**Sunday Morning – January 28, 2018**

The Last Days! What happens next?
Life Lessons from Four Apostles

Making a Lasting Difference
What are the essentials of a God-glorifying ministry?
1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Any enterprise tends to take on the attitudes and structures of the surrounding culture. Churches in Africa are unlike churches in South America, just as businesses in India are different from those in Canada. But what are the key ingredients to any ministry, church, or family, which seeks to please God and advance His Kingdom? Paul answers that question here. . .

***God grants fruitful ministry!*** (v. 1)

What creates a spiritual success story? God brings fruitfulness as the gospel is proclaimed in Christ-honoring ways:

***Our message must be bold,***
***courageous in the face of opposition.***(v. 2)

The many “you know’s” in these verses show that Paul was appealing to real-life people who had come to terms with persecution. Real-life steamrolls the spiritually unarmed. See Ephesians 6:10-20

***Our motives must be pure,***
***rooted in the desire to please God.*** (vv. 3-6)

Man-pleasing reveals our fear and insecurity; pleasing God clari-fies our vision and purifies our behavior. John 5:41-44; Romans 2:29; Galatians 1:10

***Our methods must be compassionate,***
***energized by mother-like love.***(vv. 7-9)

In touching words and tender imagery, Paul reminds us that ministry should be neither authoritarian nor legalistic. Moms risk all to be mothers and sacrifice daily for their children. Isaiah 40:9-11; Luke 13:31-34

***Our model must be authentic,***
***steeped in father-like nurture.*** (vv. 10-12)

Good dads who command respect need not demand respect. Our message is incarnated and validated when we practice what we preach, negated when we control others rather than nurture them. Luke 15:11-32

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Last Days Life Lesson

Do we want our lives, families and church to count for Christ? Our aim must be boldly evangelizing the lost and nurturing believers, not seeking the approval of others for the sake of greed, lust, or personal comfort. . .

***Ministry that bears eternal fruit is that which pleases God by courageously, gently, firmly, and righteously, proclaiming the gospel, especially in the presence of opposition.***

**Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:**

1. While in many places, Christians are persecuted as they were in the first century, we can barely tolerate being inconvenienced. How do we move from selfishness to laying down our lives for others?

2. Why is our fear of man so great? How does it manifest itself in our personal lives? In our families? In our churches?

3. Paul’s use of mother / father images should help us in discipling and dealing with people. How do “mom and dad” work together?