

So deeply do we care

Notes on the Bible readings

- 1 Thessalonians shows an intimacy between writers and readers, a close kinship – for example where Paul speaks of a gentleness that is like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children.
- As a Pharisee, Paul would have inflicted suffering; yet here, he speaks of the suffering and maltreatment he and his companions have been subjected to in following Jesus. This experience seems to have made Paul more empathic towards women, and there is a central message of self-giving to others. The letter also talks about self-giving in order to proclaim the gospel; and this is at the heart of Paul's understanding of God in Christ.
- This is a call to us in our own lives to love selflessly and be gentle as we show how deeply we care for others, and in turn be an example to our wider community and those in power. It challenges us: should we as Christians be holding those in leadership to account, expecting them to display a different way of leading where there is strength in gentleness?

Give them strength

Within your family, household or group of friends, begin a conversation about areas of your church or community life that are vulnerable – e.g. because they lack resources, financial or people. Think and pray together about ways in which you might strengthen that aspect of what you do or what you are. If you have time, try also to identify gaps in provision and how they might be addressed.

Questions for reflection

- ▶ What experience does this image most remind you of?
- ▶ How/when does care for someone require strength?
- ▶ How/when does care for someone require gentleness? What about both??



A prayer for others

Lord God, we pray for those who have brought us to faith, who have shown us your love, who have tended to our needs, physical, emotional and spiritual.

We pray for those who have put themselves in harm's way for us and others.

We pray for those whose lives have been made harder because they have sought to serve you and to help their fellow human beings.

We pray for those whose selfless acts have caused them distress.

We pray for those who have at any cost shared the gospel of Christ.

We pray for those imprisoned and tortured for their faith and witness.

May they all be blessed in abundance with your love and care. Amen.

A personal prayer

God of all times, may I live my life so that others know that I care for them, am there for them, am loving them in your name. Amen.

Live your faith

Look for opportunities to be strong, to express strength, or to convey a strong message, through a gentle action/response.