

# A TRANSITIONAL OBJECT

1 THESSALONIANS 2:9-13

In the last few days, I've been reading some of the theories of D.W. Winnicott, a pediatric psychiatrist who was the chief proponent of a unique British variation of psychoanalysis known as "Object Relations Theory." Winnicott put a name on a phenomenon familiar to all of us. He asserted that all children have what is called a 'transitional object.' We can tell it is a 'transitional object' because she always has it with her. It's usually dirty and ratty because it can't be replaced. It might be a doll, a blanket, a teddy bear, a bottle, a pacifier, an item of clothing--anything! If a child's 'transitional object' accidentally gets left at church, I usually get a frantic call from the parents, within the hour: "can you let us back in the building--we've left something there!"

One of the purposes of a transitional object is to help the child navigate through a world that is changing and uncertain. A transitional object provides emotional security for a child until that child can adjust and grow inwardly in order to cope with the real world 'out there.'

Even adults have 'transitional objects.' We know that life is full of change and loss. We know that we occasionally have to move beyond places that are familiar. People die, relationships break, people change, and time grinds on--oblivious to our feelings. Often, religion becomes a 'transitional object' for us. We cling to the comfort of our church, the familiarity of our pastor, the reassurance of our music, the sensibility of our ideas about God and faith. And when things religious are torn away from us, we can be in as much distress as a small child losing a beloved teddy bear.

May we turn to the word of God which is at work in us to sustain us through our distress. May we look to God for our comfort and shield in uncertain times. May we trust scripture to encourage us, comfort us and urge us to live lives worthy of God.

God bless,  
Pastor Barbara