Plan B: How to Deal with Busybodies
2 Thessalonians 3:6-18 (NKJV)

- In any family there is going to be some bumps that we encounter.
- That’s what the family of believers was dealing with here in Chapter 3—bumps from those who were busybodies.
- They were taking advantage of the family by not pulling their weight.
- Paul wrote about them in his first letter...

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.” 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NKJV)

- Plan A: Warn them; let them know what they’re doing is not healthy for them or the church. It’s behavior that is unfitting for a believer.
- It’s what believers do—they confront in love.

“Caring for the needs of others should be the basis of any confrontation.” Chuck Swindoll

- Well, Plan A must not have worked because here, in Paul’s second letter, he gives them Plan B.
- Let’s read verses 6 through 18 and get our bearings a bit.

Vs. 6—“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”

- A few things to note…

1. These are believers.

- Paul is not talking about a non-believer. Non-believers will act like non-believers. We cannot expect them to act like believers until they have received Christ, until the Holy Spirit has taken residence in their life.
- This group was a group of believers. Paul even calls them “brothers” here in verse 6.

2. They were walking in disorder.
• This is not someone who had stumbled into sin, but someone who was practicing it.
• The idea of “walking” here is something they were continuing in.

Walks: to live, to regulate one’s life, to conduct one’s self.

• This was not a person who struggled once in a while, or a person who stumbled in sin here and there; this is someone who has allowed this behavior to dominate his or her life.
• Like that person who would say, “I know I have an anger problem, but too bad.”
• Or like that brother who says, “I know I have a cussing problem, but at least I am real! What you see is what you get.”
• They know they have a sin issue, and they have been confronted in love, but instead of repenting of it, or seeking the Spirit to help in it, they almost wear it as a badge.
• Paul will even point out that it’s contrary to the tradition that was given to them by the apostles. In other words, it was not biblical the way they were acting; it was not Christ-like.
• I have been in counseling where people have said to me, “Yes, I am a Christian and yes, I believe what the Bible has to say about that particular sin and no, I will not change.”
• What do you do with brothers and sisters like this? Notice, Paul tells us in verse 6…

3. They were to withdraw from them.

• “Withdraw” simply means avoid.
• Don’t make them your best bud. Don’t allow them to be in your inner circle.
• Their influence is unhealthy and it could bring you down.

“Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’” 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NKJV)

• Now Paul is going to elaborate on this and give more understanding, so let’s continue on.
Vs. 7-10—“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”

4. Be willing to set an example before them.

- When Paul and his team were staying there in Thessalonica, they could say they did not take advantage of the people.
- That was never their heart. They wanted to bless the people, bring the good news to the people.
- They could say, “We took nothing from you.” It wasn’t that it would have been wrong for them to do so.
- As apostles, as ministers it would not be wrong for them to receive something material for what they were giving to them spiritually.
- Notice what Paul spoke to the church of Corinth on this…

“Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.’ Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?”
Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.” 1 Corinthians 9:4-14 (NKJV)

• It’s how the economy of the church works. The leadership in the church were teaching and equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, and as the church grows, it takes a crew to make that happen.

As you give to the Lord, it’s divided up into budgets that take care of salaries, buildings, ministry budgets, missions, and we squeeze everything we can out of every penny you give. Let me say how grateful I am as your pastor to be a part of a giving church. Thank you for your willingness and cheerfulness to give like you do. God is using you to further the kingdom here in our valley and even into the nations.

• But notice, Paul points out here that even though they could have received a financial gift, they chose not to.
• This was a new church plant and often, in the early days of a church plant, the need is for the finances to go towards the ministry needs.
• And so Paul chose to work. He was a tentmaker by trade and he chose to make tents to provide for his needs so that the finances could go to other places.
• It would also make a statement to the community that he was not interested in their money, but their hearts.
• Paul wanted more than anything for the gospel to go out, to see lives changed for the kingdom.
• And so he made a decision that when he would go in and preach the gospel and churches were planted, that he would forego any wage that could possibly come his way.
• Remember, Paul was not a pastor that stuck around in one area very long. He was a church planter. He would go in and plant, and then move on. He would set up elders that would minister or send Timothy or Silas to shepherd the flock.
• So Paul reminds them, “We had no heart to take advantage of the body. We set the right example for you, so make sure you all follow my example.”
• There were some in the family that liked eating the fruit of someone else’s labor. They were lazy and needed to change their ways.
• Notice how Paul cleans this up…
Vs. 10—“For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”

- Put that in your kitchen at home.
- Paul goes on in verses 11 through 12 and elaborates…

Vs. 11-12—“For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.”

5. The cure: get a job

- You heard me say it before: the way to overcome being a busybody is to get a job.
- Paul reminds Timothy that those who are busybodies might have too much time on their hands, idle time, and it will lead to saying things that are inappropriate.

“And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.” - 1 Timothy 5:13 (NKJV)

- And Peter will lump being a busybody in with sins like murder and an evildoer; notice…

“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.” - 1 Peter 4:15 (NKJV)

- You wonder why he lumps it in with murder, but it’s because that’s what being a busybody does. We meddle in others’ affairs and it usually ends up assassinating someone’s character.
- So Paul reminds the church: don’t go there, and the way to keep that from happening is to get to work. Put your hand to something.
- Be productive instead of destructive.
- Now, Paul is not saying to those who can’t work, “Suck it up and get to work,” but he is speaking to those who won’t work.
• He is not asking those who are disabled, but those who are able.
• If you’re able to work, then do so. There is nothing like eating a meal that you know you worked hard to earn, or keeping the lights on in the house because you clocked in and earned your keep.
• Now notice Paul’s encouragement to those who are being affected by those who are in sin…

Vs. 13—“But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.”

6. Don’t lose heart.

• Dealing with those who are trouble in the body of Christ can be very draining, and so Paul’s reminder is don’t grow weary in it.

Weary: exhausted, to faint, to be utterly spiritless

• I believe we can all get tired in the ministry, but we must be careful not to get tired of the ministry.

It’s one of the reasons we monitor our staff in the area of counseling. We don’t allow them to counsel beyond four times with a couple, and we don’t allow them to counsel beyond what their schedule will allow. We spread it out because it can take you out. It’s also why I also encourage my staff not to be out more than three nights in ministry because your wife and kids are going to get bitter at them and me. It’s even why I tell my staff to take all of their vacation time at once. It takes a week to disconnect and another to enjoy the time off, not thinking about another sermon, or this couple’s marriage struggle, or that junior staff that has been missing in action.

• You can get weary in ministry; the key is not to let yourself stay there and to make changes so that you stay healthy and productive.
• Paul will even remind us….

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” Galatians 6:9 (NKJV)

• Remember at the end of the day, on that great day, it will be worth it. In due season, you will reap a reward—don’t lose heart.
Vs. 14-15—“And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

7. The hope: Restoration

- The purpose of the withdrawal is that he or she will be ashamed of their actions.
- Paul will elaborate here on the withdrawal. Notice, he says, “Do not keep company with him.”

Keep company: to not be intimate with one.

- Don’t make this person your best bud. I don’t think that means you can’t be cordial or that you have to snub your nose at them.
- Paul reminds us not see them as the enemy; the sin is the enemy. That’s always the enemy.
- So we don’t want to see them as the enemy, but we create boundaries so that we don’t fall, and also so that they feel the impact of not being in intimate fellowship with the body of Christ.
- Paul will even say it this way to the church of Corinth…

“But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.” 1 Corinthians 5:11 (NKJV)

- Why so harsh? Remember the process here: they have been spoken to. They have been warned and that did not work. They are continuing in their sin without any heart of repentance.
- And now it’s time to set some boundaries.

“The best thing you can do with a busybody is to stay away from him or her—not out of rejection, but for restoration. If gossips and busybodies have no audience, they eventually stop.” Jon Courson
The hope is that they will see that their sin is killing everything around them. It’s not that people don’t love them; it’s not that the church does not care about them; it’s the sin that has to be dealt with.

And when you do see them and the timing is right, speak a word of exhortation to them. Notice, Paul uses the word “admonish” here.

Admonish: worn or to reprove gently.

It’s what Paul reminds the church of Galatia…

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Galatians 6:1 (NKJV)

Nowhere in all this will you find that Paul encourages for us to be rude or mean, but rather wise and willing to warn. When we do talk to them, make sure it’s truth in love.

Let’s finish with this…

“The only people who have the right to point out the dirt on another’s feet are those who have a towel about there waist, a basin of water in their hands, and are willing to wash them. If I’m not willing to come alongside someone in humility and love, I have no right to point out the dirt I see in them.” Jon Courson

Let’s stand together, and let me read to you the last bit.

Vs. 16-18—“Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all. The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Always a great way to finish a letter, grace and peace.