



18 Questions from 1 Thessalonians for a Church Planter's Soul

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians has become for me a beautiful example of the intense love that a church planter should have for the people that Jesus has given him. Writing to a young congregation who was undergoing unexpected afflictions and beginning to despair, Paul (with Silas and Timothy) encouraged their Thessalonian brothers to hope in the Gospel. But what has struck me most about his words is not their content but their *tone*. Paul's language is just drenched with emotion and affection. Paul *loved* these people deeply, and did his church planting work among them from the deepest part of his soul.

This text has become an intense challenge for me as a church planting pastor just north of Boston. I have been prayerfully asking myself this question: **would I be able to write this kind of a letter to my people?** In seeking to answer that big question well (in other words with a big, loud YES), I've formulated 18 smaller questions that emerge from the text and that I have found helpful as I reflect on the depth (or lack thereof) of my love for the people Jesus has given me.

01. Am I faithfully pressing into prayer for my people?

*1:2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, **constantly mentioning you in our prayers...***

02. For whose sake am I planting/pastoring this church?

*1:5b You know what kind of men we proved to be among you **for your sake.***

03. Am I leading in a way that is calling people to turn from idols to Jesus?

*1:9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how **you turned to God from idols** to serve the living and true God, and **to wait for his Son** from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*

04. Is a love of money or applause sneaking into my heart at all?

*2:5 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...***

05. Am I willing to be shamefully treated if that means more people hearing the Gospel?

*2:2 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.*

06. Have I worked really hard to remove any obstacles/burdens that could get in the way of my people hearing and responding to the Gospel?

*2:9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, **that we might not be a burden to any of you**, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.*

07. Have I been gentle and affectionate with my people, like a mom?

*2:7 But we were **gentle** among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, **being affectionately desirous** of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

08. Have I been for my people, cheering, like a dad?

*2:11 For you know how, **like a father with his children**, 12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*

09. Am I doing this work as if I will brag on my people to Jesus?

*2:19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of **boasting before our Lord Jesus** at his coming? Is it not you? 20 For you are our glory and joy.*

10. Would I be crushed if my people walked away from Jesus?

*3:5 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... 8 For **now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord**.*

11. Do I love to be with my people?

*3:10 ... as we pray most earnestly night and day **that we may see you face to face**.*

12. Have I taught my people how they ought to live?

*4:1 Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that **as you received from us how you ought to walk** and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.*

13. Have I hammered my people on the importance of sexual purity?

*4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality... because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, **as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you**.*

14. Am I constantly calling my people, especially those who have been with me for a while, to swim deeper in the Gospel?

*4:9 Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, 10 for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to **do this more and more...***

15. Have I been timely and helpful in teaching my people the doctrine they are most in need of getting right?

*4:13 But we **do not want you to be uninformed**, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.*

16. Has my joy in and awe of Jesus been so consistently on display that my people would get why it is good news that we get to be with Him forever?

*4:17 ... and so we **will always be with the Lord.***

17. Have I had the courage to admonish my people when necessary?

*5:12 We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and **admonish you...***

18. Am I resting in the fact that God will accomplish the work He intends among my people?

*5:23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 **He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.***

***Matthew Kruse is a pastor at Seven Mile Road just north of Boston.** Seven Mile Road is a growing community of Bostonians who have experienced undeserved grace from God and are longing to live our lives in response to His surprising gift of the Gospel. Our deep hope is to become a biblically faithful community that exhibits an engaging love and concern for the culture that God has placed us in. For more information, go to sevenmileroad.org.*

