

1 and 2 Thessalonians The Bonds of Affection

Interpreting the Text:

1. We are appropriately concerned in our time to deepen understanding among religious groups, perhaps especially the understanding between Jews and Christians. Professors Bartlett and Attridge caution readers from interpreting Paul's words as 'blaming' the Jewish people generally in 2:14-16 as many of the early followers of Christ, including Paul, would have identified as Jewish. How would you help a fellow Christian study a passage like this and ground it in the letter's historical context?
2. Paul uses language of care, referring to himself as a nurse who tenderly cares for the congregation. He later refers to himself as a father. How is Paul using familial language, gender bending what was normative for the time, to speak to his audience? How is this, in his own way, being an imitator of Christ?

Applying the Text:

1. How do Paul's self-descriptions help us think about leadership in our congregations? How is his apostleship like and unlike the leaders we need today—both ordained and lay?
2. How do Paul's self-descriptions in this chapter suggest ways that we can get beyond disputes about exclusive versus inclusive language and find language imaginative enough to touch a variety of readers or listeners?