

# STEADFAST CHRISTIANITY

## A STUDY OF 2 THESSALONIANS

### STUDY SEVEN

## Buying Into the Vision

*2 Thessalonians 3:6–15*

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*Christianity is an active, involved faith. Those who model the message of Christ are not passive. They are the people who have changed the direction of life and altered the shape of history.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**T**HE walls of world history are decorated with the accomplishments of visionary leaders. Queen Elizabeth assumed the throne after years of national unrest and united the country through powerful leadership. Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President of the United States, preserved the union during the Civil War and abolished slavery. Sir Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during World War II, became the voice of a nation and a hero of the war effort, leading the nation to victory in a period of great tumult.

Saul, the vile persecutor of Christians, in a direct encounter with the risen Christ, became Paul, handpicked to be the apostle to the gentiles. As a missionary and church planter he, too, proved to be a man of powerful visionary leadership who turned the world upside down for Jesus.

Great leaders embody powerful vision. They see what is . . . and what could be. They unify people around a common goal and stir people to action.

Jesus is *the* model of powerful, visionary leadership. He proclaimed and embodied the kingdom of God. He didn't just sit by and watch people struggle; He spoke up and took action. When surrounded by the diseased and dying, Jesus healed them. Seeing the distressed multitudes, He was moved to compassion and He taught and fed them. At the Last Supper, when He saw the disciples' dirty feet, He washed them. He withstood the temptations of the devil in the wilderness and went on to accomplish His mission "to seek and save those who are lost" by bearing the sin of the world on the cross (Luke 19:10).

In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, Paul exhorted the Thessalonians not just to accept Christ's kingdom but also to take action and participate in it. Buying into a vision implies *involvement* through engaged, disciplined, and responsible Christian living.



INSIGHT FOR LIVING



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The Bible-Teaching Ministry of Chuck Swindoll  
Study 7 • Page 1

SEARCHING  
THE  
SCRIPTURES  
BIBLE STUDIES

# Buying Into the Vision

2 Thessalonians 3:6–15

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## PREPARE YOUR HEART

*Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. (James 1:22)*

As you prepare to study God's Word, ask the Lord to help you put into action what you learn. Use the space below to write your prayer.



## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The newly formed Thessalonian church was a model for others in their depth of faith, labor of love, and expectant hope in Christ's imminent return. They welcomed Paul's teaching and doctrine, for which he frequently encouraged and praised them. But not *all* was well with these Macedonian mainstays.

Some in the church were using the Lord's return as an excuse for laziness—inactive, undisciplined, and disordered living. They received Paul's teaching about the rapture and coming kingdom but failed to connect that truth to God's vision for their day-to-day lives. *If Jesus' return was to be soon, why work?* they reasoned. *Why become entangled in moral and ethical issues? Why expend effort and make long-term plans? Leave the work, the responsibilities, and the concerns for others to handle!*

As a result, some drifted into freeloading off good-hearted believers. Paul addressed the problem head-on, commanding a rousing remedy that they quickly buy into God's vision for their daily living.



## Observation: An Exhortation to All Christians

Use your skills of observation as you read [2 Thessalonians 3:6–15](#).<sup>1</sup> What do you see? Are there any repeated words? Did Paul use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing? Look for commands, questions, emphatic statements, images, or figures of speech as you answer the following questions.

# Buying Into the Vision

## *2 Thessalonians 3:6–15*

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### **Command—2 Thessalonians 3:6**

What command did Paul issue in 2 Thessalonians 3:6? How did he describe the lifestyle of certain church members?

### **Example—2 Thessalonians 3:7–10**

After his command Paul immediately drew a contrast, offering them an example. According to 2 Thessalonians 3:7, he referred to himself and his missionary companions as models. Why? What illustration did Paul bring in 3:8?

In 3:9, Paul reinforced his personal example with a reminder. If anyone had the right to demand financial support from others, Paul did. Why? What point was he making?

Paul capped his instruction with a pointed maxim to follow: “Those unwilling to work will not get to eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). What’s the key word? Why do you think this is a good policy?

# Buying Into the Vision

## *2 Thessalonians 3:6–15*

---

### **Encouragement—2 Thessalonians 3:11–13**

What word did Paul repeat for the third time in 2 Thessalonians 3:11? In what verses does this word also appear? How were certain church members wasting their time, and how did he label them?

As in *1 Thessalonians 4:11*, what did Paul command and exhort the undisciplined to do in 2 Thessalonians 3:12?

How did Paul encourage the faithful and hard-working Thessalonians in 3:13? What is the connection to the Lord's return?

### **Admonition—2 Thessalonians 3:14–15**

Paul summarized this section with an admonition. If the undisciplined refused to receive and implement his counsel, what was the local church to do, according to 2 Thessalonians 3:14? What was the intended outcome?

# Buying Into the Vision

## 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15

---

Despite the severity of the consequence, what cautionary note did Paul conclude with in 2 Thessalonians 3:15? What is the ultimate hope?

*Show me an idle gossip, and I'll show you somebody who isn't working hard enough. Show me someone who has the time to meddle in other people's affairs, and I'll show you someone who has too much time on his or her hands. Hardworking people don't have time to be petty about other people's lives.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Interpretation: Disorderliness and Divine Discipline

On three occasions in this passage, Paul referenced those who were idle. His repetition evidenced an ongoing problem. To correct the problem, Paul taught, “Those unwilling to work will not get to eat” the food reserved for those truly in need.

The word *unwilling* is a phrase in Greek, *ou thelo*. *Ou* is a conjunction meaning “not.” Review the term *thelo* in Mounce’s Greek dictionary at [billmounce.com](http://billmounce.com). How does your research of the phrase *ou thelo* clarify his command? In our churches, whom should we assist? Not assist? What point was Paul making?

While the idle were not working, they were far from inactive. They were “meddling in other people’s business” (2 Thessalonians 3:11). What do you think they were doing? Why were busybodies so problematic within the church?

# Buying Into the Vision

## 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15

---

Paul instructed church members to “stay away from [the idle] so they will be ashamed” (2 Thessalonians 3:14). The purpose of this discipline wasn’t punitive but restorative. What’s the difference between treating disruptive people in the church “as enemies” and treating them “as you would a brother or sister” (3:15)?

Why is this discipline so difficult for leaders to practice in the church today?

*Can you imagine the impact this would have on the idle gossips in the church if they were simply ignored by the family? The worst kind of treatment is not hatred. The worst kind of treatment is indifference. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### **Correlation: Active Involvement in the Kingdom of God**

*Vision acceptance* implies *vision involvement*. A brief survey of scriptural texts reveals a recurring theme of active faith.

Paul communicated similar truth to the churches of Corinth and Philippi. Read [1 Corinthians 15:58](#) and [Philippians 3:12–14](#). What did he promise the Corinthians about their labor, and what was his (and our) expected prize for laboring in faith, according to Philippians?

# Buying Into the Vision

## 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15

---

Paul added more insight to his passionate plea for active involvement in the kingdom of God. Read *Galatians 6:7–9* and *Colossians 3:23–24*. How would you paraphrase his metaphor of sowing and reaping in Galatians? What is his premise in Colossians? From both texts, what can believers expect from being faithful in service to Christ?

It is God’s expectation that we invest our lives in active service to Him. And the rewards, temporal and eternal, are abundant!



### **Application: Practical Implications of Buying Into the Vision**

Have you adopted Christ’s vision for your life and for His kingdom? How involved are you in making that vision a reality? Let’s look at three targets to help you stay on course:

1. *Prayer.* Great adventure awaits you in prayer.
2. *Giving.* Great joy awaits you in giving.
3. *Serving.* Great satisfaction awaits you in serving.

Where and how have you actively adopted Jesus’ kingdom vision through faithful praying, giving, and serving?

Are you or a loved one living the Christian life as a “busybody”? What needs to change to engage in productive work, productive ministry, or reorientation to a kingdom vision? Who can assist this person? How would you like to pray in light of that person’s need?

# Buying Into the Vision

2 Thessalonians 3:6–15

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As a disciple of Jesus Christ, what “vision legacy” would you like to leave for future generations? What steps can you take to weave those attributes into your spiritual fiber?

As you close this study, imagine Jesus noticing you as He saw those around Him during His earthly ministry. What does He see? What needs do you have that only He can meet? He is not a passive busybody, meddling in other people’s affairs. He is a loving shepherd who compassionately nurtures His sheep. Welcome His loving compassion and His vision for you today as you follow Him as your leader through life.



## A FINAL PRAYER

*Lord God, thank You for Christ who loved me and gave Himself for me. Forgive me for the lukewarm days when I have gotten my priorities mixed up, when I have moved in the wrong direction. Show me a purpose. Show me a reason for change. And then motivate me to do it, Father, that the work of Christ might be accomplished. I pray in His strong and blessed name. Amen.*

## ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*”

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 1986, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Study 7 • Page 8