

v1 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you. v2 And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. v3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. v4 We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. v5 May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. v6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. v7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, v8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. v9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. v10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." v11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. v12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. v13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. v14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. v15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. v16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. v17 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. v18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

GUIDELINES FOR GROWING HEALTHY CHURCHES.

1. PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS - v1-2 *v1 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you. v2 And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith.*

i. PRAY THAT THEIR WORK MAY PROSPER

Because Christian growth is often a Long-Term matter, many Pastors get discouraged when they don't see any fruit for their work. In my early years as a pastor I also worked as a Computer Programmer. When I worked as a Programmer the results were immediate. If you made an error in the code of the Computer Program, the failure was seen almost immediately. The same was not true for the Pastoral Ministry. Some Pastors never see any "fruit" even after years of service, yet they may prepare the soil for someone who comes after them that may reap a rich harvest.

ii. PRAY THAT THEY MAY BE PROTECTED FROM EVIL

Not everybody that joins the church does so with pure motives. I heard a message in which the preacher said: "There are two reasons why people have not become Christians."

The first is: "THEY HAVE NOT EVER MET A CHRISTIAN."

The second is "THEY HAVE MET A 'CHRISTIAAAAAAN!!!"

Sadly, there are many 'CHRISTIAAAAAAN'S!!!' who are not Christian at all.

2. **ENCOURAGE FAITHFUL MEMBERS** – v3-5 *v3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. v4 We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. v5 May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.*

i. **REMINDE OURSELVES THAT THE DEVIL IS DEFEATED**

v3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

Many Christians live a defeated life, as if they have no way to resist the evil forces. REMEMBER, Satan and his army **HAS BEEN DEFEATED.**

Hebrews 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- v15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Colossians 1:12-14 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. v13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, v14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

REMEMBER, Satan and his army HAS BEEN DEFEATED and
WE ARE PROTECTED.

Psalms 91:1-10 (MESSAGE) You who sit down in the High God's presence, spend the night in Shaddai's shadow, v2 Say this: "GOD, you're my refuge. I trust in you and I'm safe!" v3 That's right--he rescues you from hidden traps, shields you from deadly hazards. v4 His huge outstretched arms protect you-- under them you're perfectly safe; his arms fend off all harm. v5 Fear nothing--not wild wolves in the night, not flying arrows in the day, v6 Not disease that prowls through the darkness, not disaster that erupts at high noon. v7 Even though others succumb all around, drop like flies right and left, no harm will even graze you. v8 You'll stand untouched, watch it all from a distance, watch the wicked turn into corpses. v9 Yes, because GOD's your refuge, the High God your very own home, v10 Evil can't get close to you, harm can't get through the door.

ii. **REJOICE THAT TRUE CHRISTIANS STILL SERVE GOD**

v4 We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command.

There are many verses about serving God in the bible. Let me just quote one:

Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, v24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

There is a wonderful real-life illustration about how Christ touches the heart of people toward service. **DID YOU KNOW THAT: The number of Christians in India is about 2.3% of the population, yet 65-75% of the nurses in India come from the Christian community.** May we all see our work as a calling and not just a means of earning an income.

iii. **REDIRECT OUR PLANS TO GOD'S PLANS**

v5 May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

Listen to these two verses:

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

3. **WARN UNFAITHFUL MEMBERS – v6,11-15.** *v6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us...v11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. v12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. v13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. v14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. v15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.*

i. **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A PART-TIME CHRISTIAN**
v6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. v11 We hear that some among you are idle

Paul is not complaining about those who don't work because they cannot find meaningful employment. He is talking about those who are Christian in name only, yet do not serve the Lord in any way.

ii. **THE DEVIL FINDS WORK FOR IDLE HANDS**
*v11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; **they are busybodies.** v12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat*

In all my years as a Pastor, I have never had problems from those that are involved in the life of the church. Trouble comes from those that sit on the fence and throw stones.

iii. **TREAT ALL WITH MERCY AND GRACE**
v13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. v14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. v15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

The work of the church is to be redemptive. I we don't reach out to all, even the weak Christian, who will!!

4. **FOLLOW HARD WORKING PASTORS – v7-9** *v7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, v8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. v9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. v10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."*

Jesus said:

*Matthew 7:15-20 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. **v16 By their fruit you will recognize them.** Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? v17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. v18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. v19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. v20 **Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.***

5. PRAY FOR PEOPLE - v16-18 *v16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. v17 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. v18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all..*

i. THAT THE PEACE OF GOD WILL BE IN THEM

v16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way.

ii. THAT THE PRESENCE OF GOD WILL WITH THEM

v16 The Lord be with all of you.

iii. THAT THE GRACE OF GOD WILL BE ON THEM

v16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way