

May 10, 2026

“Work as Christian Duty”
Lesson 2

Multiple Passages

Intro

Today’s lesson is a study on God’s design for work, starting from creation and continuing through the life of the first-century church. All of these have application for us today as well. The study will begin with four individual verses, and then conclude by looking at two longer passages about work from Acts and 2 Thessalonians, both passages dealing with things Paul says about work.

Read Genesis 2:15

1. This verse shows that God intended man to be a working creature from the beginning

This verse occurs before man’s disobedience to God

This means work itself is not to be seen as a punishment for disobedience

Following man’s disobedience, work is called “toilsome”—hard

Work wasn’t established to be this way in the beginning

God established man to work in partnership with Him

Read Exodus 20:9

2. This verse is in the section dealing with the Ten Commandments

Here, God establishes a day of rest, the Sabbath day for Jews

God worked for 6 days in creation, and then He rested

This becomes the model for man’s life: man is expected to work, and then to rest from work

Read John 5:17

3. Jesus says here that He is working, and that God is “always at His work”

God’s work is a continual care for His people; it goes on without interruption

Jesus is following His father’s pattern by doing caring work

This verse is part of Jesus’ defense for why He did “work” (healing a man) on the Sabbath

Doing good works are always acceptable and even expected, no matter what day they are done

Read John 9:4

4. This verse goes along with the previous verse

Jesus is telling His disciples about doing “the works of the one who sent me.”

He is doing work that benefits others, hear restoring sight to a blind man

Again, Jesus does works because it was an expectation of Him by God

We are also expected to do “good works” in the world, because we are to imitate Jesus
Our works will be non-miraculous, but they will be things that benefit others and imitate Jesus

Read Acts 20:33-35

5. vs. 33: This verse begins a passage where Paul pronounces value in hard work
Here he begins by defending his actions in preaching the gospel in Ephesus
The city had a famous temple to the goddess Artemis (or Diana)
The temple drew many visitors, and brought wealth to those who made temple items
Paul’s preaching resulted in people being converted, which disrupted the local economy
Those who were profiting from the temple were angry, and incited a riot by the people
Paul says he doesn’t preach to gain materially, as the silversmiths do who make the items
6. vs. 34: Paul establishes that he has been working while in Ephesus
He spent three years in Ephesus, so the people know his habits and patterns
He shows that he didn’t expect others to provide for him; he worked for his needs
It is important to see that the work he did was also to benefit others
7. vs. 35: Paul says that physical labor isn’t to provide for yourself alone—it is also to help others
He specifically mentions helping those in need—here, the weak
Weak can mean someone physically ill or spiritually weak
Paul says Jesus spoke of this same action
We know the gospels don’t record everything Jesus said or did (John 20:30-31)
Paul says Jesus said “It is more blessed to give than to receive”
The early church likely knew this through oral tradition
Certainly, this saying matches up with Jesus’ teachings
See Matt. 10:8 and 25:34-36; Mark 10:21-22; Luke 14:12-14

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

8. vs. 6: Paul issues a command here; he uses the word five times in the two Thessalonian letters
This command is to “keep away” from believers who are “idle and disruptive”
It is accompanied by an appeal “in the name of the Lord Jesus”
This shows for formality and seriousness
This is not a suggestion or a guideline—it is a command to act a certain way
Brothers and sisters in the Lord are to keep away from the idle and disruptive
These are people who live haphazardly, likely having a poor work ethic
The question comes up if this means to “disfellowship” them from the church
There are three categories for taking this action:
Doctrinal defection, moral defection, or divisiveness
Paul doesn’t say to remove them from the church, only to keep away from them
It seems like the situation is not yet serious enough to go to disfellowshipping

9. vs. 7: Paul offers himself as an opposite example to the disorderly persons of the previous verse
Paul says the Thessalonians should follow his example
He was not idle when he was with them—they know this, he says
He lived the way he is asking them to also live
10. vs. 8: The first part of this verse is connected with vs. 7
Paul says they didn't eat anyone's food without paying back the value of the food eaten
In other words, they didn't take advantage of anyone just because they were apostles
The second half of the verse connects to what he told them in his first letter
Paul was a tentmaker, and he was "laboring and toiling" in that job to provide for himself
He reminds them of his labor, and that it was "day and night"
He worked many hours to provide for his needs—he didn't expect handouts
11. vs. 9: Paul expound on his not asking for help, but instead working hard himself
He says, as an apostle, he had the right to ask for help
That word "right" can also mean "authority" or "power"
As an apostle, he had both he authority and the power to make this request
But he says he didn't do it, instead choosing to be an object lesson for them
He calls himself "a model for you to imitate"
They would learn more about following Christ by seeing an apostle work
This models Jesus in choosing to humble one's self, rather than using authority
12. vs. 10: There are two groups of people connected to this verse
Those who are able to work, but are unwilling to do so
Those who are unable to work for various reasons
Paul is saying the first group is who he is referring to—if you can work, you should
This allows the church to help those truly in need, and prevents a burden on resources
13. vs. 11: Paul comes back to the point he first made in vs. 6
He has received a report that some Thessalonians are "idle and disruptive"
They are refusing to work, and they are interfering with the work and lives of others
This type of action burdens others, and creates friction and discord
This internal strife weakens the church's witness to the outside world
It undermines both its mission and its message
14. vs. 12: Here is Paul's second use of "command" in this passage
He commands the idle and disruptive to "settle down and earn the food they eat"
He addresses two behaviors:
 calming their actions (quit being disruptive)
 earning their food instead of expecting someone else to get it for them
He also used the word "urge"—he is strongly encouraging as well as commanding
He urges them "in the Lord Jesus Christ"
Work is a Christlike, holy action

Application: Even in our fallen world, work is a good thing. In the beginning, it was part of God's purpose for humanity to work. Our work is to be seen as being in partnership with God. The old saying, "We don't work to live; we live to work" represents the thinking we are to have about work. Paul reminds them (and us) that our work meets both our own needs as well as the needs of others. Our work allows us to provide for others, which is a way of serving. In working, we follow the example of God the Father in creation, which allows us to set a positive example for others to imitate. Ignoring this example can lead to disunity and a weakening of the church, which diminishes its testimony to the world.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for the reminders in Scripture of why we work, of the value that comes from work. Help us to live this reminder and maintain a positive attitude toward the work you have given us. In Jesus' name, Amen.