



Live to Understand and Express the Love of God - 2 Thessalonians 3

Throughout this series you have heard this “Big Idea” repeated:

***“When our perspective begins UP with God’s eternal truths and promises,
and is brought DOWN to our daily words and actions,
it leads to UPSIDE-DOWN LIVING.”***

In closing his letter, Paul reminds believers that God has given us everything we need, and all that we need to do is to “Live to understand and express the Love of God” (3:5). He is not going out with a whisper, but with direct words of inspiration, correction and instruction that are so important for all of us to hear and apply.

Live to Understand the Love of God (2 Thess 2:16-17, 3:5)

-Paul’s prayers for the church remind them of who their God is, what He has done for them, and also to instruct and inspire them to live in light of these truths. Here are some of the gifts of God that Paul highlights:

- His preemptive, first love (John 3:16, 1 John 4:19, Romans 5:8)
- His unmerited grace (Ephesians 2:4-5, Galatians 2:20)
- His eternal comfort and wonderful hope (John 14:15-26)
- His ongoing empowerment to a life of mission, meaning, and purpose (John 17:20, Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Thess. 5:23-24)
- The more you interact with these ideas in prayer, and in processing them with fellow believers, the more applying and understanding you will have in your life.

Consider:

- How can you remember, and apply, the gifts of God’s love? One way is to pray simple “Help me, God” and “Thank you, God” prayers. Be open and honest about your needs, and receive His power, promises, and presence with gratitude.
- Who might you invite into a time of studying God’s Word with you? Have you shared your faith story with others? Have you asked those walking with Jesus in your life to share their story with you? As we do this, we can grow in our understanding of God’s great love applied to real people like each of us.

Live to Express of the Love of God (2 Thess. 3:1-18)

-Paul desires to help believers learn how to express the truth in love regarding the problem of idleness that has been growing amongst a small group in the church. (2 Thess.3:6)

“Idleness” – A purposeful refusal to carry out personal responsibilities, and rejection of wise and trustworthy teaching.

-Idleness is different from a period of rest, which is earned after work is completed.

-Idleness is different from a period of recovery, which may have certain responsibilities paused to regain health.

-It is often caused by convincing lies of the enemy towards **hopelessness** (The loss of belief in purpose for this life, or the existence of a life to come) and **worldliness** (The pursuit of temporary pleasure).

-What is the antidote to idleness? It comes from growing to understand the Love of God for us, which moves us to express love back to God and to the people around us.

Paul gives four examples of how to express the love of God and love for others:

1.) Lead by example, in humble surrender and faithful service. (1-2, 7-10)

-When we humble ourselves enough to ask others for prayer, we are modeling the vital truth that we are nothing without the power, presence, and protection of God.

-Paul needed to remind the Thessalonians that he is not calling them to something that he is unwilling to do himself. Even though he experienced great challenges, he believed that each and every day was a gift from God, meant to be lived to love God and love people with the time, treasure, and talents that he had to give.

Consider:

- Who do you have in your life that looks up to you? How might you help them to see that you, like everyone else, need prayer support and encouragement?
- Would you consider praying for our church's staff and elders this week?
- Are you willing to look at yourself before looking at others?

2.) Encourage those who are "doing good". (3-4, 13)

- We will get to the words of correction needing to be said to those who are choosing to be idle, but first we must see, along with Paul, that we must encourage those around us who are doing well. There are so many in the Family of God who choose to fight the drift, and to use their efforts and energy, to express the Love of God.

Consider:

- Who do you see expressing the Love of God well around you? How might you encourage them to keep going?

3.) Challenge brothers and sisters who will listen to correction. (11-12)

- For the Thessalonians, this group of troublemakers was not only making personal decisions that were unwise, but it was impacting the lives of others. The loving thing for their brothers and sisters to do was to confront them about it.

A few things to remember when needing to offer correction:

- Pray before, during, and after, asking the Holy Spirit to "Guide you into all truth." (John 16:13)
- Consider the right time, place, seating arrangement, etc. for the meeting.
- Invite the right people to be in the room. (Matthew 18)
- Speak "the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) of what you have observed, and what you believe to be the issue to address.
- Be open to understanding the situation differently, as new information is given.
- If they feel conviction, and a willingness to change, celebrate with them, and offer to be a support along the way.

Consider:

- Have you had experiences where people challenged you in the right way? What did you learn from that experience?
- Are there people that you love with whom God is calling you to have a challenging conversation?

4.) Set boundaries for those who will not listen, and who are dangerous. (6, 14-15)

- A person who has been challenged to change their sinful, selfish ways, and refuses to, must feel the consequences of their decision. The purpose of this consequence is to produce an eye-opening opportunity for repentance. Even though it can be painful and difficult, it is an act of love.
- Understand that God disciplines those He loves. (Psalm 94:12, Proverbs 3:11-12, Jer. 30:11, Hebrews 12:3-11)
- Again, what must be remembered here is that it is not just the individual who is refusing to do what is right that is affected, but often their refusal has ripple effects that bring hurt, pain, or even danger into the lives of those around them. This is why this must be taken so seriously in the Family of God.

Consider:

- Are there appropriate boundaries for you to set with certain people in your life? What might your prayers be for them during a time of separation?

Further Study:

- Take time this week to look over the "Consider" questions. Ask them to yourself in the Lord's presence and answer them truthfully. Then, perhaps sharing your answers with a friend can help you to apply any steps you hope to take.
- As we finish up our study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, take time to look back at what has impacted or challenged you. Set aside a time to read these two wonderful letters all the way through one more time this week, allowing God to speak through His living and active Word.