

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a zebra crossing on a city street. The crossing consists of alternating black and white horizontal stripes. Several pedestrians are captured in motion, crossing the street. Their shadows are cast long and dark on the white stripes, indicating bright, direct sunlight. The people are dressed in casual attire, including t-shirts, shorts, and trousers. Some are carrying bags or umbrellas. The overall scene is a busy, everyday urban moment.

LAST DAYS LIVING

A STUDY IN I & II THESSALONIANS

“Instructions for the Idle”

II THESSALONIANS 3:6-12

- God is a worker (Gen 1:1, 25; Col 1:16).
- God sets a pattern of working (and resting) for us (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15).
- Work is a holy duty (I Cor 10:31; Col 3:23).
- To work is normal, natural and human (Gen 2:15; Gen 3:17-19; Ps 104:23).

A Primer on Biblical Work Ethic

- Can be hard (Prov 12:11, 14)
- Can feel routine (Ecc 1:3; 2:11, 22; 3:9; 5:15-16)
- Can be despised (Ecc 2:18)

Challenges to Work

Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.

Ecclesiastes 5:19

“How good it is to work
for God in the daytime,
and at night to lie down
under his smiles.”



Jonathan Edwards

“A man must not imagine ... when he is called to be a Christian, that he must presently cast off all worldly employments ... and apply himself wholly ... to prayer and contemplation, but he must retain the calling still as well as the other, following the one still with the other.”



Thomas Gataker

“The traditional theological triad of faith, hope, and love also provides a good summary of how we can work in a moral manner. We work in faith that God has called us to our work and will supply what we need to perform it. We work in hope that God will prosper our work and make it productive. ...



Leland Ryken

... We work in love as we view our work in terms of service to society. In all of these endeavors Christian workers pray that God will lead them to meaningful work, grant prosperity through it, and use their work as a service to humanity.”



Leland Ryken

KEY POINT:

Not working is not the problem; the refusal to work is the problem.

I. The Sin of Idleness (vs. 6)

*And we urge you, brothers, **admonish the idle**,
encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be
patient with them all.*

I Thessalonians 5:14

*and to aspire to live quietly,
and to mind your own affairs,
and to work with your hands,
as we instructed you,
so that you may walk properly before outsiders
and be dependent on no one.*

I Thessalonians 4:11-12

“Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”

I Corinthians 15:33

I. The Sin of Idleness (vs. 6)

II. Paul's Example of Not Being Idle (vs. 7-10)

A. Paul's Choices (vs. 7-9)

- He was not idle (Acts 18:3-4).
- He did not expect compensation.
- He worked hard.
- He was not a burden.

What Did Paul Do?

Pastors like Paul must not be in ministry for greedy gain (I Tim 3:8; Tit 1:7; I Pet 5:2) or be lovers of money (I Tim 3:3). Since the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, it does not behoove a pastor like Paul to minister to others to accumulate wealth (I Tim 6:9-10; Heb 13:5).

*For it is written in the Law of Moses,
‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out
the grain.’ Is it for oxen that God is concerned?*

I Corinthians 9:9



Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

I Timothy 5:17-18

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

Matthew 10:5-8

⁹ Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, ¹⁰ no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. ¹¹ And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart.

Matthew 10:9-11

I. The Sin of Idleness (vs. 6)

II. Paul's Example of Not Being Idle (vs. 7-10)

A. Paul's Choices (vs. 7-9)

B. Paul's Teaching (vs. 10)

KEY POINT:

Not working is not the problem; the refusal to work is the problem.

*A worker's appetite works for him;
his mouth urges him on.*

Proverbs 16:26

- Or laziness
- The idle is responsible for his own poverty (Prov 10:4-5).
- The idle will be unsteady, while the hard working will bring stability (Prov 15:19).
- Condemned in the Scriptures (Prov 10:26; 12:27; 24:30-34)

The Sin of Idleness (vs. 6)

*In all toil there is profit,
but mere talk leads only to poverty.*

Proverbs 14:23

I. The Sin of Idleness (vs. 6)

II. Paul's Example of Not Being Idle (vs. 7-10)

A. Paul's Choices (vs. 7-9)

B. Paul's Teaching (vs. 10)

III. What to Do About Idleness (vs. 11-12)

A. Redirect (vs. 11).

But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.

I Peter 4:15

Besides that, 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.

I Timothy 5:13

I. The Sin of Idleness (vs. 6)

II. Paul's Example of Not Being Idle (vs. 7-10)

A. Paul's Choices (vs. 7-9)

B. Paul's Teaching (vs. 10)

III. What to Do About Idleness (vs. 11-12)

A. Redirect (vs. 11).

B. Get to work (vs. 12).

“Be sure that you live not idly, but in some constant business of a lawful calling, so far you have bodily strength. Idleness is a constant sin, and labour is a duty. Idleness is but the devil’s home for temptation, and for unprofitable, distracting musings. Labour profiteth others and ourselves; both soul and body need it. Six days must thou labour, and must not eat. God hath made it our duty, and will bless us in his appointed way. I have known grievous, despairing melancholy cured and turned into a life of godly cheerfulness, principally by setting upon constancy and diligence in the business of families and callings.”

Richard Baxter

“Wherever man may stand, whatever he may do, to whatever he may apply his hand, in agriculture, in commerce, and in industry, or his mind, in the world of art, and science, he is, in whatsoever it may be, constantly standing before the face of his God, he is employed in the service of his God, he has strictly to obey his God, and above all, he has to aim at the glory of his God.”

Anonymous