

2 Thessalonians 3:6-17 Answers Discipline of the Disorderly

Introduction:

Joke: There is a big difference between working hard and hardly working! Did you hear about the guy who wasn't afraid of work? He could stand right beside someone doing it and not be bothered in the least.

Today we will explore what the Bible says about the importance of working.

The English Puritans believed all of life is to honor God. They insisted that for the Christian there is no difference between the secular and the sacred; all of life is a calling, *especially* one's vocation. Through our work we are stewards serving God. The Puritans integrated life in the world with spiritual life; they held that we serve God through our daily work.

According to Leland Ryken, "the Puritan view that God calls all workers to their tasks in the world dignifies all legitimate kinds of work. Above all, the Puritan doctrine of vocation sanctifies common work."

William Tyndale said that if we look externally "there is difference betwixt washing of dishes, and preaching of the word of God; but as touching to please God, none at all."

Puritan preacher Richard Baxter explained: "God looketh not ... principally at the external part of the work, but much more to the heart of him that doth it."

— "The Original Puritan Work Ethic", Christian History magazine, Issue 89, 2006.

******What two commands were given in 3:6-12?** The church was commanded to keep away from "idle" (ESV) brothers (3:6) and "idle" brothers were commanded to get to work (3:12).

1. What would it look like to keep away from someone in the church (3:6)? Compare *Matthew 18:15-17* & *1 Corinthians 5:11*. Paul's command here evidently is part of the church discipline process. It means to withdraw fellowship from someone. In Matthew 18, Jesus said the final step is to treat a person in sin as a Gentile and a tax collector (Jewish people in general avoided socializing with Gentiles and Jewish tax collectors were commonly seen as traitors to their race and also to be stigmatized and avoided). In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul said not even to eat with such a one (more on this below).

The command to church discipline is a hard command to have to obey. Yet it is necessary both for the health of the church and the benefit of the sinner. It is tough love.

2. What type of idleness was meant (3:6)? *Compare 3:7-12.* Rather than idleness, the KJV has “disorderly” and the NAS “unruly”. The Greek is *ataktos* and means “not in proper order” and hence disorderly or insubordinate (BAGD, p. 119). It does not fundamentally mean idle. However, based on the rest of the paragraph (especially 3:10-11), it seems to be out of order with respect to work and thus idle. Instead of working hard they were hardly working.

3. What tradition had they received from the apostles (3:6)? *See 3:7-8.* The tradition in question was that of working for a living. Paul and his associates were bi-vocational ministers. They worked at secular vocations while ministering and paid for what they ate.

Word Study: “Tradition” (3:6) is from *paradosis*, the same word used in 2:15 with reference to their teaching traditions. The Thessalonians were commanded to hold to both the teaching traditions of the apostles and the lifestyle traditions of the apostles.

With respect to what were the Thessalonians to imitate the missionaries (3:7-8)? They were to imitate them with respect to not being idle.

According to 3:9, why did the missionaries prefer to work to pay their own way? The reason given in this case was to give the church an example to imitate. There obviously was a big problem in general with people not working (being lazy, living off others).

Socialism: Why is it that with socialism people who want to keep the money they earned are criticized as greedy, but those who want to take away other people’s wealth for themselves without working for it are never seen as greedy?

4. At what vocation did the missionaries toil and labor day and night (3:8)? *See Acts 18:33-34.* Paul was a tentmaker and presumably the others assisted him.

NIV Acts 20:33-34 I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions.

Bi-Vocational Missionaries: Commentator Gary Shogren argues the problem is not that these men were idle, but that they had ceased working secular jobs in order to be full time evangelists supported by the church, thus violating Paul’s missionary tradition of being self supporting. It was out of order for them to do that. This violation of tradition amounted to meddling with the way God wanted missions done (meddling/busybodies), 3:11b (Shogren, p. 334).

5. Based on 3:9, it is wrong to support a full time missionary? *See 1 Corinthians 9:14.* It is not wrong. They have the “right” to be supported. Paul was a willing exception.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:14 . . . the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:18 . . . in my preaching I . . . present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

6. What command did Paul give them in person (3:10)? The command was that if anyone was not willing to work, neither should he eat.

ESV **Proverbs 16:26** A worker's appetite works for him; his mouth urges him on.

What double problem was articulated in 3:11? *Compare 1 Timothy 5:13.* Not only were some not working but they were meddling in other people's business.

7. What is a busybody (3:11)? *Compare 1 Timothy 5:13.* In English a busybody is a officious or inquisitive person. There is a word play here in the Greek between busy at work and busybody. "Busy at work" is from *ergazomai* (to labor). The name of the unit of measure of energy and mechanical work, the erg, come from this Greek word. Busybody is from *periergazomai* (*peri* means around) and means to waste one's labor about, to bustle around uselessly, to busy one's self about trifling matters. It was apparently used of someone officiously inquisitive about other people's affairs (Thayer).

ESV **1 Timothy 5:13** . . . they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.

Review: What command did Paul have for idle busybodies in 3:12? He commanded and encouraged them to earn their own living (and quit bothering others!).

Martin Luther King Jr: "If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well."

8. What is the idea behind not just working but working quietly (3:12)? Paul did not mean than the person should work mutely. Quietly is from *hésuchia*, which can literally mean silence, but it can also mean quiet down (BAGD, p. 349). Here it seems to mean not causing trouble, not meddling.

******9. What stance should the church take toward a person who does not obey what Paul wrote in this letter (3:13-15)?** The church should take note of him, warn him and have nothing to do with him. It is tough love.

In context, when Paul wrote not to grow weary in doing good, what did he mean (3:13)? He may have written this with respect to charity. The church was to keep on doing good, helping others who were deserving, but not enabling the lazy.

10. What would it mean for the brothers to "take note" of someone (3:14)? The Greek word here, *sémeioo* (4593), means to mark. A disobedient person is to be clearly identified (marked) by the church.

What is the goal of not associating with him (3:14)? It is so that he will be ashamed and repent. The purpose of church discipline is not only to protect the church from the contagious effects of sin, but also to bring pressure to bear on the sinner in hopes of causing him to repent and be restored.

What caution did Paul offer in 3:15? He is to be warned as a brother, not treated as an enemy. The church does indeed have enemies (those who persecute it). It would be easy for the church to go too far and treat the wayward brother like an enemy. However, the lazy brother is to be warned in a *brotherly* way, not as though there is no hope.

11. How does 3:14-15 fit into the church discipline process of Matthew 18:15-17?

Perhaps 3:14-15 fits in the Matthew 18 process near the end at Matthew 18:17, where the matter is told to the whole church and the sinner is given a chance to listen to the church. He is still treated as a brother. However, if the lazy man persists in not working, then he is to be treated as a Gentile and a tax collector (Lenski, p. 467). Others feel the sin of loafing is nothing compared to the magnitude of sin dealt with in Matthew 18 and that the two passages are not parallel (Best, p. 344).

******How did Paul conclude this letter (3:16-18)?** He concluded it with a benediction.

How did Paul prove this letter was really from him and not an impostor (3:17)? Paul wrote the closing words in his own handwriting (the rest of the letter had been dictated to a secretary). It appears that Paul often wrote the conclusion to his letters in his own handwriting:

ESV **1 Corinthians 16:21** I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.

ESV **Galatians 6:11** See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

ESV **Colossians 4:18** I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.

12. Why did Paul feel the need to prove the authenticity of this letter (3:17)? Compare 2:1-2. Evidently the enemies of the church had forged a letter from Paul in order to confuse the church.

So What?

13. What did we learn about how to pray for missionaries?

14. What does this chapter teach us about work?

15. What does this chapter teach us about church discipline?

Dos and Don'ts in the Workplace
(From Richard Baxter's *A Christian Directory*)

- Choose that employment or calling ... in which you may be most serviceable to God. Choose not that in which you may be most rich or honourable in the world.
- Be diligent in your callings, and spend no time in idleness, and perform your labours with holy minds, to the glory of God, and in obedience to his commands.
- Idleness is a robbing God, who is the Lord of us and all our faculties.
- Take pleasure in your work, and then you will not be slothful in it.
- This interest of God in your lowest, and hardest, and servilist labour, doth make it honourable and should make it sweet.
- Remember that riches do make it much harder for a man to be saved.
- If God show you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way (without wrong to your soul, or to any other), if you refuse this, and then choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward.
- You must not desire nor seek to get another's goods or labour for less than it is worth.
- You have far more cause to be afraid of prosperity, than of adversity; of riches, than of poverty.
- The devil suiteth his temptations to men's daily work and business.

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear, giving them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the ESV.
- You can hear a recording of this actual lesson being taught at www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF

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