

# Mentors Work Hard

## 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Some weeks ago Pastor Aldi and I met with Megan to talk about sharing the story of the Insight Team's recent trip to the Philippines. We settled on today. Today we hear these stories against the backdrop of typhoon Haiyan. We've seen images of the horrific damage that it has caused: almost 4000 people killed, 480,000 displaced and nearly 13 million people affected. We'll have an opportunity to contribute to their needs through a retiring offering supporting Australian Lutheran World Service and its partner agencies.



I can't help but wonder how this natural disaster might have affected some of the children that we've seen and whose stories we have heard today. From what the team have told me, the children that they worked with were not in the area that was directly and disastrously impacted by the typhoon. But an event like this has a knock on effect, and no doubt these children will be affected and perhaps called upon to play their part in an enormous rebuilding effort.

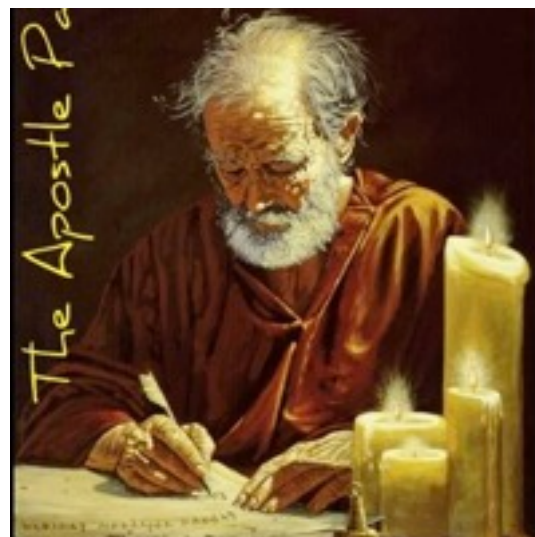
And I feel confident that they will be ready for it because of the way that others have cared for them and mentored them along the pathway to

adulthood. Compassion has provided adults who care and who want to work hard so that these kids are given the skills, the knowledge and the capabilities to succeed in life. And one more thing too. The most important things these mentors have shared is a person: Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul knew all about mentoring and about the hard work it involved. We might know about how he mentored Timothy, but he wasn't the only person who Paul nurtured into leadership. It was Paul, together with Silas, who went together to the Greek port town of Thessalonica, and preached for 3 sabbath days in the synagogue. Because of his message, the church was planted and grew, despite the opposition of the synagogue and pseudo-Christian teachers, who tried to twist the message of God's love through Jesus.



You can hear how much Paul loved the people of this church. In the introduction to his first letter, he writes: “We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. 3 We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”



There are two phrases that grab my attention. Paul talks about their **‘work produced by faith’** and their **‘labour prompted by love’**. Paul commends this church for the way that they actively live out the good news. The good news is not a pillow that we lie on, rather, it’s spiritual energy that changes us and makes us active. Paul says the same thing in Ephesians

2:8-10: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Works don’t save us, but works follow saving faith.



Paul was upset that some people in Thessalonica were twisting this truth and teaching the congregation that all they needed to do was lie back and wait for Jesus to return, which was just around the corner. They were wrong on both counts. No one knows the timetable for Jesus return. Secondly, the good news changes us and compels us follow Jesus in loving people as he does, growing people into maturity of faith and love. Paul had no hesitation in pointing to himself as a model for others to imitate. In today’s reading he draws attention to the fact that he worked as a tentmaker while also working as an

itinerant preacher and church planter.

Do you see your life as one which others could, or should imitate? Do you see that God has placed you in the lives of other people, and that they can learn more about God and his grace? Do you see that your word and action tells a story? I’m sure that it’s your prayer and mine that the story people see and hear through us is that of God’s creating, saving and life-giving work.



Our labour is prompted by God’s love for us, not by any workaholism or the need to keep busy for the sake of it. It’s not work done for our benefit primarily, but for the sake of others. Being a faith mentor for someone else is about serving them, but of course God works it that we grow through the experience too, as The Insight Team can attest.



Paul says, "Never tire of doing what is good." It gets tiring when we try to do it all on our own, without drawing on God's strength and without the support of the Christian community. It's still hard work, but more rewarding and less draining, when we are constantly replenished by

Eugene Petersen says, "The essential thing 'in heaven and earth' is... that there should be a long obedience in

the same direction; there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something that has made life worth living." This long obedience is made easier when we are walking in step with other brothers and sisters in Christ. When we are struggling, someone can take our arm, steady our steps, and shoulder the weight of our burdens. And we can do the same for others.

Mentors work hard. But the work we do is energised by God himself, and the results we get are a gift of God's grace. Pray hard, worship wholeheartedly and read the Bible deeply. Then work hard. Amen.

