

Fatherly Ministry-Part 2—1st Thessalonians 2:10-12—6/22/25
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As I typically do for Mother's Day & Father's Day each year, I focused on themes of manhood & womanhood & today's message is a continuation of that from Paul's words in 1st Thessalonians 2:10-12.

Let's read that chapter to recall Paul's love for this church & the contrasts he made with the false teachers who attacked him.

Turn to 1st Thessalonians 2 & let's read that chapter to begin. [READ]

Paul wrote to defend his genuine concern, to remind them of his love for them although he had not been able to visit again.

Verses 7-9 mention ways his loving ministry was motherly & verses 10-12 describe ways he was like a godly father with them.

The centerpiece of that fatherly analogy is a speaking ministry characterized in verse 11 as a father with his own children.

Last week we covered the importance of our example as Paul first appealed to his example in verse 10 before he described his speech.

So from verse 10, we noted that Paul prioritized (1) exemplary living & (2) transcendent calibration, meaning he prioritized a faithful lifestyle that was set in order by divine standards.

Now today we continue learning from Paul's fatherly ministry with two more descriptions that we'll see in verses 11-12.

As I mentioned last week, it breaks my heart how many people have not had a godly dad & they need new models to help them understand how to have right relationships.

That's why it's so important for Christian men to be faithful examples of fatherhood in our families & in church relationships.

God places a high value on care for widows & orphans because He gives such vital responsibilities to husbands & fathers.

God calls Himself a Father to the fatherless & a judge for widows & says He supports the fatherless & the widow in Psalms 68:5 & 146:8.

Such descriptions tell us that fathering is vital.

So we should want to be learning more always how to be spiritual fathers at home & in the body of Christ & in the world we evangelize.

As we said last week, that is especially important for men to know & pursue, but it also has applications for all of us.

Every man, woman, boy, & girl must know what godly manhood looks like & how to encourage it & honor it & pray for it for others.

And there are also aspects of fatherly ministry that we all can learn from & apply in various ways.

Yet as we affirm that fatherhood is important, we must ask ourselves what fathers must be doing, what is particularly vital as a dad.

In the gender confusion of the current era, we need guidance.

And we don't need reactionary advice from the extremes of men either as bullies or as pushovers, from the extremes of the tyrant or the wimp.

For example, the Bible gives clear guidance like the call of 1st Corinthians 16:13 to act like men that means to be strong & courageous in the convictions that define & guide life.

But since those core commitments of life are so vital, men must lovingly exhort others—especially our children—to live those values.

So among many aspects of faithful fatherhood, we'll see today a vital emphasis of meaningful words.

And that makes sense when you think about the teaching & preaching role of elders & pastors in the church, doesn't it?

Scripture gives the role of teaching the gathered church to only qualified men who must first be affirmed in other contexts.

So men must first be instructors in the home as a proving ground.

And it makes sense that a heart to teach should arise when a man becomes a father of his own children.

A father must speak to his children lest they fall into various dangers.

And a godly father longs to see his children brought to salvation and a consistent, fruitful walk with Christ.

That emphasis is what we find today in Paul's analogy of fatherly ministry that we find in 1st Thessalonians 2:11-12.

As a 1st point today, a faithful father has a heart commitment to prioritize & practice **purposeful communication**—so #1, note that fatherly ministry prioritizes purposeful communication.

As 3rd point continuing from last week & a 1st point today, note that faithful fatherly ministry prioritizes purposeful communication.

Read 1st Thessalonians 2:11 where we see this. [READ]

Being a godly example flows into this, but the speaking ministries of this verse are what Paul directly connected to fathers.

Dads and all of us who lead need to hear this—faithful and fruitful leadership requires purposeful communication.

You cannot be a good dad if you do not communicate with your kids.

And that is not just dealing with problems when they come up.

Fathers must first know from Scripture what is needed & what is best for their kids & then prioritize verbally guiding them.

And verse 11 frames the personal nature of Paul's speech with each one of you as a father would his own children.

Paul and his associates wrote to the gathered group, but they also addressed them individually at times.

As he said about his ministry at Ephesus in Acts 20:20, there was teaching publicly and house to house.

Paul and his companions knew each one of the Thessalonian converts & could give personal & purposeful direction.

That speech is described in 3 similar terms in verse 11-12.

First Paul mentioned exhorting, which could be pictured as a kind of coaching because it includes both urging and instruction along with encouragement and comfort and help as needed.

It is literally to call alongside, to be there with someone, by their side, giving them the words needed at the moment.

That need may be warning about what's ahead or exhortation toward what's right or encouragement or comfort over what's happened.

It's a picture of a leader walking alongside pointing forward to the goal & giving the words needed to keep moving toward it.

When some of you hear that, you may picture a stereotypical drill sergeant barking orders at trainees in boot camp.

You may think of being pushed and prodded and beaten and broken and even screamed at and demoralized.

But that's not biblical exhortation in the sense intended here.

Truly biblical exhortation comes with humility and concern, not with pride and mockery.

It is more than just issuing commands because it includes being available to help with understanding & response.

There is appeal in this term as seen in the noun form in verse 3 of this chapter that focused on truth to respond to.

There is an urging to act that can come across in preaching.

But more so, it is encouragement to do the right thing, support to help you do so, & instruction & urging to be sure you do so.

Such exhortation is good & desirable; it's not some angry, selfish rant.

It is so treasured & transcendent that even the Holy Spirit does that ministry in His people to direct and help us.

This term is used of the Holy Spirit 4 times in John 14-16 (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), calling Him the Helper or Comforter.

So as leaders and followers, we must value & pursue a faithful ministry of biblical exhortation.

And we can all practice this kind of exhortation with others in various ways, even if you are a younger Christian speaking to someone older.

1st Timothy 5:1-2 describes how to appeal to all ages—& that word appeal is the same word here in verse 11 for exhort.

1 Timothy 5:1-2 says: *Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.*

That alerts us that we all need exhortation from one another.

Such exhortation is a crucial ministry in the body of Christ.

Exhorting can be fatherly, but I am thankful for my own kids who lovingly & respectfully exhort me as their father too.

1st Timothy 5 describes the honor required to do so with those older than you & that may mean asking questions with a humble heart.

But as I've told many of you, the longer I'm here, the more I forget or don't realize areas I had once wanted to improve.

So we can all profitably speak into each other's lives & ministries.

Yet we as leaders also must remember that we must LEAD.

So dads with your kids, husbands with your wives, elders & teachers with the church—leading requires knowing what is needed & pointing forward to bring others along.

Just as a good coach guides & instructs & warns & urges & cheers, so fatherly ministry includes this biblical exhortation.

Then the next word Paul used in verse 11 is translated encouraging.

That it includes instruction but has more of the comforting, cheering emphasis rather than warning.

The term for encouraging brings out a soothing, sympathetic, heartfelt involvement in the plight that lay before someone.

It involves carefully understanding a situation & showing care & willingness to help with Scripture to strengthen & console.

Then the 3rd word of fatherly speech in verse 11 is translated imploring in the NAS or bearing witness in the LSB.

It is urging people to act with testimony from experience & biblical knowledge that insists upon a godly response.

It carries a solemn charge to listen & heed the advice.

A godly leader or father testifies from experience about how the truth should be applied to life.

That may be from experience with our own failures that moves us to warn earnestly against something bad.

And at other times it may be include witnessing to the joys and blessings of God's grace experienced in God's good ways.

Either way, we can help others if we are humble & honest.

We can share what TO do & how God blessed or we can share what NOT to do & how God graciously rescued us & allowed us to share lessons and warn others.

Either way, you can have testimony to share with others.

And fathers and leaders must speak up and do so.

This word for testifying can be translated 'charge' or 'implore' here because of the solemn sense of pleading in the presence of God.

It is declaration and entreaty stemming from God's truth witnessed and affirmed and passed on.

Paul was honoring this fatherly picture of Dads talking about their experience & giving related advice to help their kids.

That's not a picture of eyerolls when old men tell stories.

It's not a time for disrespectful assumptions that times have changed so much that parents & older folks don't have a clue about life today.

We dare not follow the culture that has thrown dads under the bus since the sitcoms of the 1970s until the raging rebellion today screams against all masculinity as toxic.

We need to recover & restore the treasure of wisdom passed down from one generation to the next.

That first means we need to grow in wisdom as we age—we need to never stop learning from Scripture & its applications.

But then we must testify & urge others to stay away from spiritual danger & to practice faithful habits.

And here's where we must point out the danger of laziness.

As a husband or a father or any leader, you can't be lazy.

You can't wimp out & not speak the truth if you want to be faithful as a dad or husband or spiritual shepherd.

You can't sit back & let things go & you can't cave in & let them destroy their lives & others because you fear backlash or whatever.

You can't run from conflict or change the subject or misdirect to avoid stressful situations.

Leaders must do something to actively lead.

We can't love our comfort so much that we don't assess the spiritual condition of those we lead and address areas of need.

You can't delegate spiritual training to someone else & hope your kids will learn in Sunday School or church while you do nothing at home.

And similarly in any relationship with an unbeliever, you can't hope they'll hear the Gospel from someone else or at church while you do nothing to speak truth to them.

To lead others to Christ, to make disciples, to train children, to be a godly husband, to be a faithful witness in any setting, we must all engage in purposeful communication.

We must prepare our hearts with prayer & frame our minds with truth so we enter relationships ready to speak faithfully.

God gave YOU the children & friends & coworkers & relatives & neighbors that you have.

So YOU should be the one talking to them with the purpose of communicating truth about God & life & whatever they face.

And this kind of biblical counseling is what all Christians must do with each other in carrying out the NT one another commands.

Especially in areas where you lead, you must commit to having regular conversations toward godly goals.

You must see the direction others need to go & exhort & encourage & testify & plead with them toward those goals.

Be proactive and prayerful and involved and observing and listening and asking questions and regularly caring.

And as we sense needs or see sins or identify areas for growth, we must instruct with urgency and sensitivity and wisdom.

We walk alongside with words to move toward what's ahead.

That's leadership and it cannot be done by example alone.

We can't assume people will understand the Gospel if we simply try to be examples of Christ and never speak of Christ.

And we can't assume kids will learn to obey or workers will learn diligence or spouses will understand desires unless we open our mouths and talk and explain.

Faithful leading requires purposeful communication.

Dads—be aware that the Spirit of God particularly brought this to Paul's mind as an illustration of faithful fathering.

You need to set the example & gain the biblical insight to teach your children with this kind of encouraging and imploring.

You must stay involved to model & mandate godly living at home.

We must be examples and we must be strong enough to exhort others in the path of righteousness.

We must realize the dangers ahead & want everyone prepared.

How are you doing in these areas?

Are you talking to your kids about school & work & sports & church & prayer & Bible reading & desires & thoughts & relationships?

Are you involved in a way that can rightly assess what needs to be said to lead them in the direction they need to go?

Are you bold enough to trust God to use your words to guide them?

Don't assume they'll get it from someone else.

Men, step up and lead in your own family and in the lives of others.

Don't be scared to try.

Be humble to ask for help as we all grow by God's grace.

Turn over to Proverbs 2 & 3 to see an example of this that can help us examine our speech and prepare to speak biblically.

Read Proverbs 2:1-6 & 3:1-6 to see words of a godly father. [READ]

We could read more, but just compare those words to yours.

Dads, do you speak that way to your kids?

Do you read the Proverbs with them and lovingly plead from wise experience and divine authority about the issues of life?

Or are you too cool or relaxed to get that serious or have that kind of urgency in the way you talk about things that matter for eternity?

And what about you AWANA leaders & Sunday School teachers—do you speak with a sense of the weight of the truths you share like they can rescue or destroy souls?

What about in sharing the Gospel—do you speak like Jesus is merely good for you or like He is the only thing that matters for everyone?

May God help us to speak truth clearly with caring love.

And as we ponder giving this purposeful communication, we also need to consider how to prize receiving it.

Think of it—our culture is so soft & emotional & proud that people don't expect to be challenged anymore.

Ridiculous claims of violence & abuse are often raised about simple statements of right & wrong or male & female or truth & error.

Everyone's hurt feelings have become the authority that have redefined safety into silencing of anything that might raise questions or prick the conscience or cause discomfort.

Challenging false narratives get framed as phobias or intolerance or oppression as people claim victim status when their sins are addressed.

Typical reactions accuse others of not handling the situation rightly or cast blame on others to cloud the issue of real sin.

Such problems arise when parents fail to be the authority in their kids' lives such that many kids grow up never being corrected.

Parents have attempted to be liked as friends of their kids & they've coddled & spoiled them to try to get good pictures for their social media posts for their own glory.

That tragically misses warnings like Proverbs 29:15, which says, *The rod & reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.*

And more generally, Proverbs 27:5-6 says, *“Better is open rebuke Than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”*

And though we may not seek our own insane supposed safe spaces, we must realize the influence of the culture on us.

So we need to fight the impulse to assume others don't love us if they correct us or challenge us or question us.

We need to apply wisdom like Proverbs 9:8 says: *Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you.*

We can believe Proverbs 25:12 that: *Like an earring of gold & an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.*

So rather than reacting against exhortations & encouragements & appeals from others, let's see such speech as what we need.

And let's thank those who are willing to confront us & instruct us & help us rather than complain against them or about them.

We need this kind of testimony & exhortation that Paul referenced.

And since it's so unpopular today, we may need to seek it out.

We may need pray for & ask others for counsel that challenges us, that exhorts & encourages & testifies to us & pleads with us.

We may need to confess sinful reactions or attitudes related to receiving counsel or coaching or parenting.

And listen—if you have a father who challenges you—if you have a dad or mom or any leader that you know will call you out when you are not faithful, then praise God for them & thank them for loving you.

Ask them to forgive you for every eyeroll or snarled nose or backtalk or other disrespectful, ungrateful response you've had.

Then beg them not to give up on you—plead with them not to stop exhorting & encouraging & imploring you.

Seek & expect your spiritual fathers to come alongside & probe & push & direct & correct & guide you in the right path.

Cherish the love that will not let you give up or stagnate or coast.

And realize that Christians who have walked with God for years likely have more wisdom to offer than internet searches.

So refine your searches toward sources of biblical wisdom from those who love God & love you.

And I praise God that many of you model this humble heart of a learner who wants to be challenged to grow in Christ.

I'm so thankful for how distinct from the culture so many of you are as you strive to know & live God's ways.

But as we think about all this, we need to remember that we must be pointed in the right direction with our discipleship.

We need to be aiming at the right target, moving toward the right goal.

And that leads to our 2nd point quickly this morning: fatherly ministry prioritizes **God-centered direction**.

The 1st point of purposeful communication we've been unpacking from verse 11 has a goal in verse 12 that we dare not miss.

Point #2—father ministry prioritizes **God-centered direction**.

Read 1st Thessalonians 2:11-12 again to see this flow. [READ]

To pick up from last week, leading like a godly father requires (1) exemplary living; (2) transcendent calibration, (3) purposeful communication; and (4) God-centered direction.

So point #2 today & overall point #4 is this—fatherly ministry prioritizes **God-centered direction**.

Dads, I might not want to admit it, but the goal we strive toward is not peace & quiet & our own comfort.

Though I may sinfully crave only to have no issues flare up at home or in church in any given day, that is not the main goal.

The purpose of our leading by example & speech is for others to walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls us.

The main goal is to lead people to God through Christ into a faithful life worthy of God & His transforming call on us.

Obviously, walking is not talking about the stride we take when we move our physical feet to take us from place to place.

Walking is a metaphor or comparison & picture of our daily living.

Our walk is our daily activities of life, our habits & practices.

And our goal—both personally and in leading others—is to walk worthily, or in a manner worthy, of the God who called us.

The emphasis here is upon God & His character as Caller, as the One who internally, effectually calls believers to Himself.

It may be best to say “worthy of the God who is our Caller,” because the emphasis is not upon God continually calling us but upon His character as the One who called us to Himself to walk with Him.

And of course, God’s calling in Paul’s & other NT letters is the inward call that draws us to salvation.

It is the effectual or effective call that God works when He regenerates us—or causes us to be born again—by putting His Spirit in us.

That’s different from the general, external call for people to come to Christ & be saved.

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That outward call, most often seen in the Gospels, is a universal offer of the Gospel for all to repent & believe in Jesus for salvation.

God makes that genuine offer, but we naturally ignore it or reject it unless God works inside us by His Spirit.

And that internal work is God’s effectual call by the Spirit that brings us into a right relationship with Himself.

God’s saving call humbles our hearts to submit to Christ as King now & prepares us for His future kingdom & glory.

So we want to live in a way that gives the proper weight & honor to our God & to our new life as set for His kingdom & glory.

And we want to lead others to that same goal.

The goal is not to live worthy merely of the call, but worthy of the glorious, faithful, powerful, saving, gracious God who called us.

The goal is to lead others to a walk & lifestyle that portrays God as He is worthy of being portrayed.

That requires us to be people of prayer because it’s God’s work.

We must be earnestly & fervently pray to guide our minds & ministries in this God-centered direction.

Prayer can guard our hearts against seeking to force or coerce responses as if power or control were our goals.

Praying keeps us dependent on God to work for His own reputation as we serve Him.

Then we walk in humble faith that God will show His power & goodness through His people by His grace for His glory.

Often that is hard work & it may have very slow progress, but we know it is the right direction.

We are not here to get people to like us or to do what we want or to make us look good and successful.

We are not here for people to praise us & honor us for how our kids turn out or for any other results we think will satisfy us.

We are here to point to God as the worthy Savior who has rescued us from our sins & who is trustworthy to love & enjoy forever.

We are here to display the goodness of God’s glorious spiritual rule that will lead into His future kingdom & eternal glory.

So leading faithfully means leading in that God-centered direction.

Leading in every setting is about God, not about us getting our own way or getting others to do as we say.

We must labor to keep God as the aim we always have in view.

And I'm so thankful for how many of you are living out this purposeful communication & God-centered direction.

So simply ask yourself—how can you excel still more?

Children & others need you to do so.

There are people at your work or in your neighborhood or in your family that need you to minister to them like a father.

They need you to come alongside them and sit down and hear their struggles and apply God's Word to their situation.

They need you to exhort them in urgency to trust Christ & obey Him as Lord & live daily giving God His due weight.

And we all need to seek out & receive that kind of exhortation.

We need to value it and appreciate it when it comes our way.

May God help us to apply these truths faithfully.

Let's pray as we close.