

# To the Saints: Paul's Heart for People

October 3–5, 2025 | CCEF National Conference | Jonathan D. Holmes

---

*Introduction:*

## Paul knew the Thessalonians

### Paul knew his calling

#### 1. A loving brother

*David Powlison:* “In approaching the counseling needs of their siblings, these are not fee-for-service parent surrogates from outside the family: nannies, babysitters, orphanage matrons, mere professionals. These brothers do not act parentally at an hourly rate but make a deeper investment in those whose welfare is their charge.”<sup>1</sup>

#### 2. A gentle mother

*John Calvin:* “A mother nursing her children manifests a certain rare and wonderful affection, inasmuch as she spares no labor and trouble, shuns no anxiety, is worn out by no labor, and even with cheerfulness of spirit gives herself to her child.”

A. Notice what Paul did

B. Notice how Paul did it

C. Notice why Paul did it

#### 3. An encouraging father

A. Notice what Paul did

B. Notice how Paul did it

C. Notice why Paul did it

#### 4. A proud teacher

---

<sup>1</sup> David Powlison, “Familial Counseling: The Paradigm for Counselor-Counselee Relationships in 1 Thessalonians 5,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, 25:1 (2007), 3.

## Paul knew the Lord

### *Conclusion:*

*David Powlison:*<sup>2</sup>

“Wisdom doesn’t speak in boilerplate.”

“It’s never a one-size-fits-all formula. Or, contrary to the Christianese equivalent, it’s never 3-steps-to-Victory.”

“So every psalm, every letter, every gospel, every prophet is different. The same redeemer God speaks and engages diverse people.”

“And because the people face different problems and are prone to different struggles, his words and actions always come hand-crafted.”

“Same with your words and actions. That’s what it means to counsel the living Christ to another. You might affirm one person, and challenge another, and teach another, and walk beside another, and listen to another, and weep with another . . . and do any or all of the above with the same person, depending. Such flexibility is not eclecticism. Wisdom from God is an appropriate, flexible, and timely wisdom.”

---

<sup>2</sup> David Powlison, “David Powlison on Bob Newhart’s ‘Stop It!’ Counseling Method,” August 23, 2010, *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/bob-newharts-counseling-method-a-terrific-spoof-and-a-serious-comment/>. Accessed 18 August 2025.