

# Speaking to the soul



## Pleasing God

**For we speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts. Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you well know. 1 Thessalonians 2:4-5**

Paul often faced accusations. He was accused of acting out of self-interest, of being deceitful and all manner of other things. He knew that the whole of his ministry and the progress of the Christian mission depended on his integrity and so he was always eager to rebut these accusations. But in facing up to his critics, Paul made it very clear in this passage that he had never aimed to please people. His absolute priority was to do what God wanted.

It is very tempting for anyone in leadership to make pleasing people their goal. We all want to be liked and so we are naturally inclined to do those things that win people's approval. This was a classic mark of the Pharisees, who so often focused their energies on impressing the people around them. In their praying, giving and fasting they went to extraordinary lengths to advertise what they were doing and to put on a good show. But the fact is that pleasing people is a hopeless cause. Even if you were really good at it, you would never be able to please all the people all the time. It just can't be done and Paul knew it.

Paul ensured that the focus of his life was on pleasing God and believed that, if he lived in the way that God wanted, then he could be confident in his relationships with people, however sharp their criticism. By living close to God, he knew that he would live in a way that was honest and honourable. His leadership might attract fierce criticism and painful rejection at times, but his focus was on the audience that really mattered – God himself.

## **QUESTION**

Reflect carefully: is pleasing God your priority?

## **PRAYER**

Lord God, help me to put you first in my life and not to give in to the pressure to please people. Amen