

Lighting the fire: Proverbs on overcoming procrastination and laziness

1. Remember God's plan for work.

- a. **God created us to work.** He didn't just hand food for Adam in Eve but ordained that they work.
 - i. **Genesis 2:15.** *Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and tend it.*
 1. The 'cultivate' word meant 'to work, labor' They were to work the land. Not remove weeds but channel growth of fruit bearing vegetation.
 2. They were to 'tend' the garden which meant to watch over it as good stewards to maintain it. God is an ecologist. He commanded that they don't just take from the earth but manage it so that it continues to produce
 - ii. **Genesis 1:28** They were to "fill the earth and subdue it".
 - iii. **Exodus 20:9** Part of God's commandments indicating working 6 days a week and then observing the Sabbath to rest and worship
 - iv. **Exodus 20:15** God's commandment against stealing indicates everyone was responsible to work to provide for themselves.
 - v. **Revelation 22:3** God will have us work throughout eternity by serving him.

- b. **God designed work to be a meaningful expression of obeying and pleasing him.**
 - i. **Work would give them a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction**
Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:13 *There is nothing better for a person than to eat and drink, and show ^[a]himself some good in his trouble. This too I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. . . . moreover, that every person who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor— this is the gift of God*
 - ii. **God promises to provide through your work.**
You will provide for yourself and your family.
Prov. 12:11 He who tills his land will have plenty of bread,
 But he who pursues worthless things lacks ^[e]sense
Prov. 22:29. *Do you see someone **skilled** in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank.*

You will be rewarded according to your skill and diligence.
Illustration: The ancient Jewish writings, call the Talmud, which seeks to apply the Old Testament said parents were to teach their children a skill and warned parents of neglecting this saying: "Anyone who does not teach his son a skill or profession may be regarded as if he is teaching him to rob."

- c. **God commanded not to help those who won't work.**
 - i. Don't help those **able to work:**
The OT those who refused to work be put into forced labor
Prov. 12:24. *The hand of the diligent will rule,
 But the lack hand will be put to forced labor*
1 Timothy 5:8
If anyone does not provide for his own, especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

2 Thessalonians 3:10-14

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; they are busybodies. 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.

¹⁴ Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed

Proverbs 16:26

A worker's appetite works for him,
For his hunger urges him on.

- ii. **Help those with limited ability.** Eg. In Deuteronomy widows, orphans, aliens were permitted to glean the fields to have food to live. They worked by gleaning the fields and were not simply given food.
- iii. **Help Those incapacitated:** The lame, handicapped, were helped and sustained: giving them alms; helping the needy. In Acts 20:35 Paul says he worked to help 'the weak', a word which meant incapacitated, unable to function.

God is not a socialist or communist. He never teaches equal distribution but loving care for the truly needy and firm requirement to work for all.

d. Sin changed the way people work. After Adam and Eve sinned the human race became sinful and it changed work.

- i. Work became harder. Genesis 3:17-19. Work would entail Thorns and thistles, the sweat of your brow until death.
- ii. Work became corrupted
 - 1. Some would be lazy and refuse to work only motivated by self-pleasure.
 - 2. Other would oppress workers using and mistreating them for gain. James 5:1-6
- iii. Christ reversed the curse and makes work once again meaningful. Col. 3:23-25

2. Recognize if you are lazy. marks of a lazy man.

a. Refuses to work. Prov. 21:25-26

The **desire** of the sluggard puts him to death, For his hands **refuse** to work;

²⁶ All day long he **is craving**, While the righteous gives and does not hold back

Sluggard: Slow, inactive in what matters. Only verb use in Jud. 18:9. When the Israelites were exhorted to act! It is to be inactive in what matters. They said, "Arise, and let us go up against them; for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And will you sit still? Do not delay to go, to enter, to possess the land.

Refuses = 'flatly refuses' adamant refusal (like Pharaoh refuses God's commands Ex. 7:14). It is refused due to a strong dislike, like food that is loathsome (Job 6:6-7)

The reason the sluggard will not work is His intense, continual craving to have what he wants. Working contradicts his desires to have and do what he wants

- i. **Phil. 3:19 Their god is their belly**
- b. **Pursues worthless activity. Fills up his time with meaningless profitless activity.**
 - **Prov. 12:11** . *He who tills his land **will have plenty of bread**, But he who **pursues worthless things lacks sense.***

Illustration: 44 hours a week average screen time for 18 year olds

- c. **Wants to do as least work as possible.**
Prov. 12:27. *A lazy man does not roast his prey,
 But the precious possession of a man is diligence.*
Prov. 26:14-15 *As a door turns on its hinges so a sluggard turns on his bed.*
¹⁵ *A sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.*

- d. Prioritizes sleep and recreation.
Illustration: a sloth can sleep 18 hours a day same as a house cat

Prov. 6:9-11

How long will you lie there, you sluggard?

When will you get up from your sleep?

¹⁰ *A little sleep, a little slumber,
 a little folding of the hands to rest—*

¹¹ *and poverty will come on you like a thief
 and scarcity like an armed man.*

Prov. 26:14. *As the door turns on its hinges so does the sluggard on his bed*

Prov. 21:17

He who loves pleasure will become a poor man;

He who loves wine and oil will not become rich

- e. **Always making excuses for not working and is wise in his own eyes**
Prov. 26:13 *A sluggard says, “There’s a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets!”*
Prov. 23:16 *A Sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven people who answer discreetly.*

- f. **In constant state of disrepair and crisis.**
Prov. 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.*

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

g. Promises rarely completed.

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

h. Is oblivious to his sin and need.

Prov. 4:30-34

*I passed by the field of the sluggard
And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense,*

"The parallel between 'lazy man' ["sluggard"] and 'devoid of understanding' ["lacking sense"] make clear that the laziness in view was not the result of a weak back but a hollow brain. Not strength but will was the lack."

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

Deep sleep

- A deep sleep so you are aware of nothing. Used of Sisera being in such a deep sleep he was unaware of a man coming to kill him by driving a stake through his head
- Jonah was asleep during the storm, oblivious to the ship breaking up. Jonah 1:5-6

"Once one chooses to be lazy, his lethargy is like a physical ailment that dulls him and throws him into a stupor."

i. Is always looking for easy money.

Through empty dreams:

Prov. 28:19

*He who tills his land will have plenty of food,
But he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty.*

His pursuit of empty dreams without working lead to poverty

Through lying and fraud:

Prov. 20:17

*Bread obtained by **falsehood** is sweet to a man,
But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.*

Prov. 13:11. *Wealth obtained by **fraud** dwindles,
But the one who gathers by labor increases it.*

Prov. 21:6. *The acquisition of treasures by a **lying** tongue
Is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death.*

Through Stealing – Ephesians 4:28

Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

Through using or oppressing others. Prov. 22:16

*He who **oppresses** the poor to make more for himself
Or who gives to the rich, will only come to poverty*

3. Repent

The Lord will not change our hearts from laziness to diligence until we own up to it and admit it to him as sin, asking his forgiveness and help to change.

4. Resolve to Work God's way.

- a. Work hard. Manner: Like an ant.

Prov. 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.*

Illustration: The ant sleeps less than 5 hours a day = 250 naps a day at a minute each.

- b. Work not by others having to compel you. The ant and has no chief or ruler and instinctively works hard to provide for itself.
- c. Work with initiative and priority
- i. Initiative. Ants Prepares it in summer for the winter
 - Laziness is greatest when there appears to be much time.
 - Laziness put short term pleasure before long term planning.
- d. Work Proactively and with priorities. Do Important work first before other things.

Prov. 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

Prov. 24:27

Put your outdoor work in order and get your fields ready after that, build your house.

Proverbs 27:23-27

Know well the ^[a]condition of your flocks,

And pay attention to your herds;

²⁴ For riches are not forever,

Nor does a crown *endure* to all generations.

²⁵ *When* the grass disappears, the new growth is seen,

And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in,

²⁶ The lambs *will be* for your clothing,

And the goats *will bring* the price of a field,

²⁷ And *there will be* goats' milk enough for your food,

For the food of your household,

And sustenance for your maidens.

Principles for work form Ephesians 6:5-9

- a. Show honor and respect to your boss. V. 5
- b. Work to be a testimony of Christ.

1 Tim. 6:1-2

All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. ²Those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers and are devoted to the welfare^[a] of their slaves.

- c. Work With genuineness not a man-pleaser. 6:6
- d. Work to please Christ - with fear and trembling before him 6:5-6, 7
- e. Work with good will – desire to bless your employer. 6:7
- f. Work motivated by Christ's reward. 6:8
- g. Don't threaten employees. They are equal before God. 6:9