

# **Honest Like Paul? Self-Disclosure in Ministry**

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# Self-Disclosure

- Talking about yourself
- Sharing
- Being self-revealing
- Being honest and transparent

# Self-Disclosure – A Little Background

- Different perspectives within counseling/therapy
  - Avoided in psychodynamic psychotherapy
  - Therapeutic importance increasingly explored in other counseling approaches

# **Self-Disclosure – A Little Background**

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths..... And [Adam] said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

**Genesis 3:7, 10**



# Self-Disclosure – A Little Background

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.  
Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I  
have been fully known.

**1 Corinthians 13:12**

When he appears we shall be like him, because we  
shall see him as he is.

**1 John 3:2**

# Discuss / Reflect

- What have churches and pastors from your past demonstrated?
- Have they modelled openness and transparency or been more reserved and private?

# **Mutuality to Self-Disclosure**

A normal social rule

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...which makes us uncomfortable when  
broken



# Mutuality to Self-Disclosure

A normal social rule

...which makes us uncomfortable when broken

...but may be set aside in intentional conversations

# Ministry and Self-Disclosure

In ministry, how much self-disclosure should there be?

# Ministry and Self-Disclosure

## Answer 1: Very little

I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. **(1 Corinthians 2:2)**

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord. **(2 Corinthians 4:5)**

# Ministry and Self-Disclosure

## Answer 2: Loads!

Authenticity as the 'must-have' of our age



# Ministry and Self-Disclosure

## The principle of love

- To disclose whatever will be a blessing to the other person

# **Paul and Self-Disclosure**

An unscientific survey...

# Paul and Self-Disclosure

## 115 instances

Disclosing his gratitude - 11

Reporting his prayers - 9

Stating his need - 11

**Describing suffering or struggle - 23**

**Expressing his affection - 31**

Other aspects of his discipleship - 26

# Paul's Thanksgiving

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.

**Romans 1:8**

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.

**2 Thessalonians 1:3**



# Disclosing Suffering and Struggle

I was with you in *weakness and in fear and much trembling* (1 Corinthians 2:3)

God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, *like men sentenced to death* . . . To the present hour *we hunger and thirst*, we are *poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless* . . . We have become, and are still, *like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.* (1 Corinthians 4:9-13)

*I die every day!* (1 Corinthians 15:31)

# Disclosing Suffering and Struggle

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were *so utterly burdened* beyond our strength that *we despaired of life* itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. **(2**

**Corinthians 1:8–9)**

We are *afflicted in every way*. **(2 Corinthians 4:8)**

# Disclosing Suffering and Struggle

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the *forty lashes* less one. Three times I was *beaten with rods*. Once I was *stoned*. Three times I was *shipwrecked*; a night and a day I was *adrift at sea*; on frequent journeys, in *danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers*; in *toil and hardship*, through *many a sleepless night*, in *hunger and thirst*, often without food.

**2 Corinthians 11:24–27**



# Disclosing Suffering and Struggle

To keep me from becoming conceited . . . *a thorn was given me in the flesh*, a messenger of Satan to harass me

**2 Corinthians 12:7**



# Disclosing Suffering and Struggle

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which *I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal.*

**2 Timothy 2:9**

# Disclosing Suffering and Struggle

## 1. The focus moves from Paul and to Christ

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

**(2 Corinthians 4:7)**

We felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. **(2 Corinthians 1:8–9)**

# Disclosing Suffering and Struggle

## 2. A proper expectation of the Christian life

It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. **(Philippians 1:29–30)**



# Expressing Affection

*I long to see you* that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you. **(Romans 1:11)**

I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as *my beloved children*. . . . For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel **(1 Corinthians 4:14–15)**

*I hold you in my heart* . . . God is my witness, how *I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus*. **(Philippians 1:7–8)**



# Expressing Affection

I wrote to you out of *much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears*, not to cause you pain but to let you know *the abundant love that I have for you*.

**2 Corinthians 2:4**

# Expressing Affection

When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there.

**2 Corinthians 2:12–13**

# Expressing Affection

But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that *I rejoiced still more.* **(2 Corinthians 7:7)**

*You are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.* **(2 Corinthians 7:3)**



# Expressing Affection

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. **(1 Thessalonians 2:8)**

We were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. **(1 Thessalonians 2:7)**



# Expressing Affection

But since we were **torn away from you**, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and **with great desire** to see you face to face, because we **wanted to come to you**—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. For **what is our hope or joy or crown** of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For **you are our glory and joy**.

**1 Thessalonians 2:17-20**

# Expressing Affection

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. For **now we live**, if you are standing fast in the Lord. For **what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God.**

**1 Thessalonians 3:6–9**

# Expressing Affection

## 1. Brings connection

- Them to Paul
- One to another



# Discuss / Reflect

- Should we follow Paul's example and become more self-disclosing both about our struggles and our affections?
- What are the pros and cons of following Paul's example?



# Expressing Affection – Some Cautions

1. Artificial openness

- “Fauxnerability”

2. The manipulation of others

# **Expressing Affection – Some Ambitions**

That Paul is not an academic, but a passionate lover of Christ Jesus, is made plain by the deep and uninhibited expressions of affection that permeate this thanksgiving . . . there is much here to be learned by those in the church who have pastoral care of any kind, including that of parents for children. The emotion is simply the outflow of his theology and the spirituality that issues from such theology.

**Gordon Fee, NICNT on Philippians**

# Conclusion

1. Be willing to share even if it feels personally costly

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2. Share that which will deepen relational connection



# Conclusion

1. Be willing to share even if it feels personally costly
2. Share that which will deepen relational connection
3. Disclose in ways that keep the focus on Jesus

# David Robinson: 'Speak'

