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2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-18

WORKING & WAITING



THIS WEEK'S **focus**

Sometimes we don't even realize it's happening, but we start drifting from our goals and plans. Maybe plans changed or the work was harder than we imagined. Maybe unforeseen obstacles presented themselves. Paul knew that many of the believers in the early church were experiencing this spiritually. They had experienced the genuine conviction of the Spirit, had trusted Christ for salvation, and were seeking to live a life of obedience. But then they experienced persecution. They created division where there was once unity. Their old ways started to pop up again. It became harder to remember why they were still doing this thing called Christianity. But they were eager to see Jesus come again, and they needed the reminder that believers are called to kingdom work as we wait for His return.



CENTRAL **truth**

Believers are called to kingdom work as we wait for His return.



EXPLORE

scripture

2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-18

2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-9

6 Now we command you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother or sister who is idle and does not live according to the tradition received from us. **7** For you yourselves know how you should imitate us: We were not idle among

you; **8** we did not eat anyone's food free of charge; instead, we labored and toiled, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you. **9** It is not that we don't have the right to support, but we did it to make ourselves an example to you so that you would imitate us.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:10-12

10 In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: "If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat." **11** For we hear that there are some among

you who are idle. They are not busy but busybodies. **12** Now we command and exhort such people by the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and provide for themselves.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:13-18

13 But as for you, brothers and sisters, do not grow weary in doing good. **14** If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take note of that person; don't associate with him, so that he may be ashamed. **15** Yet don't consider him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. **16** May the Lord

of peace himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with all of you. **17** I, Paul, am writing this greeting with my own hand, which is an authenticating mark in every letter; this is how I write. **18** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-18
CONVERSATION

questions

▶ READ 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-9.

.01 Paul was clear that he had a right to ask for financial support, but he didn't (v. 9). Why didn't he? What message was he sending the church?

.02 What did Paul demonstrate with his work ethic? What can we learn from his example?

▶ READ 2 THESSALONIANS 3:10-12.

.03 What does it mean to be idle? What are some examples of idleness today?



CONTEXT

Once again, Paul warned the Thessalonians against becoming idle. He had warned them against it in his first letter (1 Thess. 4:11; 5:14), and apparently it was still an issue at the time of his second. The word translated as “idle” has the sense of being disorderly or unruly, not just lazy. It seems that many believers were forgoing their work and it was causing disorder in their community. Likely, people were withdrawing from their work and responsibilities because of their misunderstanding about the day of the Lord. If they thought Christ was returning quickly, many could have forsaken their work to proclaim that message. Regardless, in doing so, they were becoming a burden to those around them, perhaps even the poor. Paul had offered them a healthy example in himself and was reminding them to imitate his ways.

.04 What did Paul mean by them becoming "busybodies"? How are we inclined to become busybodies?

.05 Why might some people be tempted to make an idol out of work? How can we avoid doing so?

▶ READ 2 THESSALONIANS 3:13-18.

.06 Why would the Thessalonians have been weary of doing good?

.07 What are some of the ways we can grow weary in doing good and doing things God's way?

.08 What was Paul's final encouragement and prayer for the Thessalonians?



CULTURE

We live in a culture that values being busy. Go more places, do more things, join more clubs, be on more teams. We are quick to place our worth and find our identities in what we do, so we just keep doing more. The problem is, we too can easily find ourselves becoming busybodies like the Thessalonians. We are doing and working—we are just busy with the wrong things. We can fill our calendars with every extracurricular activity, time with friends, and college-prep efforts. None of those things are bad in themselves. The problem comes when the things that matter for our faith take a lower priority. Our commitment to our faith community, our spiritual disciplines, and worship might be put on hold. We might just fill our time doing "good things" or "church things" but never actually engage in kingdom work.



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2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-18

NOW

what?



CENTRAL truth

Believers are called to kingdom work as we wait for His return.

.09 When are students your age most tempted to be idle or lazy? How can we fight that temptation?

.10 How can we be encouraged and challenged by Paul's teaching about work?

.11 How could we find the encouragement we need to keep doing good work and to keep doing things God's way?

.12 How can we encourage others in our lives not to lose heart this week?



DAILY devotions

MEMORIZE 2 THESS. 3:13

7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE READING



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about man?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

day 1

2 THESS. 3:6-11

DWELL

Although we don't earn God's approval, our faith and love should move us to do good work for the sake of the kingdom and the church. We should want God's family to be a healthy community! There were apparently some people in the Thessalonian church who were being idle—expecting to be provided for but not willing to contribute by working. What's more is that instead of working, they were busying themselves by being “busybodies”—maybe gossiping, stirring up drama, or causing other disruptions. These kinds of behaviors can be such a distraction that they prevent the church from caring for those who truly need the support.



How did Paul's example teach the church how they should behave with regard to work?



How can you tell the difference between an idle “busybody” and someone who genuinely needs the care and support of the church?

MEMORIZE

Write 2 Thessalonians 3:13 in a prayer journal or on a note card, and read it to yourself each morning and evening.

PRAY

Ask God to protect you and your church from the disruptive influence of idleness.

day 2

2 THESS. 3:12-18

DWELL

Although Paul instructed his readers to avoid those people who were being idle in the church, he also said that the church should not treat those people like enemies. They were still part of the church, although Paul said to avoid them so that they would be ashamed of their behavior. He also said to warn them as brothers and sisters—as beloved family members. This instruction is still useful for us today. We should care enough about fellow believers to tell them—in love—how their behavior is hurting the church. By being a living example of Christlike living, as Paul was to the Thessalonians, hopefully we can show these people how their behavior is destructive and motivate them to change their behavior on their own.



Paul was not saying that we should be ashamed to ask for help when we need it. How was his instruction different from this?



How can we encourage one another when we begin to get weary of doing good work?

MEMORIZE

Find a recording of 2 Thessalonians 3:13 online, or record yourself reading it. Listen to it at least once a day.

PRAY

Thank God that He is a giver of peace in the midst of the struggles of life.

day 3

PROVERBS 26:13-16

DWELL

Idleness can take many forms. The idle person (“the sluggard”) may make excuses about why they can’t work—“I might get attacked by a lion!” Verse 15 may seem like a ridiculous example: someone too lazy to even bring their food to their mouth properly! But think about it: in our culture of instant gratification, delivery apps and disposable plates mean we can get food whenever we want it, without leaving our house or washing any dishes. This doesn’t mean that occasional lazy days are bad! We all need to rest and take it easy sometimes—in fact, God commanded His people to rest regularly! Also, idleness is different than struggling with physical or mental health. But we should be careful to not make idleness into a lifestyle choice.



How does verse 16 say the idle person thinks of themselves? How are they wrong?



When are you most tempted to be idle? How can you prevent that from becoming a habit in your life?

MEMORIZE

Ask a friend or family member to memorize 2 Thessalonians 3:13 with you this week. Quiz each other several times during the week.

PRAY

Thank God for the gift of rest, and ask Him to help you make that an act of worship rather than idleness.

day 4

PROVERBS 26:17-22

DWELL

↓ Why do these verses use such violent imagery to describe the results of these scenarios?

↔ How can you be a peacemaker if you notice these sorts of situations happening in your church or community?

A busybody is someone who spreads gossip, is overly involved in the affairs of others, or is generally disruptive to peace in a community. These actions can have tremendously damaging effects on the church. The image of a madman shooting arrows and flaming darts shows that careless words and behavior can cause massive destruction. Inserting yourself into someone else's problems can make a situation worse than if you had just left it alone. And gossip may seem like innocent talk, but it can root itself deeply in people's lives. Words have the power to cause deep harm, and we should be careful how we use them.

MEMORIZE

Break 2 Thessalonians 3:13 into 3–5 smaller parts and try to recite a different part to yourself from memory throughout each day.

PRAY

Pray that God would guide you to avoid disruptive behavior such as gossip and quarreling.

day 5

ROMANS 16:17-18

DWELL

↑ What kind of people did Paul warn the church about? How are they distant from God?

↪ How can you avoid being led astray by a person who is causing disunity in the church? How can you pray for them?

Sometimes, the people who are creating division in a church aren't simply being a distraction, but are leading others astray with talk that sounds convincing. They may be spreading false information or promoting false teachings. Unlike in 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, where Paul said to warn the idle and busybodies like a brother, here in Romans he says that these people aren't actually following Christ, although they claim to be, and they should be avoided entirely. It is important that we learn from the wisdom of Scripture and the teaching of wise men and women in the faith so that we can learn discernment.

MEMORIZE

Use colored pencils or markers to colorfully draw 2 Thessalonians 3:13 on a piece of paper or note card, and place it somewhere you can see it often.

PRAY

Pray that God would protect your group, your church, and your community from the damaging effects of disunity and division.