

WORK MATTERS

"BRING HOME THE BACON: WORK AS PROVISION"

2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-15; PROVERBS 6:6-11

This Week's Core Competency

Stewardship – I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God. 1 Timothy 6:17-19, *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

In their book, *Your Work Matters to God*, Doug Sherman and William Hendricks explain how God views work. They argue first that work matters to God because it has *intrinsic* value. It has intrinsic value because God himself is a worker and because God has created people as workers. God makes his first appearance in scripture doing the work of creation. In Genesis 1, he is seen forming and filling the earth, and in Genesis 2:2 this activity is called "work." And since God himself is a worker, it comes as no surprise that human beings created in his image and likeness are also workers. They write: "The concept of mankind ruling over the other creatures and subduing the creation and eating from the produce of the earth all point to man as a worker. Not only is God a worker, but man is a worker, too. In fact, Ecclesiastes 3:13 calls

All legitimate work is an extension of God's work.

– Doug Sherman and William Hendricks

this work a gift of God: "Moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God" (81).

They argue second that work matters to God because it has *instrumental* value. If work has intrinsic value, then it follows that all legitimate work is an extension of God's work. In other words, our work contributes to what God wants to do in the world, i.e., it is a means to God's ends, and thus has instrumental value in general. More specifically, the authors argue: 1) through work we serve people; 2) through work we meet our own needs; 3) through work we meet our family's needs; 4) through work we earn money to give to others; and 5) through work we love God (87).

Paul would likely concur with the authors given what he tells believers in Thessalonica in his second letter to them: "We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat'" (3:7-10). And to the Ephesians he writes: "He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need" (4:28).

They conclude their chapter with these words: "Loving God. Loving others. Loving ourselves. This is what God has told us to do. This is what He wants us to concentrate on. And our work, far

con't pg. 2

from being opposed to these commands, is actually one of our most important means of fulfilling them. Work matters to God. It has important instrumental value. When a person looks at work in this way, it revolutionizes his attitude toward his job. For the first time he sees a connection between what he does all day and what God wants done . . . This means that you do not have to quit your job and go into the ministry to do something significant for God. Some will undoubtedly need to do that. But God wants most of us to stay where we are and contribute to His work in the everyday tasks of life" (94).

These observations on work give new meaning to the words "everything I am . . . belongs to God." The words pertain to more than just one's personal talents and traits; they pertain to one's vocation or career calling—whatever it might be. My father was a housepainter in the summer and furnace repairman in the winter in Detroit, and as such, he was a steward of the skills of his trades. All workers, regardless of their career fields—whether butchers, bakers, or candlestick makers—are all stewards of their job skills and the rewards they bring. All are stewards of what they do for a living. All are to do all they do "for the glory of God" (1Co 10:31).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is good.

14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Proverbs 6:6-11

6 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!
7 It has no commander, no overseer or ruler,
8 yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.
9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?
10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—
11 and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Bracket "In the name of the Lord Jesus" in v. 6 and "in the Lord Jesus Christ" in v. 12.
- * Underline "keep away" in v. 6 and "do not associate" in v. 14.
- * Circle "idle" in vv. 6, 7, 11.
- * Circle "the teaching" in v. 6.
- * Circle "example" in v. 7 and "model" in v. 9.
- * Highlight the rule given in v. 10.
- * Bracket "night and day" in v. 8.
- * Circle "busbodies" in v. 11.
- * Circle "settle down" in v. 12.
- * Bracket "the bread they eat" in v. 12.
- * Underline "never tire of doing what is good" in v. 13.
- * Lots of words that indicate logical relationships—box the following:
 - "For" in vv. 7, 10; "because" in v. 9 indicating *reason*.
 - "Nor" and "on the contrary" in v. 8; "but" in vv. 9, 15; "yet" in v. 15 indicating *contrast*.
 - "So that" in v. 8; "in order to" in v. 9; "in order that" in v. 14 indicating *purpose*.
 - "If" in vv. 10, 14 indicating *condition*.
 - "As" in v. 15 indicating *comparison*.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Paul commands his readers "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (v. 6) and "in the Lord Jesus" (v. 12). Why?
2. What does Paul mean by "idle" in this context?
3. Explain the meaning of the *figurative* expression "night and day" (v. 8).
4. Explain the *contrast* in verse 9.
5. Speaking practically, does Paul's rule apply to all who are *unemployed*? What about the *underemployed*? What about *unbelievers*?
6. Explain the connection between being "not busy" and being "busybodies."
7. Explain why Paul tells people who are "idle" to "settle down."
8. Identify the *purpose* behind not associating with loafers in the church.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about church discipline. Should members face correction, and if so, from whom?

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The message of 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 is hard to miss. In a nutshell, the apostle tells his readers that they should follow the teaching that had been given to them regarding work. He tells them to follow the example set by him and Silas on their relatively short stay in Thessalonica when the church was founded (Ac 17:1-9). Furthermore, he tells them to "keep away" or withdraw from loafers in the church, who refuse to work for life's necessities. In his first letter, he urges his readers to "warn those who are idle" (1Th 5:14); whether they did or not, we do not know for sure. If they did, the warning evidently did little to change the loafers' behavior because the problem posed by the idle busybodies persisted, making it necessary for Paul to deal with it in stronger terms and greater detail in his second letter.

In a preface paragraph to his commentary on these verses, one commentator writes: "In the First Epistle Paul had mentioned some who would not work, but were disorderly (4:11 f., 5:14), but it is evident that his brief exhortations had not produced the desired effect. He felt strongly on the matter as we see from the fact that in this Epistle he devotes so much space to this problem. Next to the section on the coming of the Lord this is the longest section in the Epistle. Paul is most anxious that these friends should come to their senses. It is noteworthy that he continues to treat them as friends. For all the authority that he knew he possessed, and for all the authoritative tone of some of this section, he yet bears well in mind that these are brethren. He appeals to them as such" (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 251).

In the first paragraph (vv. 6-10), Paul commands his brothers and sisters in Thessalonica "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" to censure every believer who is "idle," that is, every undisciplined believer who refuses to follow the apostolic teaching regarding work. Invoking "the name" implies both the command's authoritativeness and its urgency. Paul isn't commanding something new. His readers already know they are to emulate the behavior of Paul and Silas. He reminds them saying: "We were not idle when we were with you,

nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you" (v. 7-8). So although "Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages'" (1Ti 5:18), neither Paul nor Silas exercise their rights as apostles. With regard to one who refuses to work, they follow this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." In the opinion of one commentator, this command "need not be taken as a summary of the Christian doctrine of labor, but it does teach that it is scandalous for those who profess and call themselves Christians to lead idle lives and look to others for support if they themselves have opportunity and strength for working to maintain themselves and to help others who are less fortunate" (F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, v. 45, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 208).

In the second paragraph (vv. 11-13), he commands loafers and busybodies in the congregation "to settle down and earn the bread they eat" (v. 12). This command, too, is delivered "in the Lord Jesus Christ" and likewise carries the same authority and urgency as the first. While he is in Corinth, Paul hears (v. 11), perhaps from Silas and Timothy, that nothing much has changed in the past six months or so since the writing 1 Thessalonians. And so, he commands the loafers and busybodies to work for a living, which will leave them no time to meddle in others' affairs, and the other brothers and sisters to never tire of working hard.

In the final paragraph (vv. 14-15), he issues a warning pertaining to loafers and busybodies: Take note of those who refuse to obey these commands and don't mix with them. They are not to be excommunicated, but neither is their behavior to be condoned. In other words, as far as fellowship in the believing community is concerned, it's no longer business as usual. They are to be admonished by the congregation.

The Message of the Passage

Christians are to obey the apostolic teaching that all believers are expected to work hard to earn their living and that those who refuse to do so are to be admonished and denied charity.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 *living questions* to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living questions*:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 6 **in the name of** . . . The command that followed was "given with the full authority of ('in the name of') the 'Lord Jesus Christ'" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on 2 Thessalonians," 2017 ed., 27, www.soniclight.com). "Apostolic authority is essentially the authority of Christ, received by delegation from him and to be exercised only in accordance with his will. The apostles are his accredited representatives" (Bruce, 204). "Paul was not giving some private ideas of his own when he spoke 'in the name'" (Morris, 251).

v. 6 **keep away from** Cf., "do not associate with" (v. 14). "Not withdrawal of all contact but withholding of close fellowship" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on 3:6); cf., "that you keep aloof from" (Bruce, 204). "The verb has the idea of a retreating within oneself (cf. its use of furling sails)" (Morris, 251). "Anyone refusing to comply [v. 14] with the work ethic set out in this letter was not to be associated with, so that he might be ashamed of his behavior. He was not to be expelled from the church like the sinning brother referred to in 1 Corinthians 5. In Corinth the offense was so flagrant as to bring disrepute on the whole church. In Thessalonica, however, the lapse was not yet so aggravated as to bring the reproach of the pagan on the church. Here the erring brother was allowed to continue in the meetings, but probably was denied participation in such things as the love feast and the Lord's Supper. Certainly he was not to be given food, because this would make the community appear to condone his offense" (Robert L. Thomas, "2 Thessalonians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:335-36).

v. 6 **idle** Cf., 1Th 5:14. "'Idle' translates a word meaning 'disorderly' (cf. 1 Thess 5:14). The disorder defined by the remainder of the paragraph is loafing, being remiss in daily work and conduct. This is contrary to the 'teaching' ('tradition') that Paul had given them earlier (cf. 1 Thess 4:11, 12; 5:14)" (Thomas, 334). Their indolence stands in stark contrast to the industry of the apostles described in verses 7-8.

v. 6 **the teaching** Lit., "traditions" (see NIV margin). "Until the NT was written, essential Christian teaching was passed on in the 'traditions,' just as rabbinic law was (see note on Mt 15:2); it could be either oral or written. In 1Co 15:3 Paul uses the technical words for receiving and handing on traditions" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on 2:15).

v. 7 **example** Cf., "model" (v. 9). "In Thessalonica, as elsewhere, Paul and his companions sometimes supported themselves by 'making tents' to give their converts an 'example' (v. 7) of responsible Christian living ('a model,' v. 9; cf. 1 Cor. 9:3-14; 1 Tim. 5:18). They had the right to receive monetary support in payment for their spiritual ministry (Gal. 6:6), but they often gave up this right for the greater needs of their converts" (Constable, 28).

v. 8 **night and day** Paul uses *merism*, a figure of speech that uses a pair of contrasting word to express totality to emphasize that the apostles "worked hard, constantly, and purposefully" (Morris, 253) so that they would not be a burden to the Thessalonians.

v. 10 **"If a man . . ."** "Paul reminded his readers of his well-known instruction that he frequently repeated when he was with them. 'If anyone refused (was not willing) to work,' his brothers and sisters in Christ should not provide for him ('then he is not to eat, either'). Paul may have been alluding to a Jewish proverb based on Gen. 3:19a: 'By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.' The idle in this case were not unable to work, but 'unwilling' to work" (28). Or "it may have been Paul who originated the saying: it was certainly he who made it part of the Christian view of labor" (Morris, 254).

v. 11 **busybodies** "The teaching that Christ could return at any moment had led some of the believers into idleness. They had quit their jobs and were idle, 'doing no work at all,' and were simply waiting for the Lord to return . . . When people are not busy with their own work, they may tend to meddle in the business of others. They may become 'busybodies,' rather than busy, neglecting their own business in order to mind everybody else's business but their own" (Constable, 28-29).

v. 12 **settle down** Cf., "work quietly" (NET). "The root trouble apparently was their excitability. The thought of the nearness of the Parousia had thrown them into a flutter, and this had led to unwelcome consequence of which their idleness was the outstanding feature" (Morris, 256). "Such 'quiet' behavior is the antithesis to interfering in others people's affairs and being a general nuisance" (Bruce, 207-208).

v. 12 **bread they eat** "Eat bread" is a Semitic idiom for eating any kind of food. Perhaps the sense might be more broadly paraphrased: "go to work to earn a living" (see Morris, 253).

v. 13 **what is right** Paul's exhortation is quite general, but given the context, it likely refers to working tirelessly and withdrawing from those who refuse to do likewise.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

The tires had been checked. The oil had been changed and the tank was full. The car had been cleaned out, washed and vacuumed. Even the windshield wiper fluid was topped off. We had carefully loaded all of the luggage in the car and everyone was ready for a long road trip. After a quick prayer, the key was turned and "click." Nothing. After all the preparations to get the car in top running order to perform its job of getting us safely to our destination, one part decided not to participate. At exactly that moment, the battery chose to not do its job. I don't know much about cars but I do know that a dead battery means you aren't going anywhere soon. The battery is a relatively small part on the car hidden under the hood, tucked away in the corner, but it's important. In our passages today we learn that everyone plays an important part in the whole regardless of how insignificant their job may seem. This is true in cars, families, churches and communities. We all have a responsibility to contribute to the betterment of the whole. One person not carrying their weight means an extra burden on the others. Doing our part is the right thing to do as we love and serve each other. Let's pray for and encourage each other to function in our niche this week. We are better together!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read 2Th 3:6-15

1. Who are we to keep away from? (v. 6)
2. What did Paul do when he was in Thessalonica?
3. What happens to a person who will not work?

What Do You Think

1. Give some examples of being "idle."
2. What happens when you don't do your part at home or school?
3. How can we overcome laziness?

What R U Going To Do

There is probably something you are putting off doing right now. Maybe it's an assignment, or a letter that needs to be written or your closet that needs cleaning out. Do it and then list what you did for an extra 2 tokens:

Core Comp

Stewardship - I believe that I belong to God and all my stuff belongs to God.

Memory Verse

Matthew 5:15 - *Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you *Belong, Become, and go Beyond* as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.