



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V25 N30 July 23, 2023

LIVING HOPE "Idle Hands" 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Kindness/Goodness

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

"Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else."

1 Thessalonians 5:15



How does work impact Christian witness?

According to the US Chamber of Commerce (USCOC), as of June 2023 there were approximately 2 million fewer people employed in the American workforce than compared to February of 2020. The Covid crisis interrupted industry so much that many people have found it difficult to return to work. Many have entered early retirement. Others have had to care for family members or have learned to get by with less. Analysts have labeled this trend "The Great Resignation." Many have left the labor force altogether and are not actively seeking employment. The USCOC reports that there are 9.9 million open jobs currently but only 5.8 million reported unemployed workers. Approximately 30 million people were laid off or let go in 2020 due to Covid. Many have returned to work, but many have decided that returning to work is just not worth it. There are multiple factors contributing to this complex issue, but one wonders if the value of work has changed since the recent pandemic.

Employers are feeling the pressure of a shrinking workforce. Many service industry establishments and restaurants have had to reduce hours, reduce space or even close due to the shortage of workers. During a recent trip to Michigan, I found that many fast food restaurants were "drive-through only" and many were advertising starting hourly rates of \$21 or more an hour for new-hire employees with no experience. Word on the street was that no one wanted to work these kinds of jobs.

While there is no virtue in working just for work's sake, our attitude regarding work does contribute to our overall testimony. The desire to work in order to sustain oneself is a good moral value. A follower of Jesus should be one who wants to work in such a way as to "not be a burden" to others. "Earning the food that we eat" is biblical (2 Thess. 3:12). Many today see work as demeaning. Finding ways not to work is almost an industry unto itself. This is nothing new. Much of Greek and Roman culture thought of work as something only slaves performed. The goal of much of the ancient world

was to become wealthy enough to own your own domestic labor force. Roman patrons surrounded themselves with subservients who did their bidding. Christians who worked to support themselves and to benefit others through generosity were countercultural in the ancient world. Today, Christians can also be catalysts for cultural change by simply wanting to work.

How a person works also says a lot about their witness for Christ. The New Testament encourages us to work "with all your heart, as working for the Lord" (Col. 3:23-24). Working for the Lord as well as your employer should include diligence, integrity, honesty, carefulness and compassion. A hard-working Christian is one who will give 100% and more in a work environment even if the supervisor is not present. Many employers today deal with "Quiet Quitters" who do the absolute minimum required as a form of protest while still collecting a paycheck. Rather than leave the job, a "quiet quitter" will remain employed but do as little as possible to help the business thrive. A Christian working diligently can be a countercultural force in a workplace of occupational minimalists.

Work and the resulting pay can be used to take care of one's self, family and those in need. This too has biblical support as believers are encouraged to take care of their family members (1 Tim. 5:4, 8) as well as widows who have no family (1 Tim. 5:3,5, 16). This care would come from generosity and service dispensed through labor and accumulated resources. James states that "pure religion" is that which takes care of the widows and orphans (James 1:27). The Christian ethic is generosity that comes voluntarily from those who are working or have accumulated resources from work. Christianity does not force a utilitarian redistribution of wealth. Instead it invites people to share freely as they will, with those less fortunate.

Work with the goal of self-support and shared generosity is the Christian ideal. Such work allows us to share kindness and goodness with those in need. Paul exemplified this work ethic. We will do well to learn from his example.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

6 *In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive 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 offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."*

11 *We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. 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 food they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.*

[NIV]

Read in another translation

6 *But we command you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from any brother who lives an undisciplined life and not according to the tradition they received from us. 7 For you know yourselves how you must imitate us, because we did not behave without discipline among you, 8 and we did not eat anyone's food without paying. Instead, in toil and drudgery we worked night and day in order not to burden any of you. 9 It was not because we do not have that right, but to give ourselves as an example for you to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this command: "If anyone is not willing to work, neither should he eat." 11 For we hear that some among you are living an undisciplined life, not doing their own work but meddling in the work of others. 12 Now such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and so provide their own food to eat. 13 But you, brothers and sisters, do not grow weary in doing what is right. [NET]*

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

- Draw a line connecting each use of the name "the Lord Jesus Christ."
- Circle all the occurrences of the word "we" in this passage.
- Underline the words "command" and "rule" in this passage.
- Place a box around each use of the word "idle" in this passage.
- Double underline each word that has to do with work in this passage.
- Place brackets around each use of "eat" in this passage.
- Triple underline each word or phrase that refers to being a model or an example.
- Double circle the word "bushybodies" in v. 11.

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. Describe the problem Paul was addressing in 2 Thess 3:6-13.
2. How were those Paul described negatively in 2 Thess 3:6-12 more than just unemployed people?
3. What was the “teaching” the Thessalonians had received from Paul (consider vv. 6, 10; 1 Thess 5:12-14)?
4. What does following the command “keep away” (v. 6) look like for followers of Christ today?
5. What was the example Paul offered as a counter to those described as idle?
6. Does 2 Thess. 3:8 suggest that Paul was against charitable food distribution? Why or why not?
7. Put Paul’s rule (v.10) in your own words. How would you apply this in our era?
8. What is a “busybody” and what is Paul’s solution for them (v. 11-12)?
9. What might contribute to the exhaustion of “doing what is good” (v. 13)?
10. How would 2 Thess. 3:6-13 help you assist someone in need in your Community Group or small group?

Commentary On The Text

Paul finishes his second letter to the Thessalonians with a repeat lesson regarding those who were described as “idle and disruptive.” Paul initially taught on this matter in 1 Thess. 5:14-15. There he encouraged believers to “warn” those who were idle. Paul also mentioned his laborious example in 1 Thess. 2:6-10 to underscore the sincerity of his ministry among the Thessalonians. Not much had changed since his first instruction on the matter so he unfortunately has to repeat these instructions in 2 Thess. 3:6-13. This instruction is quite detailed and could be considered the second most important issue mentioned in 2 Thessalonians considering the amount of text Paul extends to the issue of idleness.

Paul’s tone is serious here as he commands “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” twice (v. 6 and v. 12). Believers were not only to “warn” the idle (1 Thess. 5:14) but were now encouraged to “keep away” from such troublemakers. The problem had not changed and perhaps had even worsened since Paul’s initial instruction. “[Paul] speaks not broadly of those who do not work but narrowly of those who refuse to work: ‘If anyone is not willing [*ou thelei*] to work.’ The fundamental problem of the rebellious idlers is not their lack of employment but their deliberate refusal to work. Paul does not have in view church members who cannot find work or are not able to work due to illness, injury, or old age. To believers who are genuinely in need, Paul expects the broader church community to ‘not be discouraged in doing good’ (v. 13), that is, to minister to them in a compassionate way (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:3-8; Titus 3:14; note also Paul’s involvement in the ‘collection’ for needy Christians in Judea: Gal. 2:10; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; Rom. 15:25-27). Regarding believers who obstinately refuse to work even when they have the opportunity and means to do so, however, Paul commands the church membership as a whole not to provide them with food and other basic daily needs (‘Let him not eat!’) as part of the broader disciplinary process (v. 6, ‘keep away from’; v. 14, ‘not associate with’)” (Weima, Jeffrey A. D., *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1-2 Thessalonians*, 616).

These were believers (v. 6) who were “idle and disruptive.” The single Greek word (*ataktia*) was used in classical literature to describe soldiers who were not following orders or keeping within rank. Because Paul ties this unruly behavior to the subject of labor, it is perceived that these believers were not working and were causing trouble with this extra time on their hands. Some believers may have not had to work due to accumulated family wealth. Others may have refused to work in light of their expectation of an imminent return of Christ. Regardless of the cause of the indolence, the net effect was a troubled church with many stressed or overworked serving the non-working to the point of potentially quitting (v. 13).

Paul rehearsed his teaching (v. 6,10) and reminded the Thessalonians of his example of hard work and ser-

vice. “Paul and his companions remind the Thessalonians again how they themselves worked for their living while they were with them, forgoing the right to live by their ministry, in order to set their converts a good example. Their maxim, taught by precept and by action, ‘If any one refuses to work, let him not eat,’ 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, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Vol. 45, Word Biblical Commentary, 208).

Paul sums up the problem with a pithy play on words, “They are not busy, they are busybodies” (v. 11). These delinquent “idlers” were doing more than just sapping the resources of a generous Christian community. They were also stirring up controversy, gossip and potential heresy among the believing community. Troublemaking often comes from people who are bored or who have little else to do than make trouble. Paul’s commanded solution is for such troublemakers is to “settle down and earn the food they eat” (v. 12). This commandment echoes Paul’s instruction made in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 where he states, “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hand just as we told you, so that you daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.” Personal industry producing self-support often fills a life with purpose. Personal achievement often creates opportunity for generosity and reduces the need for controversy. A working Christian who is able to support themselves and their family is a witness to the world and benefactor to believing community. Paul would later state that someone who refuses to take care of their own family through their own industry is “worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8, KJV).

Paul’s warnings about idleness and his encouragement toward industry should not be misunderstood to mean that we can never rest or retire from labor. Rest should be part of a labor cycle and should be a regular time of reflection, worship, refreshment and rejuvenation. A worker who never rests is one who makes work an idol. If we have labored diligently and have had the good fortune to save our funds to a point where we are able to “not be a burden” (v. 8) to others, we should enjoy the blessings of rest, recreation and even retirement. This freedom should allow the opportunity to “work” in the business of helping others through volunteerism or service. Those who can work for themselves may have more control over their schedule and may be able to prioritize times for service. We can always work for the Lord, whether we are actively employed or not. A “quiet life” of service rather than a “riotous life” of idleness and disruption should be our ultimate goal.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 6 **command** “The strong-sounding verb, we command you (*parangellō*) affords a distinctly military ring to the whole verse. The metaphor contained in the reference to every brother who is idle of the soldier who drops out of line (*ataktōs*) further enhances this tone. The command is issued, moreover, on the highest authority: in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 4:1 and 1 Cor. 5:4f). But, for all the authority with which he speaks, Paul’s affection for his readers remains. He calls them brothers, including those who are in error” (David J. Williams, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, 144).

v. 6 **keep away** “Paul enjoins the brothers to keep away from such people. His verb (*stellesthai*) was earlier used for activities such as furling sails. It signifies a withdrawing into oneself, a holding aloof (BAGD). But such a withdrawal is not to be made in a spirit of superiority. Paul appeals to brotherliness, and it is part of being a brother that no member should condone the deeds of another who, while claiming to be a brother, denies by his actions what the brotherhood stands for. Corporate responsibility is important” (Leon Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 13, Tyndale NT Commentaries, 143).

v. 6 **idle** “Paul had already discussed the issue of idle Christians in the first letter, but apparently the problem had continued. Perhaps Paul’s instruction had not been strong enough, so this passage made it clear that his commands regarding idleness came with the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. The first letter tells Christians to ‘warn those who are lazy’ (1 Thess. 5:14 NLT); that is, the believers were to firmly admonish those who were *ataкта*, a word used for soldiers who would not stay in the ranks. While everyone else was working and serving, they would not. Some were using the excuse of waiting for Christ to return. They may have considered work too menial or unspiritual, equivalent to laying up treasures on earth rather than in heaven” (Bruce B. Barton and Grant R. Osborne, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Life Application Bible Commentary, 142).

v. 6 **teaching** “In this context, an idle, lazy person who is defiantly, insubordinately, and rebelliously out of line with a lawful order for disciplined living (cf. 3:7, 11). The apostle immediately explains that he means a disobedient walk which is not according to the tradition which he received from us (cf. 3:10). The tradition would refer in general to Paul’s past teaching on this subject (cf. 1 Thess 4:11) and in particular to 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12 which had been received (1 Thess 2:13; 4:1) from the apostle and his colleagues” (Richard Mayhew, *1 & 2 Thessalonians: Triumphs and Trials of a Consecrated Church*, Focus on the Bible Commentary, 205).

v. 7 **follow** “Follow’ (*mimēomai*) means to imitate or emulate, and has the same root as the noun ‘followers’ in 1 Th. 1:6. Paul meant for both his words and his behavior to teach the Christian way. Often he must have urged, “Be followers of me” (see 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1), using this same word. This is apparently what he means when he says that his readers already know that they are ‘duty bound’ (the meaning of ‘ought’) to be shaping their lives” (Robert E. Picirilli, “Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians,” in *1 Thessalonians through Philemon*, The Randall House Bible Commentary, 142). Also used for “imitate” in verse 9.

v. 8 **labor and toil** “These two nouns constitute a fixed unit (the same word pair occurs also in 2 Cor. 11:27 and 1 Thess. 2:9) that Paul uses to describe in a more emphatic way the physical exertion connected with the work he endured during his original ministry in Thessalonica. ... both word pairs emphasizing the difficulty of the work (‘in labor and toil’) and the length of the work (‘night and day’) are further underscored by their location at the front of the sentence. The cumulative effect of all these emphases is that Paul presents a powerful example of himself that functions as not only an explicit challenge for the Thessalonian believers to imitate (v. 7: ‘You yourselves know how it is necessary to imitate us’) but also an implicit rebuke for the idle members of the church” (Weima, 610).

v. 8 **paying** “This does not mean that the ministry team was never legitimately an invited guest to someone’s house for a meal (bread) as would be normal. However, it does indicate that they did not go back to that home or any other home repeatedly, looking for never-ending handouts or free meals” (Mayhew, 206).

v. 8 **burden** “[Paul] probably enjoyed hospitality at various times during their ministry; Paul’s point was that he did not expect hospitality or impose it on anyone. They had paid for their lodging and their food in Jason’s home (Acts 17:7); with toil and labor [and they] worked night and day. Paul had been trained as a tent maker (Acts 18:3), and he had worked at this job even as he preached the gospel, taught, and built up a body of believers in this city. Because the people who had brought the gospel to the Thessalonians had worked to not be a burden on anyone, so should the new believers in the city imitate that example” (Barton, 144).

v. 11 **busybody** “Imposing upon other people, wasting other people’s time and distracting them from their daily responsibilities. Here the ‘meddlesome’ would be neglecting their own work as well as annoying their fellows; they ‘do nothing except meddle in other people’s business’ (GNB). In a parallel, younger widows (1 Tim 5:13) are likely to become busybodies (*περιεργοί*), gadding about and gossiping” (Gary Steven Shogren, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 327).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Do all you can to avoid being a burden to those around you
so you can consistently do good for those in need.

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

One valuable tool we teach our kids is how to live and participate in the daily management of the home. We won't actually blink when they turn 18 and suddenly they'll know how to clean a toilet or do laundry. Whether it's chore charts, reward systems, stars, stickers, lollipops, Chuck E. Cheese parties or marbles in a jar, we have to trick them to learn different chores and convince them that it's fun to clean the toilet. Why do we do this? We have a responsibility to get our kids ready for launch. Parents, you're not the cruise director. You're the authority in your kids' lives and have a responsibility to teach them how to be fabulous adults who can take care of themselves. Though it seems far, far away for some of you, now is the time to teach them how and what to do around the house. Summer is an especially fabulous time to reinforce this lesson because there's generally more time at home and we all know they're "bored" four minutes after they wake up. So, put Paul's lesson into practice this week. Help your kids know that we all work around the house, and when we all work, we all eat. Celebrate with popsicles, ice cream or their favorite meal. Help them understand this principle of a strong work ethic applies in all factions of life – school, sports, music, and eventually employment. Reinforce this principle even as they get older. I'm still leaving a list of chores when I walk out the door. Help them understand that we work diligently because we represent Jesus Christ. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13.

1. What does Paul command believers to do in verse 6?
2. What kind of example did Paul set for them?
3. What does Paul say to never get tired of?

What Do You Think?

Why were the people being lazy? Do you think they had a good reason to not work?

What Do You Do?

If your family had a rule that you can't eat if you don't work, would you be able to eat? This week, have a family chore time where everyone participates in household chores for 15 minutes every day.

CORE COMPETENCY: Kindness/Goodness

I treat others better than myself.

MEMORY VERSE: Hebrews 12:28-29

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids 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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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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