

1 Thess. Series: Central Baptist  
Message 2: 1 Thess 2:1-12  
February 2023

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## PROFILE OF AN AUTHENTIC PASTOR

Delivered by Pastor Tom Cowan

Recently was asked a couple of interesting questions –

- How long does it take you to prepare a sermon? My answer was 55 years!
- Have you all the sermons done in this series before you write the study guide –  
NO – my primary goal is to encourage you to read the passage each week –  
then think through it in the questions – and perhaps discuss it together in a  
group. The study guide was written last November – and the sermons are done  
week by week.

Each week I am asking God – what is in this week’s passage which is Biblical – the  
truth of scripture – and how is it relevant to our lives and especially to the life of  
Central Baptist church right now.

So this week – here is what I thought about. As you know – we have a Search  
committee working to seek out a new lead pastor for the church. I am not involved in  
that in any way – but it dawned on me – if they received an application to the position  
of Lead pastor from someone called The Apostle Paul – Here is what it would say –

Think about it – his resume would say that he persecuted and jailed Christians -then  
after he had become a Christian - Many of the cities he visited to preach chased him  
out of town – riots took place – was put in prison – 5 times he was flogged – 3 times he  
was beaten with rods – once he was stoned (that means something different than  
today! They used real stones and it hurt) –

He was always on the move – chased by bandits – he escaped once city by being  
lowered from a window in a basket and slipped away without being caught. (that was  
in Damascus.)

So -- Would you really want to hire someone like that to be the lead pastor in a Baptist  
church? I have a feeling that the Search committee would say – next application!

When Paul wrote to churches – he often had to establish his apostolic authority – he  
had to defend his reputation. Then describes his role.

That’s what we find in 1 Thess. 2:1-12. This gives us insight into how he views his task  
– as an apostle and ultimately as a pastor. Encourage you to have it open in front of  
you.

1 Thess. Series: Central Baptist  
Message 2: 1 Thess 2:1-12  
February 2023

---

The Apostle Paul was perhaps the best theologian the church has ever had. As a Jewish rabbi he was trained under Gamaliel – Paul had an outstanding mind and tremendous zeal for his religious heritage. That was why he was such a zealot and assassin opposing the church – and God took the best of this spiritual passion and turned it around – focusing it towards the church. But he is more than a theologian with a great mind – he is a pastor with a great heart. He thinks like a pastor – feels like a pastor – has a pastor’s heart for the churches he started and works with. He rejoices when they rejoice. He is not afraid to scold them when they need scolded. He encourages them when that is what they need.

**Verse 4 - We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. <sup>5</sup>You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness.**

As is the case with every spiritual leader – character is primary – this involved the temptation of money and greed – internal temptation of flattery or self-praise – trying to feed on public praise.

I suggest to you that in looking for a pastor – the same is true today. I don’t know if the issues and struggle in the area of sexuality was as important in Paul’s day – perhaps they were but they certainly are today. Day after day on TV news – we hear of people who are in positions of leadership over young people – in athletics, soccer, gymnastics or whatever who are guilty of sexual abuse. It is tragic. I wince when I hear of a scandal in the life of a well-known pastor – because when that happens – every honest faithful hard-working pastor somehow wears it.

Pastors needs to have clean hands and pure hearts. Training and degrees are important – experience is essential – but character is critical. Someone once said – character is what you are when no one is looking.

Passion is a word that recently has become part of our common vocabulary – you find it in all kinds of literature. It used to be a word that you only heard around Valentine’s Day – passion was a word that had a romantic meaning.

Then you started to hear about the need for passion in our jobs – even executives talked about the need for passion – to engage in work with deep feeling. Skills by themselves were no longer sufficient – what we needed was passion in our work.

1 Thess. Series: Central Baptist  
Message 2: 1 Thess 2:1-12  
February 2023

---

Colossians 2

1. I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.

The Greek word for struggling is actually our word ‘agony’.

It doesn’t sound very appealing to say – I want to tell you about the agony of being a pastor! It would sound a lot better if we said the joy of being a pastor – or the challenge of being a pastor. Can you imagine NorthWest Baptist Seminary advertising its programs for training in ministry and saying – come and train to be a pastor with us – it’s agony!

So I looked up the statement from NorthWest Baptist seminary - *We equip and empower followers of Jesus Christ for joyful service and skilled ministry leadership, and are passionate about raising up competent pastors, missionaries, chaplains, and lay leaders who love God and know the pulse of the people and cultures they serve.*

The word ‘agony’ comes from the idea of a gathering – then athletic competition – then it came to mean the striving involved – and then the energy that you are willing to expend in something because you are deeply committed to it.

Think of athletes who train for the Olympic Games – you see them putting every ounce of effort and strength into what they do – why do they put themselves through this regime of training and effort – the answer is passion!

Paul gives us a profile of an authentic pastor -- it is built of the basis of his character – 2 are in this week’s study – 2 are from other Scriptures. I will start outside 1 Thessalonians.

First picture – profile of a pastor:

#1 he describes himself as a spiritual midwife -- coaching them as they are being formed into Christ.

Galatians 4

19. My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed [morphed] in you,

The word – morphe – means change from the inside out. The pastor is a spiritual mid-wife – who seeks to help us be changed into the likeness of Christ.

1 Thess. Series: Central Baptist  
Message 2: 1 Thess 2:1-12  
February 2023

---

Paul says this again and again often using the word metamorphosis. He is very fond of this word. He teaches the scriptures – not to give information – but to bring about transformation.

Romans 12:2

<sup>2</sup>Do not conform (metaschema) to the pattern of this world, but be transformed (metamorphosis) by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. [metamorphosis and metaschema are opposites]

2 Cor 3:18

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate<sup>[a]</sup> the Lord's glory, are being transformed (metamorphosis) into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Each time you read the Bible on your own – each time you hear the Word from this pulpit – you need to ask a question – how is this Word wanting to change me – to morph me into the likeness of Christ. You should leave each Sunday with at least one truth – one idea that God wants to use in your life to transform you.

That's why I often ask you each Sunday as we finish – what's your take-away this morning.

#2 - The second metaphor Paul uses to talk about being a pastor – is that of a **MOTHER**.

Verse 7 -- Instead, we were like young children<sup>[a]</sup> among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children,

A Technical issue – it is very hard to know what this verse is actually saying. There is a textual problem which we cannot solve. \

Paul could be saying – we were like young children among you – or he could be saying – we were gentle among you. The Greek words only differ by one letter – and the actual word used is not certain. However the picture is clear – Paul comes like a nursing mother.

1 Thess. Series: Central Baptist  
Message 2: 1 Thess 2:1-12  
February 2023

---

The unique task of the mother is to nurse her babies.

1 Peter 2:2-3 says to us: Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,<sup>3</sup> now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Each Sunday morning – you need to ask yourself at the end of worship and teaching – How was I fed this morning? What truth from God’s Word was like milk from a mothers breast?

We are told that the Scriptures have 4 basic purposes: 2 Tim 3:16.

1 – to teach us truth

2 – to reprove us – tell us where we are going off course

3 – to correct us – to get us back on course

4 – to train us in righteousness – train = word for pediatrics.

Each time we read the Bible perhaps on our own – or listen to a message from this pulpit – at least 1 of these 4 purposes should happen.

God gets all of us like babies and little children – his goal is to bring us to maturity. Will come back to this in a few minutes.

#3<sup>rd</sup> picture – Paul changes the metaphor/picture - He moves from the gentleness of the mother -- to the **firmness of a father.**

Verse11-12 -- For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children,<sup>12</sup> encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

Fathers are generally generally seen as having a stricter way with their children than mothers – you may not have always known the experience of the 3 verbs he uses – encouraging – comforting – urging -- I recognise that – allow Paul the latitude to make his point – note his goal – to live lives worthy of God.

That’s a word to challenge all fathers – ask yourself --how am I doing with my children?

1 Thess. Series: Central Baptist  
Message 2: 1 Thess 2:1-12  
February 2023

---

We have 3 kids – 2 of them boys – and when they were all married and had their own children – one day I took a risk with them – and I asked them – So, now that you have your own children -- how did I do with you when you were kids? Their answer was --- Dad, you were fair and firm. I'll take that as an OK.

There are times as a pastor I had to meet with people – address something they were going through which was out of line with Scripture – and I had to be fair and firm. I always have to remember what the goal is for all of us – to live lives that are worthy of God who has called us into his kingdom and glory.

4<sup>th</sup> picture of an authentic pastor. **It is protection of a shepherd.**

Many of us may have had in our bedrooms – that picture of a well-groomed Jesus carrying a cute cuddly little white lamb. Well, we need to abandon that idea from our minds. The life of the shepherd was not filled with cute and cuddly lambs – but rather sheep who were valuable – and what they needed more than anything was protection.

**PICTURE OF WELL-GROOMED JESUS WITH WHITE CUDDLY LAMB**

In Acts 20 – Paul has spent 3 years in Ephesus – teaching the church – longest time Paul was at any church -- now at the dock and getting ready to leave. He speaks to them – he challenges the Ephesians leaders who now have to take over the task of leadership – he says to them – Acts 20:28 – **Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood.**

Guard the flock of God ... that is a role and job that I believe pastors have to take very seriously these days.

We are the door-keepers of the church – guardians of the flock of God – that means theologically as all kinds of teaching wanders into the churches in Victoria – our job is to guard the church – False teaching is usually not all wrong – that would make it easy to spot – some of it is right – and it tickles people's ears – they get hooked by it and they wander off down the yellow brick road. Pastors need the theological skill to know that – and then they have to guard the flock of God – keep them on the right path.

1 Thess. Series: Central Baptist  
Message 2: 1 Thess 2:1-12  
February 2023

---

Sometimes I was not very popular as I stood against something – but my job was to protect the sheep in my care. Sometimes you have to guard the flock of God morally – as ethics slip and slide – and we can easily become victims of situation ethics. It seems today that everything goes – Sometimes you have to guard the flock physically.

2 stories from my pastoral history.

The Place – large evening gathering 500-600 - mostly college/university age – in the fall new students came – police called me one day – they had heard on the street that pimps were coming to our evening service looking for new girls to turn out into the streets to work – I never had a course in pastoral theology about that. So one evening we shared with them and spoke openly to the girls about what was happening – what these guys wanted them for - also – for next 3 – 4 weeks – had some police at the church doors – saying to some girls whom they recognised – out!

We had to guard the flock of God.

#2 - In downtown church in Vancouver – a Probationer Office told me that someone he was working with was getting out of prison – wanted to come to church – well, we were open for people to come and hear the Gospel. That's what we're in business for!

But he said – the reason he was in prison – he is a pedophile. We had over 100 children at church. How do you guard the flock of God.

I met with the guy – told him that he was welcome in main sanctuary – also in fellowship area where we had coffee after the service. Our children's ministry all took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor – and I showed him a staircase up to it – I said – you picture will be hanging at the bottom of the stairs – every teacher and staff will know what you look like – if you put one foot up there – we will phone 911 and VancouverPD will be here in an instant to pick you up.

He agreed – well, a couple of weeks went by OK – then I did not see him – I asked his PO where he was – and he had been picked up for something else and was back in jail.

I wanted him to be welcome – and I also had to guard the flock of God. Not always easy – but you have to do it.

1 Thess. Series: Central Baptist  
Message 2: 1 Thess 2:1-12  
February 2023

---

The goal of all this – Ephesians 4:

**So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,<sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up<sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

**<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.**

So the search committee is working to bring the name of a lead pastor before you as a church. They seek someone with character – clean hands and a pure heart.

- Who will be Like a spiritual midwife - Who desires to see Christ morphed in each one of us –
- Who will be like a mother to feed us the milk of the Word –
- Who will be like a father to encourage each of us to live to the glory of God –
- Who will be like a shepherd who will guard the flock – and who desires to see the whole Body built up into maturity.

This is the kind of pastor that the search committee is praying about. The board is praying about that – but can I say this morning – that is not enough —it requires the whole church – each of you – every household – every family – every couple - every single person to be joining them in praying for that. This is the most important decision that you will make for the perhaps next 8-10 years or so of the life of Central Baptist church.

Will you commit to that this morning? At your evening supper when you give thanks for the day and family – add that to the list.

We can only do this because each and every pastor – and each one of us stand under the banner of another pastor – another shepherd – the great shepherd - who is our example of all of this and so much more – his name is Jesus.

1 Thess. Series: Central Baptist  
Message 2: 1 Thess 2:1-12  
February 2023

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**WORSHIP TEAM UP/ STAND**

A FAMILIAR READING – Psalm 23

**A psalm of David.**

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

<sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,

<sup>3</sup> he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,<sup>[a]</sup>

I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup>Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
forever.

Tom back up –

Prayer partners come forward

Any final reminders

Benediction:

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,<sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Thess. Series: Central Baptist  
Message 2: 1 Thess 2:1-12  
February 2023

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