

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*Faith That Works in the Workplace*  
2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

**Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.**

## **Leaders' Responsibilities:**

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## **Prior to this Coming Session:**

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

Be prepared for the group to sing the hymn "Find Us Faithful" or another song with the same theme.

### **Bible Study Leader:**

Cut out the scripture references on the final page of this session. Have them ready to hand out to your study group. Write out the verses or have Bibles (or New Testaments) ready to hand out to the group as instructed in the "Encourage Application" section in the **Bible Study Plan**.

### **Worship Time Leader:**

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*Faith That Works in the Workplace* – 22-49-05-en

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## **Music Sources:**

**Let It Be Said of Us**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #597, CCLI # 1855882

**Find Us Faithful**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #598, CCLI # 18259

**A Charge to Keep I Have**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #596, CCLI # 118850

# 1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

## ***Faith That Works in the Workplace***

### **Focal Text**

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

### **Background Text**

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

### **Main Idea**

Daily work is a way of putting the Christian faith into action.

### **Question to Explore**

How does the Christian faith relate to daily work?

### **Teaching Aim**

To help the church identify ways Christians can relate their faith to their daily work.

### **Gathering together:**

Sing "Find Us Faithful"

### **First thoughts:**

It is easy for Christians to divide their lives into the secular and the spiritual. Work belongs to our secular life; worship and ministry belongs to our spiritual life. Today we will consider the importance of work as a means of providing for ourselves and our families the necessary things to live without being a burden to others – a secular task. However, we also want to consider work as a spiritual endeavour. In our workplace we have the opportunity to influence others. When we demonstrate the qualities of a Christian – love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, self-control, forgiveness- we bring to our workplace the very presence of Christ himself. We may or may not have an opportunity to share our faith openly, but there is no doubt that we will share our testimony. It may be a positive sharing or it may leave a negative impression. But we will be testifying as to who Christ really is in our lives.

### **Closing the Gathering Time:**

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***Faith That Works in the Workplace – 22-49-05-en***

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Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

# 2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## Teacher Preparation

### *Faith That Works in the Workplace*

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#### **Question to Explore**

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#### **Teaching Aim**

To help the church identify ways Christians can relate their faith to their daily work.

#### **Introduction to your personal study:**

Today’s study gives us the opportunity to examine our own attitudes toward the work we do. Do we work as unto the Lord? Would we be glad to have Jesus with us at our job site? Would we want him around when we speak with an employee? Would we want him to know when we call in sick when we intend to spend the day doing our own business? We may not be “idlers” as some apparently were in the Thessalonian church, but we still need to examine our attitudes and actions in the work world.

#### **Background:**

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

## Focusing on the Meaning:

***These are our orders to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; hold aloof from every Christian brother who falls into idle habits, and does not follow the tradition you received from us. You know yourselves how you ought to copy our example: we were not idlers among you; we did not accept board and lodging from anyone without paying for it; we toiled and drudged, we worked for a living night and day, rather than be a burden to any of you – not because we have not the right to maintenance, but to set an example for you to imitate. For even during our stay with you we laid down the rule: the man who will not work shall not eat. We mention this because we hear that some of your number are idling their time away, minding everybody’s business but their own. To all such we give these orders, and we appeal to them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly for a living.***

***My friends, never tire of doing right.*** (2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13, *The New English Bible*, Oxford University Press, 1961).

Once again we see the intensely personal nature of Paul’s relationship to the Thessalonian church. He expresses concern because some of the members are not earning a living by working, but have fallen into idle habits. It may be that these people were convinced that Christ’s return was imminent and there was no need to work. There certainly would have been no need to save for future events.

But it is also possible that people were convinced of the truth of Christ’s burial and resurrection and became a part of the church while continuing bad habits from their past. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:25-27: ***“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body. In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.”*** People who came to salvation in the early church are like people today. They came with imperfections which require disciplined living as well as God’s grace to overcome.

The Greek word translated as “idleness” (3:6) and “idle” (3:7) basically refers to being “unruly” (3:6 NASB) or “undisciplined” (3:7, NASB) and the Thessalonians’ refusing to work demonstrated their unruliness and lack of discipline.

This unruliness and lack of discipline seems to have reached such negative proportions that Paul reminds the Thessalonians that his message to them comes in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He then tells the believers not to have anything to do with those who have fallen into idle habits. These are strong words which indicate that Paul felt that the Christian witness of the whole group was compromised by those who didn’t work.

Paul had written in 1 Thessalonians 4:11 about this same matter. ***“Let it be your ambition to keep calm and look after your own business, and to work with your hands, as we ordered you, so that you may command the respect of those outside your own number, and at the same time may never be in want”*** (The New English Bible).

Apparently, those words were not sufficient to motivate the idlers so Paul tells the believers to distance themselves entirely from those who do not work so that unbelievers will know that the Christians do not sanction such a position.

In Roman society, the household was the family unit. This may have included spouses, children, servants and slaves as well as members of the extended family who had no other place to live. Each of these contributed to the family business or farm and were an important part of the economic sustenance of the whole. If one of those refused to work, it would affect the whole group. If the family as a whole would not work, they would be soon be in serious trouble and would be a financial liability to the other believers. Paul is not talking to people with independent financial means whose failure to work might be a moral weakness, but would have little effect on others. He is most likely talking to those whose contribution to the family work was essential.

Paul then discusses the example he set for the believers while he was among them. Paul’s practice of working to support himself is described in a number of places. See 1 Corinthians 9:3-18; 2 Corinthians 11:7-9; 12:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; Philippians 4:10, 15-19. See also Acts 18:3 which describes Paul’s work.

Paul tells the readers that he serves as an example to them. This is not pride on Paul’s part, but a reminder that every Christian is an example to others. We move in different circles; we work with different people; we have our own extended family and for all of those people we are the example of Christian faith which they will honour or criticize.

Paul does not romanticize the work that he and his fellow leaders did to earn a living. The New English Bible says ***“we toiled and drudged”***.

Work is the arena in which we live out the values of our Christian faith. There we will have need of all of the fruit of the spirit which we have learned in our Christian walk. We will need love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22). Some of those elements – patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control – may be needed every day at work. Others – love, joy, peace, gentleness – may sustain us when people are annoying, demands are great and the work is “toil and drudge” as Paul indicated his work was at times.

Work gives us the opportunity to ***“live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)”*** Ephesians 5:8. Earlier in chapter 4, verses 29-32, Paul wrote, ***“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of***

**God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.**” Paul could have been writing to workers in the oil field, construction industry, or the world of finance. In fact, it is precisely for them and for all of those who work in ordinary jobs around the world – in early Christianity and in postmodern days.

In the wonderful book *Anne of Green Gables* written by Canadian author, L.M. Montgomery, Anne decides to give up her college scholarship and stay home with Marilla who adopted her when she was eleven. Marilla’s eyesight is bad and she can no longer care for the farm, Green Gables, which she and Anne love so much. Anne will teach at a nearby school and continue her studies by correspondence. Montgomery summarizes the rightness of that choice with these words, “She had looked her duty courageously in the face and found it a friend – as duty ever is when we meet it frankly.” (p. 302). Work is often a duty. We have family to care for, bills to pay, trips we want to take and the only way to achieve these things is to work for them. But work is a friend as well.

Work contributes to our sense of identity. Retirees often struggle to know “who they are” and “what their purpose is” in the early days of their retirement. If they do not find meaningful volunteer activities or hobbies, they may find their days to be long and boring. Many Christian retirees, who live in nations where they are free to do so, are able to choose ministries that make their lives meaningful and serve Christ by serving others.

One of the first questions we ask when we meet someone new is “So, what do you do for a living?” It is not healthy for all of our identity to be caught up in the work we do, but it is nonetheless important that our work contributes meaningfulness to our lives.

Colossians 3:23-24 gives us a proper perspective on work. **“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord you are serving.”** Would it not transform the work we do if we understand that it is the Lord we are serving?

It is important that in times of recession we are sensitive to the importance work plays in people’s lives. To lose a job is not only to lose an income (as important as that is). It is also to lose a part of one’s own self. This is especially true for those who have worked at the same job for many years and for those who for other opportunities for employment are limited. It is also true for those who have invested themselves in a ministry or project which they are no longer allowed to continue.

## **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

Relating faith to work centers on helping your congregation understand and accept the concept of not separating faith from any other aspect of life: work, marriage, family, hobbies, relationships, or any other thing. However, with work, that idea may seem the most difficult of all. Your task as leader of the study will be to help the church make that connection.

### **For Personal Reflection:**

**What have I learned from this study?**

**What personal experience does this session bring to mind?**

**What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***Faith That Works in the Workplace***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

**Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.**

#### **Focal Text**

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

#### **Background Text**

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

#### **Main Idea**

Daily work is a way of putting the Christian faith into action.

#### **Question to Explore**

How does the Christian faith relate to daily work?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To help the church identify ways Christians can relate their faith to their daily work.

### **Connect with Life:**

**Bible Study Time Leader:** Read the following to the group:

I want everyone to close your eyes for a moment. Now pretend that you could live at any time in history after the time of Jesus and the others in the New Testament. Choose a time period and a location somewhere in the world. Decide what age, above 16 years old, you would personally want to be during that period. Now decide what kind of work you would want to do to earn a living if those dreams were true and you were not wealthy nor of importance in that society.

Ask the group to open their eyes and to share aloud what time, place, age, and occupation they chose.

## Guide the Study:

Have someone read the passage for study today – 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13.

From the “**Teacher Preparation**” material discuss Paul’s relationship to the Thessalonian church. Mention the reasons why people may have chosen not to work. Point out the nature of the Roman household where each member – mother, father, children, slaves, extended family member – contributed to the work done and to the economic security of the family.

Ask: How critical was it that each member of the household did what was expected of him or her?

Encourage a discussion: How serious and important was the problem of people not working for the church as a whole? (Paul indicates that it was harming the witness of the church – See 1 Thessalonians 4:11 as well as the text for the day).

State: Paul reminds his readers that he set the example for them.

Ask: What example did Paul set?

Hand out slips of paper that list the following verses which talk about Paul’s working to support himself: 2 Corinthians 12:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; Philippians 4:10,: Acts 18:3. **Note to leader:** These are listed on the final page of this session and can be copied and cut into individual slips to be handed out.

Have someone read Galatians 5:22.

Invite a discussion: Can you decide which of these characteristics are important for one to have in the workplace?

Have someone read Ephesians 5:8.

Encourage the group to discuss what would it mean to live as children of light in the workplace?

Now ask them: How hard is it to do that?

Have someone read Ephesians 4:29-32.

Call for responses: What characteristics mentioned here would be of help if applied in the workplace?

## Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the session by and for themselves.

Write out completely the scriptures Colossians 3:17, and 23-24 on pieces of paper for each student. Or, hand out enough copies of the same version of the New Testament so that every participant can read it aloud together.

Ask for opinions about how such a perspective would change how we feel about the work we do.

Close with a prayer that we may do whatever we do with all of our heart, working for the Lord, not men.

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.** Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

### ***Faith That Works in the Workplace*** **2 Thessalonians 3:6-13**

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments.** No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

#### **What Kind of Work Are We Discussing, Anyway???**

Read Colossians 3:17 and 23-24 aloud. What work do you do that would be different if it was “done as unto the Lord”? Would that make a difference in schoolwork, homework, chores, or paid employment? What would that look like in your circumstance—your life?

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Faith That Works in the Workplace***  
**2 Thessalonians 3:6-13****Beginning the Service:**

Sing one or both of the following songs:

“Let It Be Said of Us”, The Worship Hymnal, #597

“A Charge to Keep I Have”, The Worship Hymnal, #596

**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

The Central Asian country of Kyrgyzstan is officially a secular republic; however, Muslims make up 82% of the population. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the number of Islamic centers and institutions has grown steadily. As of July, 2008, there were 1,791 officially registered Islamic establishments. The Muslim holidays Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha have become the main Kyrgyz holidays, and attendance at Friday prayers is on the increase. In the midst of this activity, God is at work! Recently Kyrgyz believers formed an all-Kyrgyz group with the goal of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. Their name in Kyrgyz means “Horse Messenger.” Kyrgyz believers are burdened not only for their own people, but also for those around the globe who do not know the Truth, and they have decided to do something about it! Pray for the “Horse Messengers” to be anointed with power and guided by the Holy Spirit as they go beyond the borders of Kyrgyzstan to tell the Good News!

**Sharing Guide:**

**This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God’s call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.**

## Never Tire of Doing What is Right

2 Thessalonians 3:13

Paul ends his teachings about work by saying “And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.”

This verse reminds us that doing right is a task for Christians twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It is the life work of the Christian. Seeking to act honourably, honestly, helpfully, and sacrificially is our task.

We should never tire of it.

But we do tire of it. Sometimes we are **physically** tired, sometimes we are **emotionally** tired, sometimes we are **spiritually** tired. We may be all three of those at once as one kind of tiredness affects all others.

We need then to remember other words which tell us to rest in the Lord. Exodus 31:15 reminds us that ***“For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.”***

In an agrarian society, that meant that outside chores were kept to a minimum although cattle and chickens still needed to be fed. Heavy kitchen duties were somewhat minimized by baking food on Friday in preparation for the Sabbath. Worship meant gathering with neighbours and friends – a treat for hard working people. Family or friends might come for the noon meal and visit in the afternoon. Frivolous games and reading were not permissible. To some extent, this was the pattern of the entire community so there was little opportunity to deviate from it.

Today’s life style is quite different. Shopping, hockey and soccer games, and recreational activities of all kinds are part of many people’s Sabbath. Bible study and worship may be included, but little about our modern lifestyle encourages us to meditate, rest, and think about God. Many may come to the end of the day on Sunday more tired than ever and less fit to face the work week. Philosopher and theologian Marva Dawn has written a book entitled *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* in which she challenges readers to seek a different way of being on the Sabbath with worship and rest being of supreme importance. But her use of the word “wholly” spelled w-h-o-l-l-y rather than h-o-l-y emphasizes that all of our day and all of our being should somehow be focused on God. This is not a list of activities we should or should not do. It is an attitude of the heart which enjoys corporate worship and fellowship with others and

physical activities, but centers all of this on God. An African Folk Hymn called “All Day Long” captures the meaning.

All day long I've been with Jesus, It has been a glorious day.  
I've just moved up one step higher, And I'm walking on the King's highway.

All day long I've talked with Jesus, It has been a glorious day.  
It has moved me one step higher on my walk along the King's highway.

Won't you come and walk with Jesus? It will be a glorious day.  
You can leave your sin and sorrow, You can walk upon the King's highway.

We have studied today about the importance of our work. Our Sabbath day should help prepare us for the challenges that the work week will bring.

Another use of the word rest is seen in Psalm 91: 1-2. **“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’”** Resting here is seen as being under God's protection. The Lord is a refuge and fortress. As we make application to our life in the world of work we long for the Lord to be our refuge and our fortress.

Jeremiah 6:16 tells us **“This is what the Lord says: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.’”** This ancient passage ties modern life to the past. Always we have had to stand at the crossroads of decision making and choose to take the good way and walk in it with the promise that we will find rest for our souls.

Jesus understood the weariness of body and soul that grips us. He said, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”**

### **Call to Commitment:**

It is this promise made by Jesus to us **“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”** which make Paul's instruction possible. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians **“And as for you brothers, never tire of doing what is right.”** I can never tire of doing what is right as I rest in the Lord. Decision-making, fulfilling of commitments, mundane daily tasks such as meal preparation and filling the car with gas with eventually wear us out. It is only resting in the one whose yoke is easy and burden is light that we can continue. We learn from Him – the one who said of himself – **“I am gentle and humble in heart.”** Work and rest – two elements of our life which we must do. May we do both well.

## **Concluding the Service:**

Close with singing the song which was song during the Gathering Time – “Find Us Faithful”.

**For the Bible Study leader:**

Cut apart and use as handouts during the Bible Study Time as indicated.

+++++(Cut here)++++

## 2 Corinthians 12:14

+++++(Cut here)++++

## 1 Thessalonians 2:9

+++++(Cut here)++++

## Philippians 4:10

+++++(Cut here)++++

## Acts 18:3

+++++(Cut here)++++