

SERMON NOTES

LOVE THIS BOOK

Responsibility

What's the problem?

"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive 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 offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good. Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer." (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15)

"idle and disruptive" (vv. 6, 11)

"we did not eat anyone's food without paying for it" (v. 8)

"the one who is unwilling to work shall not eat" (v. 10)

"bushbodies" (v. 11)

"patron"—a wealthy person

"clients"—the entourage

What's the goal?

Responsibility

"God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" (Genesis 1:28)

"The Lord God took the man and put him the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Genesis 2:15)

How do we develop this?

- Positive Peer Pressure
 - Personal examples
 - Consequences
- A Particular Perspective

"May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance." (2 Thessalonians 3:5)

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Description for Series

Love This Book, Part 4, is an opportunity to study the writings of Paul with a renewed understanding of what it means to be “in Christ” and how that knowledge changes everything about us. As we look at the letters written by Paul in the New Testament, we will focus on how we are Shaped by the Gospel. Through his letters, we see the challenges and questions that confronted the first generation of Christians and how Paul sought to equip others to be part of the ongoing story of the gospel.

Praying Scripture

The prayer focus this week is 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

“May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.”

Below is an example of how to pray the passage:

Father, help me to surrender to the lordship of Christ so that my heart is able to receive the deep love of God. Help me lay aside any wrong beliefs I may have about God’s love for me and accept with joy that I am deeply loved. Also, give me the ability to persevere through difficulties and trials just as Christ endured suffering when he walked on this earth. In the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, Amen.

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

JANUARY 29

So, how should our faith affect our approach to work? In writing to the Thessalonian church, Paul argues that following Jesus should encourage us to be responsible at work. So, what does this look like and how do we develop it? Paul answers those questions as we look at 2 Thessalonians.



DAY ONE

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

Before reading these verses, it is important to read the concluding verses in chapter 9, where Paul writes about the importance of a disciplined life. Paul pursues his ministry with discipline and self-sacrificial love so that he will not be “disqualified for the prize.” (9:24-27) In contrast to Paul are the people of Israel who failed to attain the “prize” of the promised land. (10:1-13) (Moo 136) Using the historical account of the Israelites in the wilderness, Paul reminds them that straying from obedience to Christ, and substituting our own desires for that obedience, leads to idolatry. Paul’s logic in chapter 10 compels us to see the experience of Israel in the wilderness as gospel-shaped and, therefore, can serve as a warning about the dangers of idolatry for Christians today. If those who drank from the spiritual rock of Christ in the past can be led into idolatry, so can we. (Macaskill 68) Anytime we place false confidence in anything but the grace and faithfulness of God, we run the risk of creating an earthly idol. (Moo 136)

As you read these verses this week, be aware of how the Spirit is leading you to think about idols in your life.

1. What connection can you make between the concluding verses of chapter 9 and the opening verses of chapter 10?
2. Why does Paul choose to refer to the Israelite experience in the wilderness?
3. What New Testament reference to Jesus is Paul referring to when he says that the rock was Christ? (See John 4:14; 6:30-35)

Respond by writing down ways that you have experienced Jesus as the bread and water of life.

Reflect on the disobedience of the Israelites in the wilderness and the consequences that they suffered. Take time to acknowledge ways that you have dismissed the provision of God and confess your actions to the Father.

Pray a prayer of thankfulness for the grace shown by the Father in your life.

DAY TWO

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

1. What does Paul say is the reason for writing these things to the Corinthians? (verses 6 and 11)
2. According to verses 6 and 7 what is the source of idolatry?
3. Name the examples that Paul gives from the account of the Israelites in the wilderness.

Respond by applying the principles from verses 6-10 regarding idolatry to your life. Are there areas of your life like eating and drinking, sexuality, or even complaining that have become an idol? (Remember, an idol is anything in which we place false confidence and value above God’s grace and faithfulness.)

Reflect on your heart and focus of your life. What idols have you unknowingly created?

Pray for the courage to dethrone the idols of your heart.



DAY THREE

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

1. What warning does Paul give the Corinthian believers? How can pride be the root of our downfall?
2. Why does Paul remind the Corinthians that they should not give into temptation? What should they see as the source of their ability to overcome temptation?
3. What is the link between temptation and idolatry?

Respond by memorizing verse 13 as a reminder of God's faithfulness and power in your life.

Reflect on the posture you have before the Lord. Do you find yourself struggling with pride and the belief that you can overcome temptation on your own? Admit your own brokenness and need for God's strength and faithfulness in your life.

Pray for humility of heart and mind. Ask the Spirit to show you when you are tempted to set up idols of your own making instead of surrendering wholeheartedly to God.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your work ethic? From whom did you learn your work ethic? What work ethic are you modeling to others?
2. How did this passage make you feel? Do you believe Paul is being harsh in this passage?
3. What problem is Paul addressing in this passage?
4. What does it look like to have a work ethic that reflects "living a life worthy of the gospel?" (Philippians 1:27)
5. George mentioned that it's important to balance the message of 2 Thessalonians 3:5, which says you are deeply loved by God and should persevere like Christ. What does this look like in your own life? What does it look like to model these qualities to children and students? (This should be true for parents, grandparents, or anyone who works with children and students.)
6. Encourage one another to practice a godly work ethic.