

Relentless

Day 28



Today's Passage

"Even though we had some standing as Christ's apostles, we never threw our weight around or tried to come across as important, with you or anyone else. We weren't aloof with you. We took you just as you were. We were never patronizing, never condescending, but we cared for you the way a mother cares for her children. We loved you dearly. Not content to just pass on the Message, we wanted to give you our hearts. And we did."

1st Thessalonians 2:6-8 *The Message*

Today's Thought

I was confronted a few weeks ago with news that Pastor's do not want to hear. So when I heard it, I denied it. I'm rather gifted in denial. Here's the confrontation; *"I know a couple who came to your church a while back and have shared that your church is not very friendly."*

So I thought to myself; *"Are you kidding?"* (I may have even thought this out loud) *"We've got to be the friendliest bunch in Central Illinois."* But how would I know? Sometimes I get so focused on the next service, the next meeting, or the next event, that I tend to zone out during important times of connection. I wonder if I'm as friendly as I think I am?

If our church is going to be relentless at reaching people, we are going to have to be relentless at friendliness. Notice in today's passage how the Apostle Paul describes this challenge; *"We loved you dearly, not content to just pass on the Message, we wanted to give you our hearts. And we did."* I want to visit that church! These folks knew the Gospel was important, but they didn't just want to pass on the message of Christ. They wanted to pass on themselves...and they did!

Surveys tell us that a person makes a determination if they will ever return to a church within the first twelve minutes after pulling into the parking lot. Think for a moment what happens and doesn't happen in this time frame. They probably won't hear the worship music or the pastor's preaching in the first twelve minutes. They will not be blown away by the Sunday School lesson or the well thought out ministry plan. They see things like parking, paint, preschool and people.

If we are going to follow the example of the Apostle Paul, we must be the church that gives our heart. We must also do this within the first twelve minutes after our guests drive onto our parking lot. This Sunday when the foyer fills with people, and you're trying to get your kids to class, and get your coffee, and catch up with others. Remember these words; God needs you to give your heart to a complete stranger who is totally uncomfortable walking into a place where you are totally at home. He may not ask you this week to stand on the street corner and proclaim the message with a megaphone, but he will ask you to give your heart to someone in the hallway. And who knows? Maybe the next time I'm confronted they'll say; *"I ran into a couple the other day and they suggest you all tone down your friendliness!"* Let's reach relentlessly!

Today's Prayer

Lord, help me to see that you work even in the little things. Help me to make my church a place that not only gives out the message of Christ, but gives out our hearts as well. Help me give my heart this week to a first time guest at our church.