Yale
DIVINITY SCHOOL
Yale Bible Study

1 and 2 Thessalonians
Some Practical Advice

Interpreting the Text:

1. In this chapter, the author clearly instructs the Thessalonians how to discipline those who are slack in their responsibilities. Those who do not work should not eat. What do we imagine was happening in this community? How might we, as interpreters of this text, piece together what information is lost to history?

2. The letter begins as it ends, with a hope for "grace" and "peace." How does this connection to grace and peace support a familiarity with Paul's writing and teaching? How might these openers and closers suggest a writing style rather than an author?

Applying the Text:

1. In both the letters to the Thessalonians the appeal to faithful behavior rests in part on the expectation that the Day of the Lord is near, or very near. In most of our churches that expectation has faded or been reinterpreted. Are there ways in which we can still lay hold of the strong expectation of our letters, or ways in which we can seek to be faithful but with a different vision of Christian hope?

2. In the letters to the Thessalonians, we see 'apocalypse' as both a source of hope and a reminder of judgement. How do you engage with apocalyptic literature like these letters? Do you find discussion of Jesus' coming again hopeful, distressing (as the promise of judgement), both, or neither?

3. How do we understand the injunctions against busybodies in a time when social media blurs the distinction between the private and the public, between my business and yours? Are there present benefits to this kind of gossip, or is all gossip, as this author suggests, to be avoided?