

**Parental Pictures of Spiritual Leadership, Part 1**

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9

Code: 52-5

Our text this morning is 1 Thessalonians chapter 2. We come upon a new portion of Scripture, verses 7 through 12. We've entitled this section, "Parental pictures of a spiritual leader." And at first that title might appear a bit obscure. It will lose that obscurity in a matter of moments. And if you are concerned about why we are addressing the subject of spiritual leadership when not all of you are spiritual leaders, let me just remind you, first of all, that the Spirit of God desires to speak to the leadership as well as the people. Secondly, this is where we are in our study of Thessalonians. Thirdly, I believe it is imperative that you as a people hold leaders accountable to be the leaders that God has called them to be. And so this bears great importance upon us.

During the week at any given point in the week I have occasion to be reading many many different kinds of materials related to the study of God's Word and sometimes reading articles of curiosity that are of interest to me. I picked one up this week on the subject of day-care centers, which at first might not appear to be relevant to the subject at hand but was in fact a good analogy as I read through it. In a day care center basically people are hired to become substitute mothers for children. The current assessment of day care is that it is for the children generally debilitating, mentally, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Workers are usually instructed not to pick up crying babies because if you pick up a crying baby then the baby will cry to be picked up and so will all the other babies and that's an impossibility. Not to give undue attention to a crying child or you will have all the children crying and be unable to give them all due attention.

Furthermore, in day care centers not only is there a lack of affection, a lack of tender loving care for each child, but there is a changing cast of characters. These substitute care taking would-be mothers come and go so that the little child about the time he or she has made some kind of significant attachment to one or another finds that person immediately out of their life forever only to have the place taken by a stranger and the process repeated. The turnover in employees is very high and so it is very common for little children to learn that relationships are very short and end totally and you never see the person again. And so there is a potential fear factor in even building a relationship being instilled in them at a very early age.

Generally the best worker-to-children ratio is five children for one worker. And that's for the very smallest children and it gets even further apart as they grow older. They are conducted in groups and little herds or flocks whichever you desire, so that there is not a full attention given to any individual as such. The children are often unhappy and lonely.

And when you think about the fact that a tiny baby is a helpless, lonely, confused, vulnerable life exposed potentially to hunger, thirst, fear, needing constant love and care, direction, instruction for survival and growth, the potential for a debilitating kind of experience is very high. That is simply why God created a family and that's why God designed a mother. And there is no substitute for that. It is essential to the well-being of children that there be a mother. It is also God's perfect plan and design that there be a father. And there is in that the perfect balance of gentle nurturing care and loving example and authority. Mothering and fathering is God's design for the raising of children. And I believe when God created the church He created the church very much like a family. And the church is not to be taken care of by surrogate mothers and fathers. Those in spiritual leadership are not to view the church with the indifference and with the independence that surrogate caretakers view little children in a day care center. They are not to deal with those in the church as if they were groups but they are to love them as individuals. They are not only to herd them around but they are to love them and nurture them personally. They are not just to command them but also to disciple them. The church is to be a family. And just like a family has to have a mother and a father to have the perfect balance of leadership, so spiritual leaders in the church must mother and father the church. That is precisely what is on the heart of the Apostle Paul in our passage.

In verse 7 he says to the Thessalonians, "We were among you as a nursing mother." In verse 11 he says, "We were imploring each one of you as a father." We treated you like a mother treats her children, we treated you like a father treats his children. And he gives us then the parental pictures of spiritual leadership.

Now remember that Paul was the model for all spiritual leaders...both by his precepts, principles and the patterns of his life. He set leadership as a pattern for us to follow. And with this rich chapter before us we are gaining insights into why he was such an effective leader.

In chapter 1, you'll remember, we saw him spell out the great quality of the Thessalonian church. It was a church that was in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, truly regenerated. It was a church for which he could give thanks in verse 2 for every person in that church. It was a church manifesting its true salvation by a work of faith, a labor of love and a steadfastness of hope in verse 3. So in verse 4 he says, "I know your brethren and I know you're beloved by God and I know you're the elect." It was a church in verse 6 that became imitators of the Apostles and of the Lord. It was a church in verse 7 that was an example to all other churches. It was a church in verse 8 that was evangelistic, trumpeting out the gospel. It was a church in verse 9 that had been totally transformed from serving idols to serving the true God. And it was a church in verse 10 looking for the return of Jesus Christ. This was a great church.

It was a great church because of the power of God through a remarkable leader. And so in chapter 2 after describing the character of the church in chapter 1, he describes the character of his leadership

in chapter 2. And this then is for us instruction about what kind of leader it takes to produce that kind of church. If we want a church like the Thessalonian church, we need spiritual leaders like Paul, like Timothy, like Silas. Chapter 2 then, he spells out for us and for the Thessalonians how he approached the responsibility of spiritual leadership.

Now last Sunday we looked at the first six verses of chapter 2 and that was an Xray, that was the inside of the leader. And we said on the inside he was marked by tenacity, integrity, authority, accountability and humility. Those were virtues in his life. That was the inside view, the Xray view.

But now in verses 7 to 12 we get the outside, this is a photograph, not an Xray. And he says if you want to see what the image looks like, what the picture looks like of a true spiritual leader, you need a picture of a mother and a picture of a father, for we in the role of spiritual leadership must be mothers and fathers...and thus he establishes the parental pictures of spiritual leadership.

Now there are many pictures that he might have chosen, there are many. In fact, the New Testament gives us a number of metaphors for spiritual leaders. In 1 Peter chapter 5 verses 1 to 4 spiritual leaders are called shepherd who have the responsibility to feed the flock of God and take the oversight of the flock. In 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verses 1 and 2, spiritual leaders are called stewards, household managers who manage resources and assets to care for a household under the direction of the owner. And as those who are spiritual leaders, we take the resources that belong to God and we disperse them to His household, so we are stewards. In 1 Timothy 2:7 Paul says that the spiritual leader is a herald. To put it in a little more contemporary historical term, we are town cryers, we are proclaimers of the King's message. In 2 Timothy 2:2 we are teachers. We have a didactic responsibility to impart truth to our people. And in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 we are slaves.

Now all of those metaphors are loaded with meaning. And we could talk about the spiritual leader as a shepherd, the spiritual leader as a steward, as a herald, as a teacher, as a slave and they're all replete with significance. But here in this text Paul moves to a more intimate and more compelling metaphor to illustrate the picture of spiritual leadership, that of a mother and a father. This because he wants to emphasize intimacy, he wants to emphasize primary care.

Now obviously some people were attacking Paul. They were attacking his credibility. They were attacking his sincerity. They were attacking his integrity. They were accusing him to the Thessalonian church these detractors were of being just another religious charlatan. They hated the gospel. They resented Jesus Christ. They resented Paul and what he had done and so they decided to attack him. We don't know the specifics of the attack but there's a polemic or a defensive style to Paul's writing which tells us he must have been dealing with an issue. And so, no doubt, they had come to the Thessalonians and said...that man Paul who brought you that message, he was no different than the rest of the spiritual phonies in our world, he spoke his own philosophical theology, he was motivated like all the rest by greed, he wanted your money, by sex, he wanted your physical sexual favors, by

power, he wanted to control you, by popularity, he wanted to become somebody to satisfy his own ego, he was like all the rest of the false teachers.

Now remember, the Greek world was filled with these. Spiritual fakers were on every corner, espousing their theories, every marketplace was their platform and they were there to capture the bodies and the minds and the money and the possessions of the gullible public. They were emissaries of Satan who is disguised as an angel of light and his emissaries are disguised as angels of light. They were there to pluck off the easy prey. And so it was easy for those who hated the gospel and hated Christ to see Paul as just another one of those and to begin to make an effort to depreciate him in the minds of the Thessalonian Christians and to assign him the identity as another religious fraud which was so common in their time. And so in chapter 2 he needs to defend himself and he does it by calling them to remember.

In verse 1 he says, "For you yourselves know." In verse 2, "As you know." In verse 5, "As you know." In verse 9, "For you recall." In verse 10, "You are witnesses." In verse 11, "Just as you know." And he calls them to reach back to what they know about him. He was there. They don't need second-hand testimony. They should never listen to detractors. They were the living testimony of Paul's credibility and effectiveness as God's man. They were in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. They were producing a faith that works, a love that labors, a hope that endures. They were imitators of the Lord. They were all they needed to look at to see the validity of his ministry.

But nonetheless he gives them a look at himself. And in effect he says, let me give you the Xray view, let me let you see me on the inside. And then he says, now let me give you a picture of the outside. And as we come to that picture I think we're going to be greatly enriched. In this message I want to talk to you about the mother and in the next one about the father.

These are not new metaphors for Paul. Back in Galatians and in chapter 4 and verse 19 Paul says to the Galatians, "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you." And there again he pictures himself as a mother. He was once in labor to give them birth and now he is almost in labor again to bring them to spiritual maturity. And there he views himself as a mother.

In 1 Corinthians and chapter 4 and verse 15 he says, "For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father." And there he views himself as a father. So these are familiar metaphors for spiritual leadership.

Let me reduce it to very simple concept. A mother illustrates gentle care and a father illustrates strong authority. And that is the balance of spiritual leadership. The tenderness and the gentleness of the motherly care, the strength and the fortitude and the courage and the leadership of fatherly care, that is the balance to spiritual leadership. And that balance has to be there for us to be what God wants us to be as spiritual leaders.

Let's look, first of all then this morning, at the spiritual leader as a mother...verses 7 through 9. Verse 7 begins with a very important word, "but...but." It's been used already three times in this brief chapter. It's a series of not this but this, not this but this, not this but his, so it's used as what we call an adversative...it flips it over, not this but on the other hand this. What is he saying? Far from being a greedy licentious sexually motivated self-styled flatterer, given over to self-aggrandizement, power, control, manipulation and abuse, rather than that, verse 7, we prove to be gentle among you as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Far cry from that, he's saying. We didn't come to you as the typical charlatan and fraud. We didn't even come to you as a hired part-time day care child watcher. We proved to be...literally we became...gentle among you. That's a marvelous word. "Among you" is in the midst of you and it talks about the fact that he was really involved with his people. We were in the midst of you gentle. Gentle is a beautiful word, *epios*, used here and in 2 Timothy 2:24 only in the New Testament. It simply means to be kind to someone, to be kind to someone. And Paul says as we moved among you we were kind to you. We didn't come to abuse you. We didn't come to take from you. We didn't come to exploit you. We didn't come to manipulate you. We moved among you with kindness. This is the spiritual leader caring for his people, being concerned about their well being, sensitive to their personal needs. It implies acceptance of all of them. It implies respect. It implies compassion. It implies tolerance of imperfections. It implies patience. It implies tender heartedness. It implies loyalty. We weren't abusive to you. We weren't domineering over you. We were gentle. We were kind to you.

How gentle? I love the metaphor he selects. "We proved to be gentle among you as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children." The term here definitely refers to a nursing mother because of the phrase "her own children." This is no surrogate here. This is no day care worker. He says we were to you as a nursing mother tenderly caring for her own children. And the metaphor is marvelous, absolutely marvelous. He picks out of all the human realm the most intimate tender cherishing human relationship. There is none to match it. There is no human relationship that is as tender, gentle as the nursing mother and the infant child, the tenderest relationship in all of human life. And it illustrates the personal care that he gave to the church. There's no authority in that metaphor. The mother doesn't hold the little one in her breast with any authority. There's no dominance there. There's no prominence on her part. There's no seeking of honor. There is only the simple giving of life, that's all. It's a spending of oneself for the child. It is the love that spares nothing...the nursing mother.

The verb "tenderly cares" literally means to warm with body heat. Sometimes translated cherish, to warm with body heat. How graphic as the mother takes the little one in her arms and warms the little life with her own body heat and passes on her life to that life. The intimacy of that, the beauty of that, the tenderness of that has no equal. So Paul says in verse 6, "Look, we might have asserted our authority. We might have been nothing more than a father but we weren't. We might have come in and laid down on you the responsibility that you had as those who speak with the authority of Christ. But our ministry wasn't just that. On the other hand, we proved to be as gentle with you as a nursing

mother tenderly caring for her own children." So Paul says in spite of the legitimate claim to apostolic authority, we used another approach. And his authority was balanced with tenderness.

From the opening picture here in verse 7, then Paul proceeds into verses 8 and 9 where he unfolds the role of mother in the beauty of its metaphorical meaning. I hope you can grasp this. Verse 8 says this, "Having thus a fond affection for you we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives because you had become very dear to us." And now we're going deeper into this metaphor. The word "thus" or "so" is the connector. So or thus means as a nursing mother and thus he extends the metaphor into verse 8. Having a fond affection for you. Certainly this is true of a nursing mother. And we would say a mother who doesn't have this kind of affection, a mother who doesn't see this as the sweetest moments of life for her to be nursing that little child has somehow lost touch with the intention of God's design for normal motherly love. That's what Paul was saying that in the end times when he wrote to Timothy he said the people will lose their family love, their normal natural affection for one another in family.

But a mother with a little child in her arms has a fond affection. That's normal. That's very natural. That's God-given. And that's what motivates her nursing, her gentle care. And as every mother knows there's no kudos for this, there are no laurels, there's no awards for mothering. All you get is crying babies, dirty diapers, sleepless nights, runny noses, illnesses. It's hard, it's consistent, endless watchful care.

I talk to grandparents now that I'm one and they always say, "Oh we love our grandchildren so much," and often they'll say, "and the best part is, they leave with their parents, or when it becomes fussy time we hand them over." Well that's...that's simply a reflection of the hard part of parenting. And it's also a reflection of the fact that as much as we love our grandchildren there is a bonding that occurs with our own children that makes that less than duty, that makes it supreme joy. And even though we love our grandchildren, they're one step removed from that intimate bonding. A mother does what she does because she has a fond affection.

You know, that word "fond affection," that verb is a very interesting verb. It means to long for someone. It means to long for someone. In fact, we find it on some grave inscriptions where it describes a parents' sad longing for a dead baby, a child gone from their life. It indicates a deep affection that winds up as a passionate longing. It's even painful.

I remember when our children were being nursed, all four of ours when they were little, it would be silent in the middle of the night and perhaps for whatever reason I might have been awake, perfect silence. Patricia would get up and I would say, "Where are you going?"

She would say, "Well I'm going to go nurse the baby."

And I would say, "The baby is asleep."

"I know, but I want to go nurse the baby."

"Feel free." And I never really fully understood why until I began to realize that for her the fond affection, the longing that she had precluded the love of sleep. And it was in her heart to give herself to her children. And even hours apart from the little life took something away from what she desired.

That longing is what makes that mother want that little life in her arms. That's the way God designed it. And Paul is saying that's a picture of a spiritual leader's responsibility to have a longing for a tender relationship with his people, a yearning, a motherly compulsion. That should be in the heart of the spiritual leader. And Paul says it was, verse 8, so we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our lives. When we came to you it wasn't just duty, it wasn't just delegated authority, it wasn't just responsibility, it was passion. We had a fond affection for you so we were well pleased. That term "well pleased" means we were eager, we were zealous. And it was generated by our affection. You're not a burden, you're a joy. In fact, in verse 20 of this chapter he says you are our glory and joy.

And so, he says, "We were pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God," stop at that point. First he imparted the gospel of God. The word "impart" is beautiful. It means to share. And the verb carries the idea of giving someone something of which you retain a part. And that's exactly what happens when you give someone the gospel, right? You give them the gospel but even though you've given it to them, you still possess it, right? And so you share. That's why we say we share our faith. That's this word. We give it away and yet we keep it and so there's a bond there. So Paul is saying...Look, we had a fond affection for you and consequently we were well pleased to share with you the gospel of God.

And I think when he's talking about the gospel of God he goes beyond justification to embrace sanctification. He understands the fullness of the great commission not only to baptize but to teach them to observe all things whatsoever I've commanded you. So he is saying not only to give you that which saved you but to give you that which sanctifies you in that gospel. But it's more than that. He says we were pleased to give you that but not only that but also our own lives, our own psuche, our own soul. That means the totality of our earthly existence. I literally give up my life for you. That's what he's saying. And that's what a mother does. A mother who is faithful to being what a mother ought to be, she sets aside her life for the life of her beloved baby. She is sacrificial. She is utterly unselfish. She is generous. She is profuse with that life. That life dominates her life. You can't have a baby and go on living your own life and fulfill God's intention for a mother. That baby consumes your life. You're there to feed it, you're there to love it, to change it, to put it to sleep, to wake it up, to dress it, to care for its every need. That's what God intended.

There are many women, they don't want to have a baby because they're afraid it might affect their figure, they're afraid it might affect their life style, they're afraid it might affect their career. You want to know something? It will affect all of that. You'll give away your life for that little life. But God said a woman finds her place in this world, if God is so gracious to grant her that privilege, in bearing children and raising them to love the Lord. Gladly then does a woman give her life for her child. And so Paul says like a mother we were so well pleased to give you not only the truth we gave you but to give you our lives...our lives. Not only were we like a nursing mother pulling you to our breast and dispensing you the life- saving milk of the Word, but we also would give you our lives, time, energy, everything.

Why he was so sad when he wrote back to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 12:14 and 15 and he says to the Corinthians, he says, "I love you so much and I'll love you even if you don't love me in return." And then he says to them, "If I love you more does that mean you're going to love me less?" What a heartbreak it is for a mother who has loved a child and the child grows up to be what Proverbs called a thankless child who is sharper than a serpent's tooth. When a sacrificial mother has so loved a child who grows not to love in return, that is the deepest pain a mother's heart will ever know. Paul felt some of that pain himself as a spiritual leader and so does any spiritual leader. It was love spent in unselfish sacrifice. He gave his life. He even said on one occasion if I be offered on the sacrifice of your faith, I rejoice. If I die getting you the gospel, that's fine...that's fine. A far cry from the attitude today. We say we ought to abort a baby if it means the life of the mother. The godly mother says, "I would give my life for the birth of my child." But see, we've reversed all those kinds of values.

Why? Why does a mother do this? The end of verse 8, the same reason a spiritual leader does it, because you had become very dear to us...very dear, beloved is the word. That's the essence of a mother's love...a strong compelling sense of the preciousness of the child. You were dear to us. You were of value. You were worthy. You were priceless to me. No way could I shuffle you off. No way could I treat you with indifference. There is a strong affection. There is a longing that fills my heart for you, not out of duty but because you were dear to me. That has to mark spiritual leaders.

The metaphor then extends then into verse 9. Still the word "for" carries us through into transition, leading us out of the analogy of verses 7 and 8 into the application here in verse 9, "For you recall, brethren," and here's another mother metaphor, "our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you we proclaimed to you the gospel of God." There's a mother, working, laboring night and day, providing for her children so that she is no burden for them.

You recall, don't you, brethren, he says, you recall, you remember, don't you? How it was when we were there with you. You know what our heart attitude was. Listen, if anybody tells you that we came to take and not to give, why don't you just recall? Why don't you just think back and remember? Were we aiming at wealth? Were we aiming at power? Were we aiming at prestige, popularity,



possessions? Were we aiming for sexual favors? If we were we didn't take any. As he says in 2 Corinthians 6:10, "We were poor making many rich spiritually." Our lives were marked by poverty, disrespect, disrepute, trouble, persecution, we weren't takers, we were givers. You recall, don't you, don't you recall our labor? Don't you recall our hardship?

Those two words sum up the whole of difficulty. The first word emphasizes the difficulty of the deed itself. The second word emphasizes the toil and the struggle and the effort in the doing of the deed. But both of them come together to say...don't you remember what a difficult thing it was, what a trial it was when we were among you?

You go back to Acts 16 and reread it, how it was when he came to Thessalonica, how difficult it was. It was always sacrifice for Paul. It was always sacrifice for Silas and Timothy. It was always a life-giving kind of ministry. They didn't covet any man's silver, any man's gold, they rather sacrificed everything they had in this world for the sake of taking the gospel to other people. That's the mother's picture.

What does a mother want? What can a child give a mother? Absolutely nothing. What price can a child pay for a nursing mother? What price can a child pay for deep affection? What price can a child pay for the longing of a mother's heart that lifts it up and embraces it in love? There's no price. The child has nothing to give and nothing can be given. Paul says we just gave, don't you remember that? And how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. We were working night and day, he says, literally night and day.

Now we remember he was a tent maker and when he went to Thessalonica he was there three Sabbaths, but he must have stayed a few weeks after that, long enough to sort of set up shop and get some business and do some work in order to support himself and those with him. The church, by the way, in Thessalonica was very poor. Second Corinthians 8 talks about the poor church in Macedonia. They were very generous and sacrificial and sent an offering to Paul to take to the poor saints in Jerusalem, but it's clear there they were very poor. And he didn't want to put an undue burden on them. Also, he didn't want people to think that there was a price for the gospel. The Philippian church, according to Philippians 4:16 did send some money to help him in his ministry. But he really earned his own way and he worked night and day because he didn't want to be a burden to anybody.

That's...that's a mother. That's why it's so very hard sometimes when a woman has been a godly mother and she gets to the point in her older years where she can't support herself, she finds it very difficult to be supported by her children. She finds it very hard to accept that because she has always known that she was fitting the role of never being a burden but always lifting the burden of her children. But it is by God's design that her children and gratitude be able to meet her need if that comes.

So Paul said we made the maximum effort to feed our spiritual children. We provided the tenderness, the intimacy, the nourishment, the care so that you wouldn't have to carry the load and we carried it all. That's a mother. And that's how we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. God's gospel. The source is God, the subject is God. The great truth of salvation with all of its implications, we proclaimed it to you without ever being a burden and on our own part we labored hard night and day to keep you receiving the nourishing truth. Hey, it takes long hours to be a mother. It takes great sacrifice to be a mother. It changes your whole life. Paul says that's how it is in spiritual leadership, around the clock care is the picture of a mother and that is part of effective spiritual leadership.

Let me just say this personally. There is no way that any spiritual leader can be all that he should be because we are in the flesh. But this is a very clear mandate from God to us. And I just want you to know that it is my heart's desire that the elders, the pastors of Grace Church be mothers as well as fathers, not just holding authority over you but being intimate and available, tender, kind, sympathetic and compassionate. That's part of the joy of pastoring. Most people in the world who know me only know me as a voice on a tape, a voice on a radio...and I'm sure 90 percent of them have an imbalanced viewpoint of me as a spiritual leader. There must be more than that and that is by God's design to bring leadership into balance.

The tender relationships that we build in our ministry are the richest and most fulfilling. I had opportunity as often I do in times of need to go to the hospital and be with Marion Walther before she went to be with the Lord this week. They said to me, "Well..." they rushed her in the hospital because the tumor has gone to her brain and I had been to her home to see her a number of times and prayed with her and sat by her bed and read the Psalms and things, and we were very good friends. And she was a widow and they have a special place in my heart.

And so when she was taken to the hospital I went to the hospital and I went in the room and she was lying in the bed and I walked in the room and she saw me and they said, "She may not recognize you because the tumor has affected her brain." And she looked right up at me and said, "John," and she grabbed my hand. And she started to kiss my hand and then it was obvious she wanted me to give her a kiss so I leaned down in the bed and kissed her on the cheek. She said, "Oh, I have to tell you the best news." And I said, "What is it?" She said, "The Lord Jesus has been here to see me three times." And, you know, I mean, it was starting...she was starting to think about Him and about heaven. And I thought to myself, "If I had known that I wouldn't have bothered to come, you know." I mean...if you're getting personal visits from the Lord, you know, not much good I'm going to be. But so I took her Bible and I read all her favorite Psalms to her and we just shared in the precious moments. And she told me all that the church had meant in her life and she told me all the things that she wanted to accomplish to the Lord but hadn't been able to and she always told me that since she had been going through this cancer which slowly killed her, she was always going to write down her testimony but she never got it written. And she wanted to lay the burden on me to try to understand

that she really tried to get that written because she wanted to help a lot of other people who are going to go through this.

And as I left that meeting there was a great sense of fulfillment in my heart. There was a great sense of joy in my heart to just know there was something more than a tape in her life, something more than a sermon in her life. There was a real person who was a part of her life and someone that she cared about and someone who cared very much about her. That's the marvelous reality of shepherding, of pastoring, of mothering a congregation of people. I can't be that way to all people, but all people in God's family must have some spiritual leaders whoever they are who are there to be that spiritual nurturer who warms and cherishes that person, for one who champions truth like I do and whose zeal knows no bounds when it comes to attacking the enemy. It's a good reminder, isn't it, of the balance of spiritual leadership.

Now I want you to remember the message this morning because when I get next week to the spiritual father, you're going to think I'm out of balance if you don't remember what I said today. Okay? Let's pray.

Thank You, Father, for the simple beauty of Your Word. Thank You for the beauty of the mother, the nursing mother and the picture of spiritual leadership that it gives us. Help us to be gentle, tender hearted, kind, patient, thoughtful, sensitive, compassionate, caring that we might be assured that the church is not a day care center with substitutes, but it's a family, being mothered and fathered out of love. We so much need Your Spirit to enable us to do this and may the children of our love be thankful children. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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