

Quality 2: Looking Like Jesus

Intro

➤ *REAL or RIDICULOUS?*

- Amid all the exaggerations and empty promises, we want something honest. We want *quality*—something authentic.

1 Thessalonians 1:6-8

➤ *"Barcode Faith"*

"The presence of the gospel in a person's heart will always be demonstrated by the power of the gospel in a person's life. The gospel is not something that we try on like a new pair of shoes. In fact, we don't 'try on' the gospel at all. In a very real sense, when we embrace the gospel, the gospel embraces us. Thus the gospel does more than reform our behavior; it transforms our being." –**Mark Howell**, *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 24

"You became imitators of us and of the Lord."

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Not selfish, but sacrificial.

"...though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi" (2:2)

"we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves" (2:8)

"If a relationship with Jesus Christ really does transform people, then one of the first things to go will be our selfishness. ...Genuine love is willing to go the distance, even to the point of exhaustion and weariness. It is a love that knows no limits and finds its ultimate source in the love of God." –**Mark Howell**, *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 35, 20

- Too often we place limits on what we'll do for the benefit of others, while we'll go to great lengths to serve ourselves.
- There is an epidemic today of young people "opting out" of things because it's something that makes them uncomfortable or isn't something they're totally interested in.

"Christians who serve out of a sense of conviction and call persevere no matter how difficult their circumstances. God strengthens them to stick at their posts. Those acting out of self-interest, however, tend to falter when the going gets tough. Stickability, especially in times of difficulty and opposition, is a proof of genuineness."

–**Andrew Young**, *Let's Study 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 21

- It's a proof of quality when you keep going even when something's no longer exciting.

Not people-pleasing, but pleasing one Person.

"For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others" (2:5-6)

- What are you trying to get from people? What are you *after* in your relationships and in your interactions with friends?

➤ *Vertical Self vs. Horizontal Self*

"With God playing no real authoritative role in informing identity, people look to others as the ultimate judge. Whereas the vertical self looks to heaven for favor and approval, the horizontal self looks to the world for approval and acceptance. For people who hold a horizontal sense of self, the creation and cultivation of a public image are paramount. Peers and society act as a mirror: we look to them to gain a sense of identity, yet they can only relay back to us the messages that we communicate to them. You cannot describe yourself as cool. Others must label you cool. In that way our identities are dependent on what others think of us. However, this means we do not think of others as being created in the image of God. We turn them into mirrors with one purpose—to tell us who we are. They are our audience. Whereas people with a vertical sense of self look to their God-given identity to find a sense of self, those with a horizontal sense of self can only hope that they will project the right image into culture so they will receive the right messages from their peers. Therefore, even the shy are drawn into the constant pursuit of putting out a public image, of running a personal public relations campaign in order to receive messages of meaning. It doesn't matter what you really think or feel; all that matters is what people see."

–**Mark Sayers**, *The Vertical Self: How Biblical Faith Can Help Us Discover Who We Are In An Age of Self Obsession*, 17

- If you get your identity from people, then that will shape how you approach them.
 - *Flattery in Instagram comments*
- Flattery can turn into gossip and slander very quickly, when it's self-interest rather than honesty that dictates your speech about people.
- Manipulative speech: a way of motivating people with words that are untethered from the truth.

"For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive" (2:3)

- Who is the judge of significance for you: *God or people?* Who would you rather impress?

"but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts" (2:4)

"This conviction has the potential to sober you and to set you free. It is sobering because God 'examines our hearts.' He knows if you are the real thing or a cheap substitute. He knows the motives behind what you do, and He sees through the excuses of why you do not do what you ought to do." –**Mark Howell**, *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 31

"To be accountable to [God] is to be delivered from the tyranny of human criticism."
–**John Stott**, *The Gospel and the End of Time*, 50-51

Not phony, but holy.

"You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers" (2:10)

- A compelling holiness, a non-ignorable Jesus.

"I began to realize that our lives have stopped speaking to the culture around us. The world looks at us and we look almost the same as the world. Slowly, inch by inch, we have replaced the biblical command to be holy with a quest for status. One of the reasons the early church grew at such a phenomenal rate was that the lives of the early Christians spoke so strongly to their neighbors. There was something different about them, something that spoke of another reality, an alternative way of living, to the culture around them. The early Christians lived lives of holiness that drew others to them and their life-giving message. The early church understood that their identity was rooted in Christ, not the surrounding culture. Therefore it is no wonder that across the Western world so few are coming to know Christ, while thousands exit the church back door." –**Mark Sayers**, *The Vertical Self: How Biblical Faith Can Help Us Discover Who We Are In An Age of Self Obsession*, Kindle Loc 168

Not fearful, but courageous self-forgetfulness.

“But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.” (2:2)

- Fear as insecurity...
- When you’re not trying to *be* somebody, to fight to maintain a certain image, to preserve yourself, you will face the most risky situations.

Not an empty follower, but an example.

“And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.” (1:6-7)

- Are you worth imitating?
- Do you draw in others?