

All In The Family

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First, thessalonians two, three. For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive. But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak not to please man, but to please God, who tests our heart. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed. God is our witness.

Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, 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. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your great love for us, God, that you didn't wait for us to reach out to you, but you reached out to us by your spirit.

You opened our eyes to the truth that Jesus Christ is both lord and savior. Thank you for sending him into the world to save us from our sins, to die in our place, to give us eternal life. And Lord, we thank you for your care for each one of us as your children, God, for the work you're doing in each one of our lives. We pray that you would complete that work, that Christ would be glorified in us. Thank you again for this mother's day when we can celebrate.

Moms, celebrate women, God, you're the one who made them the way they are, and you made them perfect. And we thank you for that. And we ask your blessing on them. And so, Lord, we pray, as Jesus taught us to pray. Our Father, who art in heaven,

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hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

You may be seated.

When I first began attending this church back in the seventies, my wife and my three boys. My daughter wasn't born yet. We lived in a little cabin where the casino is now on that property. No running water, no electricity, an outhouse, a little wood cook stove to cook on. And we had a loft where we slept.

Me, my wife, my two oldest boys, and baby Jeremy. Jeremy was just an infant at the time, and it never failed that sometime around noon, maybe one, maybe about midnight, maybe one, maybe two in the morning that Jeremy would start crying and wake me up. And so what did I do? I nudged my wife, and I rolled over and went back to sleep. You may think that's really insensitive, you cad.

No, I did that because he was hungry and my wife was nursing him, and there was absolutely nothing I could do to do anything about that other than wake her up. And she would get up and, of course, feed him and take care of his needs, and then hopefully get a few more hours sleep before we repeated that process over and over and over. I say that because mothers sacrifice for their children. They give their lives to them. They nurture them, they comfort them, they protect them, and, of course, they pray for them.

And in my mind, and for any of you men that have had to stay home and take care of children, you learn really quick how to appreciate your wife, right? Amen. Yes. That is a hard task, and yet women are called to do that, those who are been blessed by God to have children. So in that way, sacrificial love, God's heroes.

So I want to look today at Paul again as he defends his ministry, but also as he models ministry for every one of us. And that's not just for people professionally in ministry. If you're a Christian, in one way or another, you are in the ministry. It may be that you're teaching a class or you're preaching a message, or you might just be ministering to your children, or you might be sharing the gospel through your life with people where you work. Whatever it is, we're all in the ministry, and he provides a model for us to follow.

It's interesting in the second chapter of first Thessalonians that he illustrates his ministry in three ways. One, he says, I was like an infant. Second, he says, I was like a nursing mother. And third, he says, I was like a father. Ministry to Paul was a family affair, and he fulfilled every one of those roles in whatever church that he was in.

In the same way a church is a family affair. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We have fathers that led us to Christ. We have mothers that nurtured us and cared for us. And sometimes we act like infants.

Uh oh. But we do. And the fact is, because we are believers, we're brothers and sisters in Christ, part of a family. And we know, we need to know, how do we interact in that family? And, of course, if you've had children, you know that sometimes those interactions are difficult and hard to work out.

But it's something that we all must work at. So Paul modeled these three different roles in the church of Thessalonica. An illustration for you and I what we should be like as we're involved in the ministry. So let's look at them this morning. The first one we see is Paul describes himself as an infant in chapter two, verse seven.

Chapter two, verse seven, he says, but we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother caring for her children. And that word gentle among you, most of our translations, that's the way it translated, but the actual word is infants. We were infants among you. Paul isn't saying I was childish. He's basically saying that as I ministered to you, I was gentle and innocent in your presence.

Gentle and innocent. We see that in verse five and six. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed. God is our witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.

And the idea is here, Paul did not use or abuse the people he was ministering to to meet his needs. He didn't use people. He came to serve people. He basically modeled what Jesus Christ said, you must become like little children if you want to enter the kingdom of heaven. And Paul is saying, I was like that little child.

I was innocent. I was gentle. I treated you in a way that glorified God. And you could sum it up by this, Paul was a giver. He was not a taker.

Paul was a giver, not a taker. In a sense, that's what you and I are called to when we have a relationship with each other in the body of Christ. We're not here to take from other people as much as possible. We want to give in order to help them become all that God wants them to be. He said in verse six, he could have demanded things from that congregation.

As an apostle. He was a leader. He gave us the New Testament probably more than any other person who ever walked with this earth. He suffered for the gospel, and he did it willingly, and he did it lovingly, but he didn't do that. And the reason he didn't, it says, is that he came to please God, not men.

He came to please God, not men. If you're going to serve God in any way, and again, if you're a believer, you're called to serve him. The first thing that we should do, that you should do is to test your heart. Why am I doing this? Why am I serving?

Who am I trying to please? Is this what God is asking me to do. If you don't test your heart, I guarantee you that God will. God exposes the motives of our hearts. Why are we doing what we're doing in the body of Christ?

How do you know if you passed the test or not? Always looked with anticipation when you took a test in class, didn't you? And you weren't really certain how you did. And,

boy, you waited with anticipation. Did I pass or not?

Do I get to move on to the next course? And of course, we looked with that anticipation. How do we know? One way is if you get upset, if you get angry, if you're constantly disappointed or discouraged with the people you're ministering to because they aren't responding in the way you hoped that they would, you're probably not passing the test. You're probably doing it for yourself and not for God.

Your motives may be wrong. Moses gives a great illustration of how to pass the test. You remember he went up on the mountain to receive the ten commandments from God for 40 days and nights. The people got impatient, and they went to his brother Aaron, and said, hey, this Moses guy, we don't know what happened to him. Make for us a God to worship.

And Aaron claimed to throw the gold into the fire and out pop this golden calf. And of course, the people fell down to worship and started to indulge their sexual appetites. And when Moses came down, he broke those ten commandments. He was angry. But then God told them, hey, I'm going to get rid of all these guys.

I can make a nation out of you. We see Moses response back in Exodus chapter 32, after God had told him that, that he was going to get rid of those people that he was leading and ministering to. And Moses response in verse eleven of chapter 32 of Exodus was, but Moses implored the Lord, his God, and said, o Lord, why does your wrath burn hard, burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, with evil intent, did he bring them out to kill them in the mountains and consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from your burning angers and relent from this disaster against your people.

Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self and said to them, I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I promised I will give your offspring, and they shall inherit forever. As a result of his imploring God on behalf of the people, it says, and the Lord relented from the

disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people. And the fact is, when we're in ministry, they don't always respond the way we'd like them to spawn. And, oh, you're so wonderful as a leader. I just can't thank you enough.

And sometimes they do the wrong thing. But if God has called us into that ministry, whatever it may be, our responsibility is to cry out to the Lord that he would work in their life, that he would care for them. Effective leaders care about the people they're serving, even if they don't deserve it. They're gentle and humble in heart towards them, like children. Next we see that Paul describes himself as a nursing mother in verse seven.

But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. It's interesting to me that he refers to a nursing mother, not just a mother. And to me, that's one of the great mysteries of the universe, is the love that a mother has for her child, even in the midst of sacrificing for that child. It's not just people. You see that even in animals, this love for their offspring, that they would even lay down their life to protect them.

I believe this is a gift from God. It's not something natural. It's something that God has put in mothers that gives them a real love for their children. And Paul had that kind of love for the very people that he was ministering to. We see several characteristics of what both a mother would have for her children, but also what a true servant of God would have for those they're ministering to.

So let's look at just a few of these. First of all, in verse seven, chapter two, verse seven. Like a nursing mother taking care of her own children and a mother cares, that's their supreme concern in their life. They care for their children. I remember when I went into the ministry, and now it's over 44 years ago, and I received a piece of advice from a guy.

I don't remember his name, but he told me, when you get into the ministry in the church, you're going to, people don't care how much you know.

I'd spent several years learning to know things at Bible school. They don't care how much you know. They want to know how much you care.

And I found that that is true because none of us in our ministry are perfect. We don't always do it right. We make mistakes, and sometimes we could have been better. And yet, if people feel that you care about them, they'll often put up with some of your weaknesses in the ministry, and you'll be able to work in their lives. If people know the ones you minister to, that you care for them, they will want to respond to your ministry, even though you may have a lot of faults and weaknesses that go with that.

And so, first of all, they care. Second, in verse eight, so being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves. Mothers care. Mothers also share. And in the same way, in the ministry we are called, whether it's somebody professionally or just a christian going about their normal activities, they're called to share their lives with other people.

It's not a hermit kind of relationship that we have. Leave me alone and I'll leave you alone. We care and we share our lives. And he explains what that meant in the rest of that verse. He says, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel, preach the word, not only the gospel, but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

He not only cared for the people he ministered to, but he shared his, his life with them. I had another piece of advice when I went into the ministry, but I didn't embrace this one. The advice was, when you get into the ministry, don't get too close to them, don't become friends. And the idea was, if you do, then you're going to have a hard time. When it comes time to do hard things as a pastor, they won't respect you.

And I rejected that because I felt these are the people that God has called me to share my life with, and not just my ministry, but my very life with them. And that means you have to be involved in some way, and they have to know you, and you have to know them, and you have to be concerned with what their needs are. And if necessary, share. I look back over the years, and not just with people in church, but outside of the

church. When you live in a parsonage, right at a church, people know that's the pastor, and pastors are called to share.

And I can't tell you how many times there's been a knock on the door, and I felt like, oh, no, who's that? When I was in Rosebud, Montana one time, it was right on Highway 94, and out in the middle of nowhere. We would often get people that somehow were traveling from Seattle to Minneapolis with no money. Now, how do you do that? You stop in a town and you find the local pastor.

You say, can I borrow \$10, you know, to get to the next town. Okay, here's \$10. I'll share with you. They're not coming back. Okay.

But still, you end up sharing with them. If we're not willing to share, then it's more like a business. How can I use the people to meet my own needs, to pad my resume, to look good, to have power, to prepare myself, to move on to a bigger church? And a good servant not only cares about the people that he's serving, but he wants to share his life with those people. And that means you become.

They get to see your life for what it is. One of the things, when I first started attending this church, one of the things that really attracted me is Pastor Newt Razor, who was here. He wasn't a man behind the pulpit. He was a man that went out there just like the rest of us. And we got involved in his life, and he got involved with ours, and he was just a person.

He had a different job, a different responsibility, but he was just another brother in Christ, and that really impacted my life. And so a good servant and a good mother cares and shares. And one other thing in verse eight says, so, being affectionately desirous of you, we're ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. And so the word I used here is a servant, a mother. They adore the people that they're serving and care for.

They love those people. They are dear to them. I think we've all heard that expression that you have a face that only a mother could love.

I don't think that's true of any of us. I'm always surprised when a baby's born and everybody says, oh, how beautiful that baby is. And I'm going, it's red. It's wrinkly. Are you kidding?

Well, no. To a mother, that's the most beautiful face in the world, isn't it? Why? Because it's her baby. And no matter what that child does or how easy it is to raise, how difficult it may be that mother loves that child, that child is dear to him.

In the same way, when we're in ministry, when God has called us to minister to someone, those people need to be dear to us. We need to care about them, not just the easy ones, but even the hard ones, because of our relationship with them.

We minister to people because they become dear to us. They have faults, and every one of us does. And sometimes we're difficult to be around. But we're called to see them through God's eyes and God loves them. God has a plan for their life, and he wants you and I, as Jason mentioned in that proverb, he wants you and I to be involved in that plan to some way to minister those people so they can grow up and be more and more like Jesus Christ, even though there are faults and sins.

And so Paul demonstrates this mother side of a relationship, a caring, sharing, loving relationship. And mothers do that, and thank God they do. He comes to a place where we need fathers, and he does talk about that, but I'm going to leave that for Father's day. Okay. It's coming up in June, so we won't go into fathers.

But the fact is, for you and I to understand the full nature of God. It required him not only to make a man Adam, but also a woman Eve. And we see two sides of God's love and we see this mother's side. It's interesting, as you read through the Old Testament, you often see that God shelters his people under their wings. What's that a picture of?

I believe it's a picture of a mother hen and she's got her babies. I don't know how many of you have raised chickens that had babies, but there is nothing more exciting than see how a hen takes care of those little chicks and she loves them and she's out there teaching them how to peck away. And if something flies overhead, she gathers them all in and puts them under the wings to protect them. I know one of the most

exciting things I've seen with chickens. I went into my chicken coop and the mother was on the, the roost.

And all of a sudden, underneath her wings, some little chicks poked their heads out and looked at me and they were sleeping next to her warm body under her wings. That's how much she cared for them. And if you've watched any specials on chickens, that hen will give her life for those little chicks in the same way mothers do that for you and I. I think we all know that fathers are under attack on our society, and they are, but mothers are also. If you're a stay at home mother and someone asks you, what do you do?

And you say, I'm a mother. Many people will react in a way as that all, as if that's something second class, when the reality is if God calls you that and not every woman is called, but if he does, that's the greatest thing you can do because you're investing your life in a future generation to help them to be people, to help them be good citizens, but to help them be good christians and what an investment to make. And yes, at times it's hard waking up in the middle of the night and having to nurse that child and hoping you can get back to sleep before it happens again. And I remember my grandmother saying, when they're little, they step on your toes. When they're big, they step on your back.

But it's worth it because you love them. And so God has great value for mothers, and we salute you and we honor you. And really in so many ways, the future of not just the church but our country is in the hand of you mothers. When a child knows that it's loved and a child knows that you care for it and you share your lives and everything that you have with that child and they're dear to you, the chances of that child growing up to be whole and healthy and helpful, great. And we thank God for that.

Paul even says in one Timothy, the part of your salvation is tied up with how you take care of those children, that God is working through that, not just for your children's good, but also for your own. I realize that not every woman is called to have children, and many have other gifts, and we don't fault them for that. That's okay. But if you've been called to be a mother, that is a ministry and you need to see it as a ministry and

there'll be sacrifice involved, but there's also great rewards. Ask God to give you those gifts of caring, of sharing, of adoring those children that are in your life and to empower you to do everything you can to raise those children, to be good people, to be good citizens, and to be good christians, ambassadors for Jesus Christ.

And I believe God will do that. Let's pray.

Father, again, we acknowledge you as the creator. You created us, man and woman.

Part of that was to reveal yourself through each one, through the man and through the women. We thank you for these characteristics that Paul mentions as far as being like a nursing mother to this church in Thessalonica. And we thank you also that it speaks to the heart of women. God, we're so grateful for their sacrifices, for their love for us. And every one of us here had a mother and might not have been a perfect mother, but that mother gave us life.

That mother did the best with what she had to try to help us to grow up and become mature. And so, Father, we honor the mothers here and we pray that you would equip them to be great mothers Lord, that they bear fruit that would last for eternity through their children. We thank you for each woman, Father, for the characteristics you've given her in the kingdom of God, and help them to use them for your glory. Pray, in Christ's name. Amen.