



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V25 N14 April 2, 2023

NOT HOME YET "Mind Your Own Business" 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Humility

I choose to esteem others above myself.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Philippians 2:3-4



How do you live a "quiet life"?

Quiet... Do you know of this thing? I am not talking about silence or solitude. Quiet is not wilderness walks or isolation chambers. Quiet is something more than serenity or the absence of background noise. Quiet is stillness, not external but internal. Quiet is the experience of humble embrace of your current place in the world while refusing to be distracted or knocked off course by external stimuli. Think of a masterful archer or an Olympic marksman. These elite athletes are able to ignore all distractions, even their own anticipation of firing their shot. They strive to be still enough to draw on the target and not flinch one iota when releasing their ammunition. They do not zone out or go into a trance. Instead they focus intensely, even to the point of breathing on cue in order to be on target. "Slow is smooth and smooth is fast" is the mantra of all marksmen. This means that when you are pulling the trigger or releasing the arrow, you want your movements to be slow, quiet and almost imperceptible. A quiet stroke makes for a steady aim and a successful strike of the target.

Living a "quiet life" is similar. Living a life that is slow, steady, patient and predictable can make for peaceful surroundings and can prepare a person for times of high stress and extreme challenges. Faithful, quiet embrace of daily tasks that lead to larger initiatives is the path of higher performance. Jesus said "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much..." (Luke 16:10a NKJV). Doing small things well is the best way to climb higher. We often feel like we must be doing large and noisy things in order for us to be doing all that God wants us to do. Instead we would do better to humble ourselves to faithfully do what God has put in front of us rather than chase the distractions that we think God might want us to do.

Quietness is not only the avoidance of distraction. Quietness is also the practice of humility. When I live in such a way as to put others before myself, I am quieting my pride and am seeking the benefit of others. To truly put others ahead of myself, I may need to set aside time,

money, energy, focus and attention for the benefit of others. Parents, teachers and managers all know that job success is working to see other succeed. Quietly preparing to gather resources and put together gifts for others happens in shadows, in kitchens or in green rooms. Rarely does quiet preparation happen on a stage in front of a fully attended auditorium.

It has been said that humility is not thinking less of yourself but is thinking of yourself less. A person filled with pride is often expending large amounts of attention and focus upon self-promotion, self-advancement and self-preservation. Humility can be just as busy and productive as pride without the froth of self-aggrandizement. Working hard and well while trusting God for the results is better than allowing ambition to destroy ethics, compassion, and decency.

Quietness can also be the gift of peace. Quietness and humility in your life can be read by others. When others are exploding in stressful times, your quietness can be a message of hope and encouragement to those who are in great distress. Your steady hand and steady heart can be a gift of encouragement to someone who may be ready to give up. Peacemakers refuse to engage in gossip that stirs up strife and tension. A nurse that is frantic, loud, or not a team player can make a patient uncomfortable. A nurse that is quiet, calm and assuring can help the nervous patient the most before the operation.

"The redeemed, grace-rich people of God do not need to add extra noise to a noisy world. To live 'quietly' does not mean to sequester yourself, to step out of the world (see 1 Cor 5:9-10). Rather, it is to respond to your God-given vocation and feel comfortable in your own skin and place in the world, such that your focus is not on being so loud about yourself that you get the right attention and boost your reputation up in the right ways in public. Heart-quietness, life-quietness, is the by-product of contentment. Contentment can only come from peace with God" (Nijay K. Gupta, *1-2 Thessalonians: A New Covenant Commentary*, 90).

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life:

You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you,

12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline the action words in verse 11.
- Circle each occurrence of the words “you” and “your” in the passage.
- Draw an arrow connecting the words “life” used in the passage.
- Double underline the phrases “so that” in verse 12 indicating result.
- Place a box around the name for people whose respect may be won.
- Double underline the desired condition related to “anybody.”

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, “This text is about _____.”



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:11 begins with the conjunction “And.” To what big idea is the initial command of verse 11 tied (see 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10)?
2. How can ambition and a “quiet life” work together?
3. What is and is not included in a “quiet life”?
4. What is involved in minding your own business? Why is this a virtue?
5. What does Paul mean by the charge “work with your own hands”?
6. What problem was Paul addressing in verse 11 (consider 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12)?
7. What effect can a “quiet” and “industrious” life have on others?
8. What is possible for those who are not dependent on others?
9. Some would use verses 11-12 as justification for not getting involved in community. How would you respond to such a view?
10. How do verses 11-12 promote humility?

Commentary On The Text

Just before his lengthy discourse upon the return of Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-5:11), Paul provided practical instruction on how to live now on earth while anticipating entrance into God's eternal kingdom. Some may have been prone to hysteria while waiting for an imminent return of Christ. Others may have quit their jobs or closed their shops to be ready for the trumpet blast. Yet others may have thought since Christ was coming, living a sober or moral life did not matter because they soon would be in heaven. Paul warned against these types of negative behaviors in 1 Thess. 5:6-15. People who became idle or indulgent often would become dependent upon the generosity of others. This cycle of excitement leading to a lack of labor, leading to hunger and dependency would be a drain upon the community of believers and would reflect poorly upon the Christian message to the outside world. Paul wanted to make sure that a proper understanding of the end times was supported by a proper lifestyle of productivity (1 Thess. 4:11-12; 5:12-14) and generosity (1 Thess. 4:9-10).

As instruction to live well in anticipation of Christ's return, Paul introduced an oxymoron — "be ambitious to not be ambitious" (1 Thess. 4:11a). "Paul uses an unusual verb, here rendered 'to make it your ambition' (*philestomethai*); some versions have 'aspire.' The verb at times denoted a practice of the Greco-Roman elite. In lieu of being taxed, the wealthy were expected to make generous donations to their cities, in public works, entertainments, food distributions, and so forth. In many cases this became a contest of who could outstrip one's peers, since the greater gift bespoke the power and wealth of the donor as well as his magnanimity. Paul, however, uses the verb to speak of a striving to render service, not in order to receive admiration from others but in order to serve God" (Gary Steven Shogren, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT, 170). Sometimes believers can become so enthused about their faith and Christ's return that they forget that they often have mundane obligations that need to be fulfilled daily.

Paul clarified what this "ambitious non-ambition" should look like with two admonitions: 1) mind your own business and 2) work with your hands. The first direction is more general and emphasizes the individual responsibility. "Attend to your own matters" or "Look after your own affairs" carries the import of the phrase and focuses more on individual matters rather than industry. By looking after "your own affairs" you are not neglecting obligations and you are not becoming a burden to others. Someone who is "minding their own business" is also someone who is not gossiping or becoming a busybody in other people's affairs. Paul warned against being "disruptive" in tandem with a warning against "being idle" (1 Thess. 5:14).

The second directive supplied a more specific admonition to work to support yourself and your family with physical labor if necessary. "General disdain toward

physical labor was prevalent in the Greco-Roman world. Cicero, for example, pejoratively refers to 'the means of livelihood of all hired workmen whom we pay for mere manual labor, not for artistic skill' (Duties 1.150-51). This negative view toward work, however, was a viewpoint that only the wealthy upper class could afford to have" (Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1-2 Thessalonians*, 297). While physical labor may have been demeaned in the Roman world, Paul elevated physical labor and self-sufficiency (1Thess. 2:9; 4:11; 5:12). Hard work and personal industry would allow Paul and like-minded believers to not be a burden to others and would supply a means for more ministry and brotherly love. Paul's reminder of previous instructions ("we told you") carries the weight of a command.

The "daily life" mentioned in 1 Thess. 4:12 centers on the imagery of "walking around." So as you "walk around" doing all you do, your quiet life and productive self-supply (1 Thess. 4:11) will have two specific effects. First, you will "win the respect" of outsiders. While unbelievers may culturally look down upon common laborers, they would especially look down upon those who were not able to supply for themselves. Paul may have been encouraging believers to be wary of the prevalent "patron-client" system known to many of that day. Paul could be telling believers to be "avoiding entangling alliances with patrons and encouraging his converts to follow that example. They are to be quietly busy, not busybodies, which is to say not living on the dole of some patron and then spending their time spreading the patron's name around and seeking to win friends and influence people for the patron. Christians, by contrast to the patron-client system, were all to work as they were able, avoid being a burden to others, and earn money to do good to others without thought of return" (Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 121).

The second effect of this "good, walking-around, quiet, life" is that "you will not be dependent on anybody." Paul encouraged biblical community and promoted the love of brothers and sisters in Christ (*philadelphia*, 1 Thess. 4:9). But in order to "do this more and more" (1 Thess. 4:10), believers would need to have resources to share. If believers were not working to support themselves and were dependent upon others, they would struggle to be generous in the practice of brotherly love. Paul's charge to "not be dependent" is not a call to rugged and rigid individualism. Rather it is an invitation to share the harvest of a fruitful life. Romans may have looked down upon common laborers, but they were sure to highly esteem and consume the fruits of those who were not averse to physical labor.

Christians, striving to live a quiet and industrious life, can love other believers with generosity and can impress the world with such efforts. What are we doing to bless others from the harvest of our labors?

Word Studies/Notes

v.11 **ambition** “*Philotimeisthai* (‘aspire’) was regularly used in political and philanthropic contexts of achievement of political ends by means of benefactions, that is, of aspiring to do just the opposite of living quietly. In fact, Plutarch says quite bluntly that those who manifest *philotimoi* and care about their reputation (*philodoxoi*) cannot lead a quiet life. It would be totally unacceptable to do so if one loved honor (*On Tranquility of Mind*). The word’s original sense, then, was pursuit or love of honor or distinction (*Thucydides* 2.44, the speech of *Pericles*). One would seek to promote the spread of one’s name by acts of benefaction and getting one’s name inscribed in stone on honor columns or in pavements. By the time, however, Paul used the term it often had the lesser sense of ‘aspire’ or ‘earnestly endeavor’ (Rom. 15:20; 2 Cor. 5:9). Paul suggests that conventional forms of status-seeking and improving of honor ratings were to be left aside. In other words, Paul and Plutarch would have quite dramatically disagreed on what amounted to honorable and decorous behavior. Christians are not called to establish their names in the public sphere and seek prestige. They are to be ambitious in a different and perhaps counterintuitive and ‘quiet’ way. Paul is talking about not retirement but avoidance of conflict and doing purposeful work and community-building. Christians were to strive within and for the Christian community” (Witherington, 121).

v. 11 **quiet life** “Elsewhere means simply ‘to keep quiet’ (Luke 14.4; Acts 11.18; 21.14) or ‘to rest’ (Luke 23.56). However, here the idea is quite different. At times the theme of ‘being quiet’ appears in the literature of the era in the description of those respectable people who do not cause problems in the community. Philo, for example, contrasted the ‘quiet’ person with someone who was evil: ‘Besides, the worthless man whose life is one long restlessness haunts market-places, theatres, law-courts, council-halls, assemblies, and every group and gathering of men; his tongue he lets loose for unmeasured, endless, indiscriminate talk, bringing chaos and confusion into everything, mixing true with false, fit with unfit, public with private, holy with profane, sensible with absurd, because he has not been trained to that silence (*hēsychian*) which in season is most excellent.’ Philo and others contrast the ‘quiet’ life with the public life, while Philo even observes that being ‘quiet’ is a mark of nobility” (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 210).

v. 11 **mind your own business** “After identifying those in the Thessalonian church who are ‘not busy’ doing their own work but are instead ‘busybodies,’ Paul commands these idle members to earn their own living by ‘working with quietness’ (3:12, *hēsychias ergazomenoi*).

This suggests that the idleness of some at Thessalonica allowed them the time and opportunity to be involved in the kind of meddling and busybody activity that offends others. Philo contrasts the ‘quiet’ life with the ‘vulgar man, who spends his days meddling, running around in public, in theaters, tribunals, councils, and assemblies, meetings and consultations of all sorts; he prattles on without moderation, fruitless, to no end; he confuses and stirs up everything, mingling truth with falsehood” (Weima, 293).

v. 12 **respect** “Conduct themselves with ‘decorum’ (*euschēmonōs*, translated may win the respect) among the unbelievers, who are here called outsiders (*tous exō*; Mark 4.11; 1 Cor. 5.12–13; Col. 4.5; and see 1 Tim. 3.7). They should conduct themselves ‘decently’ or ‘in a fitting manner’ (Rom. 13.13; 1 Cor. 14.40; and the adjective in 1 Cor. 7.35), a word that is also used to describe those in the community who acted nobly and worthily and who would even receive public recognition for their conduct. Conduct of this type was highly valued in the ancient world. As Pseudo-Musonius said, ‘The true end of our being born into the world is to live orderly and with decorum, our minds being furnished by nature with reason as overseer and guide for this purpose” (Green, 212).

v. 12 **outsiders** “The identification of non-Christians as ‘outsiders’ (*tous exō* is found elsewhere only in 1 Cor. 5:12–13; Col. 4:5; Mark 4:11) is significant in this regard. For as in the preceding section (1 Thess. 4:3–8), where Paul views holiness in sexual conduct as a distinguishing sign of the Thessalonian church that separates it from ‘the Gentiles who do not know God’ (v. 5), here in this current section (vv. 9–12) he similarly sees self-sufficient work as a boundary marker that sets the church apart from ‘outsiders.’ As full members of God’s covenant people, Gentile believers at Thessalonica are and must continue to be a holy community whose conduct in all aspects of life distinguishes them from the surrounding world” (Weima, 300).

v. 12 **dependent** “The problem is Christians not working to support themselves because of a mistaken belief that Christ would return within the near future. The fact that the warning against slackness in working occurs both directly before and after (5:14) Paul’s explicit teaching about Christ’s final coming (4:13–5:11) supports this conclusion. Many guilty of such laxness would have become dependent on the charity of other church members as well as possibly on whatever welfare may have been available in the surrounding culture. ... While Christians will not please everyone, they should be sure that they behave according to the accepted standards of secular society, such as the civil order of society, not infringing on the rights of others, the integrity of financial self-support, and providing for one’s own family” (G. K. Beale, *1–2 Thessalonians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, 128).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Strive to live a strifeless life for Christ through respectable labor that will enable you to be generous and not dependent upon others.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Ambition is a strong desire to do or achieve something that typically requires hard work or determination. When I think about ambition, I think of a person with a certain type of grit—a small business owner or entrepreneur risking it all for their new venture, an executive climbing the corporate ladder or a rags-to-riches story of personal success. Ambition brings with it thoughts of standing straighter, taking risks and pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. With that in mind, Paul exhorts the Thessalonian church to make it their ambition to pursue a quiet life. (1 Th. 4:11). Leading a quiet life certainly doesn't sound too ambitious to me. Or does it? If your grade school kids are wrapped up in some type of drama or your toddler is teething or if you're simply a parent, you could really use some quiet. But I don't think that's exactly what Paul's talking about. What Paul is telling his new believer friends is to shrug off their worldly ways and put on Christ's character. Stop keeping up with the Joneses and bowing to the culture of the day. Say no to batting cages and practice twice a week for kindergarten T-ball. Say no to immodest and inappropriate costumes and dance moves for your young child. Say no to comparison, overextending yourself, or things that hijack your family moments. Instead, be ambitious about a quiet life that honors God. Pursue prayer, protect human dignity, practice contentment, extend compassion, seek truth. Mind your own business and work hard to make these things and others that honor Christ your ambition. You are your family's best defense.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.

1. What kind of life does Paul tell the Thessalonians to lead?
2. How should they work?
3. What will the results be if try to live this way?

What Do You Think?

What is ambition and how is it related to the Christian walk?

What Do You Do?

Play a game of Life with your family this week. Talk about the different choices you'll have to make based on what the world says and what Christ wants us to do. How different does this make the game?

CORE COMPETENCY: Humility

I make others more important than me.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Peter 1:15

But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME _____

GRADE _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

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.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

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

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.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

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

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

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

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

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

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.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

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.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

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

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

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

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

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

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

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

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

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

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.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

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.

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.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

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

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