

DISCOVER CHURCH: Celebrating Your Hard Work!

Two weeks ago, we read this verse out of...

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 NLT, *“Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and **working with your hands**, just as we instructed you before. Then people who are not believers will respect the way you live, and **you will not need to depend on others.**”*

Last week we ended with talking about the importance of encouraging one another and building each other up!

This morning I want to use the next two verses in our Study of 1 Thessalonians 5 to form the basis of today’s message.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, *“Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to **acknowledge those who work hard** among you, who **care for you in the Lord** and who **admonish you**. **Hold them in the highest regard in love** because of **their work...**”*

“Acknowledge those who work hard” and “hold them in high regard because of their work!”

You know, one of the first things God did after creating Adam and Eve is He planted a beautiful garden in Eden.

He then put Adam and Eve into it and gave them the job of tending to it and enjoying the fruits of their labor.

God himself planted that garden – it was quite the gift – a source of great delight on both counts (the work and the awesome food produced).

God saw work as valuable for his new humans.

All that happened before they fell into sin. And it was sin that led to a broken world which added sweat and toil to their good work.

The Bible says God even has jobs in store for us in heaven. We’ll certainly be worshiping God but we’ll also be serving, co-reigning with Christ, taking care of people or things. Jesus talked in parables about how our faithfulness in serving Him here will lead to even greater opportunities in our heavenly home.

As we saw in the beginning of 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul's hard work served as a good example. He could have used his leadership clout to encourage them to work hard and pay his expenses.

Instead, he worked hard to pay his own way. *Why did He do that?*

1 Thessalonians 2:9 NIV, *“Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day **in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.**”*

Two things motivated Paul. He didn't want to burden them. He didn't want them to be distracted from hearing what he had come a long way to tell them.

He wanted their undivided attention. AND, he didn't want the message of the gospel to be confused.

The Gospel is the Good News of Jesus. It is about His finished Work. Work we can never add to in order to gain salvation. It is a gift of God, not of works so no one could boast!

That isn't to say that Paul was advocating an idle approach to their faith. He was setting an example with his hard work; one he hoped they would imitate; which he mentions way back in chapter 1...

1 Thessalonian 1:5-7 NIV, *“You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.”*

Paul modelled a healthy work ethic because he wanted them to model it to others. And they did that so well that their example was seen beyond their own city; into Macedonia and Achaia.

Paul understood the value of hard work and productivity and saw the importance of acknowledging it.

1 Thessalonians 5:12 NIV, *“Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to **acknowledge those who work hard among you.**”*

And Paul practiced what he preached! Just look at how he finishes his epistle to the Romans!

Romans 16:1-12 NIV, *“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. **Greet Prisca and Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well...Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. **Greet Andronicus and Junia**, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me...Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ...Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord...”* (he goes on).

Paul acknowledged and praised people for their hard work and in his epistle to the Thessalonians he was telling them that it was important that they acknowledge the hard work of others too.

Yes, we understand that those who are working hard aren't supposed to be doing it for the praises of people. They are serving for an audience of ONE, They are serving Jesus out of love and appreciation for Him, and that is how it should be...

Colossians 3:23-24 NIV, *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”*

Despite all of that, Paul clearly instructs us, that it's important for us to acknowledge people's service to the Lord.

You know, there are a lot of ministry teams at work here at Discover Church.

There's the:

Security Team

The Greeters

The Kids Ministry: Weekly organizers, Check-in, teachers, helpers, nursery workers

There's The Youth Ministry

The Café

The Worship team

The Audio/Video team

There are The Small Group Organizers and hosts

There's The Prayer Team

The Elder Board and The Administrative Team
There is a Service team entrusted with the care of the church
And there's the New Samaritan Ministry outreach Team

All of these teams have all kinds of people working hard on them and bringing life to this community. So many that I can't count them.

So, this morning, I want us to acknowledge these hard working folks!

If you have served at any time over the last year in any of these teams or ones I have forgotten to mention, **please stand** (and if you are at home watching, please receive our sincere thank you for all you do! **Thank you!**)

You know, it has been a tough year! There have been so many hurdles to jump as we raced to stay ahead of this Covid Pandemic.

But people at Discover Church rallied and became innovative (ice pops, water, kids activities). Groups organized to set everything up and break it down to have services outside. The children's ministry and worship teams, and many others, trying to stay on top of things with a skeleton crew due the need for some who were high risk to step back.

And the whole time this was going on, you members and attendees (who have joined us in person or at home) showed your great gratitude for all these folks by being super faithful with your offerings! *Financials available in office.*

Yes, we've seen a slight decline lately, most likely due to people's own finances being strapped, but we have not felt the financial burden that many churches have felt. Maybe it's due to our growth (we're growing), despite #'s meeting on Sunday in person we have many who watch throughout the week.

Matter of fact, there have been several churches that have had to close all together because of lack of funds and volunteers.

And because of your hard work and offerings, we were able to help other churches. We were able to partner with the community and police department to help families in need because of your faithful giving. Your giving increased helping food banks, which gave birth to our hosting a food bank here.

Your Christmas giving enabled us to bless our missionaries and offset some of their decreases in giving and you kept everyone on staff paid.

So, thank you to all of you! You are a super church, one I am so very proud to pastor – I LOVE YOU!

So on behalf of the many members and regular attenders, who have rightfully opted to take advantage of the online venue because of the health risks, I thank you hard working folks who have made it possible.

We're so very blessed by your hard work! Yes, we know you did it in service to your Lord. But we also know you did it because you cared for all of us!

That is what Paul said of the hard working folks in Thessalonica too...

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, *“Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who **care for you** in the Lord and who admonish you. **Hold them in the highest regard in love** because of **their work...**”*

Your **care for us** has been demonstrated by your **hard work** and we in turn out of our **love and care for you**, we hold you in high regard – we think highly of you and esteem you!

You not only inspire us, but you cause a deep love to spring up in our hearts toward you. That is what Paul acknowledged as being the natural reaction.

Your hard work, born out of care for us has caused us to esteem you and love you even more!

I know the Lord will bless you over and above our humble acknowledgment!

With that acknowledgment of hard work clearly made known, Paul uses it to encourage others to get on board and participate in the work.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 ESV, *“And we urge you, brothers, admonish **the idle**, encourage **the fainthearted**, help **the weak**, be patient **with them all.**”*

He says, some folks are not participating because they're fainthearted or afraid, some are tired or feeble or even physically unable to, but others are just being idle or lazy.

Paul loved hard work! He wasn't a lazy man by any means! He was never quoted as saying...

“Yesterday I did nothing and today I'm finishing what I did yesterday.”

Reminds me of another funny quote I read from the famous **Phyllis Diller**:

"I should have suspected my husband was lazy; on our wedding day, his mother told me: 'I'm not losing a son; I'm gaining a couch.'"

Paul says that we are supposed to warn the lazy not to be! **Admonish?** Reprimand, rebuke, reprove, warn, it all means the same thing. Typically, it means to do this using the wisdom God Himself points out in His word.

Proverbs 26:13-16 NLT, *"The lazy person claims, "There's a lion on the road! Yes, I'm sure there's a lion out there!"*

"As a door swings back and forth on its hinges, so the lazy person turns over in bed."

"Lazy people take food in their hand but don't even lift it to their mouth."

"Lazy people consider themselves smarter than seven wise counselors."

Proverbs 21:25 NLT, *"Despite their desires, the lazy will come to ruin, for their hands refuse to work."*

Proverbs 12:24 NLT, *"Work hard and become a leader; be lazy and become a slave."*

There are two choices: Get to work and work hard like those we admire and love because of the work they do out of love for others – OR find an excuse to be lazy.

Some excuses will tap into your fears, others will justify why you keep losing jobs: *"I'm sick of working for bosses that are stupider than me."*

And here is the warning in those verses: If you don't get up off that couch and get to work, I promise you this; you'll become so weak you won't be able to lift your hand to your mouth to snack.

And when you go to bed at night, you'll have rested so much throughout the day that your nights will meet with restlessness.

In the end, you'll be forced to work for somebody else to survive – you'll become a slave – and if you don't lower yourself to that – you'll come to ruin.

Consider yourself warned! And then there are those who are frozen in place out of fear! To those Paul says...

1 Thessalonians 5:14 ESV, “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

Instill courage in the fearful! *How do I do that?* **Well, I can't!** But I know someone who can!!! Listen to what God said to His people in **Isaiah 41**.

Isaiah 41:10-13 NLT, “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. “See, all your angry enemies lie there, confused and humiliated. **Anyone who opposes** you will die and come to nothing. You will look in vain for those who tried to conquer you. Those who attack you will come to nothing. For I hold you by your right hand— I, the Lord your God. And I say to you, ‘Don’t be afraid. I am here to help you.’”

Yes, use wisdom, take necessary precautions, but don't let fear immobilize you. There are no guarantees in this life. There is danger out there! And like any war, you have to face fear and danger with courage.

Soldiers aren't promised that if they head off to the battlefield that the enemy will be miraculously removed before they get there.

No, God says, take courage because I am your God, I will give you strength, I will help you get through whatever you face, Enemies will oppose you, but eventually your enemies will meet with their demise. They will fade away and be forgotten. I can't promise you that you will not be attacked or wounded when you go out there. But I promise I will hold you together, don't be afraid because I am right here with you!

That is why you should take courage! But then Paul moves to the third reason some people are idle. He says to those working hard to care for people...

1 Thessalonians 5:14 ESV, “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, **help the weak**, be patient with them all.”

There are legitimate reasons for some who have become idle. Some people don't need warnings or pep talks – they just need help!

They are weak, powerless to help themselves. Maybe it is because of their age, or their health, or their economic misfortune? Who knows? But some people are in circumstances outside of their control and not by their own making. They are weak and need help! Who will help them?

Romans 15:1 ESV, *“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”*

Proverbs 3:27 ESV, *“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.”*

And in all three cases Paul says,

1 Thessalonians 5:14 ESV, *“And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, **be patient with them all.**”*

If you are a hard worker, you have that strength because of the Lord. If you are able to care for other people, you are probably not burdened with a condition that makes you so consumed with fear or lack of strength that you are able at the moment to work hard in your care of others.

That is great! Just remember, the shoe could be on the other foot!

That is why we are called to encourage one another. We all need encouragement or help from time to time.

In either case...

As Galatians 6:9 NLT says, *“...Let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.”*

“Never tire of doing what is good.” When it comes to life at Discover Church, what might that include? Is there a team you could serve on, to help maintain or improve the quality of life here?

Are there ways we can serve the Lord by serving one another? Perhaps you could reach out to someone who has lost a loved one, or perhaps you could welcome a newcomer to our church or invite a neighbor to service.

Maybe you could offer to usher or help in the children’s ministry, or the youth ministry, or in the café, or the A/V department or help in our outreach to the less fortunate.

Never tire of doing good! Make it your life mission to look every day for a way to serve your master, King Jesus!

Staying busy for the Lord is a lifelong mission, although the nature of the work changes as our physical and mental abilities change. God only holds us responsible for what we can do.

Yet, if we pay attention, God will give each of us an opportunity to serve him in some way every day. A smile, an encouraging word, a way to spread hope or peace or love in a world desperately in need of a Savior. Joining the prayer team and going before the Father who makes possible the impossible, is another way you can become part of the vital team that brings life to Discover Church.

As Proverbs 16:3 ESV says, *“Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.”*

Let us pray.

Lord, help us **never to tire** of doing good, to stay active for you as we serve you by serving others. **Bless** abundantly those who have worked hard here at Discover Church. **Thank you, Lord,** for them and the blessing they have brought into our lives. Give those **who are looking** for ways to serve you here eyes so **see how** they can contribute their hard work too and thereby infuse yet an even **higher quality of life** to your church. **We ask this** in the name of Jesus, who came to serve us with his very life, and now works to prepare a place for us in heaven, **amen.**