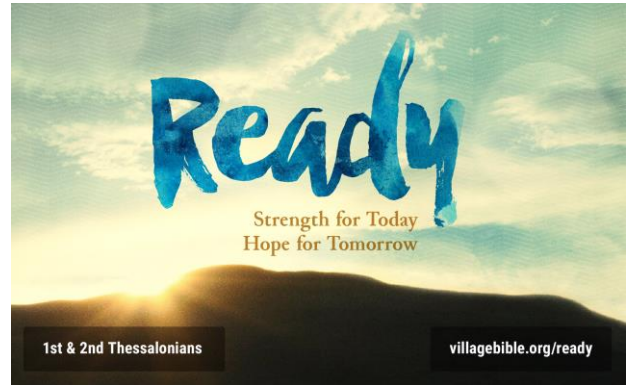




VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

An Apostle's Words & Motherly Wisdom Regarding Work

Ready: Strength for Today, Hope for Tomorrow | Part 17
Tim Badal | May 8, 2016 | 2 Thessalonians 3:6–13



Let's take God's Word in our hands and turn to 2 Thessalonians. During the last four and one-half months we have been investing a great amount of time and energy into these two letters that the Apostle Paul wrote in the first century to this church Greece called Thessalonica. He has invested a lot of time and energy with these people who were new followers of Jesus Christ. They were in essence just learning what it meant to be Christians. And we have invested our time under the theme of being "Ready" to serve and honor God as followers of Christ. Next week we will finish up this final letter, having looked at the wonderful example of these Thessalonians who had allowed God to transform their lives through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We had a movie night this past Friday and watched the incredible movie, *Woodlawn*. It told the true story of Woodlawn High School in 1973 where one student's life was changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result of that life change, the whole football team was changed. And because a football team was changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, a community was changed. And then surrounding communities were changed. In the end, an entire state was impacted by one individual who was transformed by the gospel. This story was back in the 70's in magazines like *Life*, *Time* and *Sports Illustrated*. Now, 40 years later, this movie tells the story of one life being changed and as a result concurrent circles of lives changed, making an expansive impact in that area.

One life changed by Jesus Christ can have a massive impact on the lives of those around us, and we see this as well in a small church in the town of Thessalonica in northern Greece 2,000 years ago. A handful of people's lives were changed by the gospel, which impacted the city of Thessalonica and the region of Macedonia. This little group of people got on fire for Jesus Christ and now, 2,000 years later and half a planet away, we are being challenged and encouraged by the example they left.

So let's look at 2 Thessalonians 3:6–13 and see that we can keep ourselves from having this kind of impact by being lazy and not fulfilling God's calling. We will see through the apostle's words—and through our mothers' examples—what hard work looks like and the importance of it in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

⁶ Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. ⁹ It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. ¹¹ For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. ¹² Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. ¹³ As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.

We celebrate Mother's Day today. As our four campus pastors worked on our preaching schedule, we considered taking a week off from our series and focusing on mothers from another text that would speak specifically to them. Then we realized it is very fitting to be reminded of the hard work that moms do, whether in the workplace outside of the home or within the home. Many

of us have been blessed—me included—with godly moms and wonderful wives who sacrificially serve and honor God, loving their families by working hard in all they do.

We live in a culture where idleness and laziness are celebrated instead of critiqued. This was true in the days of the Thessalonians as well. We don't know exactly what caused this, but scholars have come up with two very plausible reasons that idleness and laziness were prevalent in the lives of the Thessalonians.

The first reason may have been confusion about the second coming of Jesus Christ. Remember, Paul said, "I don't want you to be ignorant of the coming of our Lord and Savior." But there was teaching at that time that had the Thessalonians worked up into a frenzy. They had heard that their generation would not pass away until they saw the predicted signs and wonders. Now that generation was about to pass away, so they thought Jesus was going to come back in their lifetime. If they thought without a shadow of doubt that Jesus was going to return next month, why should they go to work tomorrow? Why get up early every day? Why put out all that effort? What good would their 401K be after He returns?

The second reason for this teaching on idleness was possibly based on culture. Thessalonica is in northern Greece, which was filled with all sorts of philosophies at that time that can be summed up in what we call Gnosticism. This philosophy taught that the material world—all that could be seen and touched— was evil in and of itself. Therefore, anything done with the body was evil. It also taught that the enlightened mind would push away that which was material for that which was intellectual or spiritual. Practically speaking, if someone went to work, they did that which was subhuman. Barbarians and slaves did the work. Real people philosophized and had spiritual experiences. So to work with your hands and sweat was a menial thing. It was being less than human. So these new Christians were possibly given to laziness and idleness due to cultural influences. Paul had addressed this in his first letter where he told them to live quietly and work with their hands (1 Thessalonians 4:11). Paul is also going to share that there is a command to work and earn their own living (2 Thessalonians 3:12).

Now we need to recognize that many of us look at work as a necessary evil. We work so that we can have money, so that we can have food, a car, a home, clothes—basically so we can live life. But really, at the end of the day, I would far rather be on vacation. But this viewpoint of work is unBiblical.

I think this poem sums up our dislike for work:

I don't mind work if I have nothing else to do,
I quite admit it's true that now and then I shirk,
Particularly boring kinds of work, don't you?
But on the whole I think it's fair to say,
Provided I can do it my own way,
And that I need not have to start it today,
That I quite like work.

Does that hit home? If I can do it my way, if I can choose the time it will be done, if I get to do only the enjoyable parts of it, well then, work is tolerable.

In a New York law firm, the bosses posted the following notice for all the employees to see:

Sometime between starting time and quitting time, without infringing upon lunch periods, coffee breaks, rest periods, storytelling, ticket selling, holiday planning and the rehashing of yesterday's television programs, we ask that each employee try to find some time for a work break. This may seem radical, but it might aid in your steady employment and secure yourself regular paychecks.

There is something about us that thinks work is bad. We're offended by the very mention of work on a weekend. "Let's not talk about that. I have two days when I don't have to worry about that and you, pastor, have to bring up this dirty word—work." But here's the thing: absent from our culture is a Biblical understanding that work is extremely valuable and despite our negative feelings about it at times, work is in fact a gift from God Himself.

For the Greeks of that day, work was a menial task. But God reminds us that work was not beneath Himself. God created. God worked. Genesis 1 and 2 tell us that God worked those six days of creation, "*And he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.*" The God of the universe declared His work good and says work is a noble thing.

Even before sin entered the world, God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden and gave them the assignment to tend and oversee the Garden. They were to work in the Garden (Genesis 2:15). Some of us think work is a curse from the fall. No, before the fall, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were working. But because of the fall something changed. Work would still bring fulfillment, but work would become more difficult. Work would involve sweat and struggle. It would, in some ways and at particular times, work against us. Weeds and thistles would grow. Once you would pull them they would come right back. Work would not be easy like before the fall, but it could still be fulfilling.

Let us never forget that work remains a good gift from God, even amidst frustrations, struggles and hardships. Work is something that God has given us and should produce in us a thankful attitude for the opportunity He gives, whether as mothers, students, employers or employees.

But what is work? John Stott puts it this way, "Work is the expending of energy—manual or mental or both—in the service of others which brings fulfillment to the worker, benefit to the community and glory to God." Now let me stop here. This is Mother's Day, so why would I deliver this message today? Because I am blessed and believe many of you are blessed because we have moms who modeled what it means to work.

Have you ever wondered from whom you learned your work ethic? Many will say they learned it from their fathers. For many of us, the only thing we observed was our fathers pulling out of the driveway and pulling back in eight hours later. Some of us never have been to our father's place of work, never had the ability to really see what they do. Oh, we know he brings home the money and keeps a roof over our heads, but we don't know what Dad actually does. We know he does something because he comes home tired and cranky. On the flip side, we see our mothers work. Growing up we have had a bird's eye view of our mom's toil. We recognize things within our homes would not be the same if Mom wasn't working. I can assure you in the Badal home, Amanda is the first one up and the last one to bed. She's the one who is always making sure all the trains are running on time. She was on the ladies' retreat last week and I've got to be quite honest with you, I had no idea where my children were half the time. We counted all of them when she returned and they're all good. About a year ago when Amanda had her cancer surgery, it took no less than 20 of us to make sure we did all that Amanda did. Women work hard. Moms are examples of what hard work is—like John Stott says, both manual and mental expending of energy.

So we recognize and honor the role that moms play. They do everything it takes to raise and nurture the family God has given them. There is mental anguish. It's amazing that moms find sanity in raising the kids and still can minister to their husbands. Why do they do it? In the service of others. What are they doing? Expending energy. Moms do a lot, everything from facilities manager to CEO, laundry operator to computer operator. They are the housekeeper, cook, daycare teacher, van driver, janitor and most importantly, counselor. In 2013 someone had put some numbers together and concluded that the base salary for all of these jobs for 40 hours a week would be \$37,549 annually. Now, here's the problem: moms actually work 94 hours a week, so then we have to pay them an additional 54 hours of overtime, which comes to about \$76,000 for a total income of \$113,568. That was in 2013. Here's about all we pay Mom and think we're doing really well: we will buy her a card for Mother's Day, then stop by the missions bake sale, buy a cake and say, "Mom, you're worth it." My mom is still looking for her \$113,568 annually for 18 years of raising me. That's over two million dollars! But instead I give her a hug and a kiss and she says she's blessed. It's pretty amazing, isn't it?

Moms are hard workers and God has given us moms who serve us. They minister to us. Why do they do it? Stott reminds us that they do so because it fulfills them. Well, that's insanity. "This work fulfills you, Mom? This work fulfills you, wife? To minister in this way, to do all of this work, to work all of these hours so that your children can neglect to say thank you? So your husband will take you for granted? Why do you do it?" Because God has uniquely given moms a heart and passion to serve others. They want to benefit the community around them, including their homes, and to bring glory to God.

So before we talk about this command to work hard, we stop and celebrate that moms are doing all this work. We should applaud their hard work. But we need to also recognize that the Scriptures remind women (and men) of the temptation to be lazy. Here's my only challenge for you this morning: avoid the temptation to be lazy. In the great passage of Scripture devoted to women, Proverbs 31:27 tells us that the virtuous woman watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness or laziness. So Mom, if that is a struggle for you, God says it needs to change—those are not my words. You need to work hard.

But notice that we are all told to work hard. In fact, more than two dozen times in the book of Proverbs the sluggard—what a great word for the lazy one—is told he will lose out on opportunities and miss out on blessings as a result of his or her laziness. Proverbs 10:4 says something very important on this topic: *"A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich."*

Now this wasn't just a temptation in Old Testament times. In fact, in every one of Paul's letters to his churches, he addresses at one point or another the importance of working hard. He tells the church in Colossae that they are to work for their earthly masters as if God is their employer. Paul tells the people in Corinth that he has devoted himself to working with his hands as an example for all to follow.

And here in 2 Thessalonians 3, the most extensive writing on the issue of work within the Christian life, Paul gives a zinger of a command: *"...if anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat."* Paul shares with us three things regarding the importance of work: an exhortation, an example from his own life and then he's going to encourage us. Notice that a mom's handprints are all over this passage, even though it comes from an apostle's words.

1. An exhortation (3:6)

"Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us." Let's stop there. Paul speaks as if a mother is speaking to her kids. But this isn't the first time he shares it. He had shared in his opening letter of 1 Thessalonians that they are called to work. And he comes back now two years later in 2 Thessalonians and says, "You still aren't doing it so you better listen up." When Paul says, *"Now we command you,"* he is garnering the attention of the people.

As a child growing up I knew the degree to which my mom was displeased with me by the way she called me. When I heard my mom say, "Tim," everything was good. When I heard "Timothy," she was a bit agitated. When I heard "Timothy Daniel," she was getting mad. When I heard "Timothy Daniel Badal," I better start moving. When my mom forgot my name, it meant run for the hills.

Paul wants to get their attention; notice how he does it here in verse six: *"We command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..."* In other words, "Listen up!" My mom had another phrase that really addressed where I stood with her. She would say, "Oh, Timothy Daniel Badal, as God is my witness..." When your mom conjures the name of God and brings Him into your affairs, you better be ready. Paul says here, "Listen up! I'm commanding you, but I am also bringing into this the greatest authority, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. You better listen!"

So what does he say? He says, "I want you to keep away from idle people." Boy, I heard that a lot growing up as a kid. My mom would say, "I'm not sure you should be hanging out with so-and-so. They're not a good example. I don't like how they talk. I don't like how they act. I don't like the lack of respect. Stay away from so-and-so. They're no good for you." She often reminded me that bad company corrupts good character.

Paul says, like a great mom would, be careful with whom you hang out. Paul uses the phrase *"walking in idleness"* which was used in the Greek culture of a Greek battalion of soldiers. Picture them marching through the city of Athens, all doing the same thing. A person who walks in idleness is not walking in formation with fellow soldiers. He is out of step. He is doing that which is wrong. You can spot him a mile away because he is not doing what everybody else is doing. So a lazy individual is one who easily is seen because they're walking out of formation. They've gone AWOL.

Now let's take a moment to clarify something. Paul isn't talking about those who can't earn a living because of illness or some sort of disability or because of age. Nor is Paul speaking to widows and orphans who find themselves in distress because of a death or trials and tribulations. Paul is commanding us to steer away from those who CAN work but choose not to. That's the difference.

But why? If you're working hard, why does it matter that people around you don't work? Here are a couple of reasons. Number one, because laziness is contagious. If you find yourself with a group of people who have nothing else to do, it will be very hard for you to accomplish your work. Laziness becomes a cultural thing. It is not hard for us to see laziness in the suburbs, in the ghettos and even in the country as a whole. Drive through the ghettos today and you will see people who have nothing better to do. A key solution for those who find themselves in those ghettos would be to put them to work, especially the men. Why is there so much crime in our cities? Because a great number of young men are sitting around doing nothing. I learned early in my teenage years that I got in the most trouble when I had nothing productive to do.

Even King David, who should have been at war with his army, was lazy and stayed home. He should have been leading his army into war, but he stayed home and was bored. One night he strolled along the roof of his castle and found himself with nothing better to do than to become a Peeping Tom. And you know the disasters that resulted from that evening.

So we need to steer clear of lazy people because it's contagious. It is hard to work when others are at play. On Saturday nights I devote a great amount of time to writing my sermon, but Saturday nights are also fun times at the Badal house. Kids don't have school in the morning. It's been a great time of enjoyment. So I have to make a conscious decision that I cannot work in the presence of my family as they're enjoying time off, enjoying a movie, just generally having fun. Why? I have to remove myself, because if I stay there I will never be ready for Sunday morning. We need to see the importance of sitting down and doing a job. It is hard to work hard when everybody else is having fun. Idleness and laziness can be contagious.

Number two, laziness goes against God's command for His people. Turn a couple pages back to 1 Thessalonians 4:10-11: *"But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more."* What? *"To aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you."* The Scriptures are very clear. We're to live quietly, mind our own affairs and work with our hands. That's the instruction of the apostles and it remains true today. A faithful Christian is a hardworking Christian. Why? Because God commands it. God has seen fit to keep people busy on this earth in order to be productive parts of a community. It's our job. It's what we're called to do.

The final reason that we are not to hang around lazy people is it damages our testimony. Stay right there in 1 Thessalonians 4 and notice verse 12: *"...so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one."* God wants Christians to have a strong work ethic because it gives us a good testimony with the outside world, with the unbelieving world.

2. An example (3:7-11)

But how is Paul going to move these lazy people to productive living? Notice he gives an example in verses seven to nine: *"For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate."*

So let's stop there. Paul says, "Okay, here's how I'm going to teach you what it means to be productive. You need to work hard but you don't have to follow my ways." No. He does not say, "Do as I say, not as I do." He says, "Do as I do." Notice the phraseology he uses: toil...labor...working night and day...so that we might not be a burden to you." Paul didn't have to work like that but he chose to do so.

God has called the church to minister to others by taking care of their daily necessities. We have been given the charge to provide for the pastors God gives us. That's the church's responsibility. Paul says, "Listen, I've made a choice." It didn't have to be that way but Paul made a choice to continue his day job while ministering to the church and he's going to give the reason. But before I give this reason, I want to stop and remind you that there is a group of individuals in this church whose daily necessities are provided so they can give themselves over fully to the Lord's work. It's Biblical. It's right and it's our responsibility as a church to provide for them. Some of the most hardworking people I know serve full-time in this role and should be commended, honored and respected for their ministry. Statements like, "Well, pastors only work one day a week, ha ha ha ha" are inappropriate. I see people here working hard for you and for their God.

Like Paul, I have a unique experience and this passage gives me an opportunity to speak about my calling to you as a people. I know that by doing this it may come across as self-aggrandizing, but that's not my intention. Please hear me out. I share this with all humility and I've not ever shared this before, but this passage gives the opportunity because Paul speaks to the issue of being bi-vocational, which is exactly your teaching pastor's situation. I have another job and I work at it for a particular reason. I don't have to. When I tell people that I'm a bi-vocational pastor, right away they think I'm pastoring a small church of people who are unable to pay a full-time salary. Then I tell them how large our church is and that we have multiple campuses, then they're like, "Wait a minute. That doesn't make any sense at all. Why would you do that? That goes against culture. Pastors in big churches get paid full-time salaries. They don't have any other job but this. So what in the world? Why are you doing it this way, Badal?"

Just as Paul was a tentmaker—making tents during the day, ministering when he had opportunity—I do the same and I want to give three reasons why.

Number one, in order to not be a burden on the church. I don't want to be a burden in my daily necessities. Quite frankly, I have an ability to do a job that allows me not only to work but also serve. So if I can provide for my own daily necessities, any dollar that I can save the church can be used in another gospel endeavor. God has uniquely given me an opportunity to not be a burden in that way. Now, that doesn't mean that our other full-time staff members are a burden. No. They are called to serve in that way. But like Paul, I have made a decision to not have the church support me financially.

Number two, I'm bi-vocational because my working is a reminder to you that you can work really, really hard in the real world and still find time and energy to serve the Lord in ministry. You cannot look me in the eye and tell me you just don't have time to serve the Lord. It falls on deaf ears. I've put in a long week of catering already. Add to that a day and a half in the church office counseling, ministering and helping lead the church. Yesterday was a full day. It started at 7:30 a.m. and I didn't make it to bed until almost 1:30 a.m. I finished the sermon at 12:30. So like Paul, I work night and day for you. Yes, it's hard work, but here's the thing: I do it because I love it. I do it because it honors God. I do it because God has called me to that unique experience and He's enabled me to do so. It's an opportunity to serve as an example to say that if Tim and Amanda can do it, then surely you can as well. Surely you can step out of your comfort zone, follow our lead and imitate that kind of hard work. And we do have that going on all over the place here. It's not just me. We've got people working just massive hours at their job and then coming here to serve. For example, we have some world travelers. Phil Beatty travels to Germany almost on a weekly basis and he's faithfully here every Sunday working. Pete Stenberg is all over the place—traveling to London and Japan and China—then faithfully is here to lead us in worship. We've got great examples of people who work hard and then volunteer their time to serve God. If you are telling me you don't have time to work, either you are working harder than anybody else I know, or listen now, you're being lazy. There's time to serve and be a benefit to others.

The final thing that being bi-vocational does is it gives me the ability to speak into your lives so that you cannot say, "Well, it sure is easy to have a cushy church job and not have to work in the real world." Tomorrow morning, I will get up just like you and will go into the real world just like you. I will deal with real world people and real world problems, with people who don't give a rip about what I do on Sunday mornings. They look at me as Tim Badal, caterer extraordinaire. My employees want to see me work like the rest of them. I have to deal with the same problems you have and none of it gives me the privilege, nor you the privilege, to sin against God by being lazy or complacent and not do what God has called us to do. Do you recognize that you have the great opportunity to work? What a blessing.

Now Paul goes on to say, "Work is so important that if you fail to do it then you don't get to eat. If you don't see the blessing that work is, if you have the ability to work and you don't, then listen, when you fail to work you don't get to eat." This seems harsh, but God has called us to work and love others by providing and caring for those closest to us, not to be a burden on others. So Paul says, "Follow my example. I toiled night and day. I worked hard on your behalf. I never sought to just coast on by. I could have. I'm the apostle. I'm an important guy. I could have had you waiting on me hand and foot. But listen, I worked hard among you and there's nothing more wonderful than serving God and serving you by working."

We have this dichotomy, by the way, that there is sacred work and secular work. This couldn't be further from the truth. I want you to know that I cannot separate my job as a caterer and my job as a pastor because I am commanded to do all things to the glory of God. So God is equally glorified as I'm catering an event or preaching a sermon. When I do these things for the glory of God and in obedience to God and His Word, God can say "Well done, good and faithful servant."

3. An encouragement (3:12–13)

Now Paul gives an encouragement in verse 12: *"Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good."* Paul closes this passage by giving some encouragement we need to apply to our lives and every day of work ahead.

First of all, we are to live and work quietly because we are told to do so and because we want to do so. That would revolutionize the way that we work! Think about this: if your mom woke up every morning and said, "Well, I've got to love you. I've got to feed you. I've got to make sure you have clothes on your back. I've got to make sure your daily necessities are taken care of. I didn't want to make your lunch, but I guess I have to make your lunch," she wouldn't be all that great of a mom. Right? We'd feel pretty neglected. But, if you have a mom who says, "I get to make your lunch. I get the opportunity to love on you. I get the opportunity to provide for you. I get the opportunity to serve you," then we have been graced with an incredible gift.

When we go to our places of work tomorrow—whether it's blue collar, white collar, or no collar—as Christians it is our privilege to say, "Praise be to God, I get to go to work today. God has enabled me to work and provide for my family and to serve my community. I get an opportunity to go into a workplace that doesn't know Jesus and show them what it means to work for the glory of God." Let me tell you something: that will change your commute tomorrow morning. What an opportunity we have!

Number two, to work quietly literally means to work in such a way that those you work around don't want to kill you. How terrible would it be when you walk into your workplace if the people roll their eyes? "Ah, he's back; she's back." How sad if your boss had to report that you are one of the worst employees he has. It's unbecoming of a Christian. And God says that we should

work unto the Lord in all that we do. So it is not fitting for the people of Village Bible Church to be followers of Jesus Christ and to be hated in the workplace, especially because we're lazy or good for nothing. Paul then says, "Make sure you earn your own living." While the church is a place where we share and give and are to be generous to those who are in need, believers are called to take care of themselves. We are in a culture right now that says, "I want everything for free." That's not what I grew up in and I don't know when this shift happened. I didn't get the memo on that. I don't mean to be political, but my kids love Bernie Sanders. Why? Because Bernie promises that we're going to get everything free. I learned from my Middle Eastern father that nothing is free, except for salvation in Jesus Christ and that will cost you your life. We've got to recognize that our culture today says you can have all of this and never have to do anything in return. That may be popular but it's not Biblical.

Paul says very clearly, if you can work, then work so you can eat. Now notice he says, "*...earn their own living.*" Earn means you've got to do something. Salvation is free because you cannot earn it, but you do have to work to earn a paycheck. You can't sit around having others give you everything. You have to earn it. And notice earning is on the front end. You have to gain capital by extending some sort of effort first. God has given me a unique ability to feed lots of people and I extend that gift to serve others. In turn that ability and effort earn me capital—money—so I can then provide for my family.

Now there are two things we need to recognize. Our earning and our living must be in concert with one another. Laziness is a malady of the American people because for far too many of us, living over-extends our earning. Does that make sense? If you've got thousands of dollars in credit card debt, your living has extended past your earning. Paul says that's laziness. Your living must be in concert with your earning. If you are living higher than you're earning, you're being lazy. It's not your money. So make sure that the actual dollar figure you earn covers the lifestyle you are living. No matter what your neighbors do.

Notice this responsibility is on you. He says, "*...earn their own living.*" He uses a possessive pronoun there. You're not to worry about my living and I'm not to worry about your living. As Christians we are to take care of ourselves and when trials and tribulations and unfortunate things happen, then in those moments we are called to bear one another's burdens. Not a minute sooner. Not a minute later. We are to provide. We are to minister. In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul says a man who is unwilling to provide for his own family is worse than an infidel. Finally, Paul says, we need to be encouraged to "*...not grow weary in doing good.*" One area of laziness that we have as a people is that we just don't do good. We withhold good things from others because we recognize it's going to mean more work for us and we don't want the trouble. We withhold good and grow weary in doing good because it means that we may have to sacrifice. We may have to give more of ourselves. Paul says, "*...do not grow weary in doing good.*" What an opportunity we have as gospel carriers to carry this message—this wonderful treasure we have in jars of clay—to provide and care for those around us by doing good and being productive.

So how do we not grow weary in doing good? When we go to work tomorrow, we say, "I'm going to do everything I can to make my boss happy by doing what he tells me to do the first time, not arguing, not belaboring it, not calling him every name in the book, but doing as he asks. By doing good we enable God's message to be clearly articulated through us, showing that we have been changed by the Creator God Who has worked so hard on our behalf. By being a support to the world around us, by taking up the slack and being the best that we can be, we are a silent witness of God's grace. Don't grow weary in doing good. Don't let opportunities pass you by.

You know, we live in a lazy culture that has ceased to do the hard stuff, and it is unbecoming of us as Christians. May the people of the Fox Valley area be able to say of this church, "That is a group of hardworking people. We don't know why they work so hard. We don't understand it. But they go beyond the call of duty and work with excellence. They are not lazy people." Why? Because God has called us to such a task. And we have the example of wonderful moms and wonderful women in this church who have shown us the blessing and honor that can come from productive lives. I have the great privilege of being married to a woman who shows me what it is to do good, to change her schedule, to provide for others even when it means the loss of something she has planned or desires for herself.

So let us work hard tomorrow and the next day and the next day because we are serving the Lord Himself.