

1 Thess. 2:19-20, Paul boasts of the work of God in the church at Thessalonica to see the Lord's salvation and transformation of their lives.

A Dozen Reflections for a Dozen Years of Ministry at Grace Bible Church:

- 1) **God Has Proven Faithful to His Own Word:** GBC has defined ministry from examples in Scripture and the outcome of ministry has proven God faithful to build and bless a church faithful to obey and observe His word.
 - a. Paul is thankful for the body in Thessalonica because they were imitators of Paul, disciples of Jesus, and disciple-makers, (1 Thess. 1:6-7). 1) V4, they had a proper view of salvation by election. 2) V3, a proper view of service, "work of faith and labor of love." 3) V5-6, a proper view of shepherding, "became imitators of us and of the Lord." 4) V7, they were disciple-makers, "a model to all the believers." a) They encouraged the church, V7. b) They evangelized the world, V8. c) They exalted the Lord their Savior, V9-10, turning from idols to serve a living and true God and waiting for the Son's return.
 - b. When Steve came to GBC twelve years ago to fill the pulpit for a short time, he challenged the believers in 5 Areas of church body life: 1) In Shepherding: to pray for those shepherding you and how to receive the teaching and preaching of the Word of God. 2) In Discipling/Teaching: to pray for opportunities to be taught and to disciple and replicate themselves in others. 3) In Envisioning: to pray how the church might impact others for the glory of God. 4) In Evangelizing: to pray for opportunities to share the Gospel. 5) In Loving: to take opportunities to show love and cherish one another and increase in love towards one another.
 - c. Question: If we devote ourselves to what God has commanded the church to be in the NT, will God bless the work? Answer: Yes, God has been faithful to His word.
- 2) **Prayer Must Be the Fuel that Fans the Flame of Effective Ministry:** Prayer takes place in elder meetings where they pray for the church and its members. It happens before every ministry, in every small group, bible study, event, conference, and on Sunday evenings. Why? a) It reminds believers that it is the Lord's church. b) We tend to be selfish and self-willed. c) Oftentimes we lack wisdom. d) We stop being dependent on the Lord. e) Satan hates the church and in prayer the church fights back. f) The church is never fully purified. g) The word of God is effective when bathed in prayer. h) God is pleased to answer the prayers of His people.
- 3) **The Gospel is More Precious to the Church than Ever Before:** It is a delight to the soul. The repeating of Gospel truths encourages and fuels the believer. The Gospel applies to every part of the believer's life. The Gospel truth of the cross, the blood, God's holiness, justification, salvation, etc. become more and more precious to the believer.
- 4) **Robust Journey in the Word of God Bonds the Church Together:** Spiritual union increases when the church grows together. The preaching of years past is the bond of unity and love today. Paul gave examples to Timothy in 1 Tim. 4 of the work of the Gospel: V3-5, the sharing of all things for those who know the truth. V6, the sound doctrine all have followed. V7, by refusing to hear and spread fables. V12, for the members to see the example of active leadership. V13, devoting time to reading, exhorting, and teaching of Scripture. V15, progress in godliness is evident in the lives of those that preach and teach. 2 Pet. 3:18, that all are growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

- 5) **Work of the Spirit with the Preached Word Never Ceases to Amaze:** 1) Jesus' teaching on the road to Emmaus, Luke 24:13-35. 2) Peter's Pentecost Sermon quoting Joel 2, Ps. 16, 110. 3) Paul preaching and raising of the dead in Troas, Acts 20. 4) Paul's preaching to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 of the wolves that would come from among them. 5) Lydia's heart opened by the Holy Spirit to pay attention to the words of God, Acts 16:14.
- 6) **A Congregation Can Grow into a Great Ability to Learn and Listen to the Preaching of the Word of God.** 1 Tim. 5:17, says that those that labor "in word" and teaching are worthy of double honor. A church can grow to desire the precision and depth of God's word.
- 7) **Our God is a God of Comfort:** The Gospel brings comfort through truth. Ps. 119:50, "This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me." God's word deepens the fountain of truth on which my life is founded. The comfort comes in ways of encouragement, rebuke, examination of the heart and sin, and needed humiliation.
- 8) **There is Necessary Pain Involved in the Holiness of the Local Church:** Discipline is necessary, there are those who have turned Philippians 2:1-4 in reverse. They are selfish, self-willed, prefer themselves above others, and look out only for their own interests. Christ insists that the church grows in humility and selflessness. Passages that speak of purifying the church: Matt. 18, 1 Cor. 5:1-2 & 5, Gal. 6:1, Eph. 5:11, 1 Thess. 5:14, 1 Cor. 5:11, 1 Tim. 1:18-20, 2 Tim. 3:1-5 (those having a form of godliness - they are in the church!), Titus 3:9-11. **Holiness demands vigilance!**
- 9) **GBC has Developed into the Most Generous Church:** Giving of Time, Talent, and Treasure. **Time:** service of one another. Member Care, Guest Care, discipleship, ministry, small groups, and fellowship. The work of faith and labor of love between members. **Talent:** God has sent many talented men and women committed to serving. **Treasure:** to give and meet the needs of the body and live by faith.
- 10) **God is Gracious to Bring Faithful People:** Rom. 1:16-17, the Gospel saves the soul. The proclaiming of the Gospel in our preaching and teaching has partnered with the Lord to see salvation in the lives of our children and many new members. God has given: 9 elders, 12 deacons, several ministry leaders, a staff of pastors and workers, a number of additional men graduated from seminary and a number currently in seminary. Also fruitful marriages with children who are now becoming young adults.
- 11) **The Church's Mission Never Needs Updating:** Col. 1:28 never needs updating. To mature the saints: 1) Proclaim the Word/Works of Christ and 2) Sanctify the body by equipping the saints to do the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-12) and redeem the time because the days are evil (Eph. 5:15). All of ministry's purpose is rooted in Col. 1:28.
- 12) **Leadership Unity is the Key to Effective Ministry:** Each month unity principles are discussed in leadership meetings. They are practiced among the elders and leaders. Christ is the Head of the Church and Scripture is our guide in all things. Leaders care for one another's ministries and are humble to serve one another.
- 13) **GBC has Held Up Her End of the Bargain:** To love the word of God and to love Steve's family.

Further Discussion and Application: Discuss the impact of ministry in your life.