

MAXIMIZING IMPACT FOR GOD'S GLORY

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The apostle Paul modeled how to effectively optimize our ministry in the way he related with the Thessalonians believers. From his example in 1 Thessalonians 1, we can learn the following principles to help us maximize our impact for God's glory:

- **Advocate teamwork (v. 1)**

Paul included his co-workers Silvanus & Timothy in his salutation giving due recognition for their partnership in the ministry. He showed that there is no place for lone rangers in the ministry. Likewise, we need to show appreciation and give proper recognition to our co-laborers in the Lord's work.

- **Build on the true foundation of the church (v.1)**

Paul then described the church as an assembly of people that is built in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This tells of the spiritual quality of the gathering of believers. It is not a pagan or non religious assembly nor a Jewish assembly but one that belongs to God. Being in union with the Father and Christ meant a new sphere of life, on an infinitely higher plane. Because of such nature of the church, we must refuse the temptation of claiming ownership of the church or of having messianic complex in carrying out our ministry. Rather, we must acknowledge that the church is established on the foundation that is the Lord Jesus and that we are only servants of God in building up His church.

- **Claim God's grace and peace (v.1)**

Concern for the young believers weighed heavily on Paul's mind. Like a travelling father who ached who his children back home, he yearned to be with them – to make sure that they get proper spiritual nourishment, to protect them from false teachers, to soothe their fears, to guide them through difficult decisions, and to prepare for the future. In his absence, he then asked that God's supreme gifts of grace and peace would be given to his spiritual children.

- **Develop dependence on God through prayer (v.2)**

The apostle Paul continually and frequently gave thanks for the believers as a way of expressing his dependence on God for their growth and development. One of the most effective and proven ways of intervening in the lives of the people is bringing them to God's throne through our intense intercession.

- **Express appreciation for fruits of the ministry (v.3)**

The apostle Paul appreciated three qualities in the lives of the believers. First, their *work produced by faith in Christ*. Such faith allowed them to turn from idols to the true God.

Second, their *labor prompted by love for Christ* shown by their service to the true and living God in the midst of persecution. Third, their *steadfastness* which came from their hope as they waited patiently for the second coming of Christ. As spiritual parents we must identify and appreciate the growth and progress of our spiritual children.

- **Foster equality of all believers (v.4)**

Characteristically, Paul addressed his fellow-Christians as brothers. He did not claim superiority over them; instead, he recognized the equality of the redeemed. Such equality arose from his recognition that all are beloved and chosen by God. We must foster such equality in the church for all of us are recipients of the undeserved favor of God.

- **Give compelling proclamation of God's Word (v.5a)**

The supernatural work of God is evidenced by how the people received the word in the midst of much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit. This was brought about by the compelling proclamation of the apostle Paul. The clarity of the sermon that was delivered with full conviction and dependence on the Holy Spirit resulted in positive response of the believers. Paul was so certain that the message would change their lives as it had radically changed his.

- **Have integrity and be authentic (v.5b)**

Paul's compelling message became even more effective because he lived a life consistent with the message he proclaimed. He practiced what he preached and walked his talk so that his hearers became fully aware that his manner of life and his motive were for the benefit of the people he was ministering to. He had the courage to challenge his spiritual children to imitate him because he was imitating Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). Our confidence in calling on people to follow our example is based on our living a life of integrity and authenticity.

- **Inspire contagious faith (v.6-8)**

Such effectiveness of teaching has led to the most outstanding fruit of faith, which is the change of behavior. They became imitators of their spiritual parents. Despite much affliction, the believers received the message with joy given by the Holy Spirit. Joy that is determined not by circumstance but by one's relationship with Christ. They had such contagious faith that they became model to all the believers around them. They were even effective amplifiers that they literally reverberated the gospel message. They sent it further on its way with increased power and hope so that their faith had gone everywhere.

- **Judge effectiveness by tangible results (v.9-10)**

Finally, we must measure our effectiveness by tangible results. The faith of the Thessalonians became evident to others that Paul did not have to testify about them. The people around them reported the kind of reception that was accorded to the gospel messengers. So dramatic was their conversion that the news of it had spread to the surrounding regions. Everywhere Paul traveled, people would tell him how the

Thessalonians had turned from worshiping idols and how they were giving their lives to two purposes, i.e., “to serve a living and true God” and “to wait for His Son from heaven” who is the object of their hope and the focus of their attention.

Jesus said, “By their fruits you shall know them” (Matt. 7:20). The apostle Paul showed the effectiveness of his ministry by the outstanding witness of his spiritual children from Thessalonica who became models not just in their city and province but also in other places. The quality of our fruits validates our ministry. As we observe the ten principles employed by the apostle Paul, we can be certain that we will be able to maximize our impact for God’s glory.

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