

Family ministry

Now Paul uses three family-based images to explain his attitude towards the new Christians who turned, served and waited as a result of his gospel preaching.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2 v 6-12

- ❓ *Can you pick out the three family images Paul uses? In each, what point is he making about his own attitude towards this young church?*

Young children

- ❓ *What could Paul have done, and why (v 6)?*

Effectively, he was a Vice-President of Christianity Inc. And vice-presidents don't tend to work on the shopfloor, getting their hands dirty. But Paul did. In fact, he and his team “worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone” during their stay (v 9). He's probably referring to his tent-making, which he worked at when he wasn't pastoring, in order to make ends meet. Paul had met Jesus, preached to thousands, planted dozens of churches... and yet he was a deeply humble man, willing to work with a needle and thread instead of asking for the support he deserved.

Nursing mother

Paul says he “cared” for these people as a mother does for her baby or toddler. It is a powerful image. There is not much a baby does not need; there is nothing a mother doesn't do everything in her power to provide. While babies sleep, mothers are busy. When babies cry, mothers are there.

A mother is deeply, irrevocably invested in her child. This is the kind of love Paul had for these people.

- ❓ *How did that love show itself (v 8)?*

Apply

We tend to be better at one or the other—opening our mouths to share the gospel, or opening our lives to show the gospel.

- ❓ *Which do you struggle more with?*
 ❓ *Who has the Lord called you to share your life and share the gospel with?*
 ❓ *How might you make some practical changes?*

Remember though that your lips and your life are driven by your heart. Pray for a heart like Paul's—a mother's heart to those around you who need to hear the gospel, whether they are Christians or not-yet-Christians.

Father

- ❓ *What does Paul mean by his “fatherhood” among this church (v 12)?*
 ❓ *Who in your church needs you, this weekend, to do one or more of these?*

Pray

Thank God for those who have loved you in these ways. Pray that you would share Paul's heart, and therefore share his ministry.