

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

God's Command to the Working Man!

II Thessalonians 3:6-15

1 What is God's command to the working man in the church? 2

Let us look at Second Thessalonians, chapter 3, verses 6 through 15, 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. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. 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." 1 3

We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command

1 II Thessalonians 3:6-10.

and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. 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. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. ²

The people referred to in this scripture misunderstood the Apostle Paul's teaching about the Lord's Second Coming. They thought the Lord was definitely returning any day. So, some quit their jobs and became parasites on the church.

How should the church handle this situation? ⁴

² II Thessalonians 3:11-15.

I. What Working People in the Church Should Not Do.

What working people in the church should not do.

Twice in our marriage my wife and I were confronted by what we consider today, lazy people wanting to take advantage of a Christian couple; to leech upon them.

The first, early in our marriage, was a couple who asked for a handout of food and a place to stay “for a couple of days”. We fell for it. They would show up in the evening just in time for dinner and sleep on our living room floor each night. That lasted for several weeks until we finally said it was enough.

The second time was when our second son, in his teens, asked if his friend from church could stay a few days until the renovation on his apartment was finished. He stayed in my son’s bedroom with him and ate our meals with us. When we were ready to move a

couple of months later, he wanted to move with us so he could continue to live with us.

What should charitable Christian people do with folks like this? ⁵

You should not associate with the idle person. Notice verse 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.** Again, in verse 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.** ⁶

The word **idle** ³ here, in the original language, means to be lazy, refusing to work, disorderly, sloppy, insubordinate or just not fit in. ⁷ This person doesn't want to work. So he begs and leeches on others. ⁸

³ ἀτάκτως.

Verse 11 ⁴ implies that, since he is idle, he meddles in other people's business. ⁹

How do you treat him? Verse 15 says, **Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.** **You are to treat him as a Christian brother and warn him.** Treat him as a relative who is taking advantage of you because of his relationship to you.

What do you do with a relative who leeches? You may love him but probably wouldn't want much to do with him. So, you warn him to straighten up. ¹⁰

But, **never let instances like this discourage you from being charitable!** Verse 13, **And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.** ¹¹

You were taught to love your brother in the Lord. **Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.** ⁵ ¹² You were, also, taught to help

⁴ Verse 11 - We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies.

⁵ | Thessalonians 5:15.

those who are truly in need. **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.**⁶ ¹³

So, **what do you do when it is obvious you have become a victim?** Verse 10, **For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”**

Don't let these folks discourage your charity. Just don't include them in it! God is not against welfare. He is just against lazy people! ¹⁴

⁶ Ephesians 4:28.

II. What Working People in the Church Should Do

What working people in the church should do. ¹⁵

Follow the example the Apostle Paul gave you. What did he do? ¹⁶

He was not idle. Verse 7, We were not idle when we were with you . . . ¹⁷

He was not a burden. He paid for the food he ate. Verse 8, On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. ¹⁸ If anyone has the authority to be provided for without charge, it would have been him! First Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 14 says, In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

Paul worked in the construction business making tents to be self supporting. We had a dear friend who

worked in a mortuary so he could serve as a missionary on an American Indian reservation. ¹⁹

Paul did a good job at what he did vocationally in order to be a good testimony to others. Verse 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**. Whatever you do for a living, do it well. Doing a sloppy job is a poor witness! ²⁰

Work quietly without boasting. Verse 12, **Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.** If you make an honest wage, you have nothing to boast about. God gave you the strength! If you use part of your wages for charity you, also, have nothing to boast about. God owns everything! ²¹

Obey God's word! Verse 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.** ²² Everyone who is a Christian need to obey;

those who are idle and those who must deal with idle people.

Notice in verse 6 ⁷ and verse 12 ⁸, the word **command**, ⁹ in the original language, means to give instructions or to announce something that was told by someone else. ²⁴

In verse 6, **to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us**, the word **teaching** ¹⁰ means tradition, something passed down or announced through the “chain of command”. ²⁵ These instructions were not from the Apostle Paul but passed on from the Lord. This is God’s word! ²⁶

⁷ Verse 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.

⁸ Verse 12 - Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

⁹ παραγγέλλω.

¹⁰ παράδοσις.

Although the apostle meant the instructions in our message today, we should consider the whole New Testament to be authoritative for our conduct. ²⁷

Remember, God's word is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God! Second Timothy, chapter 3, verses 16 and 17, All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. ²⁸

Are you obeying the word of God; about working hard instead of relying on others, about living the Christian life and about becoming a Christian?

biblelifemessages.org