

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:10 — The Heart Of A Good Pastor — Part 2

April 7, 2024

Good morning, CrossWinds! I hope everyone had a good Easter. This morning is a special Sunday. This is the last Sunday you will enjoy the feel of a pew. We ordered chairs many months ago. They were stuck on a container ship outside of the Panama Canal. The chairs made it through the canal. They are in America and will arrive on Friday.

God is at work regarding the timing of getting rid of the pews. A few months ago, when we tried to find a new home for the pews, we didn't have many interested. We didn't know what to do with them. When we marketed them again this spring, we found interested people. About three-quarters of them are claimed. The best news is where the largest group of them is going. They are headed to our extension site in Windom, MN. That site shares the church with a Hispanic congregation. The Hispanic congregation wants some of the pews and we are excited to help. I will message everyone this week through the church app when I have more details of the exact time of the chairs' arrival. There are 425 to unload, so help is appreciated, especially from the younger, more athletic crowd.

This morning, we are back to the book of 1 Thessalonians. Two weeks ago, we were in 1 Thessalonians 2. The background of this letter is that Paul was only in the city of Thessalonica for 4 or 5 weeks. While there, he planted a church. Everyone in the church was a baby Christian. The Jews didn't like Paul. They also didn't like Jesus, so they whipped up a rioting crowd in the city to put the city into turmoil to drive Paul, Silas, and Timothy out of town. The Jews even tried to weaponize the government against Paul. They claimed Paul was telling

people to worship a man named Jesus instead of Caesar. As a result, the politarches—that is, the city leaders, drove Paul out of town and banned him from returning.

As soon as Paul was out of town, the Jews began assassinating Paul's character. They threw him under the bus, hoping to destroy his reputation and the young church. This is why, in the first half of this letter, Paul spends time defending himself from their false accusations. They accused Paul of being in the religious business to get money. It is true that many bogus religious leaders in that day and today are in the religious business for the money. Paul defended himself saying none of that was true. He wasn't telling people about Jesus for money. He was self-supporting and made tents to support himself while in the city. He was unwilling to take their money. He wasn't in the religious business because he wanted sexual favors from women followers. Many bogus religious leaders are in that line of work for that reason, but that wasn't true of the apostle Paul. As we saw in the past weeks, Paul was telling people about Jesus because that is the job Jesus gave him to accomplish.

As we came to the end of chapter 2, Paul responded to another false accusation made against him. The Jews said, "Paul claims to love you and care about you. That isn't true. If he cared about you, he would come back to visit you. Since Paul hasn't return, that proves he doesn't care about you. He just wanted to use you."

To counter those false accusations, in the closing verses of chapter 2, Paul gave us a window into his heart, an X-ray of his soul. He told the

Thessalonians how much he cared about them and explained why he hadn't returned. He hadn't returned because of the government ban on his presence in the city was still in place. The reason he hadn't returned was not because he didn't care about them. It was that government ban which barred him from returning to the city. As he told us, he made every effort to get that ban lifted but couldn't get it removed.

In the closing verses of 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul knew he had to communicate his love to the Thessalonians in words if he couldn't communicate love through his presence. In those verses, Paul gives us an X-ray of his heart and what he feels about the Thessalonians. As Paul shows us his heart, he shows us what the heart of a good pastor looks like. Two weeks ago, we built our study around that question. What does the heart of a good pastor look like? There were three points we made.

1. The heart of a good pastor loves his people.

We saw that a good pastor must love the people God gives him. In 1 Thessalonians 2:17, Paul described how he felt when he was kicked out of the city and forced to leave that baby church. The word Paul used is the word orphaned. He felt like a mother who had her young child torn out of her arms and taken away who knows where. It is a feeling of panic when someone you love is torn out of your arms and taken away. That is how Paul felt about being forced to leave Thessalonica and the baby church that had people only one, two, or three weeks old in Christ. That is a good pastor's heart. The heart of a good pastor genuinely loves the people God gave him the privilege of pastoring. This is also

true about a youth group leader or an AWANA leader. They genuinely love the students. That is what the heart of a good spiritual leader looks like.

2. The heart of a good pastor understands the enemy.

The second thing we learned about the heart of a good pastor is they understand the enemy. They realize the church is not involved in a mere physical battle. We are involved in a spiritual battle. Satan was at work to undermine the church and undermine Christians. As the Bible says, We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers in the heavenly realms. Satan was working through the Jews in Thessalonica. He used them to stir up a crowd to drive Paul out of town. Satan was at work in the government of Thessalonica, getting a ban in place to keep Paul from returning to tell more people about Jesus. Satan was also at work keeping that ban in place thwarting Paul's efforts to remove the ban so he could return to the city.

None of this should surprise us. Nothing has changed. Satan is at work in this world today. He is committed to destroying Christians and to undermining the church. He is at work in our government opposing freedom of religion, trying to undermine religion, especially Christians, as they share the gospel with others. A good pastor is not ignorant of that. They are not surprised by spiritual opposition. They expect that opposition.

3. The heart of a good pastor remembers Jesus' return.

The third thing we learned two weeks ago is that a good pastor remembers Jesus' return. If Paul could never return to the Thessalonians in this life, he knew he would one day see them before the throne of Jesus in the next life. On that day, what will matter is not the size of your house, the size of your

bank account, how many football games you won, or how many school records you set. What will matter on that day is who is around the throne of Jesus with you. God gave you the privilege of either leading them to Jesus or maturing them in Jesus. Those people will be your joy. They will be your glory. On that day, all the sacrifices you made in life to tell them about Jesus or mature them in Jesus will be worth it.

What is the heart of a good pastor — Part 2?

This morning is part 2 of that last message. Paul continues to bare his heart. He continues to give us an X-ray of his soul. As he does, we learn more about what the heart of a good pastor looks like in 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10. Since Paul was banned from the city, and he was not able to get that ban removed, he sent Timothy in his place to visit the Thessalonians. Timothy was a young man who had recently begun traveling with Paul. He was young enough and innocent enough that the government ban that kept Paul from the city didn't apply to him. He could return to the city. Let's read about it.

Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? 1 Thessalonians 3:1–10 (ESV)

As we go through these verses, there are seven observations we can make about what the heart of a good pastor or spiritual leader looks like.

1. The heart of a good pastor cares for his people.

Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, 1 Thessalonians 3:1–2 (ESV)

The word, therefore, connects this section to what we looked at two weeks ago. It connects us back to Paul's love for the Thessalonians, the love of a mother who had her newborn child torn out of her arms and taken away. It is that feeling of panic, the feeling of desperation. As we saw two weeks ago, the Greek is clear that Paul has exhausted himself, trying every possible way to remove the barriers that kept him from returning to the city. Since he couldn't return and bear the separation any longer, he decided to send Timothy in his place. This should show us how he felt about them. Paul didn't just love them, but he genuinely cared about them.

It reminds me of when my oldest son David went on his first wrestling mission trip to Mongolia. He was young—I think he was 14—and traveling through airports by himself to meet up with his team in Los Angeles. You can imagine how Cindy and I felt about him traveling across the country alone. This was in the early days of the Find My Friend App on the iPhone. Cindy and I were glued to the screen, watching the blue dot on the screen travel through the airport. We loved him, but we also deeply cared about his well-being.

That is the heart of a good pastor. They are not concerned about their success, their legacy, their reputation, their salary, or their notoriety. What they

are genuinely concerned about is the spiritual welfare of the people. They are concerned about people and their relationship with Jesus. That is what is important. Some pastors are concerned about a book deal or the size of their church. Folks. That is not what the heart of a good pastor cares about. The heart of a good pastor cares about people and their relationship with Jesus. They are concerned not just about people becoming more like Jesus but when things pull people away from Jesus and the church.

If you are a youth group leader, you aren't concerned about the size of the youth group. You care about the students in the youth group. You want to make sure they are growing in Jesus and maturing in Jesus. It doesn't matter how big is the youth group if people are not growing in Christ when they are involved in the youth group.

We see this theme of Paul's heart being burdened for the spiritual condition of people because he genuinely cares about them in other parts of Scripture.

And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? 2 Corinthians 11:28–29 (ESV)

Paul says that it is not just the physical opposition that is hard to carry in his life. It is the daily pressure of anxiety for all the churches. That anxiety is not an administrative burden about attendance and giving patterns. It is about the spiritual maturity of the people. He says, "Who is not weak, and I am not weak?" When someone's faith is wounded, he feels the pain. He cares about them. He genuinely cares about them. Then he says, "Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?" When someone is tripped up by Satan, and gives into sin and makes

a poor life choice, he is indignant. Indignant means to be inflamed with anger when Satan or another person leads a Christian astray. He is angry because he genuinely cares about the welfare of his spiritual children as a good parent cares about the welfare of their own children.

I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? 2 Corinthians 12:15 (ESV)

Paul says I am glad to give my very life for your souls so that you are established in Jesus and mature in Jesus. He is willing to give his very life so that people would know Jesus because he genuinely cares for people. That is how much Paul cares about people. Then Paul adds, even if you love me less when I love you more, it doesn't matter. I will keep loving you. My friends that is a true pastor's heart. It is a heart that genuinely cares about the spiritual welfare of other people far more than he cares about himself. That is what the heart of a good pastor looks like. It is what the heart of a good elder looks like. It is what the heart of a good youth leader looks like.

3. The heart of a good pastor is unselfish toward people.

Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2 (ESV)

Paul's genuine care for the people leads him to be unselfish. He sent Timothy to them. If you genuinely love and care for someone, you will be unselfish with them and toward them. You will gladly sacrifice yourself for them.

At this point in the story, Paul was in Athens. Even though Paul uses the word "we," he refers to himself. If we look at Acts 18, we find Paul sent Silas to Philippi. What was three men, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, would be reduced to one

man. Silas was headed to Philippi to encourage them in the faith. Timothy was now sent to Thessalonica to encourage them in the faith.

Athens was a place of skeptics, cynical philosophers, and Christ rejectors. As Paul reasoned with the philosophers, he would be alone. Imagine being a missionary in a hostile society but not having anyone to debrief with at the end of the day, not having anyone to pray with you or strategize with you. Imagine being the only Christian in an entire city and trying to reach the city with Jesus alone. That would be tough! Paul was willing to go through that. He was willing to be left alone because he cared about the Thessalonians so much.

The verb “to be left behind” means to be abandoned or forsaken. In secular Greek, it was used to describe the feelings someone experienced when they lost a spouse in death. It refers to a painful, heartbroken separation. Why did Paul do this? Why did he endure the pain of such loneliness when he sent Timothy away? He loved and genuinely cared for the Thessalonians so much that he was willing to make that kind of sacrifice for them.

Later, Paul arrives at Corinth. At that time, Silas returned from Philippi, and Timothy returned from Thessalonica. There was a reunion then, but at this point, Paul was completely alone.

The point of all this is that a good pastor who genuinely cares about his people will be unselfish about his time. He will be unselfish about his resources. He will be unselfish about his comforts. He will make great sacrifices to help those under his care come to know Jesus and be found mature in Jesus. That means your vacations will probably not end up as all vacations. Your weekends

will not be all fun and games. It means your day off will probably not be completely off. These kinds of sacrifices should not surprise us. If we genuinely care about our wives and children, we always make these kinds of sacrifices for them. Why would a good pastor not find it natural to make sacrifices for his spiritual children if we all expect to make sacrifices for our physical children? The same is true for a youth leader. The same is true for a CW Kids teacher or an AWANA leader. Expect good spiritual leadership will involve sacrifice.

Timothy was Paul's closest friend. He was a young pastor in training. He didn't just give up time with Timothy by sending him to the Thessalonians, but he later sent him to the church in Corinth.

[That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. 1 Corinthians 4:17 \(ESV\)](#)

Timothy wasn't just anybody off the street. He was somebody Paul deeply loved. That is why it was hard for Paul to part from him.

Paul also sent Timothy to the church in Philippi to help them in their faith.

[I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. Philippians 2:19–20 \(ESV\)](#)

I love the way Paul describes Timothy. He says, "I have nobody else like him." Timothy is my best guy. I love you so much that I am willing to sacrifice my best by sending my best guy.

The heart of a good pastor, a good spiritual leader, is unselfish about their time and people. They will sacrifice their best people, their best time, and their personal comforts for the sake of others in Christ.

The heart of a good pastor is committed to the spiritual maturity of his people.

...and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith,... 1 Thessalonians 3:2 (ESV)

Why was Timothy sent? To establish and exhort them in the faith. The word establish means to buttress a building. That is adding support structures to a roof or walls to strengthen a building and handle more weight and stress. The Thessalonians were new Christians. As new Christians, they were not ready to handle significant stress in the Christian life. Timothy was sent to teach them more about Jesus, so when life was hard and the Jews were making them suffer, they didn't find their faith in Jesus breaking.

In addition, Timothy was to exhort them. That means to encourage them. This is important. When we go through hard times. When we go through job loss. When someone is sick or in the hospital, we all need people to show up not to solve the problem but to encourage us as we go through the problem. Some of the most important people in my life were people who cared enough to encourage me at pivotal moments. They didn't solve anything. They just cared enough to make time to sit down and drink a \$2 cup of coffee and encourage me. We all need encouraging people like that, especially in tough times.

So Timothy was sent to mature them in Christ and encourage them in Christ.

This reminds me of the NCAA Div 1 wrestling finals this year. I don't know if you saw them a few weeks ago. Several wrestlers were interviewed after



their national championship match, and they took the opportunity to speak about Jesus on national television. My favorite televised post-match interview was not from the finals but the semi-finals. It was after the match between David Carr and Keegan O'Toole. David Carr, from ISU, won that match and went on to win the national championship the next night. Keegan O'Toole, who lost that match, was a returning two-time national champion. It was a tough defeat. David Carr, is an outspoken Christian. After he won the match against Keegan, he used that opportunity to speak about Jesus. Keegan O'Toole is also a Christian. When he was interviewed after the loss, he used that as a chance to speak about Jesus.¹ I liked his interview because he used it as an opportunity to speak about how Jesus helps you through defeat, not just to thank Jesus for a victory. In the interview, there was no dejection, just gratitude for the opportunity to compete. He didn't speak negatively about David Carr. He spoke about how his faith in Jesus helped him handle the loss. He said he was not living for wrestling but for what would be important a hundred years from now. He said that his life is a lot bigger than wrestling. The sport is not his identity. He said his faith changed his perspective on life. Wrestling is not his end all be all. He knows God has a plan, and it is already written. We do our best, but God has a bigger plan. It may not always be what we want, but God is good. He was focused on how good God had already been to him and how grateful he was to have the privilege of competing. Where does a response like that come from? It comes from spiritual maturity. That maturity helped him handle adversity. That is why Paul sent

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCWr-dF1jis>

Timothy to the Thessalonians to accomplish. Help them grow in Christ so that when life gets hard, they can handle the stresses and losses of life well.

The message that Christians do not just need to trust in Christ, but they also need to mature in Christ is a theme found throughout the Bible. Look how Paul drives this point home.

And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. Acts 15:32 (ESV)

Encourage and mature people in Jesus.

And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Acts 15:41 (ESV)

Paul matured the churches.

After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. Acts 18:23 (ESV)

Why does Paul want to encourage and strengthen the Thessalonians? We already know the answer. It is so they handle adversity well.

that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. 1 Thessalonians 3:3 (ESV)

So that they would not be moved by these afflictions. The word moved is the Greek word *Saino*. It means to emotionally wag back and forth like the tail on a dog. I don't want you to emotionally be going back and forth between total depression one moment and being ok the next moment, then a moment later, back to depression.

Paul tells them that when they feel like the world is bearing down on them, do not be surprised by this. Remember, we were destined for this. As a Christian, we are destined for eternal glory with Jesus. We are also new creations in this

life, but we are also destined for trouble on this earth. We should expect people will oppose us simply because we love Jesus.

This is not the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel. Paul does not say, “Come to Jesus, and you will be rich. Come to Jesus, and your problems will go away.” He says, come to Jesus and know you are forgiven. You are made right with God. You look forward to an eternity with Jesus. When you come to Jesus, you can also look forward to trouble in this world. There is a spiritual battle going on. As a Christian, Satan painted a target on your back. He will do everything he can to trip you up.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,... James 1:2 (ESV)

...In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. John 16:33b (ESV)

Here is the problem with the prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel says that if you have enough faith, you will be rich. If you have enough faith, you won't have trouble in this life. You will be rich, famous, healthy, and successful. The prosperity gospel has very little sympathy for people. When they struggle financially, lose their job, when a relationship falls apart, when they are sick, the prosperity gospel says the reason you are having trouble is you. If you only had enough faith, your problems would go away. My friends, that is baloney. That is heartless. Paul told the Thessalonians to expect trouble because of their faith, not to be surprised by trouble because of their faith. Expect that in this world, we will face afflictions because of Jesus. Don't let that surprise us.

The Bible goes further. It reframes the way we think about our troubles, especially if we are suffering because of our obedience to Jesus. The Bible says that if we are suffering in this life because of our faithfulness to Christ in life, we are blessed by God in our suffering.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Matthew 5:11 (ESV)

If we are willing to suffer for our faith, God blesses us. This means that if you are willing to suffer for your faith, it is a good thing, not a bad thing.

Let me give you an example of what this might look like. When you are in high school, and your friends go to watch a movie, sometimes they want to watch an R-rated movie. In your heart, the Holy Spirit prompts you that is wrong. You know there will be an explicit sex scene. You know you will watch people get murdered. The Holy Spirit reminds you that watching that movie is not the right thing to do, but what are you to do? Do you stand outside while your friend goes inside the theatre to watch it? If you don't join your friends, you know your friends will think you are weird. They will wonder what is wrong with you. They will begin to mock you in the theatre and at school. What are you to do? If you tell your friends you will watch a different movie while they watch the R-rated movie, you will pay socially, but you are blessed in the eyes of God for having the courage to honor Jesus.

It is a question of whose applause you want in that moment. The applause of your friends or the God of the universe. You decide.

For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 1 Peter 2:19 (ESV)

When you suffer unjustly because you honor Jesus, that is gracious. That is the kind of thing where a friend may laugh at you and belittle you, but God will honor you.

This is why we say a good pastor is committed to the spiritual maturity of his people. A good pastor will teach his people the truth about suffering and prepare them to suffer well and to be blessed by God when they do. A bad pastor will say, "Come to Christ, and all your problems go away." A good pastor will tell the truth. He will say, "Come to Jesus, and your troubles have only begun."

A good pastor is protective of his people.

For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.
1 Thessalonians 3:5 (ESV)

When Paul could no longer endure being apart from them and needed to know what happened to them in Christ, he sent Timothy to learn about their faith. He was afraid the tempter had tempted them. He feared they fell away from Christ, and all his work would be wasted. Paul was protective of the people.

Remember that the Christians in Thessalonica were only a month old in Christ when he was run out of town. Paul knew that it is when people are young in Jesus that Satan works his hardest to destroy faith in Jesus.

How does the devil try to destroy faith?

Here is how Satan works against us. Much of this comes from the parable of the soils found in Matthew 13.

1. He tries to snatch away the gospel seed before it can take root.

When someone shares the gospel, when the gospel is heard, Satan comes along and tries to take away the gospel seed before it can take root in a

life. He is like a bird picking off seeds scattered on the ground. People hear the gospel, but he distracts them so they won't think about it. He creates commotion in the crowd. When I was younger, twice I traveled to South America and Central America to compete against the wrestling teams in different Countries. Halfway through the match, one of our wrestlers would briefly share his testimony, then we would have a small gospel presentation. Every time that part of the wrestling meet happened. The babies started crying. There was noise in the street. Somebody began distracting the crowd. It happened every time! What was that? It was Satan trying to snatch the gospel message out of people's lives before they could hear it and comprehend it, so it took root.

2. If it takes root, he tries to destroy it through persecution and suffering.

Secondly, if the seed of the gospel does take root, Satan tries to destroy it through persecution. This is the seed that fell on rocky ground in the parable of the soils. Satan brings trials and trouble into people's lives to kill the gospel seed as it takes life before it can take root. That is what happened to the Thessalonians. As soon as they came to Christ, Satan brought trials and trouble into their life. He was trying to destroy the gospel while the roots were shallow and their faith was not mature. That is the way Satan works. He tries to use persecution, affliction, and difficulties—especially in the lives of young Christians—to get them to fall away from Jesus.

3. If the gospel establishes itself in a life, he tries to choke it out and make it unfruitful.

Third, if someone makes it through times of suffering for Jesus, what Satan will try to do is choke out someone's spiritual life, so they are unfruitful for Jesus. In the parable of the soils, this seed fell on weedy soil. It sprung up. It grew, but since the nutrients in the soil were taken away by the weeds, the gospel seed produced little fruit.

The farmer among us can tell us about this. Just as important as planting the corn is killing the weeds that want to get nutrients in the soil before the corn. If the weeds get to those nutrients first, it will ruin the harvest.

Folks, there is only so much time in life. If Satan can't destroy your faith, he wants to keep you so busy with other things that you have no time to grow or become fruitful in your faith. That is the way Satan works. If Satan can't destroy you, he will keep you so busy that you cannot live your life in a fruitful way for Christ.

There are other ways that Satan is at work to destroy your faith and your life.

4. At the opportune time, he tempts us to sin.

Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 1 Corinthians 7:5 (ESV)

When a Christian couple is not faithful in their marital obligations with one another, Satan notices it. It is in the time when your heart is lonely that he always sends someone else into your life who is interested in you, and who would be

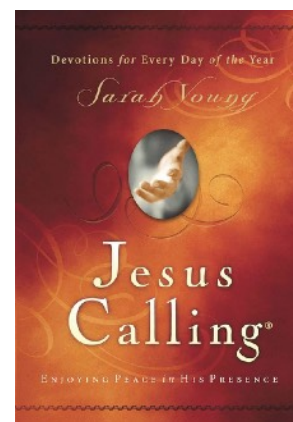
tempting to you. That is the way Satan works. He doesn't tempt us when we are strong. He waits for the opportune time. He tempts us when we are lonely, when we are tired, and when our hearts are vulnerable. Just expect this! Don't be surprised by it.

5. He disguises himself as an angel of light to lead us astray.

And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11:14 (ESV)

Satan loves to work through people that appear spiritual, but can be spiritually just out of tune. One of the ways he does this is through popular Christian books. Some popular Christian books are either not faithful to the gospel or they distort the gospel. As a result, many people in the church are led astray. That is the way Satan works. I may have become too cynical in my old age, but when I hear of the latest Christian book that everybody has to read, I get suspicious. A book like this is the book Jesus Calling by Sarah Young. I know many women love her books. They are very popular. Here is where I get myself in trouble with those women. I haven't read all of Sarah Young's books. I don't have time for that. I have read part of it. In the introduction to her book, she says this.

I began to wonder if I could receive messages during my times of communing with God... I know that God communicated with me through the Bible, but I yearned for more. I wanted to hear what God had to say to me personally on a given day. — Sarah Young, author of Jesus Calling



She knew God communicated to her through her Bible, but she claimed she wanted more than her Bible. She wanted God to talk to her in addition to her

Bible. A flag went up in my mind. Why has the Bible been enough for every other Christian for the last 2,000 years, but it is not enough for you? Doesn't that undercut the sufficiency of Scripture? Look what the Bible says about itself.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)

God speaks to us through the Bible, not subjectively outside of the Bible.

Look what else she says.

...I want to share some of the messages I have received. In many parts of the world, Christians seem to be searching for a deeper experience of Jesus' Presence and Peace. The messages that follow address that felt need. — Sarah Young, author of Jesus Calling

She says that if you want a deeper experience of Jesus' presence and peace, you don't turn to God's words in his book, you turn to my words in my book. God's words in the Bible are insufficient for us, so we need her words instead. Something is wrong with this picture!

I don't know a ton about her and her books. As I said, I don't have time to read all her books. I just know that Satan masquerades as an angel of light to lead people astray and here is a popular Christian book that tells us you will have a deeper experience of Jesus by her book instead of God's book.

A good shepherd will protect his flock by pointing those kinds of things out to his flock so Satan does not lead them astray.

The heart of a good pastor delights in the progress of his people.

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. 1 Thessalonians 3:6–7 (ESV)

Timothy returned from Thessalonica. He reported to Paul the genuine faith of the Thessalonians that we read about in Chapter 1. Paul was thrilled when he heard about this. He immediately sat down to write this letter of 1 Thessalonians that we have in our Bibles.

Paul was completely delighted in the Thessalonians' real faith. It was genuine faith. They were willing to suffer for Christ. They turned from idols to the living God. Their faith showed up in their works. All the hallmarks of genuine faith were present.

Paul says, in all our distress and affliction, we have been comforted through your faith. Paul was going through all kinds of anxiety. He was left alone in Athens. He was whipped by the Jews 5 times. He was often hungry and without food. He was exposed to the cold at night. In spite of all that suffering, when he heard about the faith of the Thessalonians, it made all of that suffering worth it. The fact the Thessalonians were still loyal to him, and the nasty Jews hadn't turned them against him was so encouraging. His great delight and encouragement was that the Thessalonians longed to see him and hadn't turned against him.

What delights a good pastor's heart is seeing his people's faith, especially faith that has endured persecution. What delight the heart of a good pastor is not a building. It is not a reputation. It is not a salary. It is not prestige. The delight of a pastor is to see his people successfully following Jesus and the baton of the gospel getting passed to the next generation.

Years ago, I was a youth pastor. Today, I follow some of my old youth group students on Facebook. What delights me is seeing them successfully follow Jesus as adults. Some have gone on to be pastors, missionaries, and leaders in their churches; others are faithfully following Jesus in the church and teaching their children about Jesus. To see them living out their faith is the delight of my heart.

[For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 3:8 \(ESV\)](#)

Paul says, do you know what makes me live? Do you know what thrills my heart? It is not the chance to have a Caribbean vacation. It is not the chance to go south for the winter. It is not that he was asked to speak at a college or give a commencement address. It is simply that the Thessalonians stood fast in the Lord, especially after Satan had done his best to destroy their faith.

That is the heart of a good pastor. He delights in his people's faithfulness. He delights in the fact that the baton of the gospel was successfully passed to the next generation. That is the thrill of his soul.

That is not just the delight of a good pastor, but it is the delight of a good AWANA leader and youth group leader as well.

[The heart of a good pastor has gratitude to God.](#)

[For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God,... 1 Thessalonians 3:9 \(ESV\)](#)

Paul continues to delight in his people but notice that he doesn't give himself or the Thessalonians the credit. He gives God the credit. Every good thing in any of us is ultimately not due to our strength. It is God's strength at work in us.

A good pastor is a man filled with gratitude to God for any good thing that takes place in the church. Isn't that true for all of us? Any good thing that has happened in our lives to draw us to God and save us by Jesus is ultimately God graciously at work in us. Even our ability to repent and respond to God was because God was graciously at work in us, enabling our hearts to respond to him.

A good pastor prays for his people.

...as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? 1 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV)

Along with rejoicing at what God has done in people's lives, as a good pastor, Paul constantly prayed for them. Look how frequently Paul prayed for people in the church. He prayed for them night and day. That means all the time. Look at his attitude when he prayed. He prayed for them earnestly, not casually.

The heart of a good pastor prays for his people constantly and earnestly. He prays not just to see them for the sake of friendship but that he can be a spiritual encouragement to help them mature in Jesus.

Application.

What does the heart of a good pastor, youth group leader, CW Kids leader, AWANA leader or Life Group leader look like? Let's look at it one last time.

1. The heart of a good pastor cares.
2. The heart of a good pastor is unselfish.
3. The heart of a good pastor is committed to spiritual maturity.
4. The heart of a good pastor is protective.

5. The heart of a good pastor delights in his people.
6. The heart of a good pastor is grateful to God.
7. The heart of a good pastor prays.



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