“A Biblical Work Ethic”

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12
1-14-2026

It should be your desire to please God by abounding in old-fashioned work!

3 Reasons: We should be Christians who work because of -

1. The Command to work (v. 11)
2. The Benefits of work (v. 11)
3. The Purpose of work (v. 12)

I. THE COMMAND TO WORK (v. 11)

A. IT'S A COMMAND THAT IS NOT UNREASONABLE (or unBiblical)
(Work should be considered an honor)

B. IT'S A COMMAND THAT IS NOT OPTIONAL
(The command to work must not be treated lightly)

II. THE BENEFITS OF WORK (v. 11)

A. IT HELPS YOU SETTLE DOWN
(Work relieves mental, physical, and emotional unrest [relieves excitement & tension])

B. IT KEEPS YOU FROM BEING A BUSYBODY
(Work removes meddlesomeness)

C. IT ALLOWS YOU TO USE WHAT GOD GAVE YOU
(Work replaces idleness)

III. THE PURPOSE OF WORK (v. 12)

You must work so that:
A. YOU UPHOLD A TESTIMONY FOR CHRIST

You must work so that:
B. YOUR NEEDS ARE MET

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INTRODUCTION: Our sinful nature does not want to work. By nature we tend toward ease, leisure, and luxury without earning it. We are afraid of work. This four-letter word is practically a curse word in the 20th century. What do you say when you leave someone? "Don't work too hard!"

America once believed in "earning your bread."

Today America's philosophy is centered around putting in less and less time for more and more money.

Our nation will sooner or later pay for this attitude. No one wants to invest. Everyone wants to take, take, take.

In context (v. 1-2), God is showing us 3 things that please Him:

1. Our sanctification (v. 3-8)
2. Our love (v. 9-10)
3. Our work (v. 11-12)

*** It should be your desire to please God by abounding in old-fashioned work!**

3 Reasons: We should be Christians who work because of -

1. The Command to work (v. 11)
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I. THE COMMAND TO WORK (v. 11)

The "and" (coordinating conjunction) ties verse 11 to the last sentence in verse 10.

Paul is saying: "We beseech you [not only to abound in love - v. 9-10 - but also] to work!"

it's interesting that Paul abruptly shifts from a command to love (v. 9-10), to a command to work (v. 11-12).

One commentator explains the transition this way: "The new exhortation is added with a view to saving brotherly love from being damaged" (Riggenbach, cited in Hiebert, p. 180).

One way to see that nothing we say or do becomes a stumbling block to anyone else, is to be busy doing what God wants us to do!

Those who cause problems in churches are the "busybody" type, who have too much "free time" on their hands.

A. IT'S A COMMAND THAT IS NOT UNREASONABLE (or unBiblical)
(Work should be considered an honor)

"Study" = lit. to have an affection for honor; to be fond of honor - to be moved into serious action by a love for honor. Those who love the honor of getting an "A" study! They put in the effort. The word in this context means to "strive eagerly" or "make it your ambition." (cp. its use in Ro. 15:20; II Cor. 5:9)

"Seek earnestly to be quiet."

The exhortation: "Study to be quiet" indicates that there was a spirit of restlessness in the young Thess. church (Hiebert, p. 180).

There is reason to believe that this restlessness (not working) came about because they were excited about, and anticipated the imminent return of Christ.

Proof: 1) Following verses deal with return
2) Follow-up letter (II Thess. 3:5-15)

--Proper earthly interests were reduced in their eyes.
--Because they expected Christ to soon appear they neglected their daily duties; while the truth of Christ's return should actually make us more enthusiastic and faithful about our daily duties.

They might have thought: "It is not work the effort to work; it is not honorable; it is not a high ambition to be serious about our jobs---after all, we will leave it all behind soon!"

Therefore, Paul says, "You are to make it your ambition ("study") to work."

Work is not a curse, it is a blessing. God gave Adam work to do in the Garden of Eden before man sinned. After the fall, he would still work, only now it would be "by the sweat of his brow." (cp. Gen. 2:15 and 3:17)

No difference between the secular and the sacred to a Christian.

There is nothing inconsistent between honest toil and personal holiness. All things are to be done as service to Christ (Col. 3:17 - "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Jesus worked, as a carpenter, before full-time ministry.

While a church planter, Paul worked so the churches would not say he preached for money.

B. IT'S A COMMAND THAT IS NOT OPTIONAL
(The command to work must not be treated lightly)

"Commanded" = a military term; to charge or order. To give instructions that must be carried out.

To not be working (unless totally physically unable) is sin!

II. THE BENEFITS OF WORK (v. 11)

A. IT HELPS YOU SETTLE DOWN
(Work relieves mental, physical, and emotional unrest [excitement; tension])

The infinitive "to be quiet" basically means: "To be at rest". It was used of silence after speech, peace after war, and rest after labor. It was also used of tranquility or peace of mind." (HIebert, p. 182)

"To be quiet" refers to having a calm, peaceful life; it's the opposite of being disorderly and disturbed, which always will lead to your causing disturbances.

Being quiet is tied to working in II Thess. 3:12.
You have an inner peace; because when you are working you are concentrating your energy on something without divided interests.

"Your body, mind, and emotions were designed for hard work, and will break down without it" ("Last Days" Journal, 1986, p. 25). The phrase "Use it or lose it" is true!

EX: of people who don't have a job. They have energy that isn't being used, so they are restless (an honest day's work gives you a good night's sleep), tense, flustered, in a tempest - going this way and then that, but accomplishing nothing!

Work is God's invention. It's good for you!

"Salt from the sweat of work preserves the soul" ("Last Days" p. 27).

I am miserable (depressed, etc.) when I don't get things done.

Man needs a sense of accomplishment.

The happiest people in a church are those that serve the most.

If you want something to get done, give it to someone who is already busy (If you give it to someone who isn't doing anything, chances are he won't get at what you give him to do).

Working hard has great therapeutic value for those of you who are "sick" all the time. Work is really a great healer!

--You get your mind off yourself
--You use muscles and tone them (lose weight)
--You get circulation going
--You have a sense of accomplishment

B. IT KEEPS YOU FROM BEING A BUSYBODY
(Work removes meddlesomeness)

The words "to do your own business" means to be busy with your own job - to be occupied with your own responsibilities. The implication is this: "Be busy, not a busybody!"

"But let none of you suffer...as a busybody in other men's matters" (I Pet. 4:15)

EX: of what would happen if young widows (under 60) were financially provided for by the Church - they would be busybodies, gossips, etc. (I Tim. 5:3-15)

The woman in Prov. 31 is one who can be primarily characterized as a worker!

"Wives are to be keepers (workers) at home" (Titus 2:5)

C. IT ALLOWS YOU TO USE WHAT GOD GAVE YOU
(Work replaces idleness)

"Work" = to labor daily

"With your own hands" = points to 1) manual labor (the Greeks viewed it as degrading, only to be done by slaves) 2) Skilled labor (If God has given you ability, use it; if skill (a trade), use it!

There was much wealth in Thessalonica; and a few wealthy people in the church (Acts 17:4), yet all are exhorted to work!

Ben Franklin said: "No man ere was glorious who was not laborious."

Why did God give us hands and legs if He didn't intend we use them?

Why so much chaos (sin) in our Country?
--Many don't work (instead they sell drugs, sell bodies)
--Many don't work enough (get rich quick schemes)

"Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles, but the one who gathers by labor increases it" (Prov. 13:11)

NOTE: Warn of the danger of being a "workaholic" where work becomes your god (need a balance).

Because America works less and makes more, she like Sodom has more time to sin (EZ. 16:49)

Laziness is sin. Idleness is sin. What good is a car that only runs in neutral all day? In NY it is a car waiting for a thief to drive it away.

So are you if you are idle. Idleness is the Devil's workshop.

How should we work?

1) David says in I Chron. 29:2, "I have prepared with <u>all my might</u> for the house of God"

2) <u>Cheerfully</u> - Col. 3:23 - "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

3) <u>Be thorough</u> - finish the job

4) Go the <u>extra mile</u> = Do it right! We are ambassadors for Christ! You will really shock the unsaved world! (leave things cleaner when you are finished with them than when you started)

III. THE PURPOSE OF WORK (v. 12)

You must work so that:

A. YOU UPHOLD A TESTIMONY FOR CHRIST

"Walk" = conduct your lives.

"Honestly" = lit. good form. In a way that matches your profession. A "becoming" or "fitting" behavior. So the unsaved don't see an inconsistency in you and thus have an excuse to reject your gospel.

"Them that are without" = those outside of our assembly and those outside of Christ.

God is concerned about those that are without (outside)

Col. 4:5 - Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."

I Tim. 3:7 - "Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without: lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."
(Cp. also I Cor. 5:12-13)

Unbelievers may not comprehend the blessings of the gospel, but they are fully able to see the difference between order and confusion, and between idleness and diligence in professed believers (Hiebert, p. 184).

We can never be indifferent to the impact we produce by our example.

We don't merely discredit ourselves, but we discredit the name of our Lord!

Christians who defend their beliefs but do not pay their bills have no beliefs to defend.

Your boss, neighbor, unsaved parents, etc., may look at your and say: "If Jesus is like you, I want nothing to do with Him."

When you are lazy on the job, you are discrediting the cause of Christ.

When you are dishonest (steal time, extra-long breaks, late, etc.) on the job, you are discrediting the cause of Christ.

When you are unproductive on the job, you are discrediting the cause of

Christ.

When you do a poor job (sloppy work) you are discrediting the cause of Christ.

A Christian should never be known as being slothful, unfaithful, etc. in his job.

A hard worker will win the respect of outsiders.

You must work so that:

B. YOUR NEEDS ARE MET

We are not to be parasites (free-loaders) living off others (using others).

Those who "deliberately impose upon the generosity of others are not living in love" (Hiebert, p. 185).

There are times when we do need each other (EX: Acts 2, 4).

"While believers must always be ready to help others (Gal. 6:2) (as an act of love), believers must also shoulder their own burden (Gal. 6:5)." (Morris, p. 88)

But these times should be the exception not the rule.

We are seeking to give, not get! Eph. 4:28 - "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

--Anyone who can work, should work.
(Public welfare discourages work - if it is to be given, it should only be for the disabled and elderly)

--Anyone who wants to work, will work.

(There is no excuse for not finding a job) I would rather dig ditches than beg.

CONCLUSION:

Are you working hard? Or hardly working?

Jesus said: "I must work..." (Jn. 9:4)