

MOM AND POP

Scripture Reading: Read 1 Thessalonians chapter 2



There's something about the mom and pop stores of yesteryear that appeal to us today in an age of big box stores. Growing up in my hometown of Webster, I can still remember a number of those family-run businesses. One of them, the Candy Kitchen, can be seen in the picture to the left. It was run by our next-door neighbors. The highlight of the place was the freshly made candies for sale in the front of the store. Even though it has been almost 40 years since the store was destroyed by fire, I can still remember the smell of the chocolates!

What made those mom and pop stores so popular? Well, not only did they meet a need in the community but they provided personal service. They knew their product and they knew their customers. Their families lived, worshipped, shopped and played with their customers' families. They were in it for the long haul and not just to turn a profit.

When Paul brought the message of the gospel to Thessalonica, he could have come as a pushy apostle demanding to be cared for and provided for by the new believers. Instead, he came more as a mom and pop organization. In fact, he compared himself to a mother and father in the way he ministered to them: *"As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."*

Paul poured himself into these folks and shared his heart and life. He understood you can't really touch people from afar. It takes a relationship. It's why he built "sweet" relationships that continued strong long after he left to move on to new areas of ministry. Paul wasn't in it just to make a convert or gain a profit for himself. Not at all. He was in it to see lives transformed by the power of gospel.

Action Step: When you look at your ministry for Christ, are you in it for the numbers and acclaim you gain or are you genuinely caring for those under your care and investing in their lives?

Prayer Focus: For the Lord to give you a heart for people so that authentically, lovingly and fully you share yourself as you minister.

Take-a-way: ***True ministry is more like a mom and pop store than it is a big box business.***