

Paul's Theology of Work (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12): The Church's Role in Addressing Unemployment Among Generation Z

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Submitted:
⁵March 2026

Revised:
⁸April 2026

Published:
¹⁶April 2026



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Abstract:

Unemployment among Generation Z presents a serious challenge amidst the digital economic shift affecting social and spiritual aspects. This study aims to address: how Paul's theology of work in 2 Thessalonians 3:10–12 is understood and what its implications are for the role of the church. The method employed is a qualitative approach through biblical exegesis and hermeneutics, supported by a literature review. The research findings indicate that work is a responsibility of faith that rejects passivity and dependency, and forms part of the Christian witness of life. Based on these findings, the church is understood as an agent of transformation that plays a role in shaping the work ethic, self-reliance, and responsibility of the younger generation. Consequently, the church needs to develop an integrative programme combining spirituality and economic empowerment as a concrete response to Generation Z unemployment.

Keywords: 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; Generation Z; Church; unemployment; Paul's theology of work

Introduction

Amidst the challenges of the digital and economic era, Generation Z faces job uncertainty and global competition that can foster a passive attitude. Therefore, the church plays a vital role in shaping this generation to work with integrity, responsibility, and to make tangible contributions in line with Christian values. Unemployment remains a persistent socio-economic challenge in Indonesia, particularly amidst economic structural shifts driven by digitalisation and globalisation. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) indicates that the open unemployment rate among young people (aged 15–24), a group dominated by Generation Z, is the highest compared

to other age groups, reaching approximately 16% by 2025 far above the national average of Statistics . This situation is further underscored by findings that around 9.9 million young people in Indonesia fall into the category of those not in employment, education, or training (NEET), reflecting the high vulnerability of the younger generation when entering the labour market (Kompas.com, 2024). This phenomenon highlights a gap between the readiness of the young workforce and the ever-changing demands of the labour market (International Labour Organization, 2023) . It can therefore be asserted that unemployment remains a challenge in Indonesia, with the highest rates among young people, predominantly Generation Z (BPS). This generation faces difficulties entering the world of work due to the digital economy and a lack of skills. With characteristics that are tech-savvy yet prone to passivity, Generation Z is a key group to study in the context of shaping a work ethic.

In addressing the issue of unemployment, the church is not only called upon to provide spiritual guidance, but also to play an active role as an agent of empowerment, preparing the younger generation to be self-reliant and productive in the world of work. Various perspectives emphasise that the church has a strategic role in responding to social challenges, particularly in efforts to tackle unemployment and in fostering a self-reliant and productive younger generation. In his research, Purwonugroho supports the idea that the church should not only focus on spiritual aspects but also play a role in building a productive Generation Z. By guiding them to face the challenges of the modern workplace, the church can act as a facilitator of education and skills development based on Christian values (Purwonugroho, 2024). A similar point is discussed by Patricia in her research, which highlights the role of the Catholic Church in tackling youth unemployment in the demographic bonus era through empowerment based on the Church's social teachings. The Church plays a strategic role in building a productive Generation Z by equipping them spiritually, educationally, and with skills, so that they are able to face economic challenges with a Christian work ethic (Patricia, 2024) . Furthermore, Y. Yerima emphasises that the Church's role in communicating with Generation Z in virtual spaces is to ensure that religious messages are conveyed effectively. This supports the idea that the Church not only nurtures spirituality but also equips Generation Z with education and skills based on Christian values to face the world of work (Yerima, 2023). Furthermore, Zega states in his work that the church's diaconal ministry contributes to reducing poverty within the congregation, which is also linked to efforts to tackle unemployment and promote increased productivity among Generation Z (Zega, 2021) . Thus, the researcher can conclude that various studies support the view that the church does not only focus on spiritual aspects, but also plays a strategic role in education, economic training, and the empowerment of young people in the digital age. Consequently, the church can become a key facilitator in guiding Generation Z to face the challenges of the workplace with integrity, responsibility, and tangible contributions to society in accordance with Christian values.

In a theological context, the issue of unemployment is not merely understood as an economic problem, but is also linked to the meaning of work within the Christian faith. The author observes that 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 provides a relevant theological basis for addressing this issue. In this text, Paul emphasises that work is not merely an economic activity, but a responsibility of faith related to the order of community life and Christian witness. Paul's rebuke of the ' ' members of the congregation who lived in disorder and were unwilling to work demonstrates that a passive attitude and dependence are contrary to Christian values. Based on this understanding, the author views the text of 2 Thessalonians 3:10-11 as speaking not only within the context of the

early church, but also as having contextual relevance to the issue of unemployment today, particularly amongst Generation Z. The theological principle of work as a responsibility of faith can serve as a foundation for the church in fostering a healthy work ethic, encouraging self-reliance, and shaping the character of a productive younger generation.

Based on the topics outlined above, the author has previously conducted relevant research. *Firstly*, according to research by Chibuzo I. Nwanguma, Paul's teaching on hard work in 2 Thessalonians 3:6–10 highlights the Church's role in shaping a work ethic and promoting the economic empowerment of the congregation as part of its spiritual and social responsibilities (Nwanguma, 2017). *Secondly*; The study by Olihe Ononogbu et al. emphasises that the Church in Nigeria must adopt a pragmatic approach to tackling youth unemployment through skills training, partnerships with the private sector, and policy advocacy to support economic self-reliance (Ononogbu et al., 2020). *Thirdly*; Furthermore, researcher Paul Danbaki Jatau asserts that the Church needs to re-emphasise the value of hard work according to Paul's teachings to counter the negative impact of prosperity theology, which undermines the work ethic and productivity of young people (Jatau, 2020). *Fourthly*; Research in Tanzania indicates that the Anglican Church in Tanzania utilises the theology of work to tackle youth unemployment through skills training, entrepreneurship, and the understanding that work is part of a spiritual calling (Mlugu & Ndereba, 2025). Although a number of studies have discussed the role of the Church in tackling unemployment and instilling a work ethic based on the teachings of Paul, there are still gaps that can be further explored, such as a specific focus on Generation Z with their digital characteristics and unique needs, a contextual approach in Indonesia that differs from the predominantly African background of previous studies, and the Church's use of digital technology and social media for skills training and economic empowerment. Furthermore, collaboration between the Church and the local business sector also presents a new avenue for creating relevant and Christian-based employment opportunities for Generation Z.

Although various studies have examined the role of the Church and Paul's theology of work, there remain research gaps that require further exploration. Firstly, the majority of previous studies have focused on the African context and the Catholic Church, meaning that contextual analyses within the context of the Church in Indonesia remain limited. Secondly, research specifically linking Paul's theology of work in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-11 with the characteristics of Generation Z as a digital generation has not been extensively conducted. Thirdly, an exegetical-theological approach connecting biblical texts with concrete Church strategies in responding to youth unemployment has yet to be developed.

Against this background, this study aims to examine how Paul's theology of work in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 is understood through an exegetical approach, and how the theological implications of this understanding can be applied to the Church's role in tackling unemployment among Generation Z. This study aims to examine Paul's theology of work in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-11 from an exegetical-hermeneutical perspective and to explore its implications for the Church's role in addressing unemployment among Generation Z. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the study of Paul's theology of work and a practical contribution to the Church's ministry in shaping a young generation that is productive, independent, and spiritually and socially responsible.

Methodology

The method employed in this study is a qualitative approach, with a primary focus on

exegetical and hermeneutical methods applied to the text of 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 as the primary data source. The exegetical approach is used to analyse the text in depth through an examination of its context, structure, and the theological meaning it contains. Meanwhile, the hermeneutical approach was used to bridge the meaning of the text into the contemporary context, particularly in addressing the issue of unemployment among Generation Z. The data in this study consists of primary data in the form of the biblical text 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, as well as secondary data obtained through a literature review, such as books, journal articles, and theological sources relevant to Paul's theology of work and contemporary social issues.

The analytical process was carried out in several stages. First, an exegetical analysis of the text to identify the theological significance of the concept of work in Paul's thought. Second, a hermeneutical analysis to contextualise these theological principles within contemporary social realities, particularly in the context of Generation Z unemployment in Indonesia. Third, a theological synthesis to formulate practical implications for the role of the church in response to this issue. With this methodological framework, the research aims to produce a theological understanding that is not merely textual, but also contextual and applicable to the life of the church today.

Results and Discussion

Exegetical Analysis of 2 Thessalonians 3:10–12

Historical and Sociocultural Context of the Thessalonian Church

The Thessalonian church lived in a multicultural social context and faced pressure due to eschatological misunderstandings, which led some of its members to live passively and be reluctant to work. Paul responded by emphasising that work is a responsibility of faith, reflecting the Christian witness in society. In his book *“Paul and the Thessalonians”* (2020), Abraham J. Malherbe explains that misunderstandings regarding Christ's coming fostered this passive attitude, prompting Paul to emphasise the importance of work as an expression of the responsibility of faith: In his book *“The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation”*, Luke Timothy Johnson emphasises that understanding the cosmopolitan social and cultural context of Thessalonica is crucial for interpreting Paul's rebuke accurately, which constitutes a concrete response to the congregation's socio-economic situation (Johnson, 2010). Consequently, the Thessalonian congregation, facing social pressures and eschatological misunderstandings, led Paul to assert that work is a responsibility of Christian faith and witness, which must be understood within the socio-cultural context of that cosmopolitan city.

In the first century, Thessalonica was a major trading centre in Macedonia due to its strategic location on the Thermaic Gulf and along the main route of the Via Egnatia, making it a bustling, multi-ethnic port city and a vital hub in the Roman Empire's economic network. According to Arja Karivieri, Thessalonica in the first century AD was a major trading centre in Macedonia due to its strategic location on the Thermaic Gulf and along the main Via Egnatia route, making it a bustling, multi-ethnic port city and a vital part of the Roman Empire's economic network (Karivieri, 2010). With its strategic position on the Thermaic Gulf and the main route of the Via Egnatia, Thessaloniki developed into an important trading centre and a multi-ethnic port city in

the first century. These conditions made the city a vital part of the Roman Empire's economy and helped shape the social dynamics of the early church, as emphasised by Arja Karivieri in her study on trade and exchange along the Via Egnatia (Karivieri, 2010).

The imbalance in the work ethic within the Thessalonian congregation was causing social strain and undermining the witness of the faith. Paul addressed this by emphasising that work is a spiritual responsibility that preserves the harmony of the Christian community. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, Paul states unequivocally that anyone who is unwilling to work should not eat. He highlighted that some members of the congregation were living in idleness and causing disruption, not because of an inability to work, but because of a refusal to do so. Paul emphasised that working quietly and independently is part of a healthy witness of faith and a responsibility towards the community (Numgba Akwaki, 2017). Furthermore, Paul cited his own example of working hard so as not to be a burden on the congregation, even though he had the right to receive support. This action demonstrates that work is not merely an economic obligation, but also an expression of love and an example within the Christian community. Thus, a balanced work ethic and individual responsibility in work are crucial aspects in maintaining the integrity and witness of the church within society.

Analysis of Key Phrases in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

Verse 10

Greek Word	Transliteration	Form	Translation	Brief Note
οὐ θέλει	ou thelei	Present Active Indicative	does not want	indicates an active will (refusal)
ἐργάζεσθαι	ergazesthai	Pres. Mid. Inf.	to work	continuous activity
μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω	Let him not eat	Present Active Imperative	do not eat	a command with ethical consequences

Analysis:

The grammatical structure of this verse highlights the relationship between will and action. The refusal to work (οὐ θέλει) emphasises the aspect of will, not inability, whilst the imperative form (ἐσθιέτω) indicates the presence of normative consequences within the community (SABDA, 2022). This confirms that work is understood as an obligation that cannot be ignored.

In verse 10, Paul reiterates the principle he had previously taught the congregation, namely that anyone who is unwilling to work has no right to eat. The Greek phrase *οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι* (*ou thelei ergazesthai*) is grammatically composed of the *present active indicative* form of the verb *θέλω*, meaning 'to will' or 'to desire', combined with *the present middle infinitive ἐργάζεσθαι*, meaning 'to work' or 'to engage

in productive activity’(*Bible Works Version 7*, 2024). This form indicates that the primary issue highlighted by Paul is not an inability to work, but a refusal to do so. As emphasised by Gordon D. Fee, the use of the present tense in this construction indicates a sustained attitude, thus pointing to a deliberate way of life, not a temporary condition (Fee, 2009). Furthermore, Ben Witherington III explains that within the social context of the Thessalonian church, the refusal to work was often linked to eschatological misunderstandings that led some members of the congregation to live passively (Witherington, 2006). This is reinforced by Gene L. Green, who emphasises that the term does not refer to those who are unable to work, but rather to those who deliberately choose not to work, thereby placing a burden on the community (Green, 2020). Meanwhile, a more recent study by Jeffrey A. D. Weima asserts that the negative form *οὐ θέλει* reveals the ethical dimension of this command, namely the existence of personal responsibility within Christian community life (Weima, 2014). Thus, lexically and grammatically, this phrase affirms that work, in Paul’s thinking, is not merely an economic activity, but rather part of a moral and social responsibility that cannot be ignored in the life of the congregation.

Meanwhile, the statement “let him not eat” (*μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω*, *mēde esthietō*) is the third-person singular *present active imperative* form of the verb *ἐσθίω*, meaning “to eat”. This imperative form indicates a command that is normative and ongoing within the life of the community, rather than merely a momentary prohibition. The negative particle *μηδὲ* reinforces the nature of this prohibition, thereby forming a logical consequence of the previously mentioned attitude of “refusing to work”(*Bible Works Version 7*, 2024). Gordon D. Fee emphasises that this imperative form is not intended as a harsh punishment, but rather as a community disciplinary mechanism to uphold shared responsibility and prevent unhealthy dependency (Fee, 2009). In line with this, Jeffrey A. D. Weima explains that this prohibition must be understood within the framework of Christian community ethics, where every member is called to contribute actively and not to be a burden to others (Weima, 2014). Furthermore, Gene L. Green emphasises that this statement is not a rejection of love or solidarity, but rather Paul’s effort to uphold order and responsibility within the life of the congregation (Green, 2020). Thus, lexically and grammatically, the expression *μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω* affirms that work is not merely a choice, but an ethical duty that serves to maintain the balance and sustainability of Christian community life.

Verse 11

Greek word	Transliteration	Form	Translation	Brief Note
ἀτάκτως	ataktōs	Adverb	disorderly	living outside the community’s order
περιπατοῦντας	peripatountas	Participle	living/walking	daily routine
περιεργαζομένους	periergazomenous	Participle	busy in vain	active but unproductive

Analysis:

The use of the word ἀτάκτως indicates a way of life that is out of step with the community's order, whilst the participle περιεργαζομένους describes activity that appears busy but is unproductive (SABDA, 2020). This structure shows that the problem faced by the congregation is not merely a failure to work, but rather a way of life that disrupts the community's order.

In verse 11, Paul describes a specific situation within the congregation, namely that there were members living *in disorder*. The term '*living in disorder*' (ἀτάκτως, *ataktōs*) is lexically an adverb derived from the word ἄτακτος, meaning 'disorganised', 'undisciplined', or 'deviating from order'. In the context of the Greek military, this term was used to describe a soldier who broke ranks or failed to follow the proper formation, thus metaphorically pointing to behaviour that violated the order of the community. Grammatically, the use of the adverbial form ἀτάκτως in this construction modifies the manner of living (περιπατοῦντας), indicating that this disorder is not a momentary act but a sustained pattern of life (*Bible Works Version 7*, 2024). Jeffrey A. D. Weima asserts that this term in 2 Thessalonians does not merely refer to general indiscipline, but specifically points to behaviour that disrupts the stability of the community, particularly in relation to work ethics (Weima, 2014). Furthermore, Michael J. Gorman explains that the concept of "living in disorder" in Paul's thought is closely linked to a failure to live a life in accordance with the calling of the faith community, thus possessing both theological and ethical dimensions (Gorman, 2004). Meanwhile, Nijay K. Gupta emphasises that the use of this term indicates a deviation in behaviour with social consequences, where individuals no longer contribute constructively, but instead become a burden and disrupt communal life (Gupta, 2020). Thus, lexically and grammatically, the term ἀτάκτως not only describes personal disorder, but also indicates a way of life that deviates from community norms, thereby becoming the root of the problems faced by the Thessalonian congregation.

Furthermore, they are described as people who "do not work" but are instead "busy with useless things" (περιεργαζομένους, *periergazomenous*). Lexically, this word is the *present middle participle* of περιεργάζομαι, which literally means "to occupy oneself excessively" or "to engage in unnecessary matters". The *present participle* form indicates an action taking place continuously, thus describing a way of life, not a momentary behaviour. Interestingly, this term carries an ironic nuance, as it etymologically derives from the root word ἐργάζομαι ("to work"), but with the addition of the prefix περί, which conveys the meaning of "to go round in circles" or "to deviate", thus pointing to an activity that appears busy but yields nothing of value (Bible Works Version 7, 2024). Craig S. Keener emphasises that this term, in the social context of the ancient world, was often used to describe a "busybody" that is, someone who meddles in others' affairs without making a tangible contribution, thereby potentially damaging social relations within the community (Keener, 2014). In line with this, Cousland explains that the contrast between "not working" and "being busy" indicates a distortion in the understanding of work, where activity is no longer directed towards productivity, but rather towards useless things (Cousland, 2002). Furthermore, Ben

Witherington III emphasises that this behaviour is not merely an individual issue, but has social implications as it disrupts the order and balance of congregational life (Witherington, 2006). Thus, lexically and grammatically, the term *περιεργαζομένους* describes a form of activity that deviates from the true meaning of work, so that this verse serves as Paul’s diagnosis of a fundamental problem within the community, namely the existence of a lifestyle that is both unproductive and disruptive to communal life.

Verse 12

Greek word	Transliteration	Form	Translation	Brief Note
παραγγέλλομεν	parangellomen	Present Active Indicative	we command	apostolic authority
παρακαλοῦμεν	we entreat	Present Active Indicative	we advise	pastoral approach
μετὰ ἡσυχίας	meta hēsychias	Prepositional phrase	Calmly	living in an orderly and peaceful manner
ἐργαζόμενοι	ergazomenoi	Participle	Working	productive activity
τὸν ἄρτον ἑαυτῶν	their own bread	Phrase	their own bread	self-sufficiency

Analysis:

The combination of the words *παραγγέλλομεν* and *παρακαλοῦμεν* reflects a balance between authority and a pastoral approach. The phrase *μετὰ ἡσυχίας* emphasises a calm and orderly life, whilst the expression “eat one’s own bread” underscores the importance of self-reliance (SABDA, 2020). Thus, this verse offers a solution centred on order and personal responsibility.

In verse 12, Paul offers a pastoral response to the issues arising within the congregation by issuing commands and advice that are both normative and edifying. The phrase “*we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ*” (*παραγγέλλομεν καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν Κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ*) grammatically employs two verbs in the *present active indicative* mood, namely *παραγγέλλομεν* (“we command”) and *παρακαλοῦμεν* (“we advise/encourage”)(*Bible Works Version 7*, 2024). The simultaneous use of these two verbs indicates a balance between apostolic authority and a pastoral approach, whereby Paul not only issues commands but also guides the congregation persuasively. Jeffrey A. D. Weima asserts that this combination reflects Paul’s pastoral strategy, which blends apostolic authority with concern for the congregation’s spiritual growth (Weima, 2014).

Furthermore, the phrase *μετὰ ἡσυχίας* (*meta hēsuchias*), translated as “working in peace”, is a prepositional construction that emphasises the manner or attitude in which one works. Lexically, *ἡσυχία* carries the meanings of “calm”, “order”, or “a life free from disturbance”, thus indicating a disciplined way of life that does not disturb

others(*Bible Works Version 7*, 2024). Nijay K. Gupta explains that this concept, in the context of Paul, relates to an orderly way of life, which is a hallmark of a healthy Christian community (Gupta, 2020). Furthermore, the expression “*eating their own bread*” (*τὸν ἄριστον ἐαυτῶν ἐσθίωσιν*) emphasises the aspect of self-reliance, whereby each individual is called to meet their own needs through their own efforts (*Bible Works Version 7*, 2024) . Craig S. Keener emphasises that in the context of the ancient world, this expression has a strong socio-economic dimension, namely to avoid undue dependence on the community (Keener, 2014).

Thus, lexically and grammatically, this verse not only provides a practical solution but also affirms the ideal way of life within the Christian community: a life that is orderly, productive and responsible. Paul’s response demonstrates that the resolution of the congregation’s problems is not merely corrective but also formative, in shaping a character and ethos of life consistent with the values of the Christian faith.

Theological Synthesis: The Theological Meaning of Work According to Paul

Based on an analysis of 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, work in Paul’s thought can be understood as part of the responsibilities of faith that are inseparable from the life of the believer. This principle is evident in the assertion in that any individual who refuses to work has no right to eat, which demonstrates that work is not merely an economic activity, but an ethical response to the call of faith. Michael J. Gorman asserts that in Paul’s theology, the life of the believer is a participation in the work of Christ, so that every aspect of life, including work, must reflect obedience and the responsibilities of faith (Gorman, 2004). Furthermore, work also reflects a Christian ethos rooted in the values of discipline, responsibility, and integrity in daily life. In this context, work is not merely a personal duty, but also part of the witness of faith within the community. Nijay K. Gupta explains that Paul’s ethics are always communal in nature, whereby individual actions, including those related to work, have a direct impact on communal life and the witness of the faith community (Gupta, 2020). Thus, work becomes a tangible expression of a living and responsible faith.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, Paul emphasises that work is a responsibility of faith, not merely an economic necessity. The Christian work ethic teaches that work is part of an active spiritual life and entails responsibility towards oneself and the community. Miroslav Volf states that work becomes a form of worship when it aligns with God’s purpose in the world. Thus, work is understood as an expression of obedience, service, and Christian witness (Volf, 1991). Consequently, the work ethic within the Christian faith emphasises self-reliance, responsibility, and social contribution values that are vital to instil in shaping a productive generation. Paul emphasises that work is a Christian responsibility and part of a healthy communal life, particularly in addressing the attitude of laziness arising from eschatological misunderstandings within the Thessalonian congregation. In his work, A. Quigley explains that Paul’s statement “if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” reflects the theo-economic principle of the early Christian community, where every member

was required to contribute actively as an expression of faith and to uphold social solidarity (Quigley, 2021). In their article in *the European Scientific Journal*, it is emphasised that Paul viewed work as a responsibility of faith that underpins witness and solidarity within the Christian community (Adelakun & Ajadi, 2020). Meanwhile, Peter Orr emphasises that for Paul, the work ethic is a tangible expression of Christian faith and a living witness amidst a consumerist culture (Orr, 2014). Thus, the phrase “If anyone is unwilling to work, let them not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10) is not merely a moral admonition, but a theological statement reflecting the importance of work as a responsibility of faith and a part of healthy communal life in early Christianity. Paul emphasised that every member of the congregation must actively contribute to maintaining Christian solidarity and witness, particularly in the face of the influence of passivism resulting from a mistaken eschatological understanding.

The meaning of Paul’s words in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 as the basis for church discipline, to understand the role of work in maintaining order and spiritual responsibility within the Christian community. Bill Wenstrom, in “*Exegesis and Exposition of Second Thessalonians 3:6*”, explains that Paul’s command to shun disorderly members of the congregation is an act of church discipline aimed at restoring them to a life in accordance with the teachings and maintaining the order of the community (Bill Wenstrom, 2020). In the article ‘*No Work No Food: An Interpretive Analysis of Paul’s Admonition in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13*’, published in *the European Scientific Journal* in August 2020, authors Adewale J. Adelakun and Oluseye E. Ajadi examine the social context of the Thessalonian congregation and the use of Paul’s teaching as the basis for church discipline, emphasising the importance of work as a responsibility of faith to counteract a passive attitude resulting from eschatological misunderstandings (Adelakun & Ajadi, 2020). Thus, the meaning of Paul’s words in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 serves as the basis for church discipline, emphasising the importance of work as a spiritual responsibility to maintain order and solidarity within the Christian community.

Refusing to take on work responsibilities within the Christian community has not only social implications, but also carries serious moral and spiritual consequences, as work is seen as an expression of faith and loyalty to the call to live together in the body of Christ. Jennifer A. Quigley explains that in the early Christian community, work was a responsibility of faith that maintained social solidarity, and refusing to contribute carried moral and spiritual consequences (Quigley, 2021). Meanwhile, Adelakun and Ajadi assert that refusal to work reflects a violation of spiritual and social ethics that disrupts the unity of the congregation; thus, Paul emphasises work as a responsibility of faith and a pillar of community solidarity (Adelakun & Ajadi, 2020). Furthermore, Luke Timothy Johnson emphasises that, within the social and spiritual context of the Thessalonian congregation, work is a moral responsibility that preserves the harmony and witness of the Christian community (Johnson, 2022). Consequently, Paul emphasises work as an essential element in maintaining harmony and the integrity of communal life within the body of Christ.

Practical Implications: The Church's Role in Tackling Unemployment Among Generation Z

The Church as a Shaper of Work Ethic

The implications of this understanding position the church as a formative agent with a strategic role in shaping the work ethic of the congregation, particularly among the younger generation. The church functions not only as a space for spiritual formation but also as a community that instils the values of responsibility, independence, and discipline in daily life. Amidst the challenges of the digital age and instant culture, the church is called to instil the values of faith, responsibility, and productivity as part of a Christian calling that is relevant and impactful for society. The church serves as a place for spiritual formation as well as a centre for life skills training, to shape a congregation that is faithful and self-reliant. "Church Member Formation in Shaping the Character of the Younger Generation in the Era of Technological Disruption" explains that the church plays a vital role in shaping the character of the younger generation by integrating values of faith and life skills to face the challenges of the digital age (Cerullo, n.d.). The Church plays a role in nurturing the character of young people through a relevant approach in the digital age so that they remain active and morally strong within the faith community (Heryanto et al., 2024). Bouno explains the Church's role in fostering entrepreneurship among young people, helping them develop practical skills to become economically independent and ready to face the challenges of the times. Thus, the church functions not only as a place for spiritual nurture, but also as a facilitator of economic and social empowerment, particularly for the younger generation. Through the integration of faith values with life skills and entrepreneurship training, the church helps to build strong character and prepares young congregants to face the challenges of the times independently and productively.

The Church plays a vital role in linking the teachings of the faith with the real economic challenges and needs of everyday life, so that the congregation can live out their faith in a practical and responsible manner within the social and economic context. Hinton and Maclurcan propose a non-profit economic model that emphasises social values and ethics, in line with the Church's teachings on solidarity and social justice, so that the Church can serve as a bridge between faith and just economic practices (Hinton & Maclurcan, 2016). Research by Galindo-Silva and Tchuente reveals that inter-religious competition can influence community culture and contribute to a reduction in domestic violence. The results of this study indicate that the church plays a vital role in shaping social values that not only strengthen family harmony but also have positive implications for family economic well-being through the social stability created (Galindo-Silva & Tchuente, 2023). It can therefore be concluded that the church plays a strategic role in bridging the teachings of faith with economic reality through the instilling of values of solidarity, social justice, and work ethics. Support for the non-profit economic model, criticism of inhumane capitalism, and the church's influence in shaping social values demonstrate that the Christian faith can be tangibly realised in a just and responsible economic life.

Fostering Independence and Productivity Among Generation Z Through the Church

The church can act as a facilitator of collaboration that promotes job creation, skills training and more inclusive economic access for its congregation. In this way, the church not only serves spiritual needs but also actively contributes to the economic empowerment of its members. Boiliu and Pasaribu emphasise that the church, through Christian religious education, can economically empower congregants by fostering character, skills, and creativity relevant to the digital age. The church not only nurtures faith but also encourages innovation and economic self-reliance among congregants through training and mentoring grounded in Christian values (Boiliu & Pasaribu, 2020). Paulina Silitonga also explains that the church plays a role in improving the economic well-being of the congregation through financial assistance, skills training, and moral guidance, so that the congregation can become more economically self-reliant (Silitonga, 2023). Based on the above, it is emphasised that the Church has a strategic role in promoting the independence and productivity of Generation Z by serving as a centre for economic empowerment that unites the values of faith, skills training, and practical collaboration. Through education, training, and moral support, the church not only nurtures the spiritual lives of its congregation but also equips them to face economic challenges independently and innovatively.

The Relevance of Paul's Theology of Work in the Modern Context and for Generation Z

Paul's theology of work, which emphasises work as a spiritual and social responsibility, remains relevant to Generation Z as they face the challenges of the modern age. Palolongan emphasises that Paul's values regarding work such as discipline, responsibility and setting a good example are still relevant for shaping the character and work ethic of Generation Z in ministry and life (Palolongan, 2023). Palopak demonstrates that Paul's ministry, centred on obedience and faithfulness to God, serves as a model for the younger generation to develop a work ethic grounded in spiritual values (Palopak, 2022). Arifianto also emphasises that to reach Generation Z in the digital age, the church needs to combine a technological approach with the instilling of values of hard work and responsibility that align with Paul's teachings (Arifianto & Tiwa, 2024). Thus, Paul's teaching on the importance of work as an expression of discipline, responsibility, and example remains highly relevant for shaping the character and work ethic of Generation Z, particularly in ministry and contemporary life. The church must combine these spiritual values with the use of technology in order to effectively guide and empower the younger generation in the digital age.

The challenges faced by Generation Z, such as a fast-paced culture, disruptive digital technological changes, and global economic instability. These factors influence their behaviour, values and working styles, thus necessitating an appropriate mentoring approach. Anggara discusses the main challenges faced by Generation Z, such as mental pressure, the high cost of education, job insecurity, and social isolation

resulting from digitalisation. The authors suggest solutions such as improving financial literacy, access to mental health services, and skills training tailored to industry needs (Anggara & Masfufah, 2024). Meanwhile, Nugroho highlights that the gig economy in Indonesia offers flexible work opportunities for Generation Z and Millennials, though these remain limited to the transport and delivery sectors. Its development has not yet been optimised in the creative and knowledge-based sectors, and it faces challenges such as a lack of protection and job training (Nugroho et al., 2023). Furthermore, Zirzis discusses Generation Z's contribution to the digital economic transformation, particularly through e-commerce, the gig economy, and technology start-ups. This generation is driving changes in consumption patterns and working methods, whilst demanding ethical and sustainable business practices (Zirzis, 2024). Consequently, Generation Z faces various challenges stemming from a culture of instant gratification, rapid digital technological advancements, and global economic uncertainty. Psychological pressure, high education costs, and labour market uncertainty are key issues influencing their mindset and work attitudes. Despite this, Generation Z is also actively involved in the digital economic transformation through participation in e-commerce, the gig economy, and tech start-ups, whilst simultaneously driving more ethical and sustainable business practices.

Paul's teaching on work as a form of devotion to God and one's fellow human beings remains relevant to this day. Values such as discipline, responsibility and social concern form an important foundation for fostering a robust work ethic and integrity amidst the challenges of the modern age. Simanjuntak discusses work from a biblical perspective as a form of spiritual devotion and service. Work is viewed not merely as an economic activity, but also as a moral responsibility that strengthens the church's ethos of service through the values of discipline, integrity, and love (Simanjuntak et al., 2024). Pabisa discusses the relevance of Paul's mission theology in the context of modern socio-cultural settings. They demonstrate that Paul successfully adapted his mission to local cultures and norms to convey the Gospel message effectively. This research emphasises the importance of an adaptive and inclusive approach in the church's mission today, so that ministry remains relevant to ever-changing socio-cultural dynamics (Pabisa & Pratiwi, 2024). Hutahaeon then demonstrates that whilst many young people understand the concept of the theology of work, only a few practise it consistently. Therefore, guidance is required to instil the values of integrity, work ethic, and a positive attitude in workplace relationships. The article emphasises that work must be understood as service to God, so that young people are expected to develop an attitude of honesty, responsibility, and dedication in their work (Hutahaeon et al., 2021). Thus, Paul's teaching on work as service to God and one's fellow human beings remains relevant for shaping a work ethic that is disciplined, responsible, and full of integrity in the modern age. An adaptive approach to the theology of work and the cultivation of spiritual values are vital so that the younger generation, particularly young people in the church, are able to consistently implement these values in their lives and ministry.

Conclusion

In 2 Thessalonians 3:10-11, Paul emphasises that work is not merely an economic necessity, but also a spiritual responsibility and part of the Christian witness. In the context of the Thessalonian church, which was facing social pressures and eschatological misunderstandings, passivity and idleness were rebuked as they could disrupt the order and harmony of community life. Therefore, the work ethic within the Christian faith emphasises self-reliance, responsibility, and social contribution as expressions of obedience to God and service to others. The findings of this study indicate that the values of Paul's theology of work remain relevant to contemporary life, particularly in fostering a work ethic characterised by discipline, responsibility, and integrity amidst rapid global social and economic change. The Church plays a vital role as an agent of social transformation, not only nurturing the spiritual lives of the congregation but also playing a part in economic empowerment, particularly for Generation Z, who face the challenges of the workplace in the digital age and modern economy.

Based on the findings of this study, the Church needs to integrate spiritual formation with the development of practical skills through a range of contextually appropriate programmes. Character building, vocational training, and the reinforcement of values such as responsibility and independence can serve as means for the Church to shape a productive and competitive younger generation. In this way, the Church becomes not only a place for the growth of faith, but also a community that prepares young people to make a tangible contribution to social and economic life.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be put forward. Firstly, the Church needs to develop mentoring programmes for Generation Z that integrate the teaching of the theology of work with practical skills training, such as entrepreneurship, digital literacy and the development of employability skills. Secondly, the Church can establish partnerships with educational institutions, the business community and social organisations to create training and economic empowerment opportunities for young people. Thirdly, the Church needs to utilise digital technology and social media as tools for mentoring and developing the potential of Generation Z so that they are able to cope with the ever-changing dynamics of the world of work.

Through these steps, the theological principles of work taught by Paul can be implemented in a contextually relevant way within the life of the modern Church, so that Generation Z not only grows spiritually, but is also able to become independent, productive individuals who make a tangible contribution to society.

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