

Passionate for Others' Spiritual Health

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:10

Introduction: Are we passionate about the spiritual health of others in the body of Christ? The Apostle Paul certainly was. His passion for the Thessalonians oozes from the passage of Scripture that we are studying today. As Steve said, what we see in Paul is really the heart of God toward others that all of us should have. This "passion for the spiritual health of others" will look different in different people depending on gifting, season of life and temperament, but the heart is the same. And so, may this passage stir us up to care more about the spiritual health of others in the body of Christ.

Opening Discussion: When was a time when the well being of a loved one was in doubt? How did it affect you?

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:10

1. What are your initial reactions to this passage? What strikes you?
2. What concerns did Paul have for the Thessalonians?
3. What was Timothy's mission in going to Thessalonica?
4. What news did Timothy bring to Paul and how did it affect Paul?
5. In what ways is Paul's deep passion for the Thessalonians' well-being seen in this passage?
6. What do you think Paul meant when he said, "Now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord" (3:8)?

Steve said:

Here's my question . . . ***"Am I that passionate about the spiritual health of anybody else in the body of Christ?"*** I know that some of you are. I've seen you pursue people so that you might encourage and strengthen them just like Timothy did. I've seen you cry out to God for their spiritual well-being the way Paul did. I've seen you invest incredible amounts of time and energy in others whose spiritual health was in jeopardy. I know that some of you excel in this. You are passionate about the spiritual health of others in the body of Christ. I've personally been the recipient of this type of care. But others of you would have to say, "Honestly, that's not really something that I do. I care about my family but it really doesn't extend beyond them."

7. How would you evaluate yourself? Do you care about anybody else in the body of Christ the way Paul cared about the Thessalonians?

Steve talked about three reasons why we might not care about the spiritual health of others in the body of Christ:

. . . a ***spiritual inferiority complex***. You may not think that you have anything to offer and that you wouldn't make a difference in somebody else's life. . .

"Don't try this at home" mindset. Perhaps this idea of being passionate about the spiritual health of others is the type of thing that you think is best left to the professionals – or at the very least pastors and elders. Perhaps you think, "What if I say or do something wrong?" . . .

Fear of burn-out. Perhaps you feel like if you care so much about others in the body of Christ that you won't have any spiritual energy left for your family or yourself. Sometimes we think that we have a finite amount of love and we need to make sure we don't expend our love too extravagantly or we'll run out.

8. Do any of these (or other) beliefs keep you from caring about the spiritual health of others in the body of Christ?

9. How would the New Testament speak to these beliefs that might keep us from caring about others?

10. Who are two or three people in the body of Christ for whom you COULD care more deeply? Write their names down:

Steve said:

When you identify someone, the simple first step is to begin investing in that person: prayer, conversation, etc. Engage that person about his/her walk with God. You don't have to have all the answers and you don't always have to "feel" passionate about the other person's spiritual health. You're not being a hypocrite if you don't feel it; you're being obedient. And I think you'll find (like Paul) that ***the more you invest, the more passionate you will be about the other person's spiritual health.***

11. What are some first steps that you could take to begin investing in at least one of these people this week?