Amos...")

- Question: What does this say about our relationship with God and/or each other?
- Question: How do the teachings, actions, or person of Jesus shed light on this passage?

Prayer Requests

