



A Quiet Christmas

Part 1 – Mind Your Own Business

Pastor Ted Cunningham

As we kick off *A Quiet Christmas*, I want to ask this question. How many of you receive, with a joyful heart, unsolicited advice? Just a few of you. You don't care for unsolicited advice. Let's make it very practical because Thursday you spent time with family. How many of you spent time with extended family on Thursday? I'm just going to see if I hit any of these scenarios. Here's some unsolicited advice you may have received. You brought food to the family table and another family member offered you some unsolicited advice on a recipe on how to make your dish better. Those are always fun times. Or how about the brother that can't keep a job and is in and out of every new startup scheme there is, and he's in and out of jobs, constantly offering you advice on how to better your life financially. You're like, "I don't think so. I don't think I'm listening to you, bro."

How about the parent that's watching you parent and has some thoughts on ways you can raise your children better? How many of you appreciate it when Mom helps you raise your children better or when you're not disciplining your child and they're like, "Let me tell you what I would do." You're like, "I am your child; I know exactly what you would do and what you did. And we're doing just the opposite."

You're figuring out where we're going with this series. Or – this gets personal – you're single and you show up to the Thanksgiving table or maybe to the Christmas table without a boyfriend, girlfriend, a fiancé, a husband, or a wife. And that aunt who has been in and out of bad relationships wants to help you with some relationship advice. You're just tired of it. You have a neighbor or a co-worker that's constantly getting into your business.

We're going to start this series off with the words from theologian Hank Williams, Sr. He said... And if you believe this, say amen. "Why don't you mind your own business 'cause if you mind your own business, you won't be minding mine." And all God's people said... Amen. I thought we could hear it from his son. I've been listening to the son all week. This is his son and friends, and this will get you fired up. You need to play this. If you have a Christmas playlist when your family comes over, just sneak this one in. Between *Silent Night* and *Away in a Manger*, play this. [Plays the recording of *Mind Your Own Business*.] That's what we want to tell people sometimes.

Today, we're talking about what it means to be a troublesome meddler and why we become troublesome meddlers. That's what Peter says in 1 Peter 4. That's how he describes it. Here's what a troublesome meddler is. **Someone who has too much time and not enough to do.** Too much time and not enough to do, which gets them prying into your life and into your business.

Now this is very different than what we talked about at the beginning of November when we talked about walking away. We talked about the five toxic people that you should walk away from. We looked at Matthew 18 and how, as followers of Christ and as brothers and sisters in Christ, we're called to go to one another. We're called to point out sin. In Matthew 18, it's that unrepentant believer. If your brother sins against you, go to them, one on one in a loving confrontation.

Today, that is not what we're talking about. We're talking about the person who just gets involved in your life because they're not tending to their own business. They're not keeping up with their own family, they've got too much free time, not enough to do, and so they begin prying into yours. We're going to look at the source of that.

If you have your bibles, turn to 1 Thessalonians 4. Here's the goal of the quiet Christmas. The goal is to live a quiet life. We don't want this to be something we just talk about this season, but something that we take with us throughout the year, outside of December. We're going to really drill down today on what it means to be quiet, what it means to live this quiet, settled life.

We're hopefully going to shoot for **less stress**. The quiet life leads to less stress, less anxiety. We're going to be tackling that in this series – having a peace of heart and soul, a peace of mind. At the end of this series, we're actually, going to do a panel on mental health. As a church, we're going to address some of the issue of our day as we talk about what it means to live at peace and to know who we are in Christ.

When we have less stress – and here's what it means to mind your own business – we're hopefully going to be **more productive**. If you have time to get into other people's business, that means you've got time to do more of your own and you need to get after what you're supposed to be doing. And then **Healthy relationships**... Here's a key that we are going to see in 1 Thessalonians 4 that I absolutely love. It's going to lead to a **good reputation**. You don't want the reputation of a busybody, you want to reputation of someone who is drama free, someone who is productive, someone who is working at it to provide for themselves and their family and others, and they are not a burden on other people.

All of this is in the context of love. When we talk about minding your own business, we probably don't see that as something in the way we love one another, but that's exactly the context that we find it in 1 Thessalonians. If you're brand new to studying the Bible, to the young Christians in here, you need to understand, this letter that we're reading called 1 Thessalonians is written to new Christians, young Christians.

Shortly after the seasoned missionary, Paul, planted this church and was suddenly swept away from it, left this church... Sometime later, he sent Timothy back to check on the progress of the church. In doing so, Timothy is loaded up with questions. And when we read the epistles, a lot of times what we are reading are the answers that Paul is giving to the questions that he has received. They didn't have phones; they didn't have email. A lot of it was transferred by word of mouth. He's going to drill down and help these young believers stay strong in the faith. It's a big heart that Paul has for young believers in that the way you started is how we want you to continue. We want you to grow.

We read in 1 Thessalonians 4: **9 Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact...** They are doing this, so he commends them. **...you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more...**

So, as followers of Jesus, we know that we are supposed to love one another, but there is always room for improvement. And all God's people said... Amen. We have to constantly be working at this is the point that Paul is trying to make. We have to strive to care for one another, to love one another, to look after one another. Today, we're going to see one of the best ways we can do that is through a quiet life and living this quiet life.

As you read through this, you see that 1 Thessalonians is a letter he's writing to young believers with a lot of questions. And he's going to answer these questions. He covers a lot of doctrine. This letter, this epistle, the book of our Bible is rich in doctrine and practical application. That is typically how Paul writes. He gives doctrine and then application. There is always a "therefore" in his writing. This is who we are in Christ, therefore, this is how we live. This is the secret to a settled life, to a quiet life that you would know who you are in Christ and then how to live in Christ. No matter what people say, no matter what they do, it will not shake you. No matter what persecution you may come against, it will not shake you. You are steadfast and steady in who you are in Jesus Christ.

I love when you go back to Chapter 1 you get these marketplace terms, these workplace terms that Paul uses to describe our faith. He says in Thessalonians 1 - **3 We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.**

All those are necessary to have a successful business. I always think about a young person going into an established business and seeing some old guy sitting behind the counter. He's the guy who owns the business. He's drinking a cup of coffee. There's a pizza place in town I love to go to. The owner of it sits in the restaurant kind of like the godfather. You probably know what restaurant I'm talking about. He's just sitting there with his cup of coffee and he's pointing at things that need to be done and pointing to people to do them.

We can look at that and be like, "Man, I want his job. Look at how good he has it. An established business, how good is this? I want to start off as the boss. How much can I buy this business from you for?" But what we didn't see was this guy's hard work, his labor, his diligence. You can look at people who own large businesses and think *Man, I want to be a CEO*. Then start working hard. Roll up your sleeves, put on your steel-toe boots, work gloves, and get after it. What's interesting about this text is we see success in the workplace... You want to be successful at work? You work hard over a long period of time. Scripture is clear on this. The tendency behind that will be profit. You'll do well in a growing faith; both of these are linked in this text. They require hard work, diligence, and patience.

I talk about marriage. I love talking about how fun marriage is, but we have to be reminded too that marriage is hard work. And all the wives said... Amen. And all the husbands said... Amen. Wow, that was stronger from the men if I can just be honest with you on that one. I'm going to give the wives

another shot. And all the wives said... Amen! Okay, I just felt like you were a little drowsy when I asked that question.

You want a relationship. You look at a couple married 25, 30, 35, 40 years and you're like, *Man, look at that couple; they've got it. I want that. They must have found each other at just the right time, in just the right season, and the algorithm put them together on farmersonly.com. Look at how great their marriage is.* You don't realize... Let me tell you some of the stories of that marriage. Their marriage could be described as being hard work, diligence, and patience. This is our faith.

I just want young Christians to hear this because I see it all the time on social media. From church to church and from relationship to relationship and job to job. The idea is "I'm not going to that church anymore because they're a bunch of hypocrites and I don't care for them and somebody said something that hurt my feelings," and you're on to the next place. I know people that give up on the church altogether because of something that was said to them.

Don't let anything said to you or done to you shake who you are in Christ. Who you are in Christ and then how you live in Christ, that's on you 100%. It takes hard work, diligence, and patience. And when you read the first three chapters, let me tell you, Paul puts a lot in there for us to grasp. I wish we had time to go into all of it. He covers in the first three chapters, the trinity, God the father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the deity of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, the nature of scripture, the Second Coming of Christ, assurance of salvation, conversion, sanctification, the resurrection, and how faith applies to works.

If you notice in Chapter 1: 3, he says, **...work produced by faith...** That is important. You could just skim over that and miss the theological implication of it. Works are produced by faith; they are not the source of faith. Please let me say it again. Works are what come out of your faith; they are not what builds your faith. I'll say it another way. Works are not what makes you a believer. That's very important. You place faith alone is Christ alone. You're works are an overflow of that, not the source of it. That's why he says it very clearly. **...your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love...** So, you show me someone who's getting after it, you show me someone who's serving and providing for their family, you show me someone who understands who they are in Christ and I'll show you someone who is prompted by this love, who is working hard, not trying to earn anything, but it's an overflow of what Christ is doing in them.

Now we get to the core of this message and the introduction to this whole series. After he says we urge you to love one another more and more – so this is something you have to work on – he says, **11 ...and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life...** All the extroverts just thought, *Ugh, I'm not going to like this series.* This has nothing to do with your personality. I don't care if you are a 2 on the enneagram or an 8 or 6 or 4 or 12... It doesn't matter what your number is. We're not talking about personalities right now. We're not talking about one who is exuberant in life and has a lot of words to share. That's not what the word *quiet* means here. We'll see in just a second what he means. **You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you...**

Something was going on. There was an idleness creeping into the church. There are a few ideas as to where this idleness came from. Some say maybe it was because they had great enthusiasm for the Second Coming of Christ and so many people thought, *If the Lord is going to return, why do I need to keep working.* Others believe that the Greek influence found it's way into the church and the Greeks abhorred hard labor. The Jews did not, but the Greeks did. They did not want anything to do with it. They would rather the slaves do that. That could have crept in. Many people are sitting around and expecting others to provide for them, expecting others to work hard and give them their daily needs. This is why Paul says you should mind your own business and work with your hands just as we told you. ***12 ...so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.***

Here's the word for quiet, the word means **restfulness**. It has nothing to do with talkativeness. It has everything to do with restfulness, being at peace. In this series, we're going to talk about a peace of mind, peace in your relationship with God, just being at peace. The first definition I want to give you is undisturbed, still, settled, not noisy, at peace. It's someone who doesn't need something from me, doesn't need anything from you because they have all they need in Christ. They don't bring drama into your life because they don't feed on that. They know who their source is. They're not looking to you for something that, by the way, you can't give them, that only He can provide. They're just settled in their relationship with Christ.

They're settled in who they are in Christ and now they know how to live in that. One definition of restfulness I had to put up there because I loved it and it's "those not running hither and thither." How many of you think I'm using an old Bible dictionary? I love that one because we love the term *hustle and bustle*, but I say the call back for the month of December for us as a church is *hither and thither*. When your kids are running crazy in December and wanting to go here and there and wanting to buy this... When Christmas break rolls around and the crazy begins, just say, "Kids, we will not run hither and thither. We are going to be a settled family. We are going to be settled and at peace because we know who we are in Christ."

So, let's just talk about this quiet life just a little bit and what it means to live a quiet life and how you and I can have a quiet Christmas. These come straight from 1 Thessalonians 4: 11-12.

1. The quiet life is less frantic, not less outgoing. Be exuberant. Be full of joy. Express that joy. That's not at all what Paul is talking about. He's talking about the person who is not at peace with God, the person who is not settled in their relationship with the Lord and now they need to project that onto other people.

Thanksgiving into Black Friday, or Thanksgiving into Black Thursday... I don't even know what we call it anymore. It starts on Thursday. It's craziness. It can be absolutely... Our family sat around the table four and a half hours, laughing and telling stories, and then this moment came where we were like, "Who am I going to elbow out to get my new television? I have to get there." It used to be they opened at 4:00 am and 6:00 am; now I have to get to Target at 6:00 pm. And the frantic, crazy pace begins. And we're caught in the hither and thither of Christmas.

Friends of ours from The Netherlands, Jill and David, sent us this. This is a business owner that I think gets it. You tell me if this sign works in the Ozarks. I think it does. Here are his hours. *“Open most days about 9 or 10. Occasionally as early as 7:00, but some days as late as 12 or 1. We close about 5:30 or 6, occasionally about 4 or 5, but sometimes as late at 11 or 12. Some days or afternoons, we aren’t here at all, and lately I’ve been here just about all the time, except when I’m someplace else, but I should be here then too.”* Is that not a sign for the Ozarks right there? Some of you sub-contractors, this should be on the side of your truck. Yeah, I said it! If you say your going to be there at 8:00, that doesn’t mean 10:00.

My brother just moved to the area and he was due at his first job. I was cracking up because he told the guy he’d be there at 8:00 and he goes, “What time do you really mean?” He said, “8:00.” But the idea of living a less frantic life, that’s where we want you to start this season. That’s why Stephanie introduced the bucket list to. If you’re just tuning into this, go online and download that. Have that as a resource for your family to say, “We are not going to allow the holidays to control us. We’re going to take time to be settled in who we are in Christ and we are going to be at peace.”

2. The quiet life is a practical way to show love for others. This is the whole context of 1 Thessalonians 4. It’s a practical way, it’s a way we don’t talk about. We did a whole series on 1 Corinthians 13 and what love is and what love is not. But this idea of minding your own business and working with your hands is one we don’t often talk about when we talk about how to love one another, but it’s a very practical way to show love to each other. In other words... If you get nothing else out of today or the start of this series, please understand this: the best way for you to be at peace with others, the best way for you to enter into a drama free Christmas is to be at peace with God and yourself.

You’re like, “But I have that one sister who comes in and she’s toxic...” Nothing she can say or do can mess with who you are in Christ. “Ted, my son, he’s nails on the chalkboard when he comes in with all his... And I go from this peaceful state to wanting to just strangle him.” The best way to be at peace with those in your life, those in this church, those in your family is to be at peace with God and yourself. To know who you are in Christ.

I was teaching this at a church this fall. I’m not even going to tell you the state I was in. It was Minnesota. I was teaching how to honor people, so the Imago Dei. The Lord’s really been using this in my life a lot lately to honor people. Honor means to esteem as highly valuable. The Imago Dei is the image of God in man. Every single human being, every single person, male and female, has the image of God. Through creation, you are an image bearer, which gives you automatic intrinsic value.

I was trying to teach that, and it’s very important when you teach that you also have to teach what it means to be a child of God. Some people hear *I’m made in the image of God, so that means I am automatically a child of God*, and the answer to that is no. Through creation, you are an image bearer. Through creation, you bear the image of God. Through salvation – faith alone in Christ alone – you become a child of God. There is a difference between the image of God and a child of God. I was trying to explain that, and I was getting fired up. I didn’t mean to even say this. I said something I wasn’t even planning on saying. You’re like, *really?* Yeah, I was shocked it came out of my mouth.

I made the statement, "Every single immigrant who crosses our southern border, whether legally or illegally, is created in the image of God and has automatic intrinsic value." And it sucked the life right out of the room. Like right now. Because some people didn't hear the theological statement there. They heard a political statement. I truly wasn't making a political statement, but people came up to me afterwards frustrated.

One person said, "I cannot believe you discussed open borders in our church." I said, "I didn't discuss... And you probably have an opinion on what I think about our borders and I'm not even sharing my opinion." I made a theological statement, not a political statement. After the first service this morning, some people came up to me, wanting to talk about that and engage with that, saying we need Christians to be involved in politics. We need Christian to be involved in government, but not politics.

There were several undocumented individuals that came up to me after that service in Minnesota. They were in tears saying, "I didn't come to this country on my own; I was brought here." I think we call them Dreamers. "I was brought here and now we're figuring out what to do." I'm not making any political statements. Some of you are like, *You're ruining my entire Christmas by talking about this right now.*

Some of us get lost in who we are in Christ because of what people are saying. Paul is telling them, "Don't get shaken in your faith by what false teachers coming in are trying to tell you." I think too many times people... Some of the undocumented individuals that came up to me after the service were in tears. They were like, "We don't even know if there is a place in the church for us anymore. We don't even know because of all the rhedhereck and all of the politics going on." And I'm not making political statement, but that is my brother and sister in Christ who needs to know that no matter what is said about them, by me or any elected official, it has nothing to do with who they are in Christ.

And if that person needs to be told to not be shaken in their faith, don't you think that around your dinner table and around your family room, you can be strong in your faith no matter what a family member says about you? No matter what someone goes after you with, know who you are in Christ. You're an image bearer of Almighty God, which gives you automatic, intrinsic value. Nothing can be said about you to lower that value and nothing can be said about you to raise that value. When we honor someone, we're just recognizing value, we're not setting it. God has set it. And then when I place faith alone in Christ alone and became a follower of Jesus, I'm now a child of God. Know who you are and don't let anybody shake you in that. The best way to be at peace is to be at peace with God and yourself.

Proverbs 25: 17 says, ***Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house – too much of you and they will hate you.***

This is throughout scripture. Paul says this to Timothy about young widows. He says, "I want to make sure we're clear on this. They get into the habit of being idle and they're going from house to house..." Look at that; they're spending too much time in other people's houses. "They go from house to house and not only have they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies." When you're not tending to your own affairs, it gets you nosing into other people's business.

3. The quiet life is self-supporting and not a burden on others. You want to show love to your family? Start providing for yourself. You want to honor your father and mother and you're in your twenties? Start providing for yourself. You're 35 and still living in their basement with Star Wars bed sheets? Start providing for yourself. I've never heard anybody say, "I like being taken advantage of." No one... none of us. We respect people who do not take advantage of us. This is exactly what he is sharing. Be willing to roll up your sleeves, put on some gloves, and work hard.

Like the guy who showed up on Monday to pump my septic system. He showed up one of the most joyful individuals I've ever met. I had the hose ready and the covers off. He goes, "Thank you so much." And I was speaking blessing to him and he was speaking blessing back to me. He had his gloves on and he was a mess, as you can imagine. He said these parting words to me, "You have a very nice system." I can't tell you what that did to me, but I was like, "Thank you! We work hard around here to keep this thing flowing."

I kept thinking about that guy as I was preparing. Is there anything better than to work hard all day long, go home, take a shower (especially him), have dinner with your family, spend some time together, and get up the next day and do it all again? I believe if you're doing that, you don't have time to be in anybody else's business.

Don't be a burden. We should all humble ourselves and be willing to do hard work to provide for ourselves. I tell my kids this all the time. I've been changing the way I say it in recent weeks. I said, "If Woodland Hills ever impeaches me, I can tell you kids that the next day, I will be doing something." For some of you, you just need the encouragement. You need to take the blue-collar job while you wait for a white-collar job. You need to take any job until the perfect job comes along. Be willing to work hard. Ecclesiastes 5: 12 - ***The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep.*** Work hard and go home and rest.

4. The quiet life does not take advantage of others. We respect those who do not take advantage of us. When you are unsettled in your relationship with Christ, you are a burden to other people. Let that sink in for just a second. The next time someone really gets all over you and you want to lung at them, ask yourself the question first: "Why am I not at peace right now in my relationship with the Lord? What am I forgetting? What does what this person comes against me with, the troublesome meddler coming against me; why in the world is this shaking me right now?" Know who you are in Christ and how to live in Christ.

I'm going to take us right to 2 Thessalonians 3, the next letter Paul writes to this church. And we'll close with this. He now has to use strong language to tell them, "Hey, I told you to be undisturbed and settled, work with your hands, mind your own business, live a quiet life, have that good reputation with outsiders. I want you to get this, but some of you are still idle. You're still not doing what I told you to do in the earlier letter." ***6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive... Why? Because when you start to get involved with idle and disruptive people, it makes you less productive. And now you're not going to be able to meet the needs of your family. ...and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were***

with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling... We were okay with exhausting ourselves because the scripture says the appetite drives us on. We wanted to eat, and we knew to eat, we'd have to work. **...so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help...** As an apostle, he could have claimed that right. **...but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."**

11 We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy... Here's that idea of troublesome meddling again. **...they are busybodies.** Going from house to house, spending too much time in the affairs of other people. **12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.**

We end the first Sunday of every month by taking a mercy offering. I want to be really clear about this because after what we just spoke of, the mercy offering is our way to give to meet the physical needs of families in our church. We're called to that as well, you know that. We are called to meet the physical needs of one another. We are called to carry one another's burden, but we're also called to carry our own load. What I love... and I've seen this happen time and time again with the mercy offering. Many of you have needed the help of the mercy offering to get through a difficult season in your life and in your family. We see it on this spread sheet – money that went to meet the need of a family in our church – and then a couple of months later, we see it in another column. That money was brought back to the church to say, "Hey, the Lord has provided for our needs; now we want to help someone else out." That's what it means to show love to one another. It means we care for one another.

Today, we have plenty of opportunities to do that. We just took the offering and we have the mercy boxes on your way out and we have the giving tree that you can stop by as well.

I'll close with the words of Hank Williams, Sr. at the end of the song. "If you mind your own business, you'll be busy all the time." Taking care of your own needs. As I pray, you're going to hear it in my prayer. I'm going to talk to those who have been idle in this church for a while, letting other people carry the burden of ministry in this church. I'm just going to ask that the Holy Spirit call you by name. If you're idle in our church and all you do is attend and you never thought about serving or giving, that a quiet Christmas would be a start for you. It would be a time for you to get involved and for you to no longer be idle, to no longer be a busybody in the church, but to be one that's rolling up your sleeves, putting on the gloves, putting on the boots, and willing to work as we serve those in this church and those in this community.

Father, it is in the name of Jesus that we enter into a quiet season, a quiet Christmas where we will strive, we will work more and more to be settled in you, to be settled in our relationship with you. And as we are at peace with you, that will bring great peace to our relationships – our family, our friends, our church family, those in this community.

May we look to you and you alone as the source of life and not to each other. Being at peace with you will bring peace and great peace to brothers and sister in Christ gathered around us. For that we are grateful.

Thank you for the needs being met in this church, for the needs that will be met through the mercy offering. Use that money to bless families this season.

It is in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.