**Community Group Discussion Guide**

**2 Thessalonians 3:6-15**

*Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15*

*Set the Context…*

**Context**: The Apostle Paul crafted his second letter to the Thessalonians to encourage them to remain rooted in Christ and their faith. Sending this letter not long after the first, Paul recognized the Thessalonian church was encountering persecution and believed their suffering to be a result of “the day of the Lord” (2 Thess. 2:2). Many Thessalonians had become idle and lazy, choosing not to work because Christ’s second coming was believed to be upon them. This not only lead to a gossiping, busybody lifestyle but people had become burdensome to others as they were continually dependent on the body for support. In this chapter Paul exhorts these believers to continue laboring in their vocations, living on mission, and guarding their witness.

**Commentary:** Paul opens with a warning to Christians that they should **“to keep away from every brother or sister who is idle and does not live according to the tradition received from us”** (v.6). Paul wanted the Thessalonians to understand that their choices and actions—their witness—spoke loudly to the world around them. Keeping away from the idle would alert them that slothfulness while able bodied was unacceptable and they were to be working hard at their jobs, contributing to society. Throughout scripture work is seen as a good thing. God gave Adam a job to cultivate and keep the garden before the fall. In other words, work is a gift from God that can be used to glorify him and provide man’s needs. Christians are to do their jobs with great effort and integrity, putting off laziness as an act of worship to the Lord. Proverbs 6:10 says, “***A little sleep, a little slumber, a little*** ***folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man***.” Paul even pointed to his own laboring in a vocation, as an example to be replicated, saying **“For you yourselves know how you should imitate us: We were not idle among you; we did not eat anyone’s food free of charge; instead, we labored and toiled…”** (v.7-8). Paul is making clear that he, as well as all Christians, are to live above reproach, making decisions based on furthering the Gospel rather than self-gain. He restates in the following verse that he did not work because he had to. **“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 imitate us”** (v.9). Another issue that arises with not working, is that free time makes you busy in other people’s business. This is the idea of a “busybody.” Paul rebukes this activity saying, “***now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and earn their own living***.” (v.12)

 The concluding warning is to pay close attention to any among them who chooses not to heed the word of the Lord in this area of life. **“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”** (v.14). As mentioned before the purpose for shunning the lazy is not because they are an enemy, but rather a brother or sister who needs correction and sanctification. This is an example of church discipline for their restoration. (1 Corinthians 5:2-5; 9-12) The letter to the Thessalonians ends with a benediction, as Paul affirms his authorship of the book and prays that they would experience the “***grace of the Lord Jesus Christ***.” (v. 18) Grace is the unmerited favor of God, and the power we need to obey God’s commands.

*Share main truths of the passage along with verses that teach them* and discuss how to apply to our daily lives …

**Key Points:**

* Warning against idleness, and the example of working (v.6-9)
* Warning against being busybodies (v.10-12)
* Holding each other accountable to obedience (v.13-15)
* Benediction (v.16-18)

**Discussion and Application Questions:**

Verses 6-9

1. In light of chapter 3, do you see areas of your life where you have drifted and/or become complacent in your walk with Christ?
2. How can you take action to grow in the areas of your life where you recognize you may have taken a back seat or are not being obedient?
3. How/why does working hard and avoiding laziness impact your witness? Discuss with your group…
4. How can you proactively and evangelistically provide for the needy, yet not negate their personal responsibility to provide for themselves (or their family)?
5. Looking to Paul’s example in v.9, although you may have certain rights and liberties, how should you treat them if it hinders your witness and/or the gospel message?
6. Paul states generosity, self-sacrifice, personal accountability, and a willingness to work hard are vital to protecting your witness (v.9). Discuss these attributes and why they/your witness matter...

Verses 10-12

1. How can we grow in our personal walks to focus on Jesus and encourage one another in the faith?
2. Paul specifically calls out those in the church who gossip and are “busybodies.” How can we avoid becoming a busybody and what steps are necessary in doing so?
3. How does a social media age contribute to being a busybody? Are their ways you can guard against this?
4. The bible is filled with proverbs and commands to consider how we speak and when we speak. In what areas could you apply doing your work quietly or being slow to speak and quick to listen.
5. Paul’s message in v.10 insinuates for every action there is a reaction/consequence. With this in mind, how does keeping Jesus at the center of everything you do so important?

Verses 13-15

1. When we face hardships, what must we remain focused on to do as Paul commands: “not grow weary in doing good” (v.13)?
2. How should we view our Christian brothers and sisters when they are at fault and in need of correction?
3. Why does Paul instruct the Thessalonians to view fellow Christians like “brothers,” rather than “enemies” when correcting them (v.15)? Discuss the significance…
4. Paul makes clear there is to be consequences for sinning, yet it is to be done out of love with hopes of correction. Does this reflect the Gospel? If so, why is it important we also champion this method?

*Share a key take away or challenge for the week…*

*Pray together in light of 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15…*

**Prayer Guide:**

* Pray for our church that we would live in a manner worthy of our calling, love one another well, glorify Christ in word and action, and remain faithful.
* Pray for our city that they would encounter authentic Christians who are hard-working, passionate, honest, loving, and generous members of society who proclaim Jesus.
* Pray for our world that they would be positively overwhelmed by Christians who take serious the exhortation to work hard, love God, and love people.