

Prototypical Living

Scripture and Background Information for June 4-10.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

A prototype is the original copy of a product. It establishes the essential characteristics of the product and sets the standard for its proper function. It is an example that all other versions of the product must base itself on to continue to work properly. In many ways, the church in Thessalonica is a prototype for all other churches because it exhibits certain qualities that are necessary for a church to thrive. So, as we go through this series, we hope to learn from the example that the Thessalonians have given us so that we can take steps to live in this prototypical way.

Background for 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12:

One of the most important things to notice in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 is the familial language that Paul uses. He describes Himself, Silvanus, and Timothy as children (1 Thess 2:7), mothers (1 Thess 2:7), and fathers (1 Thess 2:11) to the Thessalonians. This not only shows the intimacy of their relationship with the Thessalonians, but also signifies the various ways in which Paul's team has ministered to them in the short time they were able to spend with them. They were children to the Thessalonians by being resilient in the face of opposition (1 Thess 2:2) and authentic in their motives (1 Thess 2:4-6). They were mothers because of their care and affection towards the Thessalonians (1 Thess 2:7-8). They were also fathers by encouraging, urging, and exhorting them to live in the way that God called them to (1 Thess 2:11-12). If Paul and his companions ministered to the Thessalonians in this way and the result was this church becoming the prototype for all other churches, then we must be people who minister as children, mothers, and fathers, too.

Insights and questions to engage with the text:

1. Paul and his companions were children, mothers, and fathers to the Thessalonians. In what ways does God fulfill these roles in our lives as He ministers to us?
2. How has your life been impacted by people ministering to you in this way? How could you impact the lives of others by ministering to them as children, mothers, and fathers?
3. Brainstorm ways in which each of you could minister as children, mothers, or fathers to those around you. How can you, as a group, hold each other accountable to ministering in this way going forward?

*Note: In verse 7 the word that often gets translated "gentle" can also mean "little children." It seems more likely that it should be translated "little children" given the familial descriptions being used in this passage.