

CONFRONTING LAZINESS

Introduction

- While laziness is a way of life for many people, it is a temptation for all people, including believers
- Unfortunately, laziness has become a respectable sin among Christians in that many don't think it is a big deal
- We must remember that God created and ordained work as a necessary part of His creation
- Some view work as a curse...a necessary evil that must be tolerated as part of life on this fallen planet
- But Scripture tells us that work is not the result of the Fall but something that God had instituted in His perfect creation
- From the beginning, God put Adam to work

Genesis 2:5 ~ Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth; and there was no man to cultivate (literally "work") the ground

Genesis 2:15 ~ Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it

- It was always God's intention for those made in His image to work (paralleling His work in the 6 days of creation)
- It is an important and dignified way of representing the image of God and serving Him
- Thus, in the perfect plan of God, labor is not a curse, but a blessing to be enjoyed even before the Fall
- Man is a worker

1 Thessalonians 4:11 ~ make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you

- For this reason, a person who does not work when they should be becomes dissatisfied, unhappy, and meddlesome

2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 ~ For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread

- As people made in God's image, we were made to work because it is a good gift of a sovereign God
- To think that work is a necessary evil is rebellion against God's design
- The problem is that "We have come to believe that the reason we work is so that we can rest. Work in this way of thinking is a necessary evil, and that is too often the story we tell ourselves. But thinking in this way turns God's work and rest rhythm completely on its head. Biblically, we do not work so that we can rest; we rest so that we can work. When we do not get this foundational reality right, we draw wrong conclusions about both work and rest."¹
- Thus, the Bible is clear that, because the Lord ordained work for man, laziness is sin

¹<http://www.davidprince.com/2016/05/18/respectable-sin-laziness/>

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A LAZY PERSON

- The Bible has a great deal to say about laziness and Proverbs is especially filled with wisdom concerning laziness and warnings to the lazy person
- Solomon introduces us in Proverbs to the “sluggard”...someone referred to 14 times
- He is always referred to negatively and is one of the most pitiful characters in Proverbs...the object of scorn...with a negative cloud cast around him
- Solomon warns the wise to not be like the sluggard

They Hate Work and Have Difficulty Starting It

- The lazy person despises the work given to them by the Lord

Proverbs 6:6-8 ~ Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, 7 Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler 8 Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest.

Proverbs 21:25 ~ The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, For his hands refuse to work

Proverbs 24:30-34 ~ I passed by the field of the sluggard And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense, 31 And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; Its surface was covered with nettles, And its stone wall was broken down. 32 When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. 33 “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest,” 34 Then your poverty will come as a robber And your want like an armed man.

- They seek comfort, satisfaction, and leisure rather than working diligently

They Procrastinate with Little View Toward the Future

- Someone has written: “Procrastination is my sin, It brings me naught but sorrow; I know that I should stop it, in fact, I will...tomorrow”
- But we should remember that “tomorrow” is the excuse of the lazy and the refuge of the incompetent

Proverbs 6:9-10 ~ How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? 10 A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest

Proverbs 20:4~ The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing"

- We procrastinate so we can do what we want to do rather than what we ought to do
- But wisdom says, “Do the things you have to do when you have to do them, so the day will come when you can do the things you want to do when you want to do them”
- Procrastination is the cancer of discipline

They Love Sleep

Proverbs 6:10~ A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest

Proverbs 10:4-5 ~ Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, But the hand of the diligent makes rich. 5 He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, But he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.

Proverbs 19:15~ Laziness casts into a deep sleep, And an idle man will suffer hunger

Proverbs 20:13~ Do not love sleep, lest you become poor

Proverbs 26:14 ~ As the door turns on its hinges, So does the sluggard on his bed.

- The problem with the sluggard is not that he sleeps, but that he sleeps when he should be doing something responsible
- To sleep when you should be doing something responsible is a sign that you are doing something irresponsible when you should be sleeping
- In other words, when sleep begins to intrude on the best hours of the workday something is wrong

They Finish Poorly

- The sluggard does not finish what he starts

Proverbs 12:27~ A slothful man does not roast his prey

Proverbs 19:24~ The sluggard buries his hand in the dish, *And* will not even bring it back to his mouth

- Although they may have great intentions, the lazy person does not finish what they start

They Make Excuses

- The sluggard creates imaginary circumstances to justify not doing their work

Proverbs 22:13~ The sluggard says, 'There is a lion outside; I shall be slain in the streets!'"

Proverbs 26:13 ~ The sluggard says, 'There is a lion in the road! A lion is in the open square!'"

- An excuse maker always develops a reputation for making excuses

They Experience Numerous Consequences

- The sluggard only creates a mountain of problems for himself and others
- Proverbs tells us the end in store for the lazy:

A. Financial loss

Proverbs 20:4~ The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.

B. Wasted potential

Proverbs 12:24~ The hand of the diligent will rule, But the slack hand will be put to forced labor.

C. Additional difficulty

Proverbs 15:19~ The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns, But the path of the upright is a highway.

D. Unfulfilled desires

Proverbs 13:4~ The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, But the soul of the diligent is made fat.

E. Destructive tendencies

Proverbs 18:9~ He also who is slack in his work Is brother to him who destroys.

F. Increased laziness

Proverbs 19:15~ Laziness casts into a deep sleep, And an idle man will suffer hunger.

- “Sloth is a craving for personal comfort at all costs. And it is costly:
 - Sloth will cost you joy in God, in your daily routines.
 - Sloth will blind you to how God designed vocation as a means for you to love others.
 - Sloth will blind you to the needs you can fill.
 - Sloth will cost you your love for the local church.
 - Sloth will dull you with endless amusements.
 - Sloth will blind you to your urgent need for Christ.
 - Sloth will close your eyes to the wonder and beauty of Jesus Christ.
 - Sloth will mute your worship.
 - Sloth will rob you of true leisure and refreshment.
 - Sloth will kill your richest joys.
- The sloth is a comfort control freak — an illusion of power that robs all our true joy.”²
- “Being a sluggard is not fun – it is folly. A premature retirement from the responsibilities of work is like a desert mirage. It looks so refreshing in the distance, but the pleasures promised dissipate in the face of life’s realities.”³

THE CONTRAST TO THE LAZY PERSON

- The diligent, hard-working, wise person is frequently commended in Proverbs:

Proverbs 6:6-11 ~ Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, 7 Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, 8 Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest. 9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? 10 “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest”— 11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.

- “The bite of sarcasm is felt in the contrast between the diligence of the ant and the indolence of the sluggard. The contrast is humiliating. A person over 5 feet tall and weighing 130 pounds or more is told to let an ant be teacher, an ant less than a quarter of an inch long, weighing a slight fraction of an ounce. A person with gifts of speech, with a brain the size of a whole anthill, is told to bend over, peer down, and learn from the lowly ant. The irony is powerful.”⁴

Proverbs 10:4~ Poor is he who works with a negligent hand, But the hand of the diligent makes rich.

Proverbs 12:24~ The hand of the diligent will rule, But the slack hand will be put to forced labor.

Proverbs 12:27~ A lazy man does not roast his prey, But the precious possession of a man is diligence.

Proverbs 13:4~ The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, But the soul of the diligent is made fat.

²<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/lazy-busy>

³ J. Carl Laney, *Everything I Know About Success, I Learned From the Bible*, 64.

⁴ David Hubbard, *Mastering the Old Testament*, 99.

Proverbs 14:23~ In all labor there is profit, But mere talk leads only to poverty.

Proverbs 21:5~ The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, But everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.

Proverbs 22:29~ Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men.

Proverbs 27:18 ~ He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit, And he who cares for his master will be honored.

Proverbs 28:19~ He who tills his land will have plenty of food, But he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty.

Proverbs 31:10-31

THE CURE FOR THE LAZY PERSON

1. Resolve to work hard at strategic times

Proverbs 10:5~ He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, But he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.

Proverbs 20:4~ The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.

2. Remain committed to completing your tasks

Proverbs 12:27~ A lazy man does not roast his prey, But the precious possession of a man is diligence.

Proverbs 26:15~ The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; He is weary of bringing it to his mouth again.

3. Resist the temptation to justify your laziness

Proverbs 26:13 ~ The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road! A lion is in the open square!"

4. Repent of the pride that feeds your laziness

Proverbs 26:16~ The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes Than seven men who can give a discreet answer.

5. Relish the benefit of working hard

Proverbs 15:19~ The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns, But the path of the upright is a highway.

6. Recognize your need to fear the Lord

Proverbs 1:7~ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 9:10~ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

7. Remember that ultimately you are working for the Lord

Colossians 3:23~ Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.